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# **Accelerated Education Programs in Crisis and Conflict: Building Evidence and Learning**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As of 2013, almost 50 million primary and lower-secondary-age children were out of school in conflict-affected countries.<sup>1</sup> Of these, 28.5 million were primary-age; more than half of them were girls.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the impact of crisis and/or conflict has deprived millions of older children and youth of an education. Displacement, being in a child-headed household, being an ex-child soldier (including cooks, porters and sex slaves) or being disabled compounds many of the losses suffered by those deprived of an education.

Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) are flexible, age-appropriate programs that promote access to education in an accelerated time frame for such disadvantaged groups — specifically, for out-of-school, over-age children and youth excluded from education or who had their education interrupted due to crisis and conflict. AEPs are typically implemented to fill a critical gap in the provision of essential educational services to crisis and conflict-affected populations and ensure learners receive an appropriate and relevant education responsive to their life circumstances.

Policymakers and practitioners are interested in understanding how AEPs are progressing towards their goals, whether they are the right policy tool for a particular context, which components of an AEP are integral to success, and how to better program them to optimize access, learning, transition to formal schools, and employment outcomes, among other objectives.

This review originally endeavored to answer the above questions; however, consultations with experts and researchers in the field made it clear that the paucity of evidence and documentation around AEPs, particularly in crisis and conflict-affected environments, requires a step back to establish a deeper understanding of how AEPs are currently implemented and whether and how programs measure success. This insight can inform discussions on determining the effectiveness of AEPs. As a result, this review focused on the following critical questions:

1. In operation, what are the profiles of AEPs? How do the elements of these profiles differ from the theoretical elements of accelerated learning?
2. What outcomes, if any, are reported on AEPs, and what can they tell us about how AEPs increase access and improve learning outcomes for out-of-school youth?
3. What are the critical questions related to the structure and outcomes of AEPs, and where are the gaps in the literature?

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<sup>1</sup> SCF Report undertaken by UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report: *Attacks on Education: The impact of conflict and grave violations on children's futures*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

4. Based on what we know about AEPs, and the difficulties associated with evaluating AEPs and other education interventions in crisis and conflict-affected environments, what recommendations can we make about how to evaluate AEPs and operationalize the research agenda around AEPs?

## METHODOLOGY

The review identified documentation on programs reflecting the key principles of accelerated education, mainly: the program ultimately aimed to increase access for out-of-school, over-age children<sup>3</sup> and youth, contained a compressed/modified curriculum, and had a stated interactive methodology. We also reviewed programs self-labeled “accelerated learning” or “accelerated education.” We narrowed our list of “relevant” literature to 44 documents, ten of which were either mid-term or final performance evaluation reports. References in reports to other evaluations were also included in the review. We identified documentation through: 1) key informant interviews, 2) a systematic database search executed by a University of Chicago librarian; 3) references from previous reviews or evaluation reports of AEPs and; 4) internet searches.

This study is primarily focused on AEPs implemented in crisis and conflict-affected environments. Proper documentation, understandably, was harder to locate in AEPs implemented in less stable contexts. To help enrich the conversation, documentation from more stable contexts, including from AEPs not implemented in crisis and conflict-affected environments, was included in this study.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM REPORT

- **There is great variety in what constitutes an AEP.** There is an incredible diversity of programs labeled AEPs. Not only do AEPs respond to different contexts, but also their objectives evolve alongside the situations to which they are responding. For example, while most AEPs intend to respond to a lack of access, the reasons why access is limited are as varied as the programs themselves. These varied contexts shape the diversity of the design and implementation of AEPs. In addition, there exists a high-degree of variability in the intensity and quality of implementation of various components of accelerated learning and education.
- **Some programs included more content but not necessarily more instruction time.** Theoretically, longer sessions of instruction time are a critical

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<sup>3</sup> EFA Goals nominate “children” in goals one and two and refers to primary education (the focus of almost all AE programs). Goal 3 references “young people” and refers to “appropriate learning and life skills programs.” UNESCO 2016: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/efa-goals/>.

component of AEPs; ideally, the teaching methodology is interactive and learner-centered, incorporating other aspects of multiple-intelligence learning (such as music, the arts, and sports). Because AEPs are “accelerated”, they should also compress the curriculum and include condensed content. A review of the available documentation on programs demonstrates expanded learning time was the exception, not the norm. Furthermore, many of the programs reviewed included alternative subjects in their curriculum (life skills subjects, peace, civics, environment, HIV/AIDS, landmine education) which were responsive to the context but not necessarily designed to respond to the multiple intelligences approach. In addition, none described how much time was given to these subjects. Given that time is limited, it is likely not viable to add these subjects alongside interactive child-centered pedagogy while attempting to cover more ground in a shorter amount of time.

- **In a few cases, funding cycles did not allow cohorts to complete the AEP cycle.** In crisis and conflict-affected environments, where AEPs are often seen as an appropriate response, funding cycles are most often single-year cycles — making planning for programs such as AEPs incredibly difficult. For example, if a program requiring a minimum of three years of funding for its cohort to complete the program receives single-year funding, that cohort cannot complete the AEP. Most programs we reviewed in these settings fulfilled at least one cycle, ranging from three to five years. However, in several programs, the number of years the program was implemented did not match the number of years required to run a full program. Funding for only one cycle implies the program was not in existence long enough to see more than one cohort of learners graduate from the program. If learners are still part of the cycle when the program ceases, it could be assumed to be detrimental to their education — they likely cannot transition to formal schools due to limited skills and knowledge base, sit external exams because their education has been interrupted again, or, if the program was established to relieve contextual issues such as location or exclusion, cannot access another school.
- **The smaller the program, the more flexible the timetabling.** Very large programs tended to mimic the timetable of formal school systems; scheduling parallel classes to formal school programs detracts from the real flexibility of the schedule. In some cases, teachers were recruited from the formal system and the school operated split shifts, double-shifting teachers and classrooms. In these cases, any “flexibility” suited the teacher and the venue rather than the learner.
- **In some programs, school-aged or younger children or youth enrolled in AEPs instead of attending formal schools—a disadvantage to both target beneficiaries and school-age or younger students.** Theoretically, learner recruitment in AEPs prioritizes greatest need — especially the needs of over-age learners who missed most schooling (but who are not adults). Unfortunately, there is little documentation on how learners are selected for AEPs. In some situations, it appears AEP enrollment operates on a first-come, first-served basis.

In some programs, reports indicate that children and/or youth are tested prior to entry, but there is much more evidence (particularly in older programs) where school-aged and younger children and/or youth simply attended AEPs instead of formal schools: if the classes are free, and materials are provided, it is irresistible. Disadvantages to having school-age students attend AEPs could include: a wider age group limiting the potential for AEP classes as a means of social protection, the ability to ensure that age-appropriate content is utilized, and the ability to speed up the curriculum if the teacher has to slow down teaching to take account of younger students.

- **Where information on teacher selection was available, teachers were typically recruited from the community, with completion of at least secondary school required.** While several programs recruited teachers from the formal education system, asking teachers to teach a second shift after their regular teaching post, the norm recruited teachers from the community—oftentimes as volunteers. Some programs explicitly gave female teachers preference in selection; however, the prevalence of minority group representation was less clear. Few programs required teachers to be formally certified or to have received formal teaching prior to being recruited to teach; rather, programs required potential teachers complete at least secondary school, up through Grade 8 to Grade 12.
- **Documentation on teacher training is very thin.** Unfortunately, the documentation on the training provided to teachers, especially the content of the curriculum, was thin. Trainings appeared to have two major objectives: subject mastery and child-centered methodology, although without more thorough documentation and reporting of training content it is difficult to pinpoint what is taught in these trainings. Reports did document the length of teacher trainings, and how often refresher courses were provided. Several courses provided trainings that ranged from three to four weeks, although others provided training for just a few days. Training ranged from elective units in a pre-service course to the more usual in-service courses. At least two of the programs reviewed did sustained teacher training, such that teachers could move into a teacher-training institute. Most reports did not document the quality of teacher training; those that did stated the training was insufficient or ineffective. However, in an emergency response (such as in crisis and conflict-affected environments) teacher training has a low priority in comparison with provision of access and teaching/learning materials. Teacher training takes time to develop, and expertise to implement, both of which may be in short supply in an emergency.
- **M&E systems are not strong enough to collect systemized data.** A limited number of descriptive reports collected and reported data on a) enrollment, b) attendance, c) dropout rates, and d) select learning outcomes. Lack of data may be, in part, a function of programs working in emergency contexts. In the 44 programs on which we reviewed documentation, only eight reported on some or

all of the above data. Even then, several referenced weak M&E systems, or recommended that data on outcomes be collected on a more regular basis.

- **AEPs may be outperforming formal schools, but more rigorous research is needed.** Most programs that reported learning outcome scores indicated that, on average, AEP students outperformed those at government/formal schools. Reports had a strong tendency to compare outcomes of AEPs against outcomes in formal schools to gauge their relative performance. However, it is difficult to understand what the reported metric conveys about an AEP's success. For one, sometimes exams taken by AEP students versus formal school students are not equivalent. Furthermore, formal schools may not be the best comparison group, as students who attend AEPs often face drastically different circumstances than those that attend formal schools. These characteristics could heavily influence the student's attendance, academic performance, and longer-term outcomes, clouding our assessment of whether or not resulting outcomes are a function of the AEP itself or other issues.
- **Very few programs tracked longer-term outcomes, with those that do indicating mixed results.** Three studies we reviewed attempted to track longer-term outcomes relating to transition of AEP students to formal school, absenteeism in formal schools, and dropout rates in formal schools. We did not encounter any studies that tracked long-term outcomes such as employment and wage. These studies demonstrated mixed results in the medium term (absenteeism and dropout rates were high among AEP students who transitioned to and attended formal school, but in some cases these students still outperformed students who attended formal primary schools).

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Provide standard program guidance.** Given the variability around the implementation of AEPs, the AEWG should develop guidelines (similar to those in Annex 2) for program implementers on:
  - Curriculum modification: core subjects and partial curriculum vs. condensed subjects and integration; complementary subjects (multiple intelligences); needs-based subjects (e.g. health and sanitation, peace and human rights)
  - Interactive methodology: use of group work, discovery learning, child-centered programming and activity-based learning
  - Teacher selection: level of formal education, qualifications, specific training for interactive methodology), endorsement by the community and motivation
  - Teacher training: subject mastery, pedagogy for interactive learning, constructive classroom management

- Programmatic planning including access, teacher training, curriculum modification, teacher selection, ensuring community buy-in
- Sustainability planning
- **Improve documentation around AEP implementation.** Overall, documentation on program design and implementation of AEPs raised several gaps that could be better documented and shared to enhance our understanding of how AEPs are implemented in practice. Descriptive research, both qualitative and quantitative in nature, can contribute to our broader understanding of how AEPs are currently programmed and what we may want to improve upon and investigate further. Annex 3 outlines a series of questions prompted by this review on how AEPs are designed, structured, and implemented. Process evaluations or observational studies conducted by independent evaluators could better document this information. The questions in Annex 3 could also be addressed in solicitations, proposals, monitoring data, and evaluation designs from implementers.
- **Standardize outcomes and reporting.** As the donor community provides more guidance on standardizing the concept, approach, and implementation of AEPs through inter-agency working groups such as the AEWG, such groups should develop a homogenized set of metrics that programs can collect themselves. Such groups should also provide guidance to programs and implementing partners on what metrics to collect and how to measure them. Guidance on underlying instruments, data collection processes, and standards would greatly increase the quality, and likely the availability, of such data, especially during the program monitoring process — donors and implementers can use this data to better understand progress towards goals and how to improve programming.
- **Utilize mobile technology to collect and systemize data.** In less stable contexts, there are options for collecting simple monitoring data or training teachers to administer simple assessment tools to better understand the performance of a particular program. These data can also be used for evaluations. The use of technology and mobile data collection tools that employ smart-phones or simple texting, or tablets systems that connect to servers, can enable implementing partners on the ground. Using this technology, teachers themselves may be able to report data to a central repository for analysis. These techniques do not require the mobilization of fieldworker teams and can generate structured data that can be accessed from anywhere in the world. These approaches have been used in the health sector to track treatment compliance and vaccination, for example, but are very incipient in the education sector, where they are being used to track student attendance. They can be affordable, easy to set up and to manage, and reliable where infrastructure is available and capacity is present. While there is an initial investment in setting up the system that requires visiting the program location, once set up, the system is accessed and managed remotely.

