



ACCELERATED EDUCATION
WORKING GROUP

Accelerated Education Evidence Review

APRIL 2020

Strengthening the Evidence Base
for Accelerated Education



Acknowledgments

This evidence review was written by Dr. Ritesh Shah and Liyun Choo from the University of Auckland's Faculty of Education and Social Work. It was commissioned by UNICEF and managed by Lisa Bender from UNICEF's Global Education Team. Significant support, guidance and feedback was also provided by the members of the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG), chaired by Martha Hewison from UNHCR.

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The Accelerated Education Working Group is made up of the following members:

UNHCR

UNICEF

UNESCO

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Education Development Center

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Plan International

International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Save the Children

War Child Holland

The [Accelerated Education Working Group](#) (AEWG) is an inter- agency working group made up of members supporting and/or funding Accelerated Education Programmes. This Evidence Review contributes to one of the AEWG's areas of focus to strengthen the evidence base for Accelerated Education (AE) to better inform programme design and implementation for AE providers and supporters, and to better serve the needs of over-age learners.

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List of Acronyms

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
AE	Accelerated Education
AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
ALC	Accelerated Learning Centre
ALP	Alternative Learning Programme
CBE	Community based education
CEC	Community Education Committee
EGMA	Early Grades Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grades Reading Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FE	Formal education
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MoE	Ministry of Education
NFE	Non-formal education
NFMSE	Non-formal Middle School Equivalency Programme
OOSCY	Out of school children and youth
SES	Socio-economic status

Executive Summary

This [Accelerated Education Working Group \(AEWG\)](#)¹ evidence review, commissioned by UNICEF, collates and analyses recent evidence from a range of accelerated education programmes (AEP) globally.² It synthesises the most recent available data on: (1) the policy context for AEP provision; (2) the degree to which AEPs contribute to addressing the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged learners; and (3) their overall effectiveness and efficiency in integrating students into formal education, vocational education or livelihoods.

The tables below summarise the key findings for each of these areas, alongside recommendations on how and where current gaps in evidence might be addressed by the AEWG, AE implementers and funders, and national governments moving forward.

Policy context

Key findings

- AEPs are increasingly acknowledged within National Education Strategic Plans in countries with high numbers of OOSCY.
- There remain significant gaps when it comes to sustained and meaningful policy-level commitment to AEPs, particularly when it comes to: (a) government ownership and oversight of AEPs as a long-term strategy for addressing the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged learners; (b) financial allocations to AEPs from national budgets; (c) alignment and integration of AE learners within EMIS systems; (d) consistent transition pathways from AEPs into formal education.
- Most AEP evaluations and studies fail to provide a thorough contextual assessment of how what AEPs achieve for OOSCY is constrained by the policy environment, and what actions might be taken by implementing partners, the donor community, and national education stakeholders to address these issues.

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- 1 The AEWG is currently led by UNHCR with representation from UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Education Development Center and War Child Holland.
 - 2 Accelerated Education Programmes are flexible, age-appropriate programmes, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth. This may include those who missed out on, or had their education interrupted by, poverty, marginalisation, conflict and crisis. The goal of Accelerated Education Programmes is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.

Key recommendations

- Building on the 2018 mapping of the inclusion of AEPs within National Education Strategic Plans, the AEWG should lead more research and analysis on the wider political economy in which such commitments are made, and how this influences national and local-level will and capacity to seeing AEPs meaningfully embedded within the education systems of countries with high numbers of OOSCY.
- Implementing partners of AEPs should be working to collectively shape and inform the national policy context, to ensure gaps and issues in respect to AEP policy implementation are addressed in coordination with national education stakeholders and the donor community.
- An important advocacy and policy influencing goal for the AE community (donors, implementers) should be towards seeing AEPs fully integrated as a long-term government-led response to addressing the needs of OOSCY given its potential to support these learners with accredited learning and a pathway back into formal education.

Addressing the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged learners

Key findings

- Across a range of countries with high numbers of OOSCY, AEPs are providing access to sizeable numbers of overaged, disadvantaged children and youth who might otherwise lack any opportunity to acquire certificated learning. In most contexts, however, they continue to serve a relatively small percentage of the total OOSCY population.
- AEPs continue to suffer inefficiencies in terms of high learner drop out and poor attendance rates, but these may be comparable or better than similar statistics in formal education systems with learners who often come from marginalised or disadvantaged positions in society.
- Strong evidence exist to demonstrate how AEPs support learners to acquire basic numeracy and literacy skills. Such improvements are often significantly higher when compared to other groups of OOSCY or government school students in the same grade level and/or age.
- While some evidence exists to suggests that AEPs contribute to the well-being and holistic development of OOSCY, these learning outcomes are less well measured and documented at present.
- Female AE learners continue to struggle more than males in respect to retention, completion and transition.
- Other forms of disaggregated outcome reporting, by household income/poverty indices, disability status or other demographic markers are less well documented and analysed within AEPs at present.
- Often, gender-related challenges/barriers intersect with the wider political, educational and socio-economic context (household poverty, pastoralism, insecurity) and tend to disproportionately effect female learners in many contexts which AEPs operate.
- AEPs are increasingly demonstrating gender sensitivity in their programme designs and approaches and acting to address barriers precluding female learners from accessing, attending and completing AEPs through a range of gender responsive actions. Most programmes measure the success of these efforts by whether they have managed to achieve gender parity in their enrolment numbers.
- Fewer AEPs demonstrate a sustained commitment to gender transformative action. Where this is done, it is mainly centred on reshaping teacher and learning practices and community perceptions and beliefs around the value of educating girls in their community. The impacts of these actions are still poorly measured and assessed and rarely feature as an outcome in themselves for AEPs.

Key recommendations

- Further guidance should be developed by the AEWG for implementers of AEPs on the challenges and limitations of making comparisons between outcomes of the formal education system and that of AEPs, with clear stipulation on when such comparative exercises may be warranted or not.
- AEPs should aim to capture evidence on how they are supporting a more holistic set of learning outcomes beyond numeracy and literacy with its learners, with specific attention to the contribution of AEPs to building social emotional competencies and life skills.
- Greater efforts should be made by AEPs to generate disaggregated evidence and analysis, beyond gender, of AE outcomes and impacts—particularly in terms of household SES status, displacement status (as relevant), and disability status.
- The AEWG should prioritise commissioning case and research studies of successful AEPs which have focussed on gender-transformative approaches and develop specific guidance for strengthening gender responsive and transformative efforts within AEPs.

Transitions

Key findings

- AE learners continue to struggle to effectively transition into formal education systems due to a range of supply and demand side barriers.
- Very little data is available on other pathways into technical/vocational education or livelihoods for former AE learners, and this is often not an explicit focus or function of most programs at present.

Key recommendations

- The AEWG should extend on this evidence review and undertake research to identify “good practice” examples of AEP approaches and designs which establish strong linkages with the formal education (FE) system and help to facilitate higher levels of transition and reintegration into FE and/or influence FE practices and approaches.
- Using the 2019 global mapping of AEPs, the AEWG should identify and write up case studies of AEPs where transitions into technical/vocational education or into the workforce are the main focus of the AEP, rather than further formal education.

Introduction

Background and purpose for this review

This evidence review focusses on collating recent evidence which has emerged out of evaluations, reviews, and other studies done of Accelerated Education programming (AEPs) globally in the past three years (2016-present). The inter-agency Accelerated Education Working group (AEWG) and the organisations which are part of the group are key constituents for this work.³ In 2017, the AEWG agreed upon a five-year Learning Agenda with two key objectives:

(1) Further assess the efficacy of AE programming using the 10 Principles for Effective Practice in terms of outcomes: access and equity, equity of learning outcomes that meet set standards, completion, and transition to multiple pathways: further formal or non-formal education (including vocational training) and supporting the creation of livelihood opportunities; and

(2) Evaluate the contribution and cost-effectiveness of AEPs to national and global provision of equitable access to quality basic education, particularly for fragile, insecure, and underfinanced environments.

This evidence review is seen to contribute to both of these objectives. In respect to the first outcome, the intention is to draw on work in recent years to determine what this new evidence says about the impacts of AEPs globally. For the second outcome, this current review is intended to help AE practitioners understand how AEPs are currently recognised at a national-level through policies, research, and data stored in EMIS systems, and as an approach for supporting life-long learning opportunities for out of school children.

³ These organisations include: Education Development Centre (EDC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children, PLAN International, UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), US Agency for International Development (USAID), and War Child Holland.

What are accelerated education programmes?

A flexible, age-appropriate programme, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth. This may include those who missed out on, or had their education interrupted by, poverty, marginalisation, conflict and crisis. The goal of Accelerated Education Programmes is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.

They differ from other forms of non-formal/alternative education programming (remedial, catch-up and bridging programmes) which aim to support out of school learners in that they: (a) focus on learners who are between 10-18 years old and/or lack the ability to directly enter into the formal education system because of other policy restrictions and (b) geared for learners who have missed more than one year of schooling. They are *accelerated* in that they reduce the number of years in a learning cycle, allowing students to (re)enter into formal education once they have completed either part or all the basic or primary education cycle. They typically cover at least three years of schooling, but often six or even nine years of schooling.

See <https://inee.org/collections/accelerated-education> for more information

Within UNICEF, and as part of the agency's new Education Strategy, Accelerated Education is perceived to be a key approach for meeting the agency's goals of:

- (1) Increasing equitable access to learning opportunities for hard to reach learners, both in humanitarian contexts and other settings, and providing them with validated and accredited non-formal learning pathways⁴; and
- (2) Increasing engagement with adolescents and providing pathways to secondary education, particularly for girls and young women.

The new strategy also makes clear that UNICEF's approach is to move beyond ensuring access, to ensuring that students gain learning and skills development through such opportunities, and to capture the evidence-base more systemically and rigorously. This review provides an opportunity for UNICEF to assess and consolidate the evidence base on a range of AEPs which UNICEF country office have supported and/or implemented in recent years, to demonstrate where and how AEPs can help the agency to meet the goals of its new Education Strategy.

Key evidence review questions and methodological approach

In agreement with the AEWG and UNICEF, the initial questions presented in the Terms of Reference for this review were further developed and refined to the following:

⁴ See pg. 20-21

1. **AEP Policy Context:** How are AEPs recognized as a part of lifelong learning through policies and programmes in fragile, insecure and underfinanced states?
 - a. How are AEPs linked or aligned with national education priorities and plans, providing certificated learning, and linked to national EMIS systems?
 - b. To what degree does this recognition influence or effect programme outcomes in terms of both ensuring access, learning outcomes and transition to formal schooling or other pathways post-completion?
2. **AEP Outcomes:** To what extent are AEPs successful in reaching marginalized and disadvantaged groups and, specifically, girls?
 - a. What data is available from the AEP in respect to key access, retention, learning, and transition indicators?⁵
 - b. How is this data currently being captured in the programme, and with what rigour, challenges and limitations?
 - c. To what extent are outcomes disaggregated by gender, age, or other factors relevant to the context? Do outcomes vary for these groups, and what evidence exist of added value of AEPs, particularly in respect to girls?
 - d. Is a counterfactual assessed in respect to outcomes for this group of AE learners in the evaluation or research? In other words, is there a comparison group to which these learners are compared in terms of the outcomes noted above? Is this judgement valid for that context?⁶
3. **Gender:** To what extent are AEPs a successful model of gender transformative programming?
 - a. What are specific gender-related challenges or barriers within the context which the programme is designed to respond to, if any? If gender norms and values are seen to be a problem, how are they addressed?
 - b. How is gender considered in respect to the design, delivery and assessment of the AEP itself?
 - c. What evidence exist of the efficacy or impact of actions taken to mitigate or transform harmful gender norms and attitudes? For successful efforts, how was this done?

5 The specific categories of data in respect to access, retention, learning outcome and transition outcomes are ones adapted from the recently drafted MEL framework by the AEWG, and understood (based on prior research and evidence reviews) to be the ones most commonly captured. Other data in relation to access, retention, learning outcomes and transition will be documented in case there emerges a category of common outcome reporting which is missed through these questions at present.

6 The reason to ask this question, rather than to provide a singular counterfactual data point (i.e. student profiles in the formal schooling system), is that there remains a debate as to what a valid counterfactual for AE learners should be.

Review methodology

These questions were explored purely as a desk-based exercise based on a review of available external and internal evaluations, reviews and research of individual AEPs globally. 105 current AEPs were identified based on a mapping exercise done by UNICEF and the AEWG in 2019. Of these, 68 indicated that they had or were in the midst of completing an evaluation of the programme. All of these programmes were contacted by UNICEF HQ and asked to share any documentation from evaluations or other studies of their AEP completed with the research team. 11 of these programmes were able to furnish data, reports, or other suitable publications. Additional evidence was also shared with the research team by the AEWG Chair and other members of the task team. The research team also undertook its own search of academic and grey literature searching journal databases and internal repositories of key organisations (INEE, ECCN, UNESCO, as well as the those of many implementing partners of AEPs).

From a total of 51 discrete pieces of evidence which were obtained in total, 36 were identified as relevant to the key evidence review questions noted earlier. They represent 26 discrete AEPs in total, as some programmes provided more than one relevant piece of evidence. A summary of the basic details of each of these AEPs is provided in Annex 1.⁷

The countries represented and the numbers of discrete programmes from each country is noted in the table below.

Country	Number of pieces of evidence available	Number of discrete AEPs represented	Name of programme
El Salvador	2	1-	EDUCAME El Salvador
The Philippines	1	1	ALS The Philippines
Kenya	1	1	AEP Kenya
Mali	4	2	ERSA Mali Paasu Mali
Uganda	4	3	ECHO INCLUDE Uganda AEP Uganda Speed School Uganda
Myanmar	2	2	NFMSE Myanmar INSPIRE Myanmar
Nepal	3	1	Udaan Nepal
Pakistan	1	1	CHAON Pakistan

⁷ Within these programmes are a few, like ERSAs and the Speed Schools, which are shorter term (typically one year or less) and condense a fewer number of grade levels than is typical for most AEPs. While some might consider these catch up programmes, the reason they were included in this evidence review as an AEP is because they accelerate three grades into one year, and provide a vehicle for (re)integrating over-aged and out of school students who might otherwise not have access to upper primary education an opportunity to do so.

Niger/Burkina Faso/Mali	2	2	Speed School Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger
Sierra Leone	1	1	AEP Sierra Leone
Somalia	2	1	SOMGEP-T Somalia
Ethiopia	2	1	Speed School Ethiopia
South Sudan	1	1	AEP South Sudan
Iraq	1	1	ALP Iraq
Lebanon	1	1	ALP Lebanon
Liberia	3	2	Advancing Youth Liberia Second Chance Liberia
Afghanistan	3	2	STAGES Afghanistan Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme Afghanistan
Democratic Republic of Congo	2	2	AEP Congo VAS-Y Fille! Congo
TOTAL	36	26	

The majority of the evidence available at present comes from AEPs in sub-Saharan Africa. This is not unsurprising given the higher prevalence of out of school children and youth (OOSCY) in this part of the world compared to others.⁸ There remain notable gaps in evidence of programmes in specific regions—particularly South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa—despite the fact that there are several AEPs known to be running in these contexts given the higher prevalence of OOSCY within these regions.⁹ While there is also a gap in evidence from Central and Eastern Europe, it is also a region where there are not large populations of OOSCY.

Analysis of each piece of evidence was done discretely at first, with relevant information to each of the key questions and sub-questions coded using NVivo software. In many cases, the information inputted was qualitative in nature, but for key outcome indicators quantitative data was also documented in a separate Excel spreadsheet. This programme-level review then led to a second stage to a wider thematic analysis of key trends, themes and issues, which form the basis for this report.

8 See UIS. (2019). *New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescents and Youth Are Out of School*. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/new-methodology-shows-258-million-children-adolescents-and-youth-are-out-school.pdf>

9 Several targeted attempts were made to obtain further evidence of AEPs from these regions. This included requests to UNICEF COs through ROs, as well as direct follow up with COs; alongside targeted communication to members of the AEWG who are known to run AEPs in the region. Despite these efforts, relevant data was unable to be provided in the time or form required for this review.

While these pieces of evidence served as the primary source of data for the review, a separate mapping activity commissioned by the AEWG in late 2018 regarding the national policy context for AEPs was also reviewed. This information was particularly important to provide further contextual background of the policy context for a number of the countries and programmes noted in the table above. A challenge, however, with using this prior work is that it was largely done as a feasibility study into what might be gleaned from a more in-depth investigation of national policies. While it provides a clear general picture as to whether and how AEPs are included or not in National Education Strategic Plans (ESPs) or other national education policies at present, it did not delve deeply into the annual action and implementation plans (and budgets) which follow from them. As a result, the evidence review's capacity to make an assessment about the depth of policy commitment to AEPs is somewhat hindered to what individual programme evaluations claim about the policy context in question.

Additionally, for all the review questions focussed on AEP outcomes and on gender transformative programming efforts, analysis was confined to the information available from the evaluation reports, internal reporting data, and/or research reports provided or made available for each AEP. While all sources of evidence were vetted in terms of their level of rigour and credibility for claims made within them, the authors of this review did not have the necessary scope or time to independently verify or follow up on gaps or issues with each AEP examined. There was no opportunity to conduct follow up interviews with programme teams, or to conduct a more in-depth case study of any of the programmes reviewed where promising outcomes were noted. This is a significant limitation of the work and should be followed up in a subsequent stage with more targeted follow up on specific areas—such as the impact which the policy context has on programme outcomes, or on understanding how AEPs can be an effective lever for gender transformative programming efforts.

The policy context for AEPs

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- AEPs are increasingly acknowledged within National Education Strategic Plans in countries with high numbers of OOSCY.
- There remain however, still significant gaps when it comes to sustained and meaningful policy-level commitment to AEPs, particularly when it comes to (a) government ownership and oversight of AEPs as a long-term strategy; (b) financial allocations to AEPs from national budgets; (c) alignment and integration of AE learners within EMIS systems; (d) unclear transition pathways from AEPs into formal education.
- Most AEP evaluations and studies fail to provide a thorough contextual assessment of how what AEPs achieve for OOSCY is constrained by the policy environment, and what actions might be taken by implementing partners, the donor community, and national education stakeholders to address these issues.

Background

A 2015 meta-evaluation of the Norwegian Refugee Council's AE programming in 15 different countries over 20 years concluded that the efficacy and sustainability of AEPs relied heavily on supportive legislative frameworks within national education sectors. It was found that this differed dramatically across contexts and had a number of concrete impacts on AEP structures and outcomes.¹⁰ A similar conclusion was reached in four separate [case studies](#) completed in 2017 by the AEWG as part of field testing the 10 *Principles of Effective AE Practice* (otherwise known as the AE Principles). A key finding across the case studies was that the political terrain in a given context determines what is feasible for an AEP to do in terms of “best practice”. Additionally, while both within the AE Principles themselves and the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies stress the critical importance for funders and implementers of AE programming to work in concert and coordination with national governments and existing policy frameworks, it was also found that such alignment often: (1) hindered the ability of programming to then be responsive to learner needs and establish a curriculum framework that promotes a pedagogy of accelerated learning; (2) added administrative burdens, particularly in terms of compliance to policy mandates; and (3) afforded constraints in terms of the types of personnel AEPs could employ to support its programme activity.¹¹

As a 2009 UNESCO study on AEPs specifies, the “first move belongs to government”, in terms of ensuring that a supportive institutional climate and policy environment is in place first, to be able to establish entry points for AEPs that lead to effective outcomes for learners and contribute meaningfully to the education system as a whole.¹² More recently, this point has been reiterated again in a background paper to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, which argued that critical to improving opportunities for children out of school are policies which: (1) include refugee, internally displaced, asylum seeking and stateless populations in their national education plans; (2) respond in a flexible way to strengthen and expand the formal education system in order to absorb displaced children and youth, including providing certified accelerated education programmes that are accredited as well as non-formal options that have pathways into the formal education system; and (3) support flexibility in terms of ensuring trained, committed and motivated teachers for this population.¹³

10 Shah, R. (2015) *Norwegian Refugee Council's Accelerated Education Responses: A Meta-Evaluation*. Oslo: NRC.

11 Shah, R., Flemming, J., and Boisvert, K. (2017) *Synthesis report: Accelerated Education Principles Field Studies*. Accelerated Education Working Group.

12 Baxter, P. and Bethke, L. (2009). *Alternative education: filling the gap in emergency and post-conflict situations*. UNESCO IIEP: Paris.

13 UNHCR (2016). *No more excuses: provide education to all forcibly placed people (Policy Paper 26)*. UNHCR and GMR: Paris.

As part of this evidence review, documentation from the programmes themselves, as well as separate policy analysis completed in late 2018 by the lead author and colleagues for the AEWG was examined.¹⁴

Key findings

Overall, it was found that **for most countries represented in this evidence review, AEPs are an acknowledged and recognised form of education provision for addressing the needs of overaged and/or OOSCY** (see Figure 1).¹⁵

Inclusion of AEP in National Education Strategic Plans (n=17)

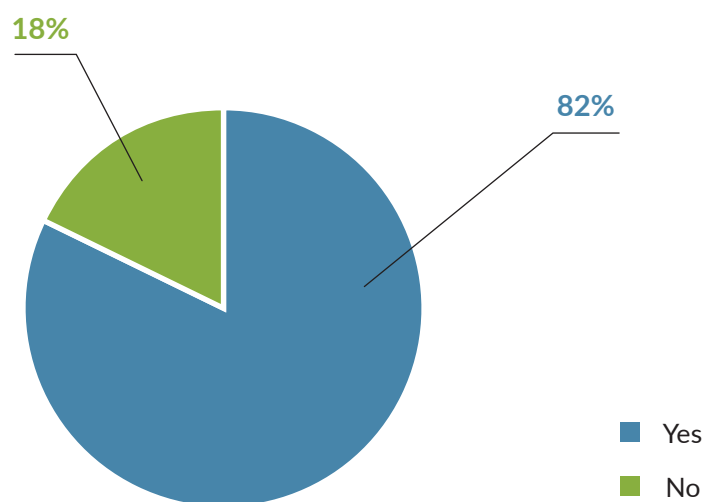


Figure 1: Inclusion of AEPs within the NESPs of countries represented in this evidence review

Some countries—such as Liberia, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo—discuss AEPs explicitly as a key lever for addressing the needs of OOSCY. In Ethiopia, under its Education Sector Development Programme (2016-2020), Alternative Basic Education (ABE) is well integrated into the government’s strategies for providing accessible, quality education to all. It is a recognised form of alternative education which seeks to address high rates of out of school children, particularly amongst pastoralist communities, with clear guidance and support for curriculum, teaching and learning and management of ABEs in the plan. Likewise in Liberia, the MoE under its current Education Strategic Plan identifies accelerated education programmes

¹⁴ In this separate piece of commissioned work for the AEWG, the intention was to ascertain at that time, to what extent AEPs were integrated into the national education strategies of countries where AE might be a viable option for meeting the needs of over-age, out of school children and youth. A total of 36 countries’ policies were reviewed. The team sourced and then analysed education sector plans, EFA 2015 reviews, alternative/non-formal/inclusive education policies, and other supporting documentation from these countries. In most instances, the countries represented in this current evidence review were included in this separate policy review, barring Nepal, and Sierra Leone.

¹⁵ In some countries, however, Accelerated Education programming is not defined in the same way as the AEWG defines it and includes bridging and catch-up programmes which are often shorter-term and not necessarily targeted at over-aged learners.

as a mechanism to address the needs of out of school and overaged children 7-13; and separate to that supports Alternative Basic Education (ABE) for out of school youth and adults to cover the skills learned in Grades 1-6 along with life skills and vocational training. In Myanmar nonformal/alternative education is well integrated into the country's current Education Strategic Plan, with an emphasis given to "equivalency" programmes which provide certified primary education for out of school learners in a condensed fashion.

Of the 26 AEPs included in this evidence review, 8 could be classified as government-led, meaning that they were fully embedded in the architecture of the national education system and often partly or largely overseen, managed and implemented by national education authorities (see Figure 2 below). 13 of the AEPs had some level of involvement from national education authorities. This ranged from their programme being clearly placed into action plans as a response to a specific humanitarian or developmental issue/concern, to the engagement of authorities in the certification or accreditation of AEP curriculum or learning. In many of these programmes though, the actual implementation of AEPs was facilitated through the support of international donors and international or local NGOs. Alarming, 5 of the AEPs reviewed continued to operate with little or no engagement of local, regional or national governments—against Principle 10 of the AE Principles, which emphasises the importance of AEPs being aligned with the national education system and relevant humanitarian architecture.

Level of government engagement in AEP's reviewed

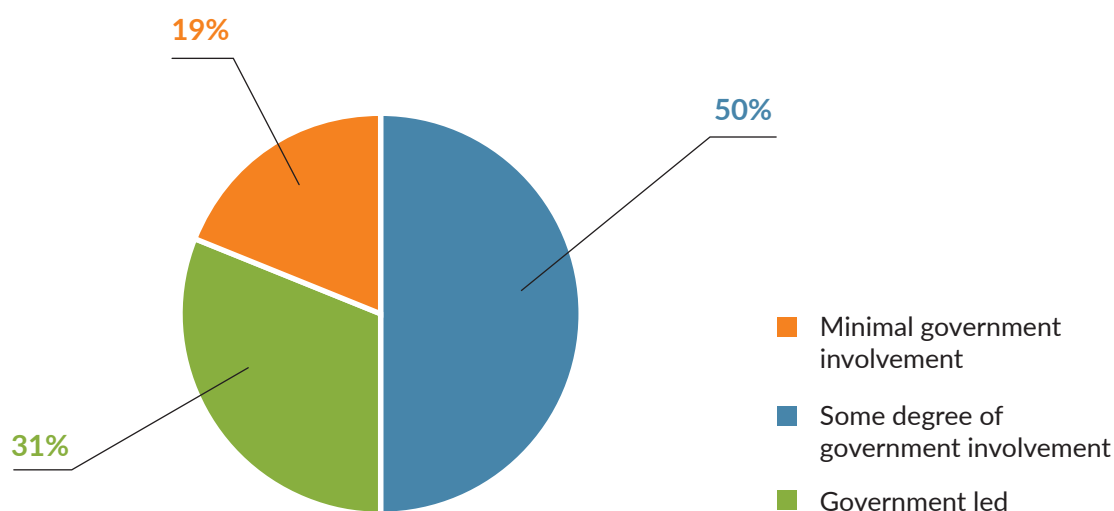


Figure 2: Level of government engagement in AEPs reviewed

Irrespective of the degree of governmental involvement, evidence suggest that significant challenges remain in terms of the full integration and alignment of AEPs into national education systems. For example, one evaluation of an AEP in Afghanistan noted that while community-based education models, which include Accelerated Learning Centres (ALCs) are part of the formal education system, this is still not operationalised or internalised. In the design of the programme and in the unconscious references of the interviewed stakeholders, there was often an implicit assumption that the CBEs were a temporary measure to be instituted in places for a short period of time until the "situation stabilizes" after which this temporary measure would disappear and education would shift to the "formal" school system within the MOE. This was exemplified according to the evaluation's authors by a lack of dedicated positions in the MOE related to CBE management funded by on-budget financing processes, and the use of 9-month service

contracts, rather than more permanent contracts, for CBE teachers.¹⁶ In Liberia, another evaluation identified that despite the MoE clearly acknowledging the critical need to addressing the challenges of access and retention for out of school youth and overaged learners, there was little practical commitment to AEPs in terms of budget allocations; with the authors of the report specifying that AEPs were only added into the sector plan after advocacy by the implementing partner of the programme.¹⁷ In Congo, ECCN found that interviewees comprising government officials, donors, and national and international nongovernmental actors involved in the country's education sector, perceived alternative education (including AEPs) as remaining outside of the government-established system.¹⁸

Many AEPs continue to be designed and implemented as a response to short-term “emergency” situations caused by conflict or natural disaster, rather than operating in contexts of chronic developmental concerns where poverty and social marginalisation are endemic features of society. Amongst the programmes reviewed, (58%, n=15) were justified as a response to a particular emergency event—whether it be the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, or civil war or localised conflict in contexts like Mali—while the remainder were more developmental oriented and focussed on addressing the needs of chronically marginalised learners and communities (i.e. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal). As more recent scholarship in the EiE community signals, however, the dichotomy between humanitarian and developmental actions may be unnecessary, with clear overlap between the two.¹⁹ In respect to outcomes for AE learners, AEPs are equally important and valuable in both humanitarian and developmental contexts as later sections discuss in greater depth.

Additionally, while AEPs are often justified by individual partners as fitting within national priorities for addressing the needs of marginalised, out of school and/or over-aged learners within national education systems, **AEPs continue to struggle to be effectively and seamlessly aligned to the formal education system—particularly for learners who exit or transition at intermediary points.** For example, in South Sudan, despite AEPs being positioned as a key strategy for supporting over-aged OOSCY between the ages of 12-18 to complete the most or all of the basic education cycle in condensed timeframe and re-enter the formal education system, mechanisms to facilitate continued access—either within the formal or non-formal system appeared to be lacking. An evaluation of one AEP in South Sudan found that AEP learners were not provided with report cards, which made moving to another centre or primary school challenging. In addition, AEP learners who wished to continue their education after completing Level 3 were disadvantaged by the lack of pre-secondary education opportunities (Grade 7 and Grade 8)²⁰ in the areas the programme served.²¹ In Mali, AEPs are recognized as a credible form of equivalent learning for basic education. The country, however, does not have a national examination before grade 9, which meant that AEP learners who did not complete the full cycle of basic education failed to earn any nationally recognized

16 KonTerra Group. (2019). *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme (Afghanistan) (2015-2019)*. New York: UNICEF.

17 EDC. (2017). *Advancing Youth Project Liberia Final Report 24 October 2011-15 June 2017*. Washington D.C: USAID.

18 Seymour, C., Heaner, G., Hartwell, A., & Deacon, G. (2016). *USAID ECCN Alternative Education in the DRC Final Research Report*. Washington D.C: USAID Education in Conflict and Crisis Network.

19 See Nicolai, S., Hodgkin, M., Mowjee, T., & Wales, J. (2019). *Humanitarian Development Coherence White Paper*. Overseas Development Institute: London.

20 Secondary education in South Sudan has four grades: Grade 9, 10, 11 and 12.

21 Nicholson, S. (2018). *Evaluation of Oxfam's Accelerated Education Programme in Greater Ganyiel, South Sudan 2014-2018' Against Global Best Practice*.

certificate, despite successfully completing and exiting out of AEP Level 1 (equivalent to Grade 4) or Level 2 (equivalent to Grade 6).²²

This becomes an acute issue, particularly when AEPs have as a main outcome the (re) integration of OOSCY into the formal education system. Even if pathways for entering back into formal education do exist in policy and practice, an ongoing challenge is the capacity to track what happens to former AE learners upon their entry into formal education. Often this is stymied by a lack of clear mechanisms for AEPs to feed information on its learners into government-managed Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS). Several reports identified that AE learners were not included within national EMIS systems at all, and hence there was no way for programmes to integrate data on key learning indicators into these national-level databases. For example, a study of NRC's AEP in Kenya (Dadaab) noted that the exclusion of AE learners from the EMIS and the lack of records on non-Kenyan refugee students posed a problem to UNHCR's educational administration of the urban refugee population, who tended to be mobile and unable to be tracked once they left the programme.²³ Likewise, in Mali, while AEP's established monitoring and evaluation systems were compatible with MoE data, the Ministry did not take ownership of these data. As a result, there was no commitment or willingness from the MoE to track AEP graduates after their transfer to formal schools.²⁴ Referring back to the earlier example from the evaluation in Afghanistan of ALCs, the authors note that the lack of tracking data to verify transitions of students into formal education within EMIS systems acts as another example of the "temporary" view which policymakers continue to have of accelerated education.²⁵ On a more optimistic note, a recent evaluation from Myanmar noted that reforms to the EMIS will also lead in the near future to a separate non-formal module which allows data from those who are part of AEPs to be tracked.²⁶

An overall assessment of the strength of the evidence

Little information is collected systematically within programme evaluations at present on the influence and impact of the policy context on programming activities and outcomes.

In most instances, individual programme evaluations did not give explicit attention to the policy context within which AEPs operate, despite the significant implications they have on both AE programme management and outcomes. Where the policy context was explored, it was often framed as a limitation rather than an opportunity, and few evaluations extended recommendations on how AEPs might better advocate for or enable a more supportive policy environment.

22 EDC. (2018). *Learning from an Accelerated Education Program in an Active Conflict Zone: Case Study of USAID/ Mali Education Recovery Support Activity (ERSA)*. Washington D.C: USAID.

23 Flemming, J. (2017). *Case Study Report: Norwegian Refugee Council, Dadaab, Kenya*. Education in Crisis and Conflict Network.

24 EDC. (2018). *Learning from an Accelerated Education Program in an Active Conflict Zone: Case Study of USAID/ Mali Education Recovery Support Activity (ERSA)*. Washington D.C: USAID.

25 KonTerra Group. (2019). *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme (Afghanistan) (2015-2019)*. New York: UNICEF.

26 EPRD & Synergia. (2019). *Joint Evaluation of Myanmar Non-Formal Middle School Education-Equivalency Pilot Programme Final Evaluation Report*. UNICEF Myanmar.