- **Utilize evaluations and tracer/longitudinal studies to help researchers, practitioners, and policy makers better understand whether and how AEPs can be more effective.** Outcomes in AEPs are complicated to measure, especially given that the populations of AEPs often face drastically different circumstances than those who attend formal schools. Evaluations can help us better answer whether AEPs are effective, whether they are the best policy option, how they compare to other alternatives, and what combination of characteristics associated with AEPs are essential in bringing about improved learning outcomes. Longitudinal and tracer studies can help track medium-term and longer-term outcomes for AEPs, including transition to and performance in secondary school and employment outcomes.

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### **A note about citations and references**

Throughout this report, we reference reports written about specific accelerated education programs. We reference these programs both in line with the text of the report, as well as in charts and figures. To help the reader easily reference these sources, we reference these reports by author's last name and year of publication (Author, Year) in line with the text or in the relevant tables.

We also reference theories, definitions, and statistics reported by various agencies about AEPs in general. For these references, we have added a footnote to the document to avoid interrupting the flow of reading.

The full citation of referenced materials appears in the References section of the report.

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of quality basic education being available for all was enshrined at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand.<sup>4</sup> This goal was reaffirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000, setting the framework for education to be made available to all children, including those in crisis and conflict-affected environments.

In 1994, UNICEF introduced a *Back to School* campaign with the return of refugees in Rwanda, evolving into an on-going initiative.<sup>5</sup> This initiative, embodying the goal first established in Jomtien, was implemented across dozens of crisis and conflict-affected countries where education infrastructures had been run down or destroyed in the conflict.

As of 2013, almost 50 million primary and lower-secondary-age children are out of school in conflict-affected countries.<sup>6</sup> Of these, 28.5 million are primary-age; more than half of them are girls.<sup>7</sup> West and Central Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa stand out as the two regions with the highest gross enrollment rate (GER)/ net enrollment rate (NER)<sup>8</sup> ratios;<sup>9</sup> over-age learners are in primary schools, sometimes making it difficult for primary-aged learners to attend school. For many of these children and youth, the experience of crisis or conflict has made their participation in education a challenge—with the disruption of education due to wars, insecurity, and attacks on schools in emergency contexts. The result is a generation of children and youth who have had a significant gap in their schooling.

One of the responses has been to adopt and adapt programs that could offer education to those who could not access formal learning programs. Key amongst these alternative approaches was the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), defined by the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG)<sup>10</sup> today as an Accelerated Education Program (AEP).

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<sup>4</sup> UNESCO <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/the-efa-movement/jomtien-1990/>.

<sup>5</sup> Pilar Aguilar UNICEF Senior Education Advisor, Education in Emergencies (personal correspondence)

<sup>6</sup> SCF Report undertaken by UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report: *Attacks on Education: The impact of conflict and grave violations on children's futures*.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> GER (gross enrollment ratio): number of students enrolled at a certain level as a percentage of the population of the age group that officially corresponds to that level (worldbank.org).

NER (net enrollment ratio): number of children of the appropriate age in a particular class over the total population of the same age group. When there is a majority of older children in classes, it is possible that age-appropriate children are squeezed out and so become over-age in turn.

<sup>9</sup> International Education Statistics Analysis Friedrich Huebler, April 2005

<sup>10</sup> The AEWG is an inter-agency working group made up of education partners working in Accelerated Education. The AEWG is currently led by UNHCR with representation from UNICEF, USAID, NRC, Plan, IRC, Save the Children, INEE, ECCN and War Child Holland.

In 2011, UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report stated, "Peace offers children who have missed out on schooling a chance to make up for lost time. Accelerated programs can help them build the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need to return to primary school or make the transition to secondary school."<sup>11</sup>

## THE EVOLUTION OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION

Accelerated education is an evolving concept that began, along with several other educational initiatives, when Howard Gardner proposed his theory on multiple intelligences in *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. This theory posits people learn in multiple ways through emotional, social, physical, reflective as well as cognitive learning systems. This theory has been absorbed and modified in the development of a number of education practices, including: child-centered learning, constructivist learning, and activity-based learning. Accelerated learning, the underpinning of what is known today as accelerated education, was a theory based on the multiple intelligences approach (Gardner, 1983), incorporating the theory of brain-based learning from Dr. Lozanov in the 1970s. The concept of accelerated learning changed and developed through the next decade, incorporating Bruner's work on discovery learning<sup>12</sup> from the 1960s and more recently the concept of rights-based education. It focuses on *how* the learning is done as opposed to *what* learning is done (Charlick, n.d.).

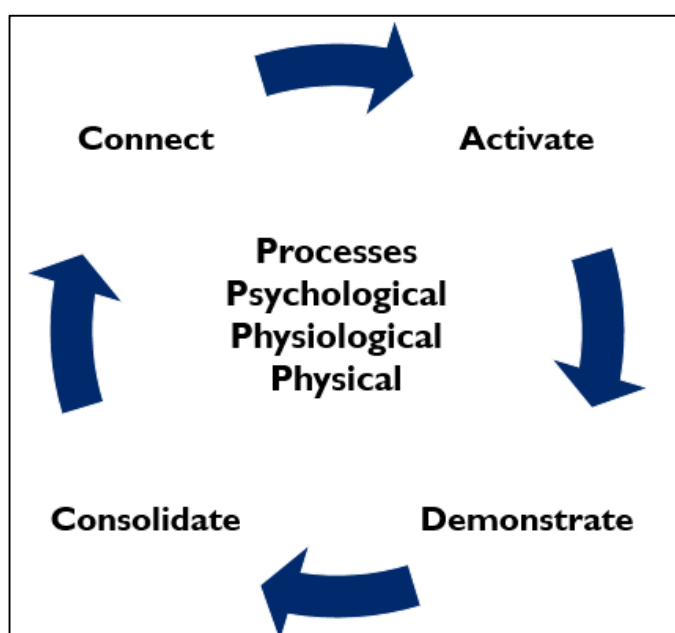
This original theory behind accelerated learning did not focus on increasing speed so learners achieved more quickly; rather, it focused on enabling more effective learning, depth, and clarity. In the original theory, "acceleration" referred to the brain's performance when learning occurred through multiple channels, implying an increased rate of internalized learning, not an increased speed of teaching. This conception of accelerated learning required an extremely well-resourced classroom and exceptionally well-trained teachers.

In the mid-90s, Alistair Smith simplified the concept of multiple intelligences to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (VAK) learning, and combined VAK with principles of discovery learning to produce the AL cycle (see Figure 1).

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<sup>11</sup> UNESCO 2011

<sup>12</sup> In discovery learning, the teacher structures the lesson (usually an activity or series of activities) so that the learner "discovers" the point or concept the teacher wants them to learn. Everything is asked: nothing is told. In discussions, the Socratic method is used so that there are "building" questions to help the learner get to the desired outcome. Primary research with a very structured outline is discovery learning, as is giving a small child 5 small stones and then 3 small stones and asking how many stones all together.

**Figure 1: Smith's Accelerated Learning Cycle**

Smith (2003) describes the four elements at the core of the accelerated learning cycle:

- **Processes:** creating an awareness for learning
- **Psychological:** developing relationships for learning
- **Physiological:** ensuring readiness for learning
- **Physical:** creating movement and space for learning

These core elements provide the physical and psychological space in which children and/or youth can learn more effectively, implying the need to create an environment that is warm and welcoming (and free of corporal punishment), requires effective teaching, and provides access to other services such as feeding or health programs.

The cycle consists of four general activities:

- **Connect:** What do the learners already know? What do they need to know? How will they benefit from knowing?
- **Activate:** The teacher poses problems to be solved.
- **Demonstrate:** The teacher provides opportunities for learners to show a variety of understandings.
- **Consolidate:** The learners are asked, “What have we learned?”, “How have we learned?” and “How will we benefit?” (Baxter & Bethke, 2009).

While this model of accelerated learning was later adopted by agencies and governments working in developing countries or crisis and conflict environments, it was not originally conceived or designed to be implemented in developing country or conflict-affected contexts where there are numerous challenges in infrastructure and resources, including under-trained teachers, lack of classrooms or under-resourced

classrooms, outdated curricula and/or a scarcity of teaching/learning materials, lack of funding, and problematic governance (Buckland, 2006).

Thus, to *connect; activate; consolidate* and *demonstrate*, and do this through *psychological, physiological and physical processes* (as shown in Figure 1) can be beyond the training and resources available to teachers in developing countries, let alone crisis and conflict-affected environments. This rings especially true in traditions where teachers mostly teach as they were taught, using a didactic style with a rigid curriculum.

While teachers, even undertrained teachers, can be trained in some of the attributes of accelerated learning methodologies, such as asking open questions, encouraging group work, and providing opportunities for small group discussion and research, this level of learner-centered approach requires much more than a crisis and conflict-affected education system can provide. As a result, the focus on teaching and learning methodology in accelerated learning became less important, not least because it was perceived as being difficult to impart to teachers in these contexts.

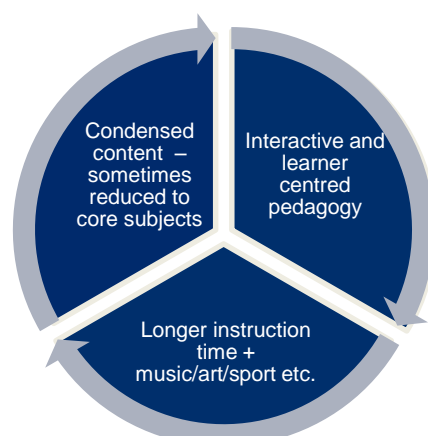
Prior its use in emergency contexts, accelerated learning had a focus on relevance in the curriculum. This may have resulted in some streamlining of curricula, but it was not designed to compress the curriculum.

Initiatives designed to help developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals began incorporating elements of accelerated learning,<sup>13</sup> especially as these elements were complementary to the formal education system or alternative approaches to help achieve the goals. In emergency situations, this concept was transferred to condensing or compressing the curriculum. In response to these needs and context, a more modified accelerated learning profile emerged (Figure 2). This incorporated crisis and conflict-affected environments (at least in principle) and was the first time the model incorporated a compressed or condensed curriculum. In 1998, ministerial officials in Liberia travelled to Uganda to see firsthand the COPE program (Manda, 2011). On their return to Liberia, they modified the concept to incorporate condensed content; Manda's report outlines one of the first instances where an alternative education program incorporated the accelerated learning profile shown in Figure 2. This model quickly spread as education agencies and INGOs adapted the model from one country to another.

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<sup>13</sup> E.g. COPE (Complementary Opportunities for Primary Education), RREP (Rapid Response Education Program) BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee)

**Figure 2: Accelerated Learning Profile, Revised for Crisis and Conflict-Affected Environments<sup>14</sup>**



Consequently, in a crisis or conflict-affected setting, the AL<sup>15</sup> model has:

- **Condensed content:** Education authorities (whether it is the ministry or an implementing agency) take responsibility for condensing or compressing the curriculum.<sup>16</sup>
- **Interactive and learner-centered pedagogy:** Teachers are trained in a rights-based,<sup>17</sup> interactive methodology, which in its simplest form means that teachers encourage learners to ask and answer questions freely, set up group work, and utilize a range of teaching activities to match individual learning styles.
- **Longer instruction time + music/arts/sports:** School managers ensure that extra time is provided in the school day/week for the other ways of learning—music, art, physical activities, etc.

Though not implemented consistently in reality, two components of the above crisis and conflict accelerated learning model remain true to the original principles of accelerated learning. Advocating interactive, child-centered approaches and longer instruction time with music and physical activities can theoretically enrich the understanding of how students in these, or any context, learn.

Consequently, programs that employ accelerated learning methodologies have emerged as a way to promote access to education in an accelerated time frame for

<sup>14</sup> ALP Workshop, Baxter, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that while the official title has now changed from Accelerated Learning to Accelerated Education, at the time of this study and indeed most of the reports that were reviewed use the term “accelerated learning.”

<sup>16</sup> A condensed curriculum generally means to rid the curricula material of overlap and revision. Ideally, it also means that because of cross-fertilization of teaching/learning styles and subject matter, subjects will mutually reinforce each other. A partial curriculum is where only core subjects are taught (i.e., four out of eight or twelve subjects).