Outcomes of AEPs

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- Across a range of countries with high numbers of OOSCY, AEPs are providing access to sizeable numbers of overaged, disadvantaged children and youth who might otherwise lack any opportunity to acquire certificated learning. In most contexts, however, they continue to serve a relatively small percentage of the total OOSCY population.
- AEPs continue to suffer inefficiencies in terms of high learner drop out and poor attendance rates, but these may be comparable or better than similar statistics in formal education systems with learners who often come from marginalised or disadvantaged positions in society.
- Strong evidence exist to demonstrate how AEPs support learners to acquire basic numeracy and literacy skills. Such improvements are often significantly higher when compared to other groups of OOSCY or government school students in the same grade level and/or age.
- While some evidence exists to suggests that AEPs contribute to the well-being and holistic development of OOSCY, these learning outcomes are less well measured and documented at present.
- AE learners continue to struggle to effectively transition into formal education systems due to a range of supply and demand side barriers. Very little data is available on other pathways into technical/vocational education or livelihoods for former AE learners, and this is often not an explicit focus or function of most programs at present.
- Female AE learners continue to struggle more than males in respect to retention, completion and transition. Other forms of disaggregated outcome reporting, by household income/poverty indices, disability status or other demographic markers are less well documented and analysed within AEPs at present.

Background

This section provides an overall assessment on the strength and nature of the evidence available when it comes to the contributions of AEPs to:

- (1) Providing increased and sustained access to out of school, overaged learners;
- (2) Supporting quality learning outcomes; and
- (3) Enabling transitions into further formal education or employment.

As part of this, this section also explores the nature and quality of the evidence available for these key outcomes of AEPs, and how the overall contribution of AEPs to national and global education priorities is being articulated and measured.

Providing access to out of school children and youth

Key findings

AE programme data on numbers of students enrolled indicate that **AEPs act as an important vehicle for providing access to OOSCY who would otherwise lack access to any other form of recognised learning.** All programmes collect data on the numbers of learners they enrol—often with a clear specification of the numbers of out of school or overage children/youth who have been enrolled over the life of the programme. Across the 26 programmes reviewed, more than 1.8 million beneficiaries have been supported to learn through these programmes alone.

What these data also indicate, however, most of the **AEPs included in this review are working with relatively small percentages of the overall national OOSCY population, despite actual numbers of programme beneficiaries being quite large in several instances** (See Annex 2). As an example, while the CHAON programme in Pakistan supported over 68,000 beneficiaries, this represents 0.66% of the total OOSCY population in the country. Even if the CHAON programme is one of several of AEPs in Pakistan—with the others not covered by this review—the cumulative total reach of AEPs in regard to addressing the total need of OOSCY remains small in contexts like Pakistan.

A few AEPs did manage to support larger percentages of the total OOSCY in a country context. For example, the government-managed Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines served over 840,521 students in 2018 alone, representing nearly 12.8% of the total OOSCY population in the country. Programmes with greater reach often accomplished this through the use of e-learning or distance-based platforms rather than face to face teaching, but often involved a trade off with lower programme completion rates (i.e. EDUCAME El Salvador, INSPIRE Myanmar); or as large-scale government supported initiatives using several implementing partners and which target specific districts or groups of learners (nomadic groups, street children, those living in remote areas without access to government schools).

Evidence also suggests that **AEP enrolment figures may be overinflated in several ways.** Firstly, AEPs suffer from inefficiencies due to high levels of drop out and non-completion

amongst enrolled learners (see Annex 3).²⁷ Secondly, several AEPs were also identified as experiencing high levels of student absenteeism, with reported enrolment numbers failing to adequately account for the relative low levels of regular student engagement in the programme activities. Thirdly, several AEPs were identified to be enrolling learners who are not part of the target population/profile for AEPs, either because they were not out of school or overaged prior to joining the programme in question.

Specific to programme completion rates, the review identified that these do vary quite significantly between programmes. AEPs with higher completion rates (i.e. Speed Schools) tend to be shorter-term programmes (typically one year or less) which then transition learners back into formal schooling at various intermediary points in the basic education cycle. The grade level into which AEP graduates transitioned into in formal education depended on their performance on placement examinations conducted at the end. Additionally, programmes with higher completion rates appear to have strong mechanisms for community mobilization, provide free and high-standard educational facilities and learning materials, use child-centred and participatory teaching methodologies, and monitor and follow up on learners' data, such as absenteeism regularly.

On the other hand, programmes with low completion rates tended to experience frequent operational delays, whether as a result of a lack of funds (such as the case of AEP South Sudan and INSPIRE Myanmar), or changing political or social conditions (such as the 2014-15 Ebola outbreak that led to Advancing Youth's ABE classes stopping for nearly a year in Liberia). Advancing Youth Liberia further noted that the ABE curriculum was too challenging for learners without any prior schooling experience, suggesting that the government's condensed curriculum did not sufficiently cater to learners' needs—a matter which again refers back to the importance of an enabling policy context.

[An assessment of the nature and quality of the evidence on enrolments](#)

In presenting programme enrolment numbers, several AEPs provided an overview of the total number of OOSCY nationally or in the regions/districts they serve, as Annex 2 suggests. Where this information is provided, it then makes it possible for programmes to identify the percentage of the total national/regional/local OOSCY population they have managed to capture through their efforts. For the purposes of this evidence review, and where such data was not provided in the evidence review, data on total numbers of OOSCY in the national context were obtained through other publicly available statistics.

At present, AEPs fail to consistently and systematically report on key internal efficiency indicators, such as programme survival or dropout rates (as indicated in Annex 3).

Irrespective of the size of the AEP, however, a consistent concern which surfaced across a number of programme evaluations was whether the enrolment numbers presented reflect a true account of meaningful participation in programme activities. For example, evaluators questioned whether programmes should count the total numbers of learners registered or rather, the total numbers of learners who attend the programme with some level of regularity. This is because absenteeism rates led to much fewer learners being regularly present at AE centres than what official programme documentation

²⁷ According to the AEWG's M&E Toolkit, this might alternatively be couched as the "survival rate" or the the numbers of AE learners who enrol and remain in the AEP through to the finish of the programme. For many programmes, these survival rates, while not often reported are quite low (20-40%).

reported. For example, in South Sudan, evaluators highlighted discrepancies between reported student enrolments and actual student attendance. In 2015, for instance, actual attendance compared to enrolment stood at 76%; in 2016 at 34%, and at 16-31% in 2017, based on unannounced spot checks carried out across that period of time.²⁸

In some instances some programmes' enrolment figures were inflated by learners who should not be attending AEPs—namely students who do not fit the typical age profile or demographic for AEPs—but choose to attend AEPs for pragmatic (distance/availability to nearest schooling) or family preference (quality of AEP perceived as better) reasons. In the case of one AEP in Afghanistan, for example, the programme intended to exclusively target girls aged above 10 who had never enrolled in any type of formal school. However, monitoring data indicated that 13% of the beneficiaries in the AEP were boys.²⁹ Likewise, evaluators of another AEP in Afghanistan found that up to 40% of the children attending were unregistered, and tended to be children of primary school age.³⁰ Within an AEP in South Sudan which targeted children and youth aged 12-18, only 74% of enrolled learners in 2017 and 85% in 2018 were of the correct age. In the five ALP centres the evaluators visited, the learners' ages ranged from 10 to 50 with 13.7% of learners below 12 and 7.7% above 24. The implementing partner supposedly verified the age of learners and checked that they were not attending primary school, but in the five ALP centres the evaluators visited, 25% of the learners who participated in the evaluation also attended formal schools.³¹

None of evidence provided a comparative overview of how drop out, or survival rates compare to the statistics in the formal education system. For the purposes of this evidence review, comparative data was sourced from the UIS-UNESCO database, but making such comparisons should be treated with caution. This is because AEPs by virtue of their purpose and structure, as well as target population, are distinctive to the formal education system. They serve populations of students which the formal education system has failed to reach, are largely overaged and with less prior educational experience, and who face a large number of “pull factors” which make it harder for them to remain in school. Hence, as has been identified in previous research on AEPs, comparisons of indicators and data between formal education systems and AEPs may not be appropriate, given that making such comparisons does not appropriately acknowledge the unique characteristics of AE learners to those of learners in the formal education system.³²

28 Nicholson, S. (2018). *Evaluation of Oxfam's Accelerated Education Programme in Greater Ganyiel, South Sudan 2014-2018 Against Global Best Practice*.

29 Corboz, J. (n.d.). *Endline GEC Report – Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Educational Success: AKF UK 5147*. 807 boys were enrolled in the ALP, which had a total of 6,135 beneficiaries.

30 KonTerra Group. (2019). *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme (Afghanistan) (2015-2019)*. New York: UNICEF.

31 Nicholson, S. (2018). *Evaluation of Oxfam's Accelerated Education Programme in Greater Ganyiel, South Sudan 2014-2018 Against Global Best Practice*.

32 See Baxter, P., & Bethke, L. (2009). *Alternative education: filling the gap in emergency and post-conflict situations*. Paris: UNESCO IIEP; Baxter, P. et al (2016). *Accelerated Education Programs in Crisis and Conflict Literature Review*. USAID: Washington DC.

Beyond access: The evidence on supporting quality learning

Key findings

The recently developed [Theory of Change for AEPs](#)³³ identifies that one of the key outcomes for AEPs should be to “*improve learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life skills*”, in line with the global and UNICEF commitment to promote quality and equitable learning outcomes rather than just providing access.³⁴

There is a strong body of evidence across the evidence reviewed which indicates that AEPs have significant impacts on students’ literacy and numeracy skills. Several of these evaluations also found that such improvements are often significantly higher when compared to other groups of OOSC or government school students in the same grade level and/or age. For example:

- VAS-Y Fille! Congo reported that girls who attended an AEP at least from midline to endline scored approximately 15 percentage points higher on the EGRA ($p < 0.001$) and 10 percentage points higher on the EGMA ($p < 0.001$) compared to the girls who remained out of school.
- ERSa Mali reported that in terms of literacy assessment, PARIS students who had transferred to grade 4 demonstrated skills significantly higher than those of their formal school counterparts 4.5 months after their transfer, even though their oral reading fluency rate started out slightly lower than that of students completing grade 3 in government schools.
- SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger reported that in mathematics, SSA/P graduates caught up and performed equally to children enrolled in government schools of the same grade by the end of the programme.
- AEP Kenya reported that on average, AEP students scored well above the national average in national examinations conducted at the end of the programme.
- STAGES Afghanistan reported that AEP girls had higher reading fluency and numeracy scores than their government school counterparts in the same grade, with girls in AEP classes scoring significantly higher than their peers in government schools.
- Speed School Ethiopia reported that Speed School students scored 10.4% (Math), 13.5% (Sidama) and 7.4% (English) more points than their Government School student counterparts. Speed School students scores in English were about 6 times better and for Sidama about 12 times better than student scores in Government Schools. In addition, Speed School Ethiopia also found that former Speed School students who dropped out before completing primary education perform better than government school students who attended the same schools and had also dropped out. In effect, former Speed School student who dropped out of Government Schools still attained higher scores than government school students who had also dropped out.

Previous research has questioned the appropriateness of AEPs making such comparisons arguing that this did not take into account selection issues, such as age differences

³³ The ToC is part of the AEWG’s AE M&E Toolkit

³⁴ See AEWG (2019) *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Toolkit*; UNICEF. (2019). *Every Child Learns: Education Strategy*.

and individual motivations, that might also have influence on differences in outcomes between AE learners and those either remaining out of school or grade-equivalent peers in formal education.³⁵ For this reason, making such comparisons should be treated with caution as there is a risk that either it sets up/reinforces the perception of the non-formal education system being of “higher quality” and in competition with the formal education system; and/or else risks comparing two completely different sub-populations of learners without grounds for such comparison.

Beyond supporting learners’ cognitive development, evidence suggests AEPs can also contribute to the well-being and holistic development of OOSCY. Programmes which assessed and measured a wider set of outcomes—such as educational aspirations, attitude towards formal schools, attitudes towards learning, confidence, diffusion of innovative educational ideas, psychosocial wellbeing, work readiness—identified improvements in these measures for learners across one or more of these domains. A summary of the programmes which measured such outcomes and what they found is specified in Annex 5.

[An assessment of the nature and quality of the evidence on learning outcomes](#)

All programmes reviewed collected and reported on learning outcomes for their students, but the types of assessments used, and the ways in which these outcomes were presented varied as indicated in Annex 4. Several programmes reported cognitive learning improvements using the Early Grades Mathematics and Early Grades Reading Assessments (EGMA and EGRA). Both of these tools, developed by RTI and supported by USAID and the World Bank, have been widely utilised within formal education systems globally over the past 10-15 years as a form of systems benchmarking. The use of EGRA and EGMA specifically, and the ways in which programmes were able to demonstrate their impact on learning are detailed in the text box below.

35 Baxter, P. et al (2016). *Accelerated Education Programs in Crisis and Conflict Literature Review*. USAID: Washington DC.

Use of EGMA and EGRA within AEPs

AEPs that utilised EGRA and EGMA tended to do so to highlight the value added of the programme vis-à-vis particular counterfactual groups and/or baseline data. Some measured the gains made by AEP students after the intervention as compared to their baseline outcomes (e.g. ABE Liberia, Second Chance Liberia), as compared to students who remained out of school (e.g. VAS-Y Fille! Congo), or as compared to that of government school students of the same grade (e.g. STAGES-Afghanistan).

For example, the use of EGMA and EGRA allowed the VAS-Y Fille! evaluation to differentiate the nature of and extent to which the ALP had on its target group. To do so, the VAS-Y Fille! evaluation found that the learners' EGMA scores doubled on average, while EGRA scored increased as much as five times. The programme evaluation concluded that the differential size of impacts between reading and mathematics gains indicated the difficulty of building solid teaching skills in mathematics in AEP compared to French. Thus, EGMA and EGRA enabled evaluators to make clear statements about the area that AEP could best contribute (i.e. literacy) and the effect size of the intervention in terms of literacy and numeracy gains.

STAGES Afghanistan used comparative EGRA and EGMA scores collected at baseline, midline and endline to draw conclusions about the programme's impact on literacy and numeracy achievements vis-à-vis other groups. For example, evaluators found that AEP girls outperformed their government school counterparts in the same grade in reading fluency and numeracy scores. Furthermore, the use of EGRA and EGMA allowed evaluators to track learning outcomes for cohort girls over time. Therefore, evaluators were also able to make conclusions about the improvements AEP made to the girls' reading fluency and mathematics skills longitudinally.

Evaluation reports that utilized and reported on learning outcomes using EGRA and EGMA also tended to report the specific learning outcomes that had the most gains by breaking down EGRA and EGMA results into more specific skillsets, such as reading orientation, letter name knowledge, phoneme awareness, quantity discrimination, and number identification (e.g. Second Chance Liberia, SGEP-T Somalia).

Second Chance Liberia analysed AEP learners' performance in EGRA by subtasks to draw conclusions about the specific skills where greatest gains occurred through the AEP. Reading orientation and letter name knowledge scores improved by 44 and 140 percent respectively, with the greatest improvement in phoneme awareness (a 1414% increase). The evaluators were also able to use an EGRA subtask (high frequency word identification) as a proxy for reading ability and compared the gains of AEP learners in relation to the benchmarks established by MOE, to demonstrate the value added of AEPs.

Speed Schools Uganda justified their use of EGRA and EGMA by defining a learning outcome as "the particular knowledge, skill or behaviour that the learner was expected to exhibit after a period of study", which should "provide information on the particular knowledge (cognitive), skill (motor) or behaviours (affective) that had been acquired by the learners after going through the specified period of instruction" (section 2.6). The evaluators argued that EGRA and EGMA tests are useful for measuring learning outcomes in terms of achievement and competence. Similar to that of Second Chance Liberia, they found that Speed School students outperformed their counterparts from government schools, especially in letter name knowledge and phonemic awareness. In other words, the use of similar instruments (i.e., EGRA and EGMA) might be helpful for meta-analysis of a range of AEPs, especially in terms of the types of basic literacy and numeracy skills which AEPs best support.

Other programmes tended to use their own internal assessments to track progress. These assessments were normally developed or aligned to national curriculum

expectations for the year levels being covered—and were either developed by individual teachers, the programme management team, the implementing partner—oftentimes with approval of formal education authorities. In such circumstances, assessments were typically administered at the end of an AEP cycle, or at the end of the programme, to then make determinations about: (a) whether learners could transition into the formal education system or move to the next level of the programme; and (b) where learners should be placed in the formal education system. Programmes using these assessments felt it supported them to make more informed decisions about transition pathways for individual learners, to ensure that the majority would successfully reintegrate into formal education rather than drop out due to being placed into a level that was either too basic or difficult for their cognitive capacities. For example, although an AEP in Mali had the aim of transitioning its learners into Grade 4 after one year of instruction, placement tests identified that a sizeable number (42.9%) would not be sufficient prepared for to enter into formal school at this level and transferred them instead into Grade 2. This was seen to significantly increase the overall rate of successful reintegration for AEP graduates.³⁶

Several AEPs also relied on teacher or student self-report to measure improvements in learning outcomes. For example, an evaluation of an AEP in DRC Congo, surveyed 143 participants, some of whom were in AEP, some had left AEP and others had never been in AEPs about their perceived capacities in respect to literacy and numeracy skills. They then compared the responses of these three groups of participants to come to the conclusion that “[t]hose who were currently in or had been in an alternative education program were typically able to do basic math, read, and write at least a little, while a quarter and over a third of those who were never in an alternative education program were unable to do math or read and write at all, respectively.”³⁷ Another evaluation from an AEP in South Sudan did not collect data on students’ learning outcomes. Instead, it relied on teacher self-report, such as changes in learner behaviour (e.g. reduction in violence, awareness of early marriage and better hygiene) to report on the learning outcomes of AEP students.³⁸ However, against current AEWG guidance, the use of self-report data alone may not be sufficient in and of itself to assess improvements in learning outcomes.³⁹

Several AEPs used as a counterfactual or comparison the performance of students in formal schools of an equivalent grade level, or otherwise, a “control group” of OOSCY not participating in the AEP to indicate the value-added of students’ performance in their programme. This practice, as commented in the previous section, may not provide an appropriate mechanism for comparison and such analysis should be treated with caution.