<sup>17</sup> Rights-based (RB) pedagogy is when the principles of human rights—equality, dignity and respect—are incorporated into the teaching/learning program. It follows then that there can be no corporal punishment or emotional abuse, that classroom management is based on respect for the “other” (so listening when others are speaking), and work is respected and acknowledged. An effective RB classroom generally has very few classroom management or discipline problems.

disadvantaged groups, out-of-school, over-age children and youth who missed out or had their education interrupted due to poverty, violence, conflict, and crisis. The goal of these programs is to provide learners with equivalent competencies as those in the formal system in an accelerated timeframe, with learners either transitioning back into the mainstream education or completing an entire primary cycle.<sup>18</sup>

Although the definition and shape of accelerated learning has changed over forty years, from the idea of individual efficacy to speed of curriculum acquisition, the idea is still evolving. The most recent evolution is the move from accelerated learning (which infers individual efficacy) and accelerated learning programs (ALPs) to accelerated education (which infers systemic approaches as opposed to the individual approach) or accelerated education programs (AEPs). Many agencies who fund these programs are placing increased emphasis on moving learners through the school system more quickly than traditional education programming can manage. Because education infers a broader interpretation than learning, accelerated education infers the entire process of education and its cognitive, emotional, and social components.

From here on, we refer to these programs as accelerated education programs, or AEPs. The Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) defines an AEP as:

“A flexible age-appropriate program that promotes access to education in an accelerated time frame for disadvantaged groups, out-of-school, over-age children and youth who missed out or had their education interrupted due to poverty, marginalization, crisis and conflict. The goal of an AEP is to provide learners with equivalent certified competencies for basic education and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.”<sup>19</sup>

As the popularity of these programs increased, however, the label of “accelerated learning” and “accelerated education” was co-opted for an increasingly wide range of programs in response to a wider range of target groups. In an effort to have a cohesive understanding of the various labels used in emergency and alternative education programs, The Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) has developed a flow chart (Annex 2) to define the appropriate target beneficiaries of accelerated education; many programs that call themselves AEPs are actually bridging programs (short-term targeted preparation courses that support students’ success taking various forms such as language acquisition and/or other existing differences between home and host education curricula and systems for entry into a different type of certified education).<sup>20</sup> Other programs that are named AEPs would

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with AEWG chair

<sup>19</sup> INEE Term Bank

<sup>20</sup> Accelerated Education Working Group Definition

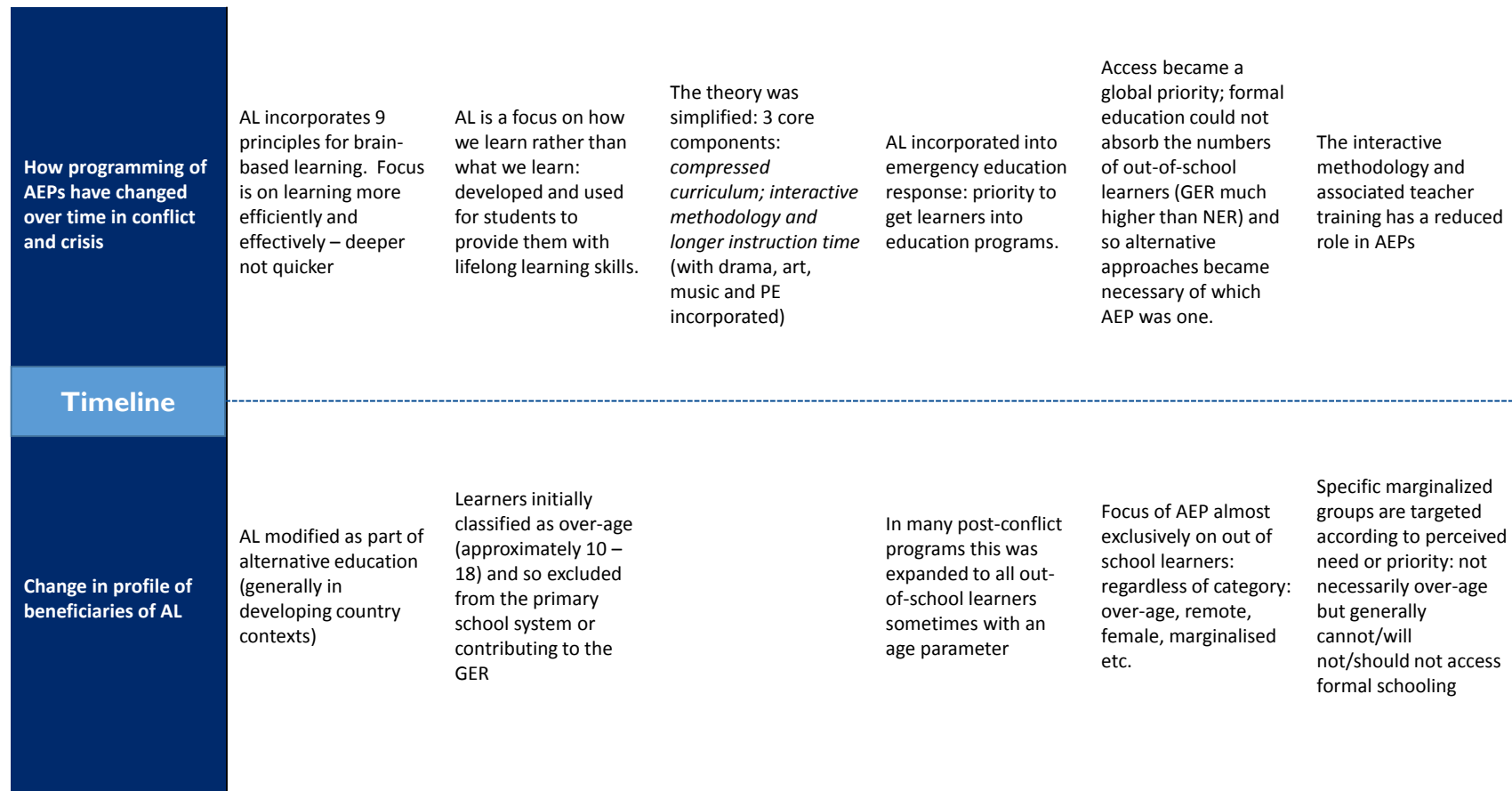
be more accurately called remedial programs,<sup>21</sup> catch-up programs,<sup>22</sup> adult literacy programs, skills readiness programs, or just alternative basic education programs.

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<sup>21</sup> Additional targeted support, concurrent with regular classes, for students who require short-term content or skill support to succeed in regular formal programming.

<sup>22</sup> A short-term transitional education program for children and youth who had been actively attending school prior to an educational disruption, which provides students with the opportunity to learn content missed because of the disruption and supports their re-entry to the formal system

**Figure 3: Evolution of AL Programming and Beneficiary Profile in Crisis and Conflict Settings**



## OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The growing popularity of accelerated learning in crisis and conflict settings merits a closer look at how the modified accelerated learning profile (Figure 2) is currently implemented, whether these programs meet their intended goals, and how to improve programming to better meet these goals.

This literature review originally endeavored to answer questions about the effectiveness and impact of accelerated education programs, particularly in situations of crisis and conflict: mainly, do AEPs lead to greater access to education and improved learning outcomes? The answer is a complex and requires clearly articulated objectives, measures of success, and an understanding of what AEPs should be measured against. To attribute and measure improvements in outcomes to AEPs themselves over other alternatives, studies require a proper counterfactual. Studies with experimental research designs (randomized control trials) or quasi-experimental research designs (e.g. difference-in-differences, propensity score matching) develop a counterfactual that, if executed correctly, allows the researcher to measure what, if any, changes in outcomes can be attributed specifically to the intervention over other factors.

A scan of published and grey literature, along with a number of interviews and consultations with experts in the field, confirmed that the availability of rigorous experimental, quasi-experimental, or longitudinal studies of AEPs is limited. Other review efforts have run across the same issue (Burde et al., 2015; Longden, 2014). In addition, when scanning available literature, the team found that very few AEPs met the modified Accelerated Learning profile (Figure 2). Discussions with key informants and experts in the field of accelerated education programs, alongside our initial scan of the literature, exposed a number of programmatic variations in the design and implementation of AEPs. In light of the current landscape of the AEP literature, this review was readjusted to answer critical research questions that will ultimately inform a research agenda on understanding the impact and effectiveness of AEPs.

1. In operation, what are the profiles of AEPs? How do the elements of these profiles differ from the theoretical elements of accelerated learning articulated in Figure 2?
2. What outcomes, if any, are reported on AEPs, and what can they tell us about how AEPs increase access and improve learning outcomes for out-of-school youth, especially those in crisis and conflict-affected environments?
3. What are the critical questions related to the structure of AEPs, and where are the gaps in the literature?
4. Based on what we know about AEPs, and the difficulties associated with evaluating AEPs and other education interventions in crisis and conflict-affected environments, what recommendations can we make about how to evaluate AEPs and operationalize the research agenda around AEPs?

## METHODOLOGY

Documentation was identified through:

- Key informant interviews to locate grey and unpublished literature. Key informants were initially identified by USAID and experts in the area of emergency education. As conversations occurred with the initial list of key informants, more key informants were located and interviewed.
- A systematic database search executed by a University of Chicago librarian<sup>23</sup>
- References from previous reviews or evaluation reports of AEPs
- Internet searches<sup>24</sup>

Ideally, this review would have prioritized experimental and quasi-experimental studies. In the absence of these studies, this review relies heavily on performance evaluations, especially those that are transparent in their methodology and limitations. When researching outcome data, the team searched for studies that provided clear methodology and analysis for how results were reached. Other documentation describing the program was used as needed to supplement information missing from evaluations.

After creating a comprehensive pool of available resources, close to 90 documents, the team used the following inclusion criteria, some of which are included in the AEWG flow chart (Annex 2) and the AEWG definition of AEPs to decide whether or not to review the program and include it in our discussion:

- Is there a compressed or modified curriculum?
- Is the program ultimately aimed at increasing access to out-of-school, over-aged children and youth?
- Does the program have a stated interactive methodology?

The review looked for elements of programs that reflected the principles of accelerated learning, but programs were also reviewed if they were self-labeled “accelerated education” or “accelerated learning.” As a result of this culling exercise, we narrowed our list of “relevant” literatures to 44 documents, ten of which were either mid-term or final performance evaluation reports. References in non-evaluation reports to other evaluations, especially those that were summative, were followed up to locate where available.

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<sup>23</sup> Search terms include: (pub("forced migration review" OR refugee\*) OR (pub(migration OR demograph\*) AND refugee\*) OR su(refugees OR "internal migration" OR "political violence")) AND ("education program\*" OR "teaching methods" OR curricul\* OR "accelerated learning" OR "emergency education" OR "rapid education" OR "alternative education" OR "out of age" OR "community-based school\*" OR "community-based educat\*" OR "accelerated classes" OR "catch-up" OR su(teacher\* or teaching) or ((su(internet) or digital) and (learn\* or teach\*))). Limited to 2000-2015.

<sup>24</sup> Search terms include: “accelerated learning program”, “accelerated education program”

The focus of this study is primarily on AEPs implemented in crisis and conflict-affected environments. There exists a wide-spectrum of factors and level of “stability” across crisis and conflict-affected environments; while some programs were implemented in more “stable” contexts, others were implemented in emergency situations where aspects critical to the successful implementation of AEPs, including infrastructure and institutional capacity, were especially weak or non-existent. Proper documentation, understandably, was harder to locate on AEPs implemented in less stable contexts. To help enrich the conversation, documentation from more stable contexts, including from AEPs not implemented in crisis and conflict-affected environments, was included in this study.

Consequently, caution should be taken when interpreting findings; not everything implemented in a stable context, or every conclusion drawn about AEPs in stable contexts, translates directly to an emergency context. Because AEPs need to respond to context-specific factors, it is not necessarily valuable to compare programs side-by-side. However, we hypothesize that key characteristics of AEPs implemented in stable contexts could also have promise in crisis and conflict-affected environments. Similarly, questionable practices, weaknesses, and red flags that pertain to the characteristics of AEPs implemented in stable contexts are likely to be exacerbated in programs implemented in crisis and conflict-affected environments.

## SECTION 1: PROFILE OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

While reviewing the literature, the team paid careful attention to the elements documented for each program. In reality, many cases varied from the profile described in Figure 2. In this section, we summarize the profile and program elements of AEPs whose documentation the team reviewed to answer our first research question: in practice, what is the profile of accelerated education programs?

In particular, we focus on the:

- **Design and structure of AEPs**, including their degree of acceleration (and the accompanying learning time and compression of curriculum) and how many cycles or programs have been funded (duration). We also outline observed class sizes and strategies for flexible timetabling.
- **Profile of beneficiaries of AEPs**
- **Selection and training of AEP teachers**, along with the instructional materials provided
- Elements of **conflict-sensitivity** and **gender-sensitivity** in AEP curriculum
- **Costs** associated with learning
- The **funders and stakeholders** of AEPs

### CHALLENGES IN COMPARING AEPs

One of the issues that became very clear during the course of this review is the incredible diversity of AEPs. AEPs are generally implemented in response to needs, where it has been decided that accelerated learning, in some form, is the most appropriate response. However, many of the characteristics of AEPs, while generally shared amongst different programs, are in fact specific for the context to which they are responding. For example, while most AEPs intend to respond to a lack of access, the reasons why access is limited are as varied as the programs themselves. These varied contexts shape the diversity of the design and implementation of AEPs.

Therefore, it may not be reasonable to compare a program designed to respond to massive numbers of over-age youth whose education has been interrupted by cyclic conflict to a program that responds to the educational needs of nomadic communities or a program that responds to the needs of urban youth living in extreme poverty.

Because AEPs respond to different contexts, and therefore have a range of varying objectives, their programmatic characteristics, including curriculum compression, instruction time, and teaching methodology, are context-specific. For example,

depending of the objectives of the AEP, curricula can be compressed and/or pared back—compression can occur through curriculum review (and rewriting), elimination of overlap and revision, or deletion of subjects from the curriculum such that only core subjects are taught. The result may be one curriculum that covers twelve subjects but does so at an accelerated pace, versus a four subject partial curriculum. These variations have a number of implications for how teachers are trained, how classes are structured, and how students are ultimately assessed.

Within this context, this review attempts to document available information about AEPs, highlighting the diversity in their designs and implementation. Because of this diversity, however, readers should bear in mind contextual information before trying to draw generalizations across AEPs, or comparing programs against each other.

### **Transitional or Foundational?**

In emergency situations, education programs are generally developed as transitional programs. They are put into place as an emergency response, either as a stopgap, or when formal education does not exist or cannot be accessed by sections of the population. AEPs in Liberia, RISE in Iraq, and the APEP and Children in Crisis programs in Afghanistan are all examples of transitional programs.

Foundational programs are designed to be part of the rebuilding and part of the formal education process. They may look and act exactly like other formal education programs managed by the government and they often initially work in parallel to the government system. However, foundational programs exist to create a more effective and efficient system. They should model new and improved curricula approaches, more effective teaching and learning models, and more effective social and community protection models. Ideally they should also create structures so that these elements can be viewed and absorbed by those in the formal system. AEPs are generally not considered foundational because they have restricted target beneficiaries.

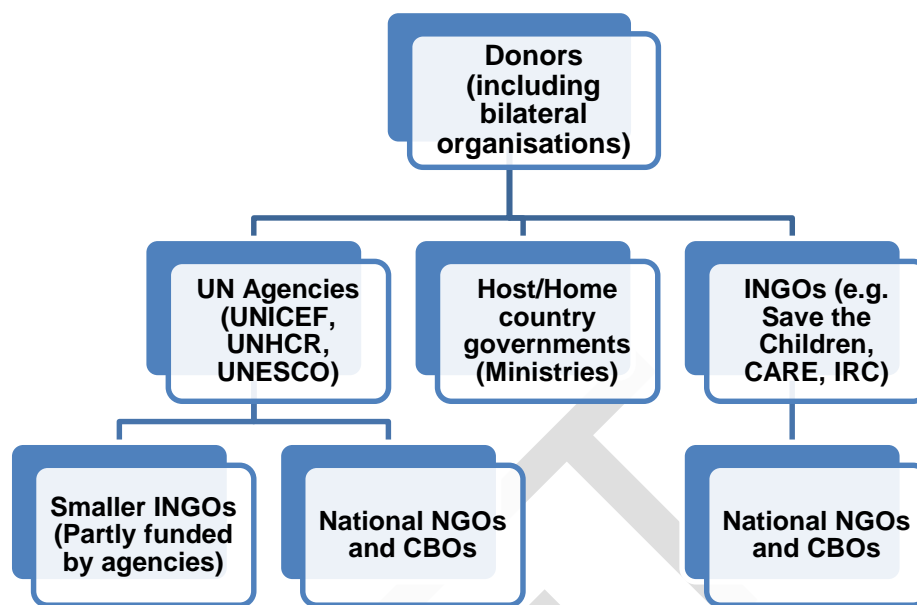
The transfer from transitional programs to foundational programs is one of the key issues with the original concept of AEPs in crisis and conflict-affected environments, with an objective for learners getting back into the formal school system. Recognition of curricula, teachers, and learners is generally delayed because of the administrative issues connected with them: teacher certification, accreditation of programs, reconciliation of salaries and coordination of curriculum as well as the obvious task of having learners move smoothly from a non-formal setting to a formal setting through recognition of the learning achievements. Agencies operating in the field are increasingly pushing to have the programs endorsed and ultimately supported by the government. Because the program does not look like the formal program it is considered non-formal. Non-formal education is sometimes perceived by ministries as being 2<sup>nd</sup> class education.

## FUNDERS AND STAKEHOLDERS OF AEPS

**Figure 4: Funding and Implementation Stakeholders**

DRAFT

In situations of crisis and conflict, governments and relevant ministries may be in a



nascent stage, or may lack capacity (financial and otherwise) to effectively manage and operate education systems. In situations with large refugee populations, the additional demand may stretch already limited resources within the host country government. In these instances, aid agencies often take responsibility for infrastructure, teacher training and salaries. Equally, with internally displaced populations, they may create a huge demand on local educational resources and, again, aid agencies may take responsibility for infrastructure and teacher training, although less often responsibilities for salaries. These aid agencies are often funded by international donors and bilateral agencies and historically work together with the government (or take on the role of the government). The funds are traditionally funneled to UN agencies and to major international non-governmental organizations. More recently, some UN agencies are funding and implementing AEPs directly as well as supporting other agencies to implement projects. For example, some of the programs reviewed were both funded and implemented by UNICEF. At the same time, other programs are implemented by smaller NGOs (either international or national) that are funded by UNICEF.

Other organizations start from the grassroots level (as opposed to starting at the government or system level). In our review, War Child, COPE in Uganda, Children in Crisis in Afghanistan, and School for Life in Ghana are examples of where the community was not only approached first but was instrumental in developing and supporting the AEP. Community-based AEPs tend to be small-scale and supported by the smaller INGOs. One exception to this is the School for Life program in Ghana which is funded by DANIDA and USAID. Rather than working through a hierarchy, organizations moved directly to the community who support the program in kind.

There were three other exceptions to the “typical” funding and implementation structure. Two programs—the Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education Program in Ethiopia and the Basic Accelerated Cycle in Esmeraldas, Ecuador—operated with financial support from the government. Gambella was implemented by a combination of local NGOs and CSOs, while the program in Ecuador was operated by an INGO working in conjunction with local NGOs. The Speed Schools program in Ethiopia was the only program reviewed that was funded by a private foundation.

## DESIGN AND STRUCTURE OF AEPs

At their core, AEPs aim to accelerate learning by employing a compressed or partial<sup>25</sup> curriculum, utilizing longer teaching and learning times, and relying upon the conceptual understanding of older learners. Depending on how AEPs operationalize the above three inputs, the design and structure of AEPs varies greatly, resulting in a certain degree of acceleration.

### *Instruction Time*

As outlined in Figure 2, a critical component of AEPs is that they should work longer sessions, because the teaching methodology is interactive and learner-centered, and the curriculum incorporates other aspects of learning (such as music, the arts, and sports).

There are few documented examples of expanded instruction time (Nicholson, 2006; Longden, 2014; Nicolls 2004). APEP in Afghanistan, for example, achieved the degree of acceleration required (two years in one) because students worked a longer academic year and worked through the vacation period to allow for learning the curriculum in a shorter amount of time. While this program appears to follow the model, learning time was only expanded to allow for an increased volume of traditional learning. In other words, APEP did not necessarily provide expanded learning time to incorporate interactive methodology and non-cognitive learning.

Expanded learning time appears to be the exception, not the norm (Table 1). Several programs appeared to add elements to the core curricula, including life skills subjects or brain-based learning subjects (music, physical activity). Given that time is limited, adding these subjects alongside interactive child-centered pedagogy while attempting to cover more ground in a shorter amount of time is not viable if the learning time is not expanded. It could be the case that the need to move through the curriculum subjects more quickly has been prioritized over providing expanded class time.

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<sup>25</sup> Baxter and Taylor *What is Accelerated Learning?* Global Working Group on Accelerated Education 2015

**Table 1: Examples of Programs That Document Expanded Instruction Duration, Enhanced Activities, and Pared Down Curriculum**

<b>Programs which employ expanded instruction time</b>
APEP Afghanistan (Nicholson, 2006)
<b>Programs which add components to traditional curriculum, but did not indicate expanded instruction time</b>
School for Life Ghana (Hartwell, 2006): school day includes time for sports, handicrafts, music, and dance
COPE Uganda (Deweese, 2000): life skills coursework
Accelerated Learning for Positive Living and United Service (Coyne et al., 2008): extra learning activities
Children in Crisis Afghanistan (Rowse & Weir, 2014): ALP classes offer all 12 subjects including sports
CESLY Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (The Mitchell Group, 2011): extra activities
Somalia, Puntland, Somaliland Accelerated Primary Education Support (APES) (Wesonga, 2013): clubs established
South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) (Leigh & Epstein, 2012): civics and health
Udaan (CARE India, 2012): social learning curriculum aimed at girls empowerment
<b>Programs which pared down curriculum (to basic subjects), but did not add more instruction time</b>
BRAC Primary Schools (Chaboux, 2005)
Ethiopia Speed Schools (Akyeampong, 2012)
Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education (Anis, 2007)

### **Curriculum Compression**

Table 4 outlines the range of compression seen amongst documented programs; most accelerated programs compress by 50% (8 years into 4, or 6 years into 3) to match the formal primary curriculum (Lee & Epstein, 2012; UNICEF, 2011; Nicolls, 2004; Manda, 2011; Nicholson, 2006)—although some programs have a higher degree of acceleration with a shorter cycle, compressing 3 years into 1 year (Hartwell, 2006; Ayeampong, 2012).

While AEPs focus on curriculum compression, they often also add components to the traditional curriculum to address gender sensitivity, conflict sensitivity, and other issues of relevance. Given limited time, condensing formal education subjects while adding more content could set up a tension between teaching for test results (and transitioning successfully) and educating for relevance. Many of the programs reviewed included alternative subjects in their curriculum (peace, civics, environment, HIV/AIDS, landmine education); however, none described how much time was given to these subjects (Table 1). At least one program, SPARK, Zambia, flagged the difficulties associated with an external exam when only a partial curriculum (core subjects only) was achieved (Chondoka & Subulwa, 2004).

A heavily edited curriculum in terms of subjects, the inclusion of additional subjects to the core curriculum, and the speed at which concepts are taught can have consequences. The Mid-Term Review for *Accelerated Learning for Positive Living and United Service* (Coyne et al., 2008) noted the achievements for the level 1 learners were much less successful than for levels 2 and 3. While this could imply that academically weaker level 1 learners drop out, increasing average scores for level 2 and level 3, in context, it is likely that level 1 learners had generally never attended school or a learning program before. The “hidden curricula” of formal schooling, such as focused attention, sitting still, fine motor skills, etc. are not part of the learners’ repertoire (Coyne et al., 2008; Gordon, 2013). Coupled with compressed learning and, in some cases, longer hours of instruction, the learner has to learn a set of fundamentals that those who have been in school already know. In addition, several interviewees noted that learners in level 1 were underage or so close in age that they could have been enrolled in a normal primary school, implying they lacked the intellectual and emotional maturity to deal with a compressed curriculum (Chondoka & Subulwa, 2004). In contrast, learners directly enrolled in levels 2 and 3 likely were in school at some point in their lives to have achieved the pre-requisite level of learning.

### ***Duration of Programs***

Ideally an AEP would last as long as it takes to fulfill its objectives. If the objective is to bring in a finite supply of out-of-school, over-age children and youth to the program, then the program would continue until there are no more enrollments. If the objective is to provide an education program for those who cannot ever access a formal education program (e.g. distance, cultural factors, nomadic groups), then the program might always exist, just as formal education exists.

At the developmental end of the spectrum, where the intent of the AEP is to respond to other criteria (exclusion, location, minority groups) or where the AEP was originally established as a response to conflict but has since responded to systemic exclusion caused by the conflict, the duration allows for multiple cycles (where multiple cohorts have gone through and completed the AEP). Among these, BRAC has been implementing for more than 30 years (Chaboux, 2005), UNICEF Cambodia ALP for nine years (Taylor 2010), School for Life Ghana for over 20 (Hartwell, 2006).

However, in a crisis or conflict-affected environment, programs are not generally funded for the long-term. While it seems self-evident, sometimes the number of years the program is implemented and funded does not match the number of years required to run a full program.