36 EDC. (2018). *Learning from an Accelerated Education Program in an Active Conflict Zone: Case Study of USAID/ Mali Education Recovery Support Activity (ERSA)*. Washington D.C: USAID.

37 Seymour, C., Heaner, G., Hartwell, A., & Deacon, G. (2016). *USAID ECCN Alternative Education in the DRC Final Research Report*. Washington D.C: USAID Education in Conflict and Crisis Network.

38 Nicholson, S. (2018). *Evaluation of Oxfam’s Accelerated Education Programme in Greater Ganyiel, South Sudan 2014-2018 Against Global Best Practice*.

39 See AEWG. (2020). *Accelerated Education Programme Monitoring & Evaluation Toolkit*. Available at <https://inee.org/resources/accelerated-education-programme-monitoring-evaluation-toolkit>

Evidence on post-programme outcomes for AE learners

The long-term ambition of AEPs, as specified by the AEWG is to support learners' transition into further education pathways and/or livelihood opportunities. Depending on the structure of the AEP, they often hope to transition learners at some intermediary point in the basic, formal education structure (for example after the end of primary education, or lower primary education), or at the end of basic education where students then enter into secondary education or technical/vocational pathways.

Key findings

Overall, it would appear that **programmes continue to struggle to ensure that AE learners make the transition into the formal education system due to a range of supply and demand-side barriers** noted below.

Supply side barriers	Demand side barriers
Lack of transport to reach government schools/long distance to government schools (STAGES Afghanistan; AEP South Sudan)	Early marriage (STAGES Afghanistan; AEP Uganda; Udaan Nepal)
Insufficient teachers, especially female teachers in formal schools (STAGES Afghanistan; Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Afghanistan)	Learners' age where many are still over-aged to re-enter into upper primary or lower secondary education (STAGES Afghanistan; Speed Schools Ethiopia; AEP Uganda; ECHO INCLUDE Uganda)
Didactic teaching methods and violent learning environment in government schools (Second Chance Liberia)	Continuing barriers of insecurity and poverty (STAGES Afghanistan; Second Chance Liberia; AEP Uganda; NFMSE Myanmar; AEP South Sudan)
Lack of government schools to transition into (ERSA Mali; AEP South Sudan)	Lack of desire to continue education in formal schools (Udaan Nepal; AEP Uganda)
Lack of clear guidelines on how learners from AEPs can transition into the formal education system (Myanmar NFMSE, Lebanon AEP Pilot)	Household chores (Udaan Nepal)
Lack of availability of secondary or vocational education opportunities (STAGES Afghanistan; ECHO INCLUDE Uganda; AEP Uganda)	Cultural and social norms against females attending schools (STAGES Afghanistan; Increasing Access to Basic Education Afghanistan; Udaan Nepal; ECHO Uganda)

On the supply side, one of the key challenges identified in numerous evaluations and research reports are the differences between the AEP learning environment—perceived to be more supportive to the needs of over-aged, marginalised learners—and the formal schooling system as a whole.

Specifically, an evaluation of Speed Schools in Ethiopia found that after transition, more Speed School students repeat (around 69%) compared to other groups of students. The evaluators suggested that this might be related to the challenges of AEP learners adjusting to formal school settings with larger class sizes, didactic approaches to teaching and learning, and government schools' policy of repetition for poor performance or

intermittent dropout.⁴⁰ Similarly, the STAGES Afghanistan evaluation suggested that AEP girls' learning outcomes might be reduced or slowed down after transition into government hub schools without support for the transfer of better teaching skills to government school teachers. Furthermore, without the recruitment of more female teachers into government schools, AEP girls who had transitioned into government hub schools were likely to drop out again due to family concerns.⁴¹ This conclusion echoes ones also reached by the Second Chance Liberia programme where it was noted that corporal punishment in formal schools and overly didactic teaching approaches made AEP students reluctant to attend government schools after transition. Therefore, the report recommended engagement with the Ministry of Education to encourage a positive approach to schooling and learning.⁴² Likewise, another evaluation of an AEP in Uganda specified that without significant investments in formal primary school infrastructure, strong social protection schemes to allow children the capacity to attend school full time, additional teachers and improved teaching conditions, transition 'back' into primary was not a feasible option for most learners who attended the AEP.⁴³

Recognising these issues, **several evaluations identified the need for programmes to make stronger links with formal, government schools to support effective transition of AEP learners—particularly in respect to supply-side constraints.** This included, for example, professional development support for government teachers on inclusive pedagogy and building strong teacher-student relationships.⁴⁴ An additional reason for AEPs to engage in the long-term with addressing both supply and demand side constraints is the risk otherwise, that they become a preferred option to the formal system and help to perpetuate or maintain parallel education provision.⁴⁵ For national contexts where there is not political will or interest to afford diverse schooling options, this is a particularly important consideration.

A few programmes had such engagement with the formal schooling system as part of their approach. The Udaan Nepal programme supported the building of separate toilets for boys and girls in government schools to support girls' participation in education. In a school in Somadi, the Headteacher also reported to evaluators that Udaan had provided them with a water pump to supply water to the toilets. This was seen to help facilitate access, particularly for girls, into formal education in Nepal. AEPs which were co-located in government schools often also contributed materially to them, as a gesture of goodwill, but also cognisant that many AE learners would find themselves in these

40 K., A., Delprato, M., Sabates, R., James, Z., Pryor, J., Westbrook, J., ... A.H., T. (2018). *Speed School Programme in Ethiopia: Tracking the Progress of Speed School Students: 2011-17. Research Report.* Falmer, Brighton, UK: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex.

41 Corboz, J. (n.d.). *Endline GEC Report – Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Educational Success: AKF UK 5147.*

42 Westbrook, J., & Higgins, S. (2019). *Report on the Evaluation of the Quality of the Teaching & Learning in the Second Chance program for Out of School Children in Liberia carried out by the University of Sussex, England.*

43 Save the Children UK. (2019). *Accelerated Education Programming (AEP): Children, Families, Teachers And Educational Stakeholders Experiences Of AEP In Uganda.* London.

44 See K., A., Delprato, M., Sabates, R., James, Z., Pryor, J., Westbrook, J., ... A.H., T. (2018). *Speed School Programme in Ethiopia: Tracking the Progress of Speed School Students: 2011-17. Research Report.* Falmer, Brighton, UK: Centre for International Education, University of Sussex; Corboz, J. (n.d.). *Endline GEC Report – Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Educational Success: AKF UK 5147;* Westbrook, J., & Higgins, S. (2019). *Report on the Evaluation of the Quality of the Teaching & Learning in the Second Chance program for Out of School Children in Liberia carried out by the University of Sussex, England.*

45 This point is discussed in much greater detail in Shah et. al (2017) and Shah (2015).

schools afterwards. For example, ERS Mali constructed one classroom and one block of two latrines, as well as provided classroom furniture and a complete kit of teaching and learning materials for each host school. Paasu Mali also supported students in host schools by acquiring resources such as benches, tables and furniture for all classrooms. When programmes did have such engagement, the general conclusion reached is that this greatly helped to facilitate transition of AE learners by addressing some, but not all, of the key supply side barriers.

Another key supply side issue, connected back to the policy context discussed earlier, is the lack of clear guidelines or procedures on how learners transition from AEPs into formal education. For example, in Myanmar, evaluators noted that children and parents who wished to transition into high school after completing the Non-Formal Middle School –Equivalency Program (NFMSE) could not do so because there was no High School Equivalency Programme. There was also no clear policy statement concerning the recognition of the NFMSE award and the options children had upon completion because the Credit Accreditation Committee had yet to be formed at the time of the evaluation.⁴⁶

Conversely, AEPs which have the capacity to transition learners at intermediary points of the basic education cycle (Grade 4 or Grade 6/7) or which have flexibility in terms of where they can place learners in the formal education system (based on final examination performance) tend to have higher success in seeing learners successfully reintegrate.⁴⁷ Again, this suggests the importance of an enabling policy context, and ongoing dialogue with the formal education system/schools for AEP providers.

No evidence discussed how AEPs were directly supporting formal education systems to address the demand-side constraints specified in the table above. As later sections of this review identify though, in ensuring equitable outcomes for all, and seeking gender transformative solutions, AEPs sometimes address demand-side constraints impacting on learners' access, retention and learning within their programmes. Some of these efforts—such as the establishment of community or parent councils—might have longer-lasting impacts on community attitudes and values towards education, but none of the reviewed programmes explored the impacts of these efforts on demands for formal schooling.

There is more limited evidence available on the medium to long-term transition pathways and outcomes of AEP learners in the formal education. **A few programme evaluations or assessments have identified that AEP learners remain in the formal schooling system if their initial entry into/back into system is well-facilitated.** Specifically:

- Speed Schools Ethiopia found that of all the former Speed School students tracked, about 74.6% were still in school compared to 66.1% of a comparison group of students who were already in government schools from the start of the evaluation. This led the evaluation to conclude that Speed School graduates are more likely to remain in school after transitioning than their counterparts already in the formal system.

⁴⁶ EPRD & Synergia. (2019). *Joint Evaluation of Myanmar Non-Formal Middle School Education-Equivalency Pilot Programme Final Evaluation Report*. UNICEF Myanmar.

⁴⁷ As an example of this, when looking more closely at the SS Uganda programme, which aims to support learners to transition in Grade 4, only 71.1% of completers were eligible to make this transition in the 2017 cohort. However, because completers had the possibility to be transitioned into lower grades (Grades 2 and 3) this led to the transition rate being much higher.

- SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger found that 75.45% of the children who successfully transitioned actually completed a full year in the formal school system.
- Udaan Nepal found that majority of the Udaan graduates (93.41%) transitioned to formal government school, followed by Madrasa (3.66%) and private school (2.93%). Of the 273 transitioned girls, 83.88% of the girls attended school for at least one day during the past year, whereas 16.12% of the girls had never been to school even once during the year. Out of the 273 girls who did attend school, 66.67% were found to continue schooling in the following academic year, while 33.33% of these girls dropped out by the end of the first year following transition.
- In its graduate survey, ALP Iraq found that a great majority (n=239, i.e. 63 %) remained in secondary education, while a smaller number (n=76, around 20 %) were now working.

Some programmes also managed to monitor the academic performance of its former AEP learners following their transition into formal schools. **This majority of available evidence suggests that there are no major differences in the performance of former AEP students compared to other learners in the formal schooling system at the same grade level.** For example, a follow up study of former students from the ERSA Mali programme found that 4.5 months after transfer, graduates who had transferred into Grade 4 performed significantly higher than their formal school counterparts on school tests across all subjects. Likewise, qualitative data from separate AEPs in Liberia and Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger—namely interviews with teachers and head teachers—suggest that AEP graduates were performing as well as their peers across all subjects.⁴⁸

An assessment on the quality and nature of data used to assess transition pathways out of AEPs

Prior studies and reviews of AEPs have found that systematically capturing transition pathways and choices made by programme beneficiaries has been challenging due to a lack of access which programmes have to these learners once they leave the AEP, as well as a lack of tracking of AEP learners within EMIS systems.⁴⁹ Programme M&E systems have typically been geared towards capturing immediate programme outputs and outcomes (enrolments, attainment of certified learning and basic skills, completion), rather than the end-outcome of AEPs. It was found in this review that this issue persists, with **many programmes continuing to not formally report on the percentages of its learners who (re)integrate into further education pathways.**

As Annex 6 suggests, programmes that do report on this key outcome, tend to do so in a range of different ways. Oftentimes 'transition rates' can be inflated by programmes counting transitioned learners as those who are *eligible* to transfer into the formal education system, rather than just counting the learners who actually make this transition. Additionally, programmes with high reported rates of transition tended to use as a denominator the total number of students completing the programme (i.e. total

48 Westbrook, J., & Higgins, S. (2019). *Report on the Evaluation of the Quality of the Teaching & Learning in the Second Chance program for Out of School Children in Liberia carried out by the University of Sussex, England*; Kebede, T. A. (2018). Strømme Foundation's Speed School Program in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger Evaluation Report; Dillon, A., Traore, L., & Tomaselli, N. (n.d.). *Évaluation D'impact Du Projet Stratégie Dé Scolarisation Accéléérée*. New Haven, Connecticut: Innovations for Poverty Action.

49 See Shah (2015) and Baxter et. al. (2016)

number of learners eligible for transition), rather than the total size of the programme cohort (number of programme enrollees).

The lack of consistency on the presentation of these data is ideally something which will be rectified as AEPs begin to utilise the AEWG's Accelerated Education M&E Toolkit to capture and calculate transition rates in a standardised way.

Equity considerations: Do these impacts vary?

One of the key justifications for AEP provision in countries around the world is that such programmes provide meaningful, flexible, quality learning experiences for children and youth who might otherwise lack access to such opportunity. In other words, AEPs are viewed as an important vehicle for addressing the needs of hard to reach learners, both in humanitarian contexts and other settings, and providing them with validated and accredited non-formal learning pathways.

The above sections presented evidence on cumulative impacts of the AEPs across the programmes' entire population of beneficiaries. This section explores the degree to which evidence exist of the specific benefits for sub-populations of learners who may face disadvantage because of their sex, socio-economic status, lifestyle, or location. Identifying this level of disaggregation is important not only to assess whether and how AEPs might be an important lever for addressing the needs of marginalised learners, but also because prior studies have identified that often, programmes have not explored equity-based indicators sufficiently.⁵⁰ In light of this, the AEWG in its recently released [AEP M&E Toolkit](#) has included in it a series of recommended equity indicators in respect to access, retention, completion and transition rates for AE learners by gender, disability, displacement status, or other relevant factors.

Key findings

Most programmes tended to disaggregated output and outcome level indicators for their activities by gender, as Annex 7 suggests. Some notable trends and patterns observed across the evidence review include the following:

- Females, and particularly older females, are more prone to leaving the AEPs prematurely (i.e. drop out or fail to transition from one level to another) or failing to transition to formal schools due to increasing responsibilities they hold in the family. For example, ECHO INCLUDE Uganda found that transition from AEP into secondary school is particularly low for female learners, with only about 2 in 10 transitions into secondary school being made by a female learner. Female learners in AEP Levels I and II were two times more likely to drop out from education than male learners in the same classes. Family and household responsibilities were cited as the main reason for why females dropped out. Similarly, Udaan Nepal found that the maximum retention in age for female

⁵⁰ See Shah (2015) and Baxter et. al. (2016)

learners was below 14 years and dropout increased significantly as the girls grew older than this age. Udaan Nepal suggested that this might be because of girls' increasing responsibilities in the family.

- Males appear to outperform females in regard to cognitive skills and abilities, often reflecting a differential starting position between male and female learners on entry into the AEP. For example, SSA/P Mali reported on average, the score obtained by boys is higher than that of girls in French. The scores obtained for SSA/P children in French were -0.58 standard deviations for boys and -0.62 for girls initially, but in the final survey these scores were 0.02 and 0.04 respectively. Thus, SSA/P boys still outperformed girls, but girls had caught up with boys to a large extent. Similarly, Second Chance reported that boys' mean scores across all EGRA and EGMA tasks were higher than the girls at baseline and endline. INCLUDE ECHO Uganda also reported that on average boys performed better than girls in assessments of learners' literacy, and numeracy competencies. At the highest level of numeracy competence, of the 30.1% of participants demonstrating competence at this level, 40.6% were male whereas only 22.7% were female. Similarly, 10.4% of female participants were able to attain the highest level of literacy competence, versus 24.1% of male participants.

Given these trends, the importance of programmes taking into account gender responsive and transformative actions proves even more vital—a matter which is discussed in more detail in the next section of this report.

[An assessment on current AEP approaches to disaggregating and reporting on outcomes](#)

Across the evidence and research reviewed, disaggregation of key AEP indicators by the gender, socio-economic status, disability status or other demographic features of the learner population varied significantly, as indicated in Annex 7. Most commonly, programmes disaggregated by gender, but less so by other demographic characteristics.