Most of the programs reviewed in these settings fulfilled at least one cycle, ranging from three to five years. Funding for only one cycle implies that the program was not in existence long enough to see more than one cohort of learners graduate from the program. If learners are still part of the cycle when the program ceases, it could be

assumed to be detrimental to their education—they likely cannot transition to formal schools due to limited skills and knowledge base, sit external exams because their education has been interrupted again, or, if the program was established to relieve contextual issues such as location or exclusion, may not be able to access another school.

The planned duration of the program, pressures from donors, and the degree of acceleration planned for the program can lead to unintended consequences. Take, for example, a curriculum that has been compressed from six years into three. The program cycle should follow the cycle illustrated in Table 2:

**Table 2: Program Cycle, Example 1**

1 <sup>st</sup> year of implementation	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of implementation	3 <sup>rd</sup> year of implementation	4 <sup>th</sup> year of implementation
1 <sup>st</sup> intake – level 1	1 <sup>st</sup> intake – level 2	1 <sup>st</sup> intake – level 3 End of first cycle	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> intake – level 1	2 <sup>nd</sup> intake – level 2	2 <sup>nd</sup> intake – level 3 End of second cycle
		3 <sup>rd</sup> intake – level 1	3 <sup>rd</sup> intake – level 2
			4 <sup>th</sup> intake – level 1

Examples: NRC Liberia programs using TEP (Nicholson, 2006)

As shown in Table 2, after four years of implementation, only two full cycles of learners would have graduated. If the program continued for a fifth year, three cycles could be completed. This model assumes that every out-of-school learner has no prior education, needs to start at level 1, and there are not a huge number of learners to accommodate. When the number of learners exceeds capacity, some programs take the oldest learners first (Hartwell, 2006).

However, some programs (such as those in Liberia and South Sudan) experienced pressure both from the potential learners and from the government to simply enroll learners in programs. In those cases, some implementing partners began the program with all levels starting simultaneously. In cases where level 3 (where learners may just be the oldest learners in the cohort but who are often presumed to have had an interrupted education rather than no education) is a single-year program, level 2 has two years, and level 1 has three years, this could be problematic. In the best-case scenario, potential learners are screened and allocated to classes based on both previous education and age.

**Table 3: Program Cycle, Example 2**

1 <sup>st</sup> year of implementation	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of implementation	3 <sup>rd</sup> year of implementation
1 <sup>st</sup> intake level 1	1 <sup>st</sup> intake: level 2	1 <sup>st</sup> intake ;Level 3 <b>End of first full cycle</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> intake: Level 2	1 <sup>st</sup> intake: Level 3 End of “cycle”: Graduate	
1 <sup>st</sup> intake: Level 3 End of “Cycle”		

If the program is extended beyond three years then a new level 1 intake can be enrolled and so on. There could be replicas of this model every year. If there are a large number of level 1 enrollees (generally learners aged nine and older and who have never been to school) then it may take at least nine years to complete the program. However, there are no recorded programs operating in a conflict or crisis-affected country that have been in operation for over nine years.

When a project is stopped (either through lack of funding, a change in policy, or through a government directive) then there are learners who do not complete their cycle. So in a program that operates for 4 or 5 years where the AEP is compressed to 3 years (e.g. Afghanistan, Liberia, Iraq, Somalia APES), there are cohorts of learners who cannot finish their cycle.

For example, in the multiple programs operating in Liberia between 2006/09 and 2007/11, both time frames were interrupted by cyclic conflict (UNICEF, 2011). With an AEP of three years, only one cohort in each time frame completed all three years of the program (Manda, 2011).

As seen in Table 3, several programs in crisis, conflict, and post-conflict contexts were only able to see one cohort of students through—examples include Children in Crisis Afghanistan, CESLY Liberia, and APEP Afghanistan among others.

To avoid these situations, planning for accelerated programs should incorporate the number of cycles of learning required to ensure the target group (out-of-school, over-age children and youth) graduates from the program and to fund the program accordingly. If that is not possible (generally because emergency response/humanitarian assistance funding is single-year funding),<sup>26</sup> then intake should be tailored to ensure those enrolled can continue until they graduate with no threat of the program ceasing mid-cycle.

<sup>26</sup>Given the single-year funding model for emergencies coupled with the long-term nature of education, there have been mismatches for both basic education and specific education initiatives. This is not restricted to Accelerated Education programs. Once any specialized funding ceases, generally, the reporting on the specialized approach also ceases. This is not, necessarily, to say that the program itself ceases, although historically, it is often downgraded.

In the programs reviewed, there was no direct evidence that emergency response programs continued after specialized funding ceased. This may have been a function of the reports and documents reviewed as much as a change in context or need. Once programs were mainstreamed (funded from regular sources), they seemed to be less regularly reviewed or reported.

**Table 4: Reported Degree of Acceleration and Duration of Program**

Program	Country	Acceleration of cycle	Program duration (as reported)	Cycles completed (Approximate)
<b>Conflict/Post-Conflict Contexts</b>				
Accelerated Learning in Liberia- IBIS (Gordon, 2013)	<b>Liberia</b>	6 years to 3 years	2005-8; 2009-11	3
Ethiopia Speed Schools (Ayeampong, 2012)	<b>Ethiopia</b>	3 years to 1 year (10 months)	2011-2017	3
South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) (Leigh & Epstein, 2012)	<b>Sudan</b>	8 years to 4 years	6 years	3
Children in Crisis (Rowse & Weir, 2014)	<b>Afghanistan</b>	6 years to 3 years	Not reported	1
CESLY Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (The Mitchell Group, 2011)	<b>Liberia</b>	6 years to 3 years	2009-2011	1
APEP (Kissam et al., 2006)	<b>Afghanistan</b>	5 years to 3 years	2003-2006	1
Accelerated Learning Program UNICEF Cambodia (Taylor, 2010)	<b>Cambodia</b>	6 years to 3 years	2006-2010	1
Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education (Anis, 2007)	<b>Ethiopia</b>	4 years to 3 years	2005 to unknown	-
Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education Programme (COPE) (Deweese, 2000)	<b>Uganda</b>	5 years to 3 years	1995 to unknown	-
Accelerated Learning for Positive Living and United Service: Mid-term Evaluation Review (Coyne et al., 2008)	<b>Liberia</b>	Not reported	3 years	-
Accelerated Primary Education Support (APES) (Wesonga, 2013)	<b>Somalia</b>	Not reported	2009-2012	-
Education Program Dadaab (Gomez, 2015)	<b>Kenya</b>	4 years to 3 years	2014-present	-
<b>Development Contexts</b>				

Program	Country	Acceleration of cycle	Program duration (as reported)	Cycles completed (Approximate)
BRAC Primary Schools (Chaboux, 2005)	<b>Bangladesh</b>	5 years to 4 years	1985-present	25
School for Life Ghana (Hartwell, 2006)	<b>Ghana</b>	3 years to 1 year (9 months)	2004-present	10
Udaan (CARE India, 2012)	<b>India</b>	5 years to 1 year	2009 to present	5
SPARK Zambia (Chondoka & Subulwa, 2004)	<b>Zambia</b>	7 years to 4 years		

## CLASS SIZE

Class sizes are often a function of supply and demand. In both Afghanistan and Liberia, for example, the formal education system was already beyond capacity with learners; almost as soon as AEPs started in these countries, they too were beyond capacity, with learners eager to take advantage of an education (Gordon, 2013). Where programs were established in isolated areas (because there was no other formal schooling), demand was particularly high, which was not unexpected as these were the first schools reaching these areas. A report on TEACH Ethiopia (a program designed to respond to the issue of geographic isolation) stated that “up to 70 students were observed in some classrooms” (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008).

**Table 5: Examples of Reported Class Sizes**

Program	Country	Class Sizes
APEP (Kissam et al., 2006)	Afghanistan	25
BRAC Primary Schools (Chaboux, 2005)	Bangladesh	25 to 33
Accelerated Learning Program UNICEF Cambodia (Taylor, 2010)	Cambodia	25
Ethiopia Speed Schools (Ayeampong, 2012)	Ethiopia	25
School for Life Ghana (Hartwell, 2006)	Ghana	25
Children in Crisis (Rowse & Weir, 2014)	Afghanistan	2 to 34
Accelerated Learning for Positive Living and United Service: Mid-term Evaluation Review (Coyne et al., 2008)	Liberia	27
Transforming Education for Adults and Children in the Hinterlands (TEACH) (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008)	Ethiopia	50 to 70
South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) (Leigh & Epstein, 2012)	Sudan	120
UNICEF Accelerated Learning (Nicholson, 2007)	Liberia	Ranges from 65 to 163:1

Almost half of the programs considered to be AEPs did not mention class size, but most of those that did (or that referred to it) claimed to have a maximum class size of

25:1 through 30:1. Some programs that mirror formal curriculum have class sizes around at 40+:1, with at least one program (Liberia) that recorded 65:1 (original class sizes for that program were 163:1, so volunteer teachers were recruited to work with the regular teachers to reduce to pupil teacher ratio, or PTR, to 65:1)<sup>27</sup> (Nicholson, 2007). Some formal reports listed very modest class sizes; however, key informants, who had observed classes, stated that in reality class sizes were typically much higher than formally reported sizes.

Where class sizes were reported, they averaged around 25-30:1—generally much smaller than the parallel formal education classes in developing countries. For example, the typical class in government primary schools in Cambodia is 50 students to one teacher (Taylor, 2010). However, to incorporate interactive techniques, even 30:1 is very difficult for an inexperienced teacher. Some programs have attempted to get around this by increasing the number of teachers in each class. For example, in the IBIS program in Liberia, there were two teachers per class; however, only one of the teachers is required to be literate.<sup>28</sup>

### ***Flexibility of Timetabling***

AEPs that have flexibility of timetabling should provide learning at times that best suit the learner. These times may change by day, month, or season, depending on needs. The only programs reviewed that reported genuine flexibility were community-based education programs (Rowse & Weir, 2014; Murphy, 2010). In the Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education program in Ethiopia, 12 out of 30 schools were mobile; facilitators moved with the schools, carrying along learning materials and a blackboard. Timetables differed between pastoral, agro-pastoral, and agricultural woredas due to different needs amongst students, and differed between classes (Anis, 2007).

The smaller the program (War Child, Children in Crisis) the more flexible the timetabling can be. Very large programs (NRC, UNICEF) tend to mimic the timetable of formal school systems; this may be because program managers view this as a motivation for transition from AEPs to formal schools.<sup>29</sup>

Scheduling parallel classes to formal school programs detracts from the real flexibility of the schedule. For example, some NRC programs (including those in Liberia and Afghanistan) have, as part of their intervention, constructed classrooms for the AEP classes in regular schools. In addition, they recruit teachers from the formal system. The “flexibility” in this case ensures that the teachers and classrooms are available after school and to enable split shifts. According to Nicholson (2006),

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that this was not necessarily adding quality to the teaching process by limiting class size as two teachers in a single room with 100+ learners and no training in group work does not make for a smaller class as much as it makes for rotation teaching

<sup>28</sup> This idea was developed many years ago by Dean Brooks as a social protection for female students. One teacher had to be female and in the classroom.

<sup>29</sup> Personal communication with NRC representatives

where AEPs are held in regular schools, there have been situations where education officials require them to meet in the afternoon. In South Sudan they were required to hold to the regular school timetable. These classes become, in essence, a split shift system albeit one that theoretically moves through the curriculum twice as fast.

## BENEFICIARIES OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

One key point in the rationale for the provision of AEP services is access. Every program reviewed noted access to education as a pre-condition of program implementation and targeted either out-of-school youth,<sup>30</sup> school dropouts, or children who have never been in a formal school system. Because AEPs can be modified to ensure the inclusion of different target groups, they respond to a need and complement what the formal system is trying to achieve. However, in these cases there may be no cohesion either in form or content; hence, scaling up, or replicating programs across organizational boundaries, can be difficult.

From our review, historically AEPs have responded to:

- Learners who are *over-age for the formal school system and have been denied education* or had their education severely interrupted because of crisis or conflict—all programs reviewed had the goal of reaching over-age students. This is particularly important in some countries (for example, Liberia) where there are age restrictions for children entering school. In these settings, children who are older than the rules allow are the primary target group for AEPs.<sup>31</sup>
- *Disadvantaged or marginalized/excluded learners* (this may include distance from formal education). This group could include girls (and increasingly women)—examples of programs that target girls include TEACH Ethiopia, IBIS Liberia, School for Life Ghana, COPE Uganda, APES Somalia, and APEP Afghanistan (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008; Gordon, 2013; Hartwell, 2006; Dewees, 2000; Wesonga, 2013; Nicholson, 2006). Disadvantaged or marginalized learners can also include certain minority tribal groups, nomads, etc. None of these categories are exclusive and there is a deal of overlap—certain tribal groups inhabit very remote locations and so suffer the twin discriminations of marginalized populations and distance (e.g. APES Somalia, Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education and TEACH Ethiopia, which all provide mobile ALPs for nomadic groups).
- *Girls*. Although many girls in these contexts are over-age, there are AEPs (particularly in countries where girls have been traditionally denied an education) where the entire focus is on girls' education. The assumption here is that girls

<sup>30</sup> EFA Goals nominate “children” in goals one and two and referring to primary education (the focus of almost all AE programs). Goal 3 references “young people” and refers to “appropriate learning and life skills programs” (World Education Forum 2015).