While some programmes captured other demographic characteristics besides gender to profile the background of their AEP learners, few undertook analysis of differential impacts in outcomes because of these factors. Often this was due to the fact that beneficiary populations were not large enough to disaggregate data at multiple levels. Instead, the impact of characteristics like household SES, age on entry, etc. were often described anecdotally—with students who started AEPs at an older age, and from poorer households identified as more likely to be identified as struggling to complete and transition out of the AEP but with little hard evidence to back such claims.

Addressing and changing gender norms through AE programming

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:

- Often, gender-related challenges/barriers intersect with the wider political, educational and socio-economic context (household poverty, pastoralism, insecurity) and tend to disproportionately effect female learners in many contexts which AEPs operate.
- AEPs are increasingly demonstrating gender sensitivity in their programme designs and approaches, and acting to address barriers precluding female learners from accessing, attending and completing AEPs through a range of gender responsive actions. Most programmes measure the success of these efforts by whether they have managed to achieve gender parity in their enrolment numbers.
- Fewer AEPs demonstrate a sustained commitment to gender transformative action. Where this is done, it is mainly centred on reshaping teacher and learning practices and community perceptions and beliefs around the value of educating girls in their community. The impacts of these actions are still poorly measured and assessed and rarely feature as an outcome in themselves for AEPs.

Background

This review was also tasked with exploring the degree to which AEPs can effectively address entrenched gendered norms and behaviours which impact on male and female children and youth entering into and remaining in education by adopting gender-transformative approaches. As the previous section of the report identifies, while AEPs can be an effective approach for reaching out of school children and youth, there are still significant gender-based barriers, particularly for females in many contexts. The concept of gender transformative programming suggests a need to explore how programmes are addressing the root causes of such barriers and working to transform harmful gender roles, norms and power relations.

The *Guide to the AE Principles* focusses on having AEPs being gender sensitive and responsive, but not necessarily transformative in their actions. In prior research on AEPs, Baxter et al. (2016) found a small proportion of AEPs as having considered gender sensitivity in their programming. Programmes that considered gender sensitivity generally took these approaches in their programming: modelling gender-sensitive behaviour and awareness; targeting female learners and/or teachers; mandating gender quotas in learner and teacher recruitment, ensuring girl-friendly schools. Of the few AEPs that incorporated gender-sensitive programming in the curriculum to mitigate gender stereotypical roles, none evaluated the outcomes of such programmes and few monitored the gendered experience of schooling (Baxter et al., 2016; Shah, 2015). This present evidence review seeks to further investigate, what, if anything has changed in relation to the findings of these past meta-analyses/reviews of AEPs on a global scale.

Findings

Many programmes identified a range of barriers or issues in the context which precluded girls from attending, remaining and completing the AE programme, and transitioning into further schooling. This recognition was strong evidence of **AE programmes, on the whole, having improved in respect to demonstration of gender sensitivity in their planning and approaches**. A summary of the challenges which programmes identified and the responses which followed is provided in Annex 8.

There were however, a few AEPs which failed to have specific programming strategies targeted at responding to gender-specific challenges or barriers, despite the fact that this is strongly advocated for in the *10 Principles of Effective AE Practice*.⁵¹ For example, evaluators critiqued ECY El Salvador for its gender-blind approach, noting that “activities that involved gender were limited to promoting equal participation” and “no analysis was made of gender gaps in participation, why they occurred, and whether gender equality was the best approach.”⁵² Even though girls were not excluded from participation in school learning or extra-curricular activities, evaluators argued that a gender-blind approach might overlook structural constraints to female students’ participation and thus, the inclusivity claims made by schools were likely to be overstated.

51 For example, Principle 3, which focusses on the AE learning environment and the need for it to “inclusive, safe and learning ready” demands that all AEPs develop appropriate strategies to achieve this, for male and female learners, as well as other groups who might not feel included otherwise.

52 USAID. (2017). *Mid-Term Performance Evaluation For Education For Children And Youth Activity 2011-2017*. Washington DC: USAID, p. 35.

One observation which surfaced from a review of programme documentation is that identified gender-related challenges/barriers are not always so clearly “gendered”. Often, they are connected to broader political, educational and socio-economic challenges that also affect boys—issues as poverty, poor quality teaching, inability to speak the language of instruction, insecurity and distance from AEP centres. Nonetheless, **the intersectional nature of vulnerability was found to disproportionately effect female learners more than males in several AEPs**, as specified in brief below.

Household poverty

SOMGEP-T Somalia found poverty to be a major predictor of underperformance for ALP girls. Three key proxies of household poverty were significant predictors of lower learning outcomes amongst this population—more so than their male counterparts. Specifically, girls whose caretakers reported that the members of their household go to sleep hungry most days, often go without clean water, and often go without needed medical attention had lower literacy and numeracy scores (with literacy scores being lower to a statistically significant degree for all three poverty proxies). Thus, important variations in household economic distress can further impede the learning of girls who are already at risk because of their sex.

Similarly, STAGES Afghanistan identified poverty as a barrier to girls’ school enrolment at baseline, and midline results indicated that poverty continues to be a barrier to girls’ school enrolment. At baseline, household inability to meet basic needs impacted negatively on girls’ enrolment. The midline findings were consistent with these baseline findings. The qualitative data suggested that poverty interacted with a number of other barriers, including requirements to purchase schoolbooks and other resources, and pay school fees. STAGES Afghanistan found that the provision of free classes and school learning resources (e.g. books, notebooks, school bags, pencils and pens) was an important enabler of girls’ enrolment, particularly for poor families. This action was in direct response to feedback from community members with children in government schools who identified that a lack of affordable school resources (including books, pens, uniforms etc.) was a strong barrier to sending girls to school and a key reason for poor families being unable to enrol their girls.

Pastoralism

Evidence from Somalia suggests that pastoralism poses further challenges to girls’ success in an AEP. SOMGEP-T Somalia reported that several proxies of pastoralist lifestyle were strong predictors of lower learning outcomes. Girls with heads of household who reported their profession as being pastoralist, as well as girls belonging to households that own camels (a proxy for an itinerant/pastoralist lifestyle) had literacy and numeracy scores that were significantly lower than average. Ownership of medium-sized livestock is also predictive of lower learning outcomes (to a statistically significant degree for numeracy). SOMGEP-T Somalia concluded that these findings provide strong evidence that pastoralism is associated with ALP girls having lower learning outcomes.

Insecurity

Increasing access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Afghanistan reported that the security situation is gender biased, noting that when learning centres came under attack, girls’ education was targeted more commonly than boys, with attacks on girls’ only centres accounting for around 40 per cent of all attacks, and mixed centres accounting for another 32 per cent of the total attacks on schools. In other words, insecurity has a disproportionate impact on girls rather than boys in the context of Afghanistan’s AEPs.

Most often, **AEPs undertook gender responsive actions and initiatives to attempt to redress these issues, often in line with guidance noted in the *Guide to the Accelerated Education Principles*.** Such actions included:

- Affording flexibility in terms of the timetabling and location of AEP activities to accommodate the constraints facing girls from attending classes;
- Provision of gender-appropriate and separate latrines and sanitary materials;
- Employment of female teachers and centre leaders;
- Establishment of gender-segregated classes; and
- Establishment of clear codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms for violations against learners of any kind;

Evidence collected by programmes suggests that **gender responsive measures were perceived to facilitate and enable increased recruitment and enrolment of female learners, as well as improved retention of these learners throughout the course of the programme.**

At the same time, several programmes also identified that enacting some of these gender-responsive actions were longer-term priorities—particularly the recruitment of female educators—given the lack of suitably qualified human resource in target communities. Nonetheless, programmes pursued such strategies in the belief they could serve as a valuable long-term contribution to the education system as a whole.

Fewer programmes made a commitment to gender transformative actions which sought to challenge discriminatory practices, policies, beliefs, values and norms which stand in the way of gender equity goals. Those that did often sought to address and transform gendered norms, behaviours, and practices both within the learning environment itself (though teacher training and curriculum reform), and the wider community (aiming to shift community beliefs and attitudes). Examples of action taken, and the impacts of such action are discussed more in the next section.

Assessing the impacts of gender-sensitive, responsive and transformative action

For most AEPs, **the impacts of gender responsive or transformative actions were often assessed in regard to whether it then helped to increase overall enrolments of female learners in the programme**, particularly when striving for gender equity within the programme (i.e. 50% of enrolments being female learners). Often, however, such claims were made without presentation of a counterfactual—namely what the enrolment figures would have been had there not been gender responsive actions undertaken. Additionally, evidence was often presented as a programme output (numbers of female learners enrolled) rather than an outcome (% increase in female enrolment as a result of a specific set of responses).

A much smaller portion of AEPs went beyond this to look at how such actions to address gender-based barriers had impacts on learner retention, transition and learning outcomes, and more broadly wider norms, beliefs and values.

SOMGEP-T Somalia was one of the few projects that included positive shifts on gender and social norms at the community and individual level as one of its key outcomes. Some

of the actions taken by SOMGEP-T Somalia to shift gender norms included: engaging community-level stakeholders including religious leaders, women's groups, men and boys; developing girls' leadership and mentorship skills; providing adult literacy and financial literacy classes for mothers; and supporting the financial empowerment of mothers through savings groups (VSLA), business selection, and business coaching and mentoring. The programme used both quantitative and qualitative data to examine shifts in gender norms. For the quantitative survey, SOMGEP-T Somalia measured caregivers' perceptions on the worth of girls' education, as well as head teachers' perceptions on the likelihood of community support for girls' vs boys' school fees from baseline to midline. The findings indicated positive change from baseline to midline, but qualitative interview participants across groups still mentioned early marriage, pregnancy, prioritization of boys' education over girls' education, and absence during menstruation as unique barriers girls face to enrolling in, attending, staying in, or succeeding in school. SOMGEP-T Somalia also drew on household data from its midline and endline assessments to argue that that social gender norms around the roles of women in Afghan society were changing as migration and conflict drove more women to take up new roles in society. This shift in gender norms was reflected in higher proportion of female heads of household, though a variety of factors still limited girls' interest in school and coloured adults' perceptions of the importance of their education.

STAGES Afghanistan also attempted to track shifts in wider gender-based attitudes, behaviours and values through an output indicator that measured the percentage of men who expressed support about their female relatives leaving the home to go to school, courses, employment or meetings. The midline data fell short of the targeted 92%, with 90.60% of the men surveyed expressing support about their female relatives (mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters) leaving the home to go to school, courses, employment or meetings. At endline, STAGES Afghanistan concluded that although perceptions of women's and girls' roles were changing, gender stereotypes had not shifted accordingly. At baseline and midline, STAGES asked male heads of households, female carers and cohort girls about their agreement with the statement 'it is women's and girls' right to be educated'. A very high proportion of respondents agreed with the statement at baseline (90.2% of men, 94.4% of women and 97.5% of girls). At midline, agreement had increased slightly for men (90.6%) but decreased for women (91.4%) and girls (93.8%). When only analysing re-contacted baseline households, and disaggregating data by type of community intervention, slightly lower proportions of men, women and girls agreed at midline that it is women's and girls' right to be educated, particularly in CBE communities.



Recommendations on ways forward

Building on the findings and key issues raised from previous sections of the report, this section provides an overview of what the authors recommend as a way forward from both a programming and evidence-generation/advocacy dimension.

Policy context

The review's findings highlight the **importance of AEPs engaging more directly with formal schools and systems into which AE learners eventually (re)enter**. Implementing partners of AEPs should be working to collectively shape and inform the national policy context, to ensure gaps and issues in respect to AEP policy implementation are addressed in coordination with national education stakeholders and the donor community.

For example, a pilot of a large-scale AEP in Lebanon recommended that an AEP operating manual be developed in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The evaluators suggested that the manual included a clear coordination strategy with all educational partners, all AEP-relevant data, referral pathways and certification processes, an agreed upon timeline to ensure timely information dissemination, a clear plan for the supply and delivery of educational materials. They argued that such inclusive policy making process supports the post-conflict transition to sustainable sector development.⁵³ In Uganda, district education officers interviewed as part of an AEP recommended that modalities of alternative education be better incorporated in education policy documents and guidelines, so that interagency coordination in education could be improved.⁵⁴

At the same time, **it is important to better understand policy contexts which are seen to be enabling for effective AE outcomes, and where national education systems appear to be taking greater ownership and responsibility for alternative education programming**. In Latin America, in particular, as well as the Middle East region, there appear to be numerous examples of where this is the case. The evidence available and reviewed in this exercise was insufficient to an in-depth investigation of this topic, and warrants further follow up, particularly if AEPs are to be situated as a key response in both humanitarian and more developmental contexts.

A long-term view for the AE community should be to see AEPs more integrated within national education systems, and with stronger ownership, management and oversight by national educational authorities for effective AE provision. A key first step is to understand what opportunities and challenges exist to move towards this vision. Building on the 2018 mapping of the inclusion of AEPs within National Education Strategic Plans, the AEWG should lead more research and analysis on the wider political economy in which such commitments are made, and how this influences national and local-level will and capacity to seeing AEPs meaningfully embedded within the education systems of countries with high numbers of OOSCY.

Supporting equitable AE outcomes and effective transition pathways

What the evidence suggests is that for AEPs to have sufficient reach to provide educational opportunity to hundreds of thousands of OOSCY globally on an annual basis, programming should strive to be fully embedded within national education systems and run and managed in a way which is scalable. As long as AEPs remain the purview of non-

53 Aziz, C. R. (2017). *A Window of Hope: Accelerated Learning Program Pilot Evaluation*. Ministry of Education and Higher Education & UNICEF.

54 Save the Children UK. (2019). *Accelerated Education Programming (AEP): Children, Families, Teachers And Educational Stakeholders Experiences Of AEP In Uganda*. London.

government partners, there will be limited ability for them to sufficiently address the tens of millions of other OOSCY who remain without access to certificated learning and who might be eligible to participate in an AEP. An initial step in this respect is to **identify examples of how and where AEPs are working in ways which establish or leverage off of strong linkages between the nonformal and formal education system—both for the purposes of effectively supporting learner transitions, and to assess ways in which AEPs can influence the national education system more widely.**

AEPs appear to be a powerful vehicle for acting to reshape entrenched community values, attitudes and beliefs on gender roles and responsibilities and to facilitate improved opportunities for female learners. Despite the growing evidence base on the range of gender-responsive and transformative approaches being undertaken by AEPs, there is still a lack of sufficient data on how such efforts impact on gendered norms and values. **A need remains to explore how AEPs can be designed, implemented and assessed in ways that serve the purposes of gender transformative programming.** This requires both the conduct of case and research studies of successful programmes, as well as improved guidance on measuring such outcomes within AEPs based on the work of programmes where this is already occurring.

Given the significant variation in how drop out, transition and enrolment data are reported from programme to programme, **there is a critical need for AEPs to be introduced to, and better utilising standard indicators and measures for reporting on AEP outcomes using the recently released AEP M&E Toolkit.** This will allow in the medium to long term for a better comparison of outcomes across programmes, as well as the more systematic collation of the scale and reach of AEPs on a global scale.

There also remain a number of “blind” spots when it comes to the ways in which AE outcomes are presently reported. In regards to learning outcomes, the focus in most programmes on reporting on acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills appears to have come at the expense of **measuring a wider range of outcomes which AEPs might strive for—including psychosocial well-being, life skill acquisition, social emotional competencies, readiness for work, and general self-confidence/self-efficacy—to name a few.** This could be rectified with greater direction, examples and measures provided by the AEWG on how programmes can do this. Additionally, while gender-disaggregated analysis and reporting of AE outcomes is commonplace, other forms of reporting are not, even when they may be appropriate. Again, the importance of undertaking such forms of analysis should be stressed by the AEWG.

A need remains of examples of AEPs where there is a recognition and expectation that learners will not transition into further formal education but will instead pursue livelihood opportunities or seek out technical/vocational education. **Efforts should be made to identify and write up case studies of AEPs where transitions into non-educational pathways are the main focus based on the AEWG Mapping Exercise conducted at the end of 2019.**

Lastly, caution should be exercised when data on AE learners are compared to learners in the formal education system—given that in many ways they are a discrete population with distinct characteristics. **Further guidance on the challenges and limitations of making such forms of comparisons should be outlined explicitly** by the AEWG with clear stipulation on when such comparative exercises may be warranted or not.

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Annex 1: Summary of AEPs reviewed

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
El Salvador	EDUCAME El Salvador	Adults and youth over the age of 15 who did not finish secondary education or the third cycle of basic education	To provide all over-age students in high school with the opportunity to study intensively and graduate in a shorter period of time	ECY seeks to reintegrate OSY back into a formal school setting in support of the Government of El Salvador's education program EDUCAME, which offers six flexible modalities for OSY from 11 years of age to continue their formal schooling outside of the traditional education system. Students can complete the third cycle of basic education in 18 months, or lower secondary education in 12 months, rather than the normal three or two years, respectively.
The Philippines	ALS The Philippines	Out-of-school youth and adults who are basically independent learners but did not complete the formal elementary or junior high school levels	To provide out-of-school youth and adults with a qualification	ALS consists of the basic literacy program (BLP) and the accreditation and equivalency (A&E) programs, which are often accompanied with contextualized livelihood skills training. In principle, ALS programs are open to anyone who meets the eligibility condition, which is the age restriction at entry. These programs are carried out in a span of ten months in a year. But in order to earn the official certificates that are equivalent to the formal schools, they are required to pass the national A&E exam, which is offered once a year. With the official A&E certificates, ALS learners are able to pursue further education including junior and senior high schools, post-secondary technical and vocational education, or formal sector employment, which requires junior secondary education completion.
Kenya	AEP Kenya	Children aged 10-17 who have either never been to school or had their education interrupted.	To increase access for out-of-school and overage children and youth	The program utilizes the Kenyan NFE national curriculum and condenses eight years of primary school curriculum into four. The AEP segregates the Standards 1-4 of the Kenyan NFE curriculum into L1A and L1B. Learners take the annual national exams with the goal of integrating them, when ready, into the formal school system. Students who are considered not age-appropriate for the grade level will continue with the AEP.

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Mali	ERSA Mali	Out-of-school children aged 8 to 12 years	To reintegrate out-of-school children into the formal education system through a two-year Accelerated Education Program (AEP) in AEP Centers attached to formal schools and to provide basic education, life skills, and livelihood training out-of-school youth	ERSA's objective is to provide an educational program for over-age children who have been completely denied education or who dropped out of school due to conflict or other factors to help them integrate into formal school. The program seeks to reach all eligible children, ages 8–12, for enrollment in AE Level 1. The Level 2 curriculum is designed for children aged 12 years or older who successfully pass the transfer test to grade 4 after Level 1 but are over-aged to enter this grade. Older children (12–14) can be given the opportunity to enter the 2nd AEP level without having completed the 1st AEP level. These children should be 12 years or older, have recently returned to their village, and dropped out of grade 3 or 4. The curriculum focuses on essential skills in language arts, mathematics, and living together. In order to address the trauma and risk experienced by students, Living Together activities (which focus on social-emotional learning and development of resilience) comprise one third of the instructional time.
	Paasu Mali	Children aged 9 to 12 who have dropped out of school due to conflict, displacement or the destruction of schools.	To facilitate pupils to re-enter formal schools and return to their studies	The program was developed and adapted to the context of emergency and instability in Mali. In addition to the regular tests, students will take a test organized by representatives of the Ministry of Education to enable them to pass in the 3rd year of the first cycle. Those who do not pass will be put in the second year.

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Uganda	ECHO INCLUDE Uganda	Conflict-affected, over-age and out of school children (host and refugee)	Provide opportunity for conflict-affected children to learn and develop their potential in inclusive and protective education in emergencies (EiE) systems	The AEP in Uganda condenses the seven years of Primary Education into three years and adopts accelerated learning techniques to support children to achieve the primary leavers' certificate. The Action's purpose is for conflict affected children (host and refugee) in West Nile and Western Uganda to receive quality accelerated education, be protected and have increased personal wellbeing.
	AEP Uganda	Adolescent children between 10 and 19 years of age	To help out-of-school children transfer back into the formal primary school system	AEP Uganda focuses on condensing the primary education cycle into three levels, with the option of taking the primary leaving certificate on completion of Level three. AEP condenses primary education into three levels. In theory, at the end of each cycle, children can transfer back into the formal primary school system. In the formal primary system in Uganda, Grades 1 to 3 are taught in mother tongue, and 4 to 7 in English.
	Speed School Uganda	Former school dropouts who had been out of school for a minimum of two consecutive years from the time of admission to the speed school program and those who had never enrolled in school at all	To prepare out-of-school children for reintegration into the formal education system	The program compresses Uganda's official Primary One to Primary Three curriculum into nine calendar months. At the end of this period, those who attain the required competencies are then reabsorbed (or, for many, absorbed for the first time) into the mainstream school system.

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Myanmar	NFMSE Myanmar	Non-formal primary education achievers and out-of-school children in Middle School education aged 13 and above	Provide non-formal middle school education to out-of-school children aged 13 and above	NFMSE is designed to provide equivalent education to middle school level.
	INSPIRE Myanmar	Out-of-school children	To enable out-of-school children to be enrolled and retained in primary education programmes	Inspire is a competency-based modularised curriculum. The curriculum has two levels, each with two modules and designed to allow children to move in an out of studying to meet their working demands. For example, once they had completed a module, they could break for work such as the harvesting season, and then continue on to the next module.
Nepal	Udaan Nepal	Girls between the age of 10-14 years who have either never been to school or dropped out	To encourage more girls of the poorest, most vulnerable and socially excluded families in Nepal to complete grades 5, 6 & 7	Udaan Nepal offers an opportunity for girls, especially from poor and socially excluded communities such as dalits, to get back to the formal education system, which they have missed out on due to various social and economic barriers. Girls, aged 10-14 years, complete their primary education in 12 months. Through the Udaan approach, the girls are facilitated for 12 months at the Udaan school, then they attend the Grade 5 examinations, and based on the performance in the examination, they receive enrolment at Grade 4, 5, 6, or even 7 at community schools – thereby become part of mainstream formal education. Subjects like Nepali, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies which are taught at the primary schools of community schools were taught at the Udaan centers.
Pakistan	CHAON Pakistan	Out of school children aged 9-12 years primarily from marginalized communities	To improve and adjust the current curriculum making it relevant to local needs and contextualizing the needs for primary certification	The project established ALCs with a target of three years to pull out children from the hazardous labor providing them with flexible hours of learning. These ALCs operate in second shifts at the government school facilities

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Niger/ Burkina Faso/Mali	Speed School Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger	Out-of-school children between 8-12 years old	To provide educational opportunities for out-of-school children and to provide learners the opportunity to enroll at 3 rd or 4 th grade level; and eventually complete primary school within the formal system.	The Speed School program is a nine-month intervention designed to provide access to education for out-of-school children (OOSC) aged 8-12 and enable them to enrol in a local school to complete their primary education. The condensed curriculum covers the first three years of primary education, and teaching is provided in a temporary school to groups with an average size of 25 learners. Upon completing the program, children are able to enrol in grade 4 of formal primary schools. Children are taught to read and write in their local language during the first two months, and then continue with an accelerated curriculum in French.
	SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger	Children aged 8 to 12, not in school or early school leavers.	To provide a second chance to children who have never been to school and whose age no longer allows them, and to children who are prematurely excluded from the education system	SSA/P teaching program condenses 1st to the 3rd year of primary education. The mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction during the first two months, then French is used for the next 7 months, or 9 months of lessons in total corresponding to the normal school year of the fundamental. The transfer of learners to a conventional school is done in a nearby host school or in any other school at the request of the parents. It is based on the results of the end-of-year evaluation. Children are transferred either to 3rd or 4th year of primary school based on the averages obtained at the end of the year.
Sierra Leone	AEP Sierra Leone	Overage, OOS children aged between 10-16	To support out of school, overage children between 10-16 to complete primary school in 3 years instead of 6 and to acquire functional literacy and numeracy	AE level 1 and 2 curricula are condensed and competency based, focusing on literacy and numeracy.
Somalia	SOMGEP-T Somalia	Out of school girls and students who are unable to/ do not wish to attend formal secondary school		ALP offers out of school girls and students who are unable to or do not wish to attend formal secondary school with an alternative option, thereby encouraging them to remain in school. The program focuses in part on developing life skills relevant to the job market.

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Ethiopia	Speed School Ethiopia	Out-of-school children between 9-14 years old	To improve individual learning by seeking not only faster learning but also deeper and more effective learning	The Speed School program provides opportunity for primary school-aged out-of-school children between the ages of 9 to 14 to be reintegrated into government schools after ten months of accelerated learning instruction. Students who have dropped out from government primary schools prior to having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills, and a few others, who had never entered school are selected to undertake an intensive basic literacy and numeracy program for 10 months.
South Sudan	AEP South Sudan	Children and youth aged 12-18 who have enrolled in lower primary classes, dropped out or could not access education	To provide an alternative way for adolescent girls and boys in South Sudan who are out of school to access education.	The project implements the MoGEI ALP which targets children and youth aged 12-184 who have enrolled in lower primary classes, dropped out or could not access education. It uses a condensed form of the primary curriculum so learners can complete the primary cycle in four years instead of eight. Learners can join their age appropriate grade or complete up to level 4 (L4) and take the South Sudan Primary Leavers Certificate examination and go on to secondary school.
Iraq	ALP Iraq	Over-age out-of-school children between the ages of 12-18, particularly girls, who had dropped out of primary school or never enrolled, in many cases due to the disruptions caused by war and civil unrest		Under this programme, the usual formal primary education cycle (6 years) was condensed into a shorter period (3 years), thus offering aspiring learners a flexibility that suited their specific contexts. After completion, it enabled them to engage in secondary and continuing general education, post-primary technical and vocational and education and training (TVET), or work where a minimum of knowledge and skills – i.e. at least literacy and numeracy – was required.

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Lebanon	ALP Lebanon	Children aged 9-17 who have missed two years or more of formal schooling, or who have never been to school	To support reintegration into the formal education system and access certified learning in Lebanon	<p>The curriculum is a condensed version of the Lebanese curriculum designed by the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD). It is a learner-centered approach to teaching the core subjects: Arabic, French or English, mathematics, science (life science, chemistry and physics for grades 7-9), with additional life skills and psychosocial support modules.</p> <p>The ALP offers nine curriculum levels, each of which corresponds to one of the nine grade levels of the Lebanese basic education system. When the child reaches the age-appropriate level, he/she will be (re)absorbed into formal education. All successful learners receive a MEHE-issued certificate that allows them to enter the appropriate grade in a second- shift school.</p>
Liberia	Advancing Youth Liberia	Youth between 13 and 35 years of age and have little (primary school level) to no literacy.	Increased access to quality alternative basic education services, social and leadership development, and livelihoods for youth and young adults, aged 13-35 who are un- schooled or out of school and have no or marginal literacy and numeracy skills.	<p>The ABE course consists of three levels aligned with the MoE's national primary education curriculum, with each level designed to take one academic year. Level 1 is designed for learners with no literacy, and by graduation from Level 3, learners will have attained a sixth-grade level of education and have the potential to enter into Junior Secondary School at completion. The ABE curriculum is standards-based. To ensure equivalency and to support learners in transitioning to formal school, the ABE curriculum was aligned to the MoE's formal primary school curriculum.</p>
	Second Chance Liberia	Poor rural children between ages 8-12 from the most marginalised communities who dropped out of school over two years previously or have never been to school	90% of students will transition to a local partner 'Link' government school at Grade 3 or 4	<p>The Second Chance program was adapted from the Ethiopian Speed School program for the very different post-conflict context of Liberia, starting in 2016-17. It gives poor rural children between ages 8-12 from the most marginalised communities who dropped out of school over two years previously or have never been to school the opportunity to catch up through an accelerated learning model.</p>

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Afghanistan	STAGES Afghanistan	Girls aged above 10 who have never enrolled in any type of formal school through ALP classes	To provide education for OOS girls living in rural communities that are far from the nearest government school and aged above 10 who cannot enrol in grade one of government schools due to MOE policy, with the aim of completing grade six by the end of project implementation and thus prepare them to join lower-secondary grades in government schools	Girls enrol in ALP classes progress through an accelerated cycle of two grades per year, with the aim of completing grade six by the end of project implementation. Although STAGES primarily targets girls, boys are also enrolled in a large proportion of CBE communities in either mixed-gender classes or boys' classes.
	Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme Afghanistan	Children between 10-15 years of age who were never in school or who had dropped out in remote communities	To provide primary education opportunities to Out of School Children (OOSC) from 10 provinces and deprived districts	ALCs are available to girls and boys between 10-15 years to be able to complete their primary school cycle in three instead of six years. ALCs cover an accelerated learning process for primary education (grades 1-6) delivered in three years. In some circumstances, the ALCs have provided extensions up to 8th grade and the new CBE policy provides for the option of ALCs covering up to 12th grade in special circumstances.

Country	Name of programme	Target group	Aims of programme	Basic details
Democratic Republic of Congo	AEP Congo	Children who have not entered the formal schooling system by the time they are 6 or 7, and youth dropouts between 9-14 years old so that they may re-enter formal secondary schooling	To provide a safety net for the young people who fall out of the formal system	AEPs allow young people to complete the primary education cycle in a reduced number of years. The national curriculum for accelerated primary education, known as the Programme National de Rattrapage Scolaire (PNRS), is based on the formal school curriculum but compresses six years of primary schooling into three. After completing accelerated primary schooling, students can sit the national exam held at the end of primary school and, if successful, an AEP student can enter formal secondary school as long as she or he will complete the process before age 24. Alternately, AEP students may enter a formal professional-training or nonformal skills-training program. Children from 15 years of age (and not older than 24 years) who are too old to enter the formal education system can access a three-year literacy training that will support their subsequent engagement in a professional training program.
	VAS-Y Fille! Congo	Over-age, out-of-school girls.	Provide OOS girls with access to quality non-formal education opportunities	The three-year course represents a government-accredited “compressed” version of the primary school curriculum, designed to prepare 9-15 year old children to take the national end-of-primary exam, which, if passed, would allow them to enrol into secondary school.

Annex 2: Enrollment numbers for AEPs

Programme (and country)	Total number of OOSCY or overaged children enrolled	Total number of OOSCY or overaged children within the context ⁵⁵	Percentage of the total OOSCY or overaged children supported through the AEP
EDUCAME EI Salvador	50,203 ⁵⁶	155,963 ⁵⁷	32.2
ALS The Philippines	840,521 ⁵⁸	6.58 million ⁵⁹	12.8
ECY EI Salvador	15,643 ⁶⁰	155,963 ⁶¹	10.03
INSPIRE Myanmar	40,713	456,947 ⁶²	8.91
AEP Congo	456, 219	7 million	6.52
ALP Lebanon	5,854	90,000	6.50
Advancing Youth Liberia	22,902	741,180	3.09
SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger	108,033	6,108,463 ⁶³	1.77
Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme Afghanistan	42,820	3.7 million	1.16

55 Based on numbers provided by the evaluation report, unless stated otherwise.

56 This number is based on the total number of students enrolled in EDUCAME modalities in 2016 and include all six modalities. EDUCAME offers six “flexible modalities” for OSY from 11 years of age to continue their formal schooling outside of the traditional education system. Of these six flexible modality offerings, ECY supports the traditional distance, semi face-to-face, night, and sufficiency test modalities.

57 Based on UIS 2018 data.

58 The age range of participants enrolled in ALS is very wide, because ALS accepts learners of all ages. Rounds of the past ALS surveys revealed that ALS programs are predominantly appealing to the younger population who are under age 30 particularly. The number presented here is based on an estimated number of out-of-school-youth-and-adults (OSYA) aged 16-30 enrolled in ALS (The World Bank, 2019).

59 This is based on the number of OSYA aged 16-30 presented in the report (The World Bank, 2019).

60 The total number is for 2016 and only include four ECY flexible modality courses (USAID, 2017). Of the six flexible modality offerings offered by the EI Salvador government, ECY supports four: traditional distance, semi face-to-face, night, and sufficiency test modalities.

61 Based on UIS 2018 data.

62 Based on data reported in EPRD & Synergia. (2019). *Joint Evaluation of Myanmar Non-Formal Middle School Education-Equivalency Pilot Programme Final Evaluation Report*. UNICEF Myanmar.

63 Total number of OOSCY in the three countries given in UIS.

Programme (and country)	Total number of OOSCY or overaged children enrolled	Total number of OOSCY or overaged children within the context ⁵⁵	Percentage of the total OOSCY or overaged children supported through the AEP
Speed School Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger	61,900 ⁶⁴	6108,463 ⁶⁵	1.01
ECHO INCLUDE Uganda	6,844 ⁶⁶	701,000 ⁶⁷	0.98
STAGES Afghanistan	34,299	3.7 million	0.93
CHAON Pakistan	68,449	10,431,923 ⁶⁸	0.66
ECHO INCLUDE Uganda	4,379 ⁶⁹	701,000 ⁷⁰	0.62
AEP Uganda	2,984	701,000 ⁷¹	0.43
ERSA Mali	7,762	2,061,713 ⁷²	0.38
VAS-Y Fille! Congo	24,600	7 million ⁷³	0.35
AEP South Sudan	6,030	1.8 million	0.34
AEP Kenya	1,948 ⁷⁴	598,000 ⁷⁵	0.33
AEP Sierra Leone	720	287,936 ⁷⁶	0.25

64 Based on the total enrolment in the programme across the three countries.

65 Total number of OOSCY in the three countries given in UIS.

66 This number was reported in a tracer study report on the ECHO INCLUDE programme in West Nile and Wester Uganda and based on 2018 children who were no longer attending classes at AEP centres in 2019.