<sup>31</sup> 2011 Education Act of Liberia states that children should start school at 6 and that children over that age should attend “special” opportunities such as AEP. Prior to 2011 the cutoff was 11 (Manda, 2011).

and women suffer considerably more in crisis or conflict than do boys and men, even without the discrimination of having been denied education.

While not every AEP reviewed was established in a crisis or conflict-affected environment (e.g. SPARK in Zambia), all programs were implemented to respond to a need to provide access for out-of-school learners. AEP classes were established in response to learners who had been denied an education or who had their education interrupted because of conflict—sometimes in cases where children’s and youth’s schools no longer exist or were significantly destroyed by conflict (e.g. APEP in Afghanistan, where children were unable to access particularly damaged areas of Kabul), whose teachers have fled or have been killed, or who could never access education because their area was cutoff from the resources of larger cities. In Taliban-era Afghanistan where girls were forbidden to go to school, a huge demand was also created once Taliban restrictions were lifted. Children whose education was interrupted because of conflict can also refer to children associated with fighting forces (CAFF): both boys and girls who have been abducted, trained, and/or used as sex slaves or porters.

Keeping in mind that conflict exacerbates existing inequities (Buckland, 2006), girls, remote area groups, marginalized/excluded groups, and learners in extreme poverty all became potential beneficiaries in various programs (Table 6). Every report reviewed targeted one or more of these groups.

Programs such as those in Afghanistan (Kissam et al., 2006; Rowse & Weir, 2014; Nicholson, 2006) looked primarily at groups that were historically excluded, predominately girls.

Some AEPs operate in remote areas not served by any other form of education. Learners may be over-age (because the exclusion is long-term), but equally these programs are implemented because there is no other available option. In this situation, learners may be age-grade appropriate. Even with a degree of acceleration, one could argue these programs are a complementary education system.

**Table 6: Snapshot of beneficiary profiles across programs<sup>32</sup>**

Program	Country	Beneficiary Profile	Age Range
<b>Children in Crisis (Rowse &amp; Weir, 2014)</b>	Afghanistan	Children who cannot access school, particularly	Not reported

<sup>32</sup> While the literature claims a specific age range for AE programs (generally when learners are too old to begin primary schooling), it should be noted that where programs have been developed to respond to an issue of location (remote area schools) that the age range often parallels a formal primary program. These programs were included in the study because they claimed compression of curriculum and/or “speeded up” school time and were ultimately aimed at increasing access to out-of-school, over-age children and youth, even if some youth did not meet these criteria. A strict adherence to a specific age range would have greatly limited the scope of the study.

Program	Country	Beneficiary Profile	Age Range
		damaged areas of Kabul	
<b>Afghanistan Primary Education Programme (APEP) (Nicholson, 2006)</b>	Afghanistan	Over-aged students, particularly girls	Over 9 years
<b>Transforming Education for Adults and Children in the Hinterlands (TEACH) (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008)</b>	Ethiopia	Disadvantaged, out-of-school children, particularly girls, many of whom are pastoralists and live in remote, hard-to-access areas.	7-14 years old
<b>Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education (Anis, 2007)</b>	Ethiopia	Children from nomadic/pastoral communities, ethnic minorities, out-of-school youth or those who withdrew from school, rural poor, and girls	7-14 years old; although 20% of learners may be 15-19 years old
<b>Ethiopia Speed Schools (Ayeampong, 2012)</b>	Ethiopia	School dropouts from poor families	Not reported
<b>Revitalization of Iraqi Schools and Stabilization of Education (RISE) Project Pilot (Nicolls, 2004)</b>	Iraq	Not reported	11-17 years old
<b>Accelerated Learning in Liberia- IBIS (Gordon, 2013)</b>	Liberia	Out-of-school youth, particularly girls	Not reported
<b>CESLY Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (The Mitchell Group, 2011)</b>	Liberia	Adults, school dropouts from basic education, economically active persons who want to continue learning, women and girls, and vulnerable and disadvantaged populations	13 years or older
<b>Accelerated Primary Education Support (APES) (Wesonga, 2013)</b>	Somalia	Girls, rural poor, IDPs, returnees, nomads and children with disabilities	Not reported
<b>South Sudan Interactive Radio Instruction (SSIRI) (Leigh &amp; Epstein, 2012)</b>	Sudan	Out-of-school youth and adults	Not reported
<b>Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education</b>	Uganda	Children who have never been in formal school system, priority given to	8-14 years old

Program	Country	Beneficiary Profile	Age Range
<b>Programme (COPE)</b> (Deweese, 2000)		females	
<b>BRAC Primary Schools</b> (Chaboux, 2005)	Bangladesh	Rural youth	8-10 years old
<b>School for Life Ghana</b> (Hartwell, 2006)	Ghana	Out-of-school youth; rate higher for females than males	8-15 years old
<b>SPARK Zambia</b> (Chondoka & Subulwa, 2004)	Zambia	Underprivileged children who are dropouts or never been in formal school system	9-16 years, but actual age range was 7-14 years

### ***Enrollment and Selection***

Theoretically, learner recruitment in AEPs is based on greatest need first—prioritizing learners who are over-age and who have missed most schooling (but who are also not adults).

Unfortunately, there is little documentation on how learners are selected for AEPs. In the Children in Crisis Afghanistan program, the community and the elders (including the mullahs) went from house to house to encourage parents to let their girls go to school (Rowse & Weir, 2014). This motivation and support from the community added to the success of implementation. While there was no indication that these girls were all over-age, the criterion was that they were all out-of-school.

In other situations, however, it appears that AEP enrollment operates on a first-come, first-served basis.<sup>33</sup> In some programs, reports indicate that children and/or youth are tested prior to entry (Manda, 2011) but there is much more evidence (particularly in older programs) where children and/or youth who were school age and younger simply attended AEPs instead of formal schools: if the classes are free, and materials are provided, it is irresistible (Manda, 2011; Nicholson, 2006).

There are several potential disadvantages associated with school-aged learners attending AEPs. If primary-aged girls attend classes for over-aged learners there is likely a heightened risk of younger learners being subjected to higher levels of GBV, including physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Older learners could be humiliated by being in classes alongside very young children. Furthermore, if teaching and learning is sped up at a level meant for older students, then younger students may not be able to keep up. If the teacher slows down the teaching to take account of younger students, then the program could be self-defeating. Children who are enrolled but are too young to actively participate or cope cognitively may drop out, leading to frustrated expectations. In situations where one of the program goals is social

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Coordinator of the AEWG, 2015.

protection, putting different age groups together in learning groups contradicts the goal.

## TEACHER<sup>34</sup> SELECTION AND TRAINING

As Figure 2 illustrates, interactive methodology is an incredibly important pillar of accelerated learning. The challenge lies in finding teachers in resource poor, crisis and conflict-affected environments who can, despite limited education, resources, and training, create an atmosphere that encourages interactivity and can implement a complex curriculum. In areas where skilled teachers have fled or have been killed, recruiting teachers to meet this specific human capital need poses a great challenge. Training skilled teachers in activity-based learning and interactive methodologies, let alone those who have never taught before, requires a training program that enables teachers to not only impart core subjects but also create a learning environment that embodies the principles of accelerated learning.

### Selection

Ideally, AEPs have a teacher selection plan based on community input but with ministry (or education authority) involvement and validation. It was unclear from the review how many programs had selection plans, but several programs, including School for Life Ghana, TEACH Ethiopia, and COPE Uganda, had teachers who were selected directly by the community, from the community (Hartwell, 2006; Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008; Dewees, 2000).

#### Selecting teachers:

**Certified teachers:** *Advantages:* Teachers who use up-to-date pedagogy and rights-based education provide a long-term improvement in the education system. The more immediate change in classroom behaviors also requires consistent monitoring and support (in this case by the ministry), appropriate T/L materials, a revised curriculum, and reduced class size. *Disadvantages:* There are issues surrounding ministry recognition: upgrading of teaching levels and, therefore, salaries and (re)allocating teachers according to their skill set.

#### Trained but not recognized teachers:

*Advantages:* Teachers very often have a strong foundation of activity-based learning. *Disadvantages:* Observers/monitors do not necessarily know the content of training. There is a risk of overlap and missed concepts deriving from multiple but non-coordinated trainings. Teachers may not have a long-term future without ministry recognition.

**Volunteer teachers:** *Advantages:* Teachers want to be there; they are known and respected by the community; they are relatively easy to train (e.g. they don't have to unlearn bad habits). Employers (the community) are constantly on watch. Because they are being supported by an NGO or agency, they usually have smaller classes, utilize interactive pedagogy and employ rights-based classroom management. *Disadvantages:* Observers/monitors do not necessarily understand the concepts and methodology; there is a risk of overlap and missed concepts deriving from multiple but non-coordinated trainings. Teachers may not have a long-term future without ministry recognition.

<sup>34</sup> While there is increasing use of the term “educator” in lieu of the term “teacher” in the AEP context, almost all reports referred to instructors as “teachers.”

At a minimum, selection should aim for gender parity and the inclusive recruitment of minorities. The initial identification of teachers should take into account elements that contribute to quality or help to negate past injustices. These elements should include level of knowledge (literacy and numeracy), pedagogical skills and knowledge and constructive attitudes.

Several programs explicitly gave female teachers preference in selection, including BRAC Bangladesh and COPE Uganda (Chaboux, 2005; Dewees, 2000). The prevalence of minority group representation is less clear.

It is unclear whether or not any of the programs we reviewed consistently utilized the following strategies for teacher selection:

- The communities where the AEPs are to be implemented. There are often talented “teachers” who are well known within the communities, even though they may have no formal qualifications. These people have the advantage of knowing the community well and being respected within the community.<sup>35</sup>
- Ministry records<sup>36</sup>
- Volunteers who have been trained by NGOs in some area of education<sup>37</sup>

Table 7 outlines the profile of teachers documented by evaluators or AEPs. In the context of a post-conflict or fragile state there is often a tension between teachers who are certified (considered to be “trained teachers” by the MoE but who may or may not have completed a teacher training course) and teachers who have been trained (sometimes very extensively) by INGOs (Baxter & Bethke, 2009) but where this training is not recognized or accredited by the ministry. While several programs did recruit teachers from the formal education system, who were asked to teach a second shift after their regular teaching post (Taylor, 2010; Coyne et al., 2008), the norm was to recruit teachers from the community, oftentimes, volunteers. In contexts where AEPs were started after formal schools were in operation, AEPs had little choice as to potential teachers.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of teacher qualifications and equivalence of service, we found few programs that required teachers to be formally certified or had received formal teaching prior to being recruited to teach; rather, programs required that potential teachers completed at least secondary school through Grade 8 to Grade 12. There was no indication in the documentation that programs did assessments of teachers in literacy or numeracy.

<sup>35</sup> It is often easier to train untrained teachers in interactive and child-centered methods than it is to retrain “trained teachers.” Formal qualifications often signal teachers who are didactic in their teaching style.

<sup>36</sup> These may be out-of-date or unavailable, but where they exist, they could generally form the initial identification of teachers.

<sup>37</sup> These “teachers” may not have any official certificates but are often extremely well-trained in both content and interactive pedagogy.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Coordinator of AEWG, 2015

**Table 7: Teacher profile, selection, training, and support**

Program	Country	Teacher Profile	Teacher Selection	Teacher Training and Support
<b>Afghanistan Primary Education Programme (APEP)</b> (Nicholson, 2006; Kissam et al., 2006)	Afghanistan	65% of teachers also taught in formal schools 42% were women 20% were teenagers; mean age 31.8 years	Not reported	Cascade model (126 hours on average) 87% of teachers said they had gotten support they needed from provincial teachers
<b>Transforming Education for Adults and Children in the Hinterlands (TEACH)</b> (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008)	Ethiopia	Facilitators from nearby communities; preferred completion of Grade 8 but not necessary.	Selected by community from community	Trained for 5-15 days; receive 1-2, 10-15 day refresher courses; compensated
<b>Gambella Regional State Alternative Basic Education</b> (Anis, 2007)	Ethiopia	From communities; aims to find teachers who finished Grade 10	Not reported	Not reported
<b>Ethiopia Speed Schools</b> (Ayeampong, 2012)	Ethiopia	Completed secondary education	Not reported	Trained for 27 days with six additional days of training at beginning of year
<b>Revitalization of Iraqi Schools and Stabilization of Education (RISE) Project Pilot</b> (Nicolls, 2004)	Iraq	Out-of-work teachers returning to workforce or new graduates with no teaching experience	Not reported	Not reported
<b>Accelerated Learning in Liberia- IBIS</b> (Gordon, 2013)	Liberia	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
<b>Accelerated Learning for Positive Living and United Service</b> (Coyne et al., 2008)	Liberia	Conventional teachers teaching a second shift	Not reported	In service training

Program	Country	Teacher Profile	Teacher Selection	Teacher Training and Support
<b>Complementary Opportunity for Primary Education Programme (COPE)</b> (Deweese, 2000)	Uganda	Live in same community, priority given to female instructors	Depending on location; either identified by the community or identified and recruited by coordinator	Initial 3 week training course, as well as periodic 2-day refresher course, taking place anywhere from 4-12 times per year, depending on the district
<b>BRAC Primary Schools</b> (Chaboux, 2005)	Bangladesh	Community members who live within walking distance of school. Female teachers given preference; must have 10 years of education.	Not reported	12-15 days prior to the start of the program. The same teacher is assigned to the same cohort of students for the entire 4 year cycle.
<b>Accelerated Learning Program Cambodia</b> (Taylor, 2010)	Cambodia	Conventional teachers teaching a second shift	Not reported	Trainers train using a 5 day training program but no special pedagogical techniques are introduced
<b>School for Life Ghana</b> (Hartwell, 2006)	Ghana	Volunteers from community	Nominated and recruited by communities themselves.  Compensation: Small annual incentive (soap money), food, small amounts of cash, household labor from community.	3 week GES-run in-house training, complemented by refresher courses every three months at various district centers. Supervisors visit classes 1x per month to provide on-the-spot training.  Trainers instructed in the School for Life approach. Teach in facilitator trainees' local language.  After several years of service, opportunities to gain formal, college-required teacher qualifications.

Program	Country	Teacher Profile	Teacher Selection	Teacher Training and Support
<b>SPARK Zambia</b> (Chondoka & Subulwa, 2004)	Zambia	Volunteers and official trained teachers; must have at least Grade 9 or Grade 12 leaving certificate	Not reported	Not reported

### **Teacher Training**

Ideally, a training program for AEP teachers should (Baxter, 2006):

- Incorporate the fundamentals of rights-based, learner-centered, activity-based learning. All training in this component should utilize this methodology for the teacher training; thus, all lessons are group-based with activities, games, and open discussions as well as research and worksheets;
- Work with teachers on the concepts of compressed or condensed curricula or the materials developed for teaching/learning such that the teachers understand that a condensed curriculum:
  - eliminates the overlap and repetition of traditional subjects
  - utilizes the cross-fertilization of subjects to reinforce (rather than repeat)
  - utilizes interactive teaching methodology (to eliminate/minimize revision);
- Provide the opportunity for subject strengthening if required;
- Have a training model (cascade with follow up or spiral) for the teachers that is interactive and based on discovery learning and the aspects of teaching that the teachers themselves are supposed to implement. This would need to be an initial 8-10 days with regular (twice per annum) follow-ups of 3-5 days;
- Provide a strong mentoring<sup>39</sup> and support system for the teachers;
- Be cyclic. Professional development sessions and mentoring should be consistent and continuous. Network training, peer-to-peer, professional development: any processes that keep teaching motivation high should be built into the program.

As noted in Table 7, many teachers were recruited directly from the community with no prior teaching experience. Ideally, when programs state that the teacher is chosen from the community (particularly remote area programs) and that the teacher must have achieved at least grade 8, subject mastery must be a priority in the teacher training.

<sup>39</sup> Mentoring in teacher training programs is generally in the form of a more experienced educator providing advice and support to the novice teacher. This may be very limited (several weeks) to a full academic year. These may be classified as refresher courses. Mentoring is not limited to AEP programs; it is a useful informal training device in situations of crisis.

Unfortunately, the documentation on the training provided to teachers, especially the content of the curriculum, is thin. Where accredited teachers were trained, trainings appeared to have two major objectives: subject mastery and child-centered methodology, although without more thorough documentation and reporting of training content, it is difficult to pinpoint what is taught in these trainings.

However, several reports did document the length of teacher trainings and how often refresher courses were provided. As Table 7 outlines, several courses provided trainings that ranged from three to four weeks, although others provided training for just a few days. Training ranged from elective units in a pre-service course to the more usual in-service courses, as well as trainings provided by NGOs. These NGO-provided trainings were often shorter but more regular. At least two of the programs reviewed held sustained teacher training, such that teachers could move into a teacher-training institute (Gordon, 2013; Hartwell, 2006).

External evaluations of AEPs did not always document or report on the quality of teacher training. In UNICEF Cambodia, the evaluation reported that while training was provided,

[It was] quite short and...largely involved an examination and discussion of the materials themselves. Some advisers consulted by the evaluation felt that this was inadequate... [;] the training should include a greater appreciation of the underlying concepts, in other words there should be more attention to technical aspects. (Taylor, 2010)

An evaluation of TEACH Ethiopia noted that the variety in the level of education of facilitators made training problematic (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008). Another report of community-based programs in Afghanistan stated that the training was either insufficient or ineffective.

### ***Teaching and Learning Materials***

The reviewed material says little about teaching and learning materials. In the programs that are essentially running a parallel curriculum, they have developed teacher and learning materials (TLM) to match what is taught in government schools, as in BRAC Bangladesh and SPARK Zambia (Chaboux, 2005; Chondoka & Subulwa, 2004). Many programs (particularly those aiming to have students transition into formal education) use the formal education materials to ensure continuity but some do not provide the necessary guidance on consolidation of material for a condensed curriculum (Gordon, 2013).

The programs in Gambella, Ethiopia; Ghana, Zambia; and all the programs in Liberia used government-developed materials designed specifically for ALPs.

## CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

The majority of the programs reviewed operated in crisis or conflict-affected environments. USAID's *Education Strategy* recognizes the role education can play in contributing to and mitigating the effects and drivers of conflict. As such, USAID E3/ED developed the *Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs* to enable institutions, governments, or organizations

"Education that is conflict sensitive encompasses policies, activities, and approaches that promote equitable access to educational opportunity and curricula based on skills and values that support peace and social cohesion."

-USAID Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs (2)

implementing these programs to identify whether or not they are designed and implemented in a manner that is conflict sensitive. The Checklist notes the minimum criteria for conflict sensitivity is to ensure that a program has a "Do No Harm" approach, defined as a requirement to make "all decisions with an awareness of how they could affect power relations and inter-group relations that may contribute to conflict" (2). An education program that embodies the full principles of conflict sensitivity goes beyond Do No Harm (DNH) to actively promote system-wide equity, inclusion, equitable access, peace, and social cohesion via policies, activities, and other approaches.

The criteria laid out in the checklist are applicable to all types of education programs, including AEPs, particularly since in crisis and conflict-affected environments programs are focused on expanding access to education. However, delivery of an AEP to only some groups of children and/or youth may result in a perception that those children and/or youth "have more" because of their involvement in the program (Burde et al., 2015) thus creating division rather than cohesion.

Examples of programs that documented an awareness and responsiveness to the principles of "Do No Harm" are outlined in Table 8. Examples of programs that embody the DNH approach are those that do not favor one side of a conflict through language instruction, teacher selection, or the location of schools. This table only reflects approaches specifically mentioned within available evidence; programs may have incorporated additional considerations that were not documented.

**Table 8: Examples of Do No Harm Approaches in AEPs Operating in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings\***

Country / Program	Inclusion of marginalized populations	Community mobilization	Child-friendly classrooms	Language of instruction	Teachers from same ethnic/language group due to intergroup conflict
Afghanistan - Accelerated Learning	X				

Country / Program	Inclusion of marginalized populations	Community mobilization	Child-friendly classrooms	Language of instruction	Teachers from same ethnic/language group due to intergroup conflict
Afghanistan – APEP	X	x			
Afghanistan - Community Basic Education Centers	X	x			
Ethiopia - Gambella Regional ABE	X			x	x
Ethiopia - TEACH	X			x	
Iraq - RISE	X		x		
Liberia - ALP for Positive Living and United Service	X				
Liberia - IBIS ALP	X				
Liberia - UNICEF ALP	X				
Pakistan - NRC ALP	X	x			
Somalia/Puntland - Support to IDP Education	X				
South Sudan – SSIRI	X				
South Sudan – SBEP	X				

\*based upon available documentation

By definition, the efforts to target the most marginalized populations, including nomadic/pastoralist communities, refugees/IDPs, girls, ethnic minorities, and former youth combatants, follow the principle of “Do No Harm.” For example, the Gambella program in Ethiopia used mobile AEP centers and flexible timetables to ensure accessible classes for historically marginalized pastoralist populations. Additionally, the program was aware of ongoing conflict between different ethnic communities and recruited teachers with the same cultural and linguistic background as their students. Learning and teaching materials were also developed in different languages (Anis, 2007). The RISE pilot program in Iraq and the Community Based Education Centers in Kabul, Afghanistan also clearly identified potential exclusions and responded to them by obtaining buy-in via community mobilization techniques (Nicolls, 2004;

Rowse & Weir, 2014). There is no evidence on the effectiveness or impact of their approaches within available documentation on AEPs, although given the complexities involved in understanding and measuring the desired results and outcomes related to DNH and conflict sensitivity, more research must be done to understand how to best judge the effectiveness of these programs.

However, approaches to inclusion need to be carefully considered. For example, anecdotal evidence on a catch-up program in Burundi suggests some students dropped out of the program because they were stigmatized as former combatants (Sempere, 2009). While not explicitly an AEP, the principle remains the same; these unintended consequences have the potential to foster or exacerbate conflict, i.e. to do harm.

It was unclear how many programs actively promoted peace and social cohesion. This does not necessarily confirm that these programs lacked these elements in their curriculum, but merely that there was a lack of documentation of these elements available for review. Two documented approaches in South Sudan (SSIRI and SBEP) and one program in Afghanistan (APEP) contained these elements.

The SSIRI program contained a Radio Based Education for All (RABEA) component that contained information on civic participation, rule of law, and other pertinent issues (Leigh & Epstein, 2012). However, the evaluation does not identify how many AEP classes or learners tuned in to RABEA programming and also notes that in cases where AEP classes were using radio programs, the class sizes were sometimes too large for learners to hear well (Leigh & Epstein, 2012). Similarly, Sudan Basic Education Program (SBEP) documentation states all teachers were required to have some working knowledge of peace education in addition to being specifically trained in peace education (MOEST, n.d.). However, there is no specific information available on the contents of the peace education curriculum, to what degree it was taught in the classrooms, or its effectiveness.

The APEP program in Afghanistan presents an interesting case where the program included elements of peace education, but encountered challenges in a DNH approach. APEP included peace education and printed peace posters to hang in classrooms but no detail was available on the contents of the peace curriculum or the posters nor how many posters were printed and distributed. However, the program encountered unexpected challenges in some communities when, due to donor restrictions, they were unable to purchase religious textbooks for the classroom. The program attempted to solve the problem within its restrictions but with limited success (Nicholson, 2006). This represents an important lesson learned for countries where religious education is part of the national curriculum.

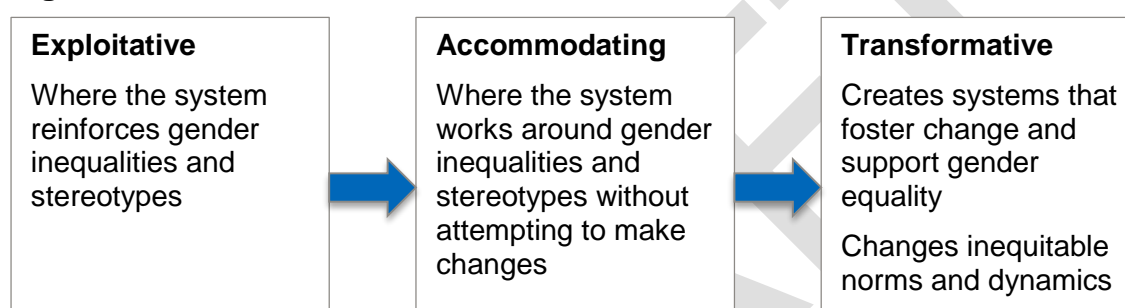
## **GENDER SENSITIVITY AND GENDER-RELATED PROGRAMMING**

USAID defines gender equality as concerning both:

[...] women and men, and it involves working with men and boys, women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Genuine equality means more than parity in numbers or laws on the books; it means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for males or females. (USAID, 2012)

Gender-related programming generally passes along a continuum, such that a program would first be accommodating before it could become transformative. The cultural context of many of the programs would make this the only sustainable program development. In the literature reviewed, programs reflected the various points of the continuum but were not generally referenced as such in their gender-related programming.