67 Estimate is based on data provided in fhi360. (n.d.). *Uganda: Out of School Children of the Population Ages 7-14*. Retrieved from https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Uganda_OOSC_Profile.pdf

68 Based on 2018 data from UIS. (n.d.). *Education: Number of out-of-school children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age*. Retrieved from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=121>

69 This is the number reported at the time of the baseline data collection.

70 Estimate is based on data provided in fhi360. (n.d.). *Uganda: Out of School Children of the Population Ages 7-14*. Retrieved from https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Uganda_OOSC_Profile.pdf

71 Estimate is based on data provided in fhi360. (n.d.). *Uganda: Out of School Children of the Population Ages 7-14*. Retrieved from https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Uganda_OOSC_Profile.pdf
The evaluation report used the number of out-of-school refugee children in Uganda as the base, but for this report, we use the total number of out-of-school children as the base.

72 Based on 2018 data from UIS.

73 Based on Seymour, C., Heaner, G., Hartwell, A., & Deacon, G. (2016). *USAID ECCN Alternative Education in the DRC Final Research Report*. Washington D.C: USAID Education in Conflict and Crisis Network.

74 This number is based on 2015 programme data (Flemming, 2017).

75 Estimate is based on data provided in fhi360. (n.d.). *Kenya: Out of School Children of the Population Ages 7-14*. Retrieved from https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Kenya_OOSC_Profile.pdf

76 Based on 2018 data from UIS.

Programme (and country)	Total number of OOSCY or overaged children enrolled	Total number of OOSCY or overaged children within the context ⁵⁵	Percentage of the total OOSCY or overaged children supported through the AEP
Udaan Nepal	466 ⁷⁷	200,795 ⁷⁸	0.23
Paasu Mali	2,972	2,061,713 ⁷⁹	0.14
NFMSE Myanmar	286	456,947	0.06
SOMGEP-T Somalia	1,332	3 million ⁸⁰	0.04

⁷⁷ Based on number of students enrolled in Udaan from 2014-2016.

⁷⁸ 2017 UIS data

⁷⁹ Based on 2018 data from UIS.

⁸⁰ Estimate is based on data provided in USAID. (2020). *Bar ama Baro ("Teach or Learn")*. Retrieved from https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact_Sheet_-_Somalia_BAB_February_2020.pdf

Annex 3: Dropout, completion and internal advancement rates for AEPs

Programme name (country)	Reported advancement rates (from one level to another) as a % of original cohort group	Reported survival rates, as a % of total enrolled	Reported drop-out rates (% of students not completing the full programme)	Drop-out rate in primary education ⁸¹	Primary school survival rate ⁸²
ERSA Mali (Cohort 1)		74 ⁸³		No data available	48.08 ⁸⁴
ERSA Mali (PARIS II)		91	9	No data available	48.08
ERSA Mali (PARIS I)		79		No data available	48.08
AEP Kenya		88	12	7	84.14 ⁸⁵
NFMSE Myanmar		61 ⁸⁶	31.7 ⁸⁷	No data available	83.18 ⁸⁸
INSPIRE Myanmar		40		No data available	83.18
AEP South Sudan		30 ⁸⁹		No data available	No data available
Pasuu Mali		77 ⁹⁰		No data available	48.08

81 The UIS data calculates the dropout rate in primary education based on the cumulative drop-out rate to the last grade of primary education. The dropout rate in primary education is presented here because most AEP programmes seek to transfer AEP students into primary education.

82 The UIS data calculates the completion rate for primary education using household survey data. The completion rate indicates how many persons in a given age group have completed primary education.

83 Initial student enrolment totalled 5,136, and 74% of those enrolled completed the AEP year.

84 Based on 2015 UIS data.

85 Based on 2014 UIS data

86 Authors of the evaluation report estimated the completion rate from those originally enrolled to be 61%, but no actual data was provided.

87 Authors of the evaluation report noted that the overall percentage of dropout through the cycle semester 1 to semester 6 was 31.7%. It is unclear why the estimated completion rate and reported dropout rate do not add up.

88 Based on 2016 UIS data.

89 The author reported 30% as the retention rate. The overall programme dropout rate was not provided, though dropout rate at each level of AEP was.

90 The report did not provide the completion rate. Instead, it reported on the number of students who completed the year and the total number of learners enrolled. We calculated the completion rate based on the number of students who completed the year, against the total number of learners enrolled.

Programme name (country)	Reported advancement rates (from one level to another) as a % of original cohort group	Reported survival rates, as a % of total enrolled	Reported drop-out rates (% of students not completing the full programme)	Drop-out rate in primary education ⁸¹	Primary school survival rate ⁸²
SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger		88.56	11.44	31.16 ⁹¹ (Burkina Faso) 35.60 ⁹² No data available available for Mali	48.08 (Mali) No data available for Burkina Faso & Niger
ECY El Salvador			30 ⁹³	16.73 ⁹⁴	89.71 ⁹⁵
ALS The Philippines		67 ⁹⁶	33	7.14 ⁹⁷	91.87 ⁹⁸
Increasing Access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Programme Afghanistan			42	No data available available	54.21 ⁹⁹
Udaan Nepal		94 ¹⁰⁰		26.45 ¹⁰¹	83.16 ¹⁰²

91 Based on 2017 UIS data

92 Based on 2013 UIS data

93 AIS estimates that about 30 percent of OSY who enrol in the sufficiency test module drop out.

94 Based on 2017 UIS data

95 Based on 2018 UIS data.

96 The completion rate presented here includes all learners in the BLP, the A&E Elementary, and A&E Secondary programmes. The completion rates for BLP, the A&E Elementary, and A&E Secondary programmes were 56%, 61% and 70% respectively.

97 Based on 2016 UIS data

98 Based on 2018 UIS data.

99 Based on 2015 UIS data.

100 The report did not provide the completion rate. Instead, it reported on the number of Udaan graduates who turned up at the Grade 5 exams (438), against the number of enrolled students (466). We calculated the completion rate based on the number of students who completed the year (i.e., took the Grade 5 exams), against the total number of learners enrolled.

101 Based on 2016 UIS data

102 Based on 2016 UIS data

Programme name (country)	Reported advancement rates (from one level to another) as a % of original cohort group	Reported survival rates, as a % of total enrolled	Reported drop-out rates (% of students not completing the full programme)	Drop-out rate in primary education ⁸¹	Primary school survival rate ⁸²
Advancing Youth Liberia		24 ¹⁰³		53.54 ¹⁰⁴	34.25 ¹⁰⁵
Speed Schools Uganda		96	4	64.5 ¹⁰⁶	43.62 ¹⁰⁷
ECHO INCLUDE Uganda	12 ¹⁰⁸		50 ¹⁰⁹	64.5	43.62

103 The report did not provide the completion rate. Instead, it reported on the number of learners who completed an AEP level (5,500), against the total number of enrolled learners (22,902). We calculated the completion rate based on the number of students who completed an AEP level, against the total number of learners enrolled.

104 Based on 2016 UIS data

105 Based on 2013 UIS data

106 Based on 2016 UIS data

107 Based on 2016 UIS data

108 This percentage is based on transition into another AEP, not necessarily an internal transition.

109 Findings from the tracer study assessment covered 2,971 learners interviewed from refugee settlements in Arua, Yumbe and Moyo districts, as validated from the 3,231 who were no longer in the AE programme identified from the 2018 cohort. Majority (47%) of the learners who dropped out of AEP did so in Level II of their education compared to 34% and 19% who did the same in Levels I and III respectively. About half of the respondents who had dropped out had not sat for the third term exam of last AEP that they had attended, meaning they dropped out before the end of the academic year.

Annex 4: AEP measurement of learning outcomes

Programme name (country)	Use of EGRA and EMGA	Use of programme-specific assessment (teacher, programme or partner-based tool) to measure cognitive learning ¹¹⁰	Use of national exams	Teacher or student self-report
VAS-Y Fille! Congo	X		X	
STAGES Afghanistan	X			
Speed School Ethiopia		X		X
Second Chance Liberia	X			
Advancing Youth Liberia	X (EMGA only)	X		X
Increasing access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Afghanistan	X			
Speed School Uganda	X	X		
SOMGEP-T Somalia	X			
ERSA Mali		X		
PAASU Mali		X		
SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger		X		
AEP Kenya			X	
ALP Lebanon		X		X
ECY El Salvador			X	
ALP Iraq				X
Udaan Nepal		X		X
AEP South Sudan				X
Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger		X		X
INSPIRE Myanmar				
NFMSE Myanmar				
ECHO INCLUDE Uganda		X		X
AEP Uganda			X	

¹¹⁰ Such tools include placement tests that designed to sort children into different grade levels that they were to transition into.

Programme name (country)	Use of EGRA and EMGA	Use of programme-specific assessment (teacher, programme or partner-based tool) to measure cognitive learning ¹¹⁰	Use of national exams	Teacher or student self-report
ECCN Congo				X
ALP The Philippines		X		
ALP Sierra Leone				

Annex 5: AEP measurement of non-cognitive learning outcomes

Programme name (country)	Other types of outcomes measured from data collected from learners	A summary of the results and findings from these assessments
Speed School Ethiopia	Educational aspirations	About 69% of former Speed School students stated that they would like to carry on their education beyond grade 12 at post-secondary level, while only 49% students from Government Schools said they would like to carry on beyond grade 12.
Advancing Youth Liberia	Employability and work readiness ¹¹¹	Advancing Youth reported that their endline results showed a positive picture of Advancing Youth participants' work readiness and livelihoods skills. While total learner employment decreased 7.7% compared to the baseline, both the quality of employment and learner confidence increased. The significant increases in the amount that learners were able to save over the past six months led learners to feel more confident in their ability to provide for their families. Learners also reported gains in confidence in both their ability to develop a business plan and to create and sustain a new business. They also reported gains in confidence in their ability to improve their work and their capacity to help others find work.
Increasing access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Afghanistan	Educational aspirations	79% of AEP students stated that they planned on continuing their education and 79% of parents said that they expected their children to continue their education after transition.

111 Advancing Youth measured the number of youth gaining employment or better employment. The evaluators calculated this number by looking at gains along a number of livelihoods dimensions including new employment, perceived ability to provide for oneself and family, savings habits and overall satisfaction with one's work. Self-employment was included as a type of employment and dimensions such as perceived ability to provide for one's family and changes in financial behaviours such as saving were measured.

Programme name (country)	Other types of outcomes measured from data collected from learners	A summary of the results and findings from these assessments
ERSA Mali	Knowledge in entrepreneurship	ERSA Mali found a small but statistically significant increase in average score in entrepreneurship, from 58% to 61%. However, only 43% of youth demonstrated improved knowledge in entrepreneurship.
	Work readiness	ERSA Mali found that the average score in work readiness increased from 66% to 68% which is a small increase. Only 46% of youth demonstrated improved work readiness.
ALP Iraq	Educational aspirations	ALP Iraq found that when asked to what plans learners had after completing the Iraq ALP, almost all of them said that they wanted to continue with secondary education. This was the intention of almost 95% of learners.
Udaan Nepal	Confidence and female empowerment	Drawing on qualitative data, Udaan Nepal found that ALP girls had become more outspoken and confident about themselves. They had realized the value, necessity and benefits of education. They had also been empowered and became agents of social change since they now openly challenged the practice of early marriage.
AEP South Sudan	Change in learners' behaviour	AEP South Sudan reported that the PTA, teachers and parents valued the change in behaviour that attending ALP had brought in the learners. These groups reported a noticeable reduction in violence in both males and females, a reduction in bad manners and negative activities such as hanging around markets or the river in groups 'up to no good'.
	Learners' wellbeing	AEP South Sudan also reported that parents and teachers associated the AEP with better learner well-being. They noted that children and youth were now attending classes after they had finished their domestic responsibilities rather than wasting their time. In the ALP centres visited close to large cattle camps, the PTA commented that youth who attended classes were not undergoing scarification rituals and cattle raiding and revenge killing had reduced. Furthermore, some learners who had attended L3 and L4 were now hygiene promoters, working with NGOs, becoming teachers and able to take up short term vocational training places outside Ganyiel.

Programme name (country)	Other types of outcomes measured from data collected from learners	A summary of the results and findings from these assessments
Speed School Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger	Self-esteem/ confidence	Speed School Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger reported that 92% of students felt confident about themselves after joining the Speed School. Self-confidence among girls was slightly higher than boys in Burkina Faso (89 percent), while for boys in Mali (96 percent) and Niger (94 percent), it was higher than girls by one percent.
ECHO INCLUDE Uganda	Learners' wellbeing	ECHO INCLUDE Uganda found that AEP learners demonstrated a good level of wellbeing (70% for learners aged over 14; 76% for learners aged below 14).
	Self-esteem/ confidence	ECHO INCLUDE Uganda also found that there was a small but notable difference between girls and boys, with boys scoring higher than girls, in particular in the area of self-esteem.

Annex 6: AEP reported rates of learner transition to formal schooling

Programme name (country)	Transition rates into formal education	How this was calculated or measured (if explained). Ideally important to differentiate if based on eligibility or verified transitions of learners
ERSA Mali (Cohort 1)	90.3	This percentage only includes students who were tested after completing PARIS I during FY18 and actually transitioned into formal school or PARIS II centers.
AEP Kenya	25	The transition rate represents the actual transition of nearly all Level 3 students from primary to secondary programs (both formal and non-formal). as a percentage of students across the entire program (Levels 1A, 1B, 2, and 3).
SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger	75.45 ¹¹²	The evaluators defined the “net transfer rate” as the number of children in formal school at the end of the first year of reintegration. It thus measures actual transition rate.
Increasing Access to Basic Education (Afghanistan) ¹¹³	31.6	The report measured “percent CBE as transitioned”, but it is not clear how this reported transition rate was calculated. ¹¹⁴
Udaan Nepal	62.76	The report measured actual transition rate based on the percentage of the 435 graduated girls (i.e., completers) who transitioned into formal schools.

112 Evaluators noted that all SSA/P children who have successfully completed their course in SSA / P centers are transferred to mainstream schools. However, follow-up results conducted by IPA show that 24.55% of children who have completed SSA/P have not been successfully transferred. Evaluators concluded that it could be that all of the children who completed SSA / P were actually enrolled in mainstream school at the start of the year, but only 75.45% actually completed the first year in mainstream school.

113 2. 2019 Afghanistan

114 According to the evaluation report, the total number of ALC students who transitioned was 12,475, but the total number of students enrolled in ALC was 42,820. Our calculation of the transition rate using the total number of students enrolled is 29%.

Programme name (country)	Transition rates into formal education	How this was calculated or measured (if explained). Ideally important to differentiate if based on eligibility or verified transitions of learners
Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger ¹¹⁵	86 ¹¹⁶	The report measured actual transition rate based on self-reports by Speed School graduates from the 2014/15 cohort. ¹¹⁷
Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger	90	The report defines number of students who initially enrolled in the Speed Schools and then became eligible to transfer to formal primary schools as efficiency rate.
Speed Schools Uganda ¹¹⁸	94.2	The report measured transition rate based on the number of children enrolled who took the placement test ten months later (and thus became eligible for transfer). The figure presented here is based on the 2017 cohort.
Speed Schools Uganda	95.7	The report measured transition rate based on the number of children enrolled who took the placement test ten months later (and thus became eligible for transfer). The figure presented here is based on the 2016 cohort.
Speed Schools Uganda	96	The report measured transition rate based on the number of children enrolled who took the placement test ten months later (and thus became eligible for transfer). The figure presented here is based on the 2016 cohort.

¹¹⁵ 7. 2018 Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

¹¹⁶ 86% of Speed School graduates from the 2014/15 cohort reported that they reintegrated into primary school and resumed their education in 2015. The remaining 14% of Speed School graduates did not continue with their education in the formal primary schools despite their eligibility.

¹¹⁷ The report noted that remaining 14% of Speed School graduates did not continue with their education in the formal primary schools despite their eligibility.

¹¹⁸ Speed School Uganda also seemed to report the total number of Speed School graduates who actually enrolled in a government primary school the following year. However, this number was missing from the report we received. Speed School Uganda also used the results of the placement test as an indicator of successful transition.

Annex 7: Levels of disaggregation in reporting of outcomes by AEP

Programme name (country)	Gender	Location	Disability	Age, cohort or level	Religion	Prior educational background	Household SES	Mobility of household
VAS-Y Fille! Congo ¹¹⁹	X							
STAGES Afghanistan	X	X	X ¹²⁰	X			X	X
Speed School Ethiopia	X	X		X			X	
Second Chance Liberia	X	X ¹²¹				X		
Advancing Youth Liberia	X							
Increasing access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Afghanistan	X	X						
Speed Schools Uganda	X			X				
SOMGEP-T Somalia	X		X	X			X	X
ERSA Mali	X							
PAASU Mali		X						
SSA/P Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger	X	X					X	
AEP Kenya	X							

119 Target group are girls, so no disaggregation of outcomes by gender.

120 Disaggregation of data by disability was done at midline but not endline

121 Reported noted that while scores were also disaggregated by location, it has not been reported due to the large number of locations running only one class.

Programme name (country)	Gender	Location	Disability	Age, cohort or level	Religion	Prior educational background	Household SES	Mobility of household
ALP Lebanon	X							
ECY EI Salvador	X							
ALP Iraq	X ¹²²							
Udaan Nepal				X	X			
AEP South Sudan	X ¹²³							
Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger	X					X	X	
INSPIRE Myanmar	X							
NFMSE Myanmar	X							
ECHO INCLUDE Uganda	X			X				
AEP Uganda	X							
ECCN Congo	X	X						
ALP The Philippines	X	X						
ALP Sierra Leone	X							
CHAON Pakistan	X	X						

122 Learners' response to one question was disaggregated by gender: Out-of-school children willing to enroll in the Iraq ALP.

123 Evaluators noted that the many project reports provided for the evaluation did not disaggregate the data by location or educational programmes.

Annex 8: Gender based barriers, responses and impacts

Gender-related challenge	Actions to address the challenge	Examples of programme & efficacy/challenges
<p>Girls' access to education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendency to withdraw from school during their menstrual periods • Lack of female role models, and proper support and counselling services that might encourage continuation of education upon reaching adolescence • Inadequate gender appropriate infrastructure (boundary walls, WASH facilities) 	<p>Clear strategy to target female learners for enrolment in AEP, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting targets for female enrolment • Ensuring access to water and separate latrines for girls and boys • Providing sanitary materials to girls when relevant • Employing female teachers • Engaging with the local community • Targeting subgroups of female learners who were most vulnerable, e.g. girls from pastoralist households • Increasing access for women to sustainable employment opportunities and positions of decision-making, such as teachers, head teachers and school principals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to the USAID ERSA project, 41% of Cohort 1 host schools did not have latrines. ERSA Mali constructed one block of two latrines in each host primary school. However, the impact of the new latrines and facilities for washing hands on safety and well-being could be limited without water to clean the facilities, but water access was not fundable under USAID funding guidelines for ERSA. Similar efforts to provide separate latrines were discussed by AEP Kenya. • Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger targeted 50% female learners in its enrolment. Similar efforts to target female learners were discussed by AEP Kenya, which included the gender parity index in its evaluation report. • Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, SOMGEP-T Somalia and AEP Kenya employed female instructors to support girls' enrolment and to attend to girls' learning needs. During the 2014-2018 strategy period, Speed Schools Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger employed 1,154 teachers, of which 40 percent were female. AEP Kenya mentioned that it prioritized the recruitment of female teachers to attend to the specific needs of female learners and reported that there was a female teacher at each AEP level. However, the historic low rates of access to education for women, traditional gender norms which limit women's mobility and the ability to work outside the home, made the low recruitment of female teachers a particular problem. Therefore, STAGES Afghanistan provided apprenticeship teacher training for young women and worked with district and provincial teacher education departments and teacher training colleges to increase the number of women qualified to teach through material and training support, and provision of grants to young women to enable them to attend teacher training colleges. • Taking into account that pastoralism increased the vulnerability of at-risk girls, SOMGEP-T Somalia worked with its school management committees and host communities to intensify efforts to enrol girls from nomadic and pastoralist families. • STAGES Afghanistan set a 45% target of employing women as teachers, head teachers and school principals in its programmes, and participating in decision within communities at school shuras. Despite the increased support for female teachers, traditional gender norms that classified female teachers as "soft" and thus more appropriate for teaching girls did not shift. Although there were increased women participation in school shuras, with both men and women highlighting their important role in decision making, female shura members tended to be relegated to traditional gendered roles involving speaking with mothers and conducting domestic-like labour, rather than non-traditional ones such as mobilising funds or advocating to public authorities, roles seen as more appropriate for men. • To address parents' reluctance for their girls, especially girls entering puberty, to be taught by male teachers, STAGES Afghanistan undertook measures to recruit female teachers. STAGES provided apprenticeship teacher training for young women and worked with district and provincial teacher education departments and teacher training colleges to increase the number of women qualified to teach through material and training support, and provision of grants to young women to enable them to attend teacher training colleges. These strategies successfully provided 58 newly qualified female teachers in Kabul and Kandahar.

Gender-related challenge	Actions to address the challenge	Examples of programme & efficacy/challenges
<p>Gender-based violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical and verbal harassment by boys and sometimes teachers in school Harassment on the way to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building schools close to girls' homes Girl only classes Trained teachers and school management councils on creating safe learning spaces, children's rights and avoidance of corporal punishment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERSA Mali provided information to students and teachers on reporting mechanisms and follow-up of exposure to violence and gender-based violence. AEP Sierra Leone reported having a child friendly referral mechanism in place for the reporting and follow up of exposure to gender-based violence in schools, but evaluators noted that the different AEP committees had different conceptions of their roles and what had to be done. Similarly, Increasing access to Basic Education and Gender Equality Afghanistan supported the establishment of gender-based violence prevention and referral mechanisms at school-community levels, including training of teachers on the code of conduct to promote zero tolerance to violence at and on the way to school.
<p>Lack of gender-sensitivity in teaching and learning</p>	<p>Gender and conflict-sensitive curriculum, pedagogy and learning materials, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing teacher training to improve AEP teachers' gender and conflict-sensitive instructional practices Building inclusion, gender-sensitivity and protection practices into the AEP teacher training Disaggregating data by gender to monitor the learning progress of girls and boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERSA Mali's Living curricular activities included gender equity. STAGES Afghanistan provided training and mentoring for teachers on gender fair teaching and established girl only classes. Spot checks by the evaluators showed that teachers were addressing girls as respectfully as boys and giving them the same level of participation. AEP South Sudan provided basic teacher training which included gender sensitive practices such as how to respect females, how to give them choice in where to sit and to ask questions equally to both females and males. Both teachers and learners reported the use of group work, discussion and brainstorming in class and all females felt they were treated equally by the teachers. However, the number of teacher training days decreased from 15 day in 2015 to 3 days in 2018 due to training budget constraints. Another challenged was the high teacher turnover that affected "capacity building.

Gender-related challenge	Actions to address the challenge	Examples of programme & efficacy/challenges
<p>Traditional norms expecting women to primarily care for children in the home and assume responsibility for household tasks, and placing little value or emphasis on education for women</p>	<p>Equip girls with life skills that support their voice and agency and working around the traditional norms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipping girls with leadership and mentorship skills through life skills development so that they can better participate in class, break traditional norms that restrict girls' voice; engage in the local economy; and contribute to their communities in the future. • Establishing community-based classes close to home to reduce travel time to school • Training school management councils on working with parents to adapt expectations or responsibilities • Working with teachers and school management councils to make up instructional time lost during harvest and planting seasons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOMGEP-T Somalia specifically target out-of-school girls who were unable to or did not wish to attend formal secondary schools. Its AEP offered these girls an alternative option to encourage them to remain in school and focused on developing life skills relevant to the job market, such as financial literacy and business selection. Although the midline results has slightly improved the girls' leadership and life skills, none of these differences between the intervention and comparison group were statistically significant. • STAGES Afghanistan mobilized the community to emphasize the fact that girls' chores at home should be reduced in order for them to focus on their studies. School shuras played an instrumental role in following up on girls' absenteeism and raising parents' awareness on the importance of education versus domestic chores or livelihood activities. • STAGES Afghanistan reported the most important and effective STAGES intervention in reducing barriers to be the establishment of community-based classes close to home to reduce travel time to school. The midline household survey suggested that perceptions of girls' unsafe journey to school were strongly linked to long distances to travel to nearest schools, with mean distances increasing as perceptions of lack of safety increase. Long distance to school was identified across all sampled provinces as one of the primary and overarching barriers to girls' enrolment, and this barrier interacted with fears of insecurity and a number of other barriers, such as poverty, lack of affordable transportation, harassment from boys or men and concerns about shame brought on the family. Parents who participated in the qualitative interviews consistently stated that building more schools close to their homes would be the most important change that would facilitate girls' school enrolment. Furthermore, community members in CBE communities frequently described the STAGES classes in their communities in a highly positive way since they were providing accessible education closer to girls' homes. Evaluators reported a clear pattern in the findings that suggested that girls were more likely to attend school the closer they were to the school, and were more likely to have increased learning outcomes the closer they are to accessible schools. Furthermore, STAGES provision of learning resources such as schoolbooks, notebooks, pens and school bags appeared to be a successful factor in poor households allowing girls to enrol in CBE classes. • Second Chance Liberia set up a parent engagement group to gain the support and interest of parents who were illiterate and had had little previous contact with schools or teachers. The organizing supervisor actively encouraged women participants to speak and used group meetings to promote girls' learning and challenge unhelpful gender norms and stereotypes. Mothers celebrated their daughters' commitment to and enjoyment of learning in meetings.

Gender-related challenge	Actions to address the challenge	Examples of programme & efficacy/challenges
Early marriages that led to drop-out or prevented girls from ever attending school	Advocate for child protection and child rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STAGES Afghanistan established girls only classes and female teachers for young women to increase in-laws' acceptance of married woman's participation in education. Although many girls still dropped out due to early marriages, girls who stayed on had better attendance and learning and educational outcomes in girl-only classes. Girls in girl-only classes had higher mean attendance rates at endline (98.87%) than midline (94.58%); however, girls in mixed-gender classes had lower attendance rates at endline (90.25%) than midline (94.38%). • CHAON Pakistan successfully advocated for the creation of Sinh Child Protection Authority, with new legislation and revisions to protect children and their rights. With the Child Rights Group supporting awareness-raising campaigns about the negative consequences of early child marriages and child labour, the project saw shifts in behaviors at the community level, such as more enrolment in schools and child protection followed by discouraging early marriages.

Annex 9: Evidence on the cost-effectiveness of AEPs

Background

While not a primary focus for this evidence review, where and how AEPs present information on their costs per beneficiary was collated when presented in evaluation reports and other studies of programmes analysed. Understanding such costs is an important precursor to an ongoing stream of work within the AEWG Learning Agenda to assess comparative unit costs for AEP participant access, completion and learning outcomes in relation to equivalent per/pupil unit costs in formal schooling. Beyond the immediate comparisons between costs between AEPs and formal education, is also the role which AEPs can play in increasing an individuals' earnings, particularly for females for the additional years of schooling they attain through such programmes.¹²⁴ Over a lifetime, the argument goes, the short term costs of funding AEPs is far less than the monetary and non-monetary benefits to individuals and society; or conversely the household, community and societal costs incurred from a less educated and skilled population.¹²⁵

Findings

While many programmes did not report costs on a per beneficiary basis, a few did so and also made comparison to the costs of educating a student of an equivalent grade level in the formal schooling system. Often this data was used to suggest how the AEP in question was a cost-effective alternative—either by being roughly similar or lower in costs—to a similar education in the formal schooling system.

124 Montenegro, Claudio E., and Harry Anthony Patrinos (2017). Comparable Estimates of Returns to Schooling around the World. Policy Research Working Paper 7020, World Bank, Washington, DC.

125 World Bank. 2018. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1.

Programme (and country)	Cost per beneficiary	Comparative cost per beneficiary in formal schooling
VAS-Y Fille! (Congo)	220-290 USD ¹²⁶	220-290 USD
Speed Schools (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger)	132 USD ¹²⁷	243 USD ¹²⁸
NFMSE (Myanmar)	433 USD ¹²⁹	377 USD ¹³⁰
Oxfam's ALP (South Sudan)	167 USD ¹³¹	100 USD ¹³²

There are, however, a number of caveats to how costs per beneficiary are calculated for both the AEPs, and how comparisons or counterfactuals are made to the formal education system.

An evaluation of the ALP in South Sudan noted that whilst the cost per enrolled learner per year may seem reasonable for the AEP project, the cost per learner attending the AEP was much greater if the number of instructional days and learner attendance were

126 The report did not explain how the unit cost per beneficiary was calculated.

127 The Speed School program provides out-of-school children with three years of equivalent education and hence the average expenditure becomes 49 USD per reintegrated student for a school year. The cost of enrolling one out-of-school child in a Speed School is 0.4 USD per day, which is much lower than the poverty line of 2 USD per day. These cost assessments do not take into account program administrative costs at the level of Strømme Foundation and are only indicative of actual costs at the level of implementing partners.

128 According to the report, government expenditure per primary school student in Burkina Faso and Mali is 272 purchasing power parity (PPP) USD, while it is 214 PPP USD in Niger for a school year. The research team calculated the comparative cost per beneficiary in formal schooling by averaging the cost in the three countries.

129 The cost presented here is the cost per student per year. The cost per student over the three year period was 1,298 USD. According to the report, cost estimates included training for facilitators, recurrent materials and textbooks, management and operational costs, and procurement of laptops and equipment required for vocational training as well as estimates for informal contributions made by those at the township or center level, such as financial assistance provided by facilitators to students to encourage them to attend school. The cost per beneficiary is calculated using number of students enrolled, as the focus is on the opportunity to learn. This means that high dropout rates will increase the unit costs per completer. For example, the report presented the cost per graduate per year as 478 USD. Despite the high cost, evaluators noted that there was no viable alternative to NFMSE for older children from vulnerable families who must work and argued that the cost of not educating these children was likely to be significantly higher in the longer term, with negative impact on Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

130 This estimate was obtained from the evaluation report, which drew the estimated \$377 USD per year for a child to attend middle school education in developing countries from the Global Education Monitoring Report 2015.

131 Evaluators noted that whilst the cost per enrolled learner per year may seem reasonable for the ALP project, the cost per learner attending the ALP is much greater. When the number of instructional days is considered, the cost per learner attending per day is very high.

132 The DAE report that a child in basic education costs approximately \$100 USD per learner per year. We did not use the public spending on education per child to calculate the cost of schooling in South Sudan because the public spending on education in South Sudan is amongst the lowest in the world (see The World Bank. (n.d.). Education in the Republic of South Sudan Status and Challenges for a New System. Retrieved from The World Bank website: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/787661468302991853/pdf/705950PUB0EPI0067902B09780821388914.pdf>)

considered. For example, the cost per learner in 2017 was \$167, but if low attendance rates of many learners were taken into consideration, the cost per learner rose to \$796. And if the number of learners who completed the primary leavers certificate were considered, the cost per learner rose to \$83,333—due to the high levels of drop out within the programme.¹³³ Similarly an evaluation of Speed Schools in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger claimed that the average expenditure was 49 USD per reintegrated student for a school year, which was lower than the comparative cost per beneficiary in formal schooling. However, these cost assessments did not take into account the program administrative costs at the level of the Foundation and were only indicative of actual costs at the level of implementing partners.¹³⁴

Even when AEPs have higher cost per beneficiary, one evaluation report noted that there was no viable alternative for older children from vulnerable families who had to work and that the cost of not educating these children was likely to be significantly higher in the longer term and negatively impact Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹³⁵ In another report, evaluators argued that given the strong learning outcomes (AEP learners had double the EGMA scores on average and increased EGRA scores as much as five times) and with comparable cost to that of educating the beneficiaries in one year of formal schooling, ALPs represented “a cost-effective opportunity to provide OOS children with access to quality education” (p. 10).¹³⁶

An overall comment on assessments made of cost-effectiveness

The comparisons made in the evidence reviewed appear to ignore several of the complexities of comparing costs/beneficiary of AEPs with that of the formal education system. As noted in prior research, a direct comparison of the annual recurrent costs of running an educational programme per student in attendance is not sufficient when comparing AEPs to formal schooling. Instead, the research argues that comparison should be made in respect to the average costs for a learner to complete an education cycle (i.e. primary education) in an AEP versus formal school, and the average costs for learners achieving minimum standards of learning or literacy.¹³⁷ None of the evaluations had managed to calculate costs in this way, despite this approach being formally sanctioned by the AEWG under its Learning Agenda on the specific question of cost-effectiveness.¹³⁸

133 Nicholson, S. (2018). Evaluation of Oxfam’s Accelerated Education Programme in Greater Ganyiel, South Sudan 2014-2018 Against Global Best Practice.

134 Kebede, T. A. (2018). Strømme Foundation’s Speed School Program in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger Evaluation Report.

135 EPRD & Synergia. (2019). Joint Evaluation of Myanmar Non-Formal Middle School Education-Equivalency Pilot Programme Final Evaluation Report. UNICEF Myanmar.

136 International Rescue Committee. (n.d.). Improving Girls’ Access and Learning Outcomes in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Evidence from a DFID-Funded Randomized Control Trial of VAS-Y Fille! New York; London.

137 Farrell, J.; Hartwell, A. 2008. Planning for successful alternative schooling: a possible route to Education for All. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.

138 This includes: (1) Per pupil annual recurrent costs: Costs of total programme (except those related to capital and development)/ # of students attending; (2) Per pupil completion costs: # years to complete full education cycle X the per pupil annual recurrent costs/ cumulative drop-out rate over the full cycle; (3) Per pupil learning costs: Per pupil completion cost/ratio learners who attain minimum competency levels.