**Figure 4: Gender Continuum**



Only nineteen of the forty-four programs reviewed specifically mention gender sensitivity, so it can be assumed that the remaining twenty-five were, at best, gender blind or gender accommodating.

In those reports that did mention “gender sensitivity,” the term referred exclusively to girls and women, even though gender sensitivity should address the experiences of both males and females. The following three approaches to gender-related programming were reflected in the programs reviewed:

- **Modeling behavior and awareness:** Some programs, such as Udaan India and South Sudan SSIRI, attempted to ensure (via teacher training and/or awareness raising) that classes had a constructive, inclusive approach where girls were called upon equally, teachers responded positively to girls’ questions and comments, lessons included messages about equal rights, or community mobilizers sensitized local leaders to the importance of educating their girls. These programs could be seen as transformative.
- **Targeting:** Some projects specifically target girls and women by:
  - Making the program available to girls and women only, generally because they had previously been excluded and there was an identified need to help them compete on an equal basis in the formal school system (an example includes Udaan in India).

- Searching out female teachers to teach in an all-girls or mixed-class environment. Examples of programs that do this include BRAC Bangladesh and COPE Uganda (Chaboux, 2005; Dewees, 2000). These programs could be seen as accommodating.
- **Quotas:** There were also programs that included gender equity as a goal by mandating that specific percentages of beneficiaries must be female. This gender parity approach, particularly when programmed in isolation, is the weakest of program options.

Interestingly, there was no indication in the literature reviewed that gender-sensitive programming in the classes was designed to mitigate gender stereotyped roles. In fact, in at least one program (partly in response to community pressure), girls are offered quite different (more sedentary) activities than those offered to boys (computing vs. football; sewing vs. sports) (Nicolls, 2004). This programming could be seen as gender exploitative.

The below table provides examples of programs that employed some or all of the above approaches to gender-related programming.

**Table 9: Elements of Gender-Related Programming in AEPs Operating in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings**

Country / Program	Targeting of female beneficiaries	Targeting of female teachers	Modeling behavior/ teacher training	Awareness-raising	Quotas
Afghanistan – APEP	x	X		x	
Afghanistan – PACE-A					x
Afghanistan - Community Based Education Centers	x			x	
Bangladesh - BRAC	x	X			
Ethiopia - Gambella Regional ABE	x				
Ethiopia - TEACH	x				
Iraq - RISE	x				
Iraq – EEPCT	x			x	
Iraq – Improving Access to Quality Basic Education	x				
India – Udaan	x	X	x		x
Liberia - IBIS ALP	x				
Liberia – CESLY	x			x	
Uganda – COPE (Bushenyi only)	x	X			
Pakistan - NRC ALP	x			x	

Country / Program	Targeting of female beneficiaries	Targeting of female teachers	Modeling behavior/ teacher training	Awareness-raising	Quotas
Somalia/Puntland - Support to IDP Education	x				
Somalia/Somaliland – Alternative Basic Education	x				
Somalia – APES	x				
South Sudan – SSIRI	x		x	x	
South Sudan – SBEP	x	X	x		

The available documents make it difficult to determine how highly gender sensitivity was prioritized for each of these programs. The team did find evidence that some programs tailored their programming to some degree to be more inclusive of female learners, most often by recruiting female teachers, instituting quotas for the number of female learners, or making accommodation for pregnancy. Two of these programs, in addition to role modeling and targeting approaches, actually aimed to develop behavior and attitude change:

- *SSIRI, South Sudan:* The SSIRI program in South Sudan not only trained teachers in gender-sensitive behavior, such as making a point to call on both boys and girls equally, but had components in the RABEA curriculum that promoted equal rights for women as well as a female health messaging component (Leigh & Epstein, 2012).
- *Udaan, India:* The Udaan program in India is a girls-only program. While not in a conflict or crisis-affected area, the program focuses on the psychosocial empowerment of girls via a social learning curriculum that helps them to assess their own values and beliefs and understand their social and political rights (CARE India, 2012).

Based on available documentation, neither of these programs evaluated whether there was a transfer of knowledge from the teacher to the learner or whether there was a change in attitudes or behavior among beneficiaries.

## COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH LEARNING

Although Education for All has resulted in the abolishment of school fees in many countries, often there are hidden fees that restrict access to education. This is usually more prevalent and prohibitive in crisis and conflict-affected environments. These costs can include school uniforms, school supplies, transportation to and from school, supplementary fees to hire additional teachers or to top off teachers' salaries, or cases of petty corruption where teachers ask students for food or other services such as cleaning or childcare.

Within the literature reviewed, there was limited evidence that fees or donations were required from communities or individual learners for AEPs. Four programs did require some type of community support for the program, typically through in-kind donations. For example, the TEACH program in Ethiopia required that communities donate land for the construction of their education centers (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008). In the School for Life Ghana program, the community provided land and contributed to school construction costs, as well as food and household labor as payment to community-based facilitators (Hartwell, 2006). Some sites for the COPE program in Uganda also required financial contributions from the local community (Deweese, 2000). Within these four programs, there is no information to indicate the effects, positive or negative, that these costs have upon participation in the program.

## **SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING AND EXIT STRATEGY**

Whether a program is foundational or transitional in nature defines the strategy for what comes after a program or project is over. When a program is transitional in nature, an exit strategy to determine when and how activities should be scaled down should be part of the initial planning process. For programs that are more foundational in nature, this process could be referred to as a transfer strategy or sustainability planning, where decisions should be outlined as to whom and how the project will be transferred. These strategies should be part of the initial planning.

When the program is designed (even by default) to be a transitional program, it usually has a very simple exit strategy: when external support is no longer required to meet the need or when the objectives are fulfilled, the program ceases. So, in the case of AEPs initiated to respond to a very specific situation (as the multiple programs in Liberia were), ideally, when there are no more over-age learners, then the program would cease. While this may have been the case, it was not reported in the documents we reviewed.

When reading through reports of more complex transitional and foundational programs, we looked to see if there was mention of the following important elements of a sustainability plan:

- Communication and collaboration with communities in planning the implementation and continuing throughout the course of implementation
- Close discussions and coordination with the relevant ministry and other INGOs
- Commitment from the relevant ministry/ministries for the continuation, scaling up or down and validation of the various components of the program
- A valid and appropriate timeline
- Capacity building and working together with potential NGOs and CBOs with an incremental transfer of responsibility

- Clear, accurate record keeping of student enrollment, attendance, achievements, and transition (including dropouts)
- Transparency of costings and finance, including (where possible) a per capita cost

In the case of the more complex transitional programs and foundational programs, the lack of a defined handover strategy and sustainability planning is difficult to explain. Some of the literature included mid-term reports, such that a handover strategy was not a priority in reporting. In most cases it appears a handover strategy was either not part of the initial planning, not defined as a strategy, or not reported as such.

In some cases (such as SSIRI in South Sudan) the government ministry did not feel that it could adequately implement the program. Although the ministry wanted it to continue, it appears the program stopped when funding ceased. In Liberia, multiple INGOs and agencies implementing AEPs were taken by surprise when authorities announced the closure of the initiative (with no viable exit strategy); as a result, the programs simply stopped (Manda, 2011). The few that remained in operation (IBIS, USAID, and UNICEF) did not outline an exit strategy or transfer plan in the documents reviewed.

### **LIMITATIONS**

While the review found documentation and reports that provided some detail about the design and implementation of AEPs, it also exposed the general lack of documented information on education in crisis and conflict-affected environments and, more specifically, on AEPs. Furthermore, there was a general lack of documentation about limitations in implementation. Evaluations commenting on the quality of components of the program were difficult to come by. There is likely a significant publication bias, where programs that had the funding, ability, and time to put together a report or hire an external evaluator are overly represented. Programs that were replicated across multiple countries (e.g. NRC's ALPs) have a much heavier representation in the documented literature than other programs.

One of the greatest challenges to this review is the issue of moving goalposts, especially because so many AEPs are initiated in response to an emergency. Objectives are not always articulated; there seems to be a lack of documentation in how programs change and develop and what factors cause these changes. These factors greatly shape any understanding about what AEPs are responding to and what aspects of AEPs are effective in meeting these goals.

### **BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND DOCUMENTING AEP IMPLEMENTATION**

Overall, reviewing documentation around program design and implementation of AEPs raised several gaps that could be better documented and shared to enhance

our understanding of how AEPs are implemented in practice. We provide recommendations to the donor, research, and practitioner community on how to build-out the broader body of evidence around the effectiveness of AEPs—through descriptive research in both qualitative and quantitative in nature that, if well-documented, can contribute to our broader understanding of how AEPs are currently programmed and what we may want to improve upon and investigate further.

While this review and other similar efforts lay the groundwork of describing and synthesizing already available information, there is a dearth of information on basic program characteristics and quality of implementation. For example, with regards to teacher selection and training, in the course of this review it was difficult to discern how teachers are trained, what teachers are taught, and what the rates of teacher absenteeism and retention are in AEPs. Similar gaps occur in other topics, including classroom observations to understand how AEP curricula are actually unfolding (and whether interactive learning is actually happening) and whether extra time is actually included in the curriculum relative to the normal school schedule. When thinking about conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity, there should be overt mention of these principles in the design and implementation; where possible, analysis and assessment around these issues should take place during the project.

Furthermore, the field would greatly benefit from a good proof of concept to understand whether, at a basic level, AEPs are implemented in the way they were intended. Some of this could be achieved through on-going program monitoring, which is especially important given AEPs tend to be implemented in constantly evolving settings. For example, while we found rich detail about each programs' target beneficiaries, some evidence suggests that as the program was implemented the profile of students enrolled in these programs differed from what was originally intended. Furthermore, it is not always clear how students were identified/recruited, selected, or whether they were screened out of the program.

Annex 3 outlines a series of questions around how AEPs are designed, structured, and implemented prompted by this review. Better documentation of this information could be achieved by having independent evaluators gather this information through process evaluations or observational studies. The questions in Annex 3 could also be a part of solicitations, proposals, monitoring data, and evaluation designs from implementers.

## **SECTION 2: MEASURING OUTCOMES IN AEPs**

In this section, we discuss the types of outcomes, as outlined in the literature, used to measure the performance and effectiveness of AEPs. Answering questions of AEP effectiveness is a difficult exercise because, as outlined in Section 1, complete information about the structure and component parts of each program is limited. Furthermore, the goals of and alternatives to each program are context-specific and

not always well-defined. From this review, it is not entirely clear what a “successful” or “effective” AEP endeavors to accomplish and, therefore, it is not clear what outcomes we should use to measure an AEP’s success.

Almost none of the evaluations reviewed for this paper establish a proper counterfactual that allows us to understand what, if any, effects can be attributed to a particular AEP or how AEPs compare to other alternatives (see Section 3 for a more in-depth discussion about why this is important in understanding impact). A review of evidence in emergency in education established that “no experimental or quasi-experimental studies attempt to measure the effect of accelerated learning programs”, and that “it would be useful to conduct rigorous research to understand the relative benefits of different AEP models” (Burde et al., 2015).

Furthermore, few longitudinal studies tracked the progress of students over time, especially once students transitioned out of AEPs into work or secondary school. However, with the increased focus on establishing an evidence base for AEPs, several rigorous studies were underway with the results of which are yet to be released at the time of this review.<sup>40</sup>

A limited number of descriptive reports collected and reported data on a) enrollment, b) attendance, c) dropout rates, and d) select learning outcomes. In the 44 programs for which we reviewed documentation, only eight report some or all of the above data. Even then, several reference weak M&E systems (Akyeampong et al., 2014; Gordon 2013) or recommend data on outcomes be collected on a more regular basis.

Even when these data were reported, it was difficult to understand what the reported metric conveyed about an AEP’s success. Studies which collected and reported data tended to compare outcomes (such as dropout rates and learning scores) against averages in government schools. While government schools may be the appropriate counterfactual in some situations (e.g. when students in AEPs have the choice of attending a government school versus an AEP), these schools are often not the right comparison.

When government schools were the appropriate counterfactual, programs did not collect standard indicators across government and AEP schools, making it difficult to compare learning assessments and test score outcomes. A similar review published in 2013 also cited these obstacles.<sup>41</sup> In contexts where students sat the same exam, programs compared average test scores to government schools to contextualize how AEPs perform. While the comparison may be indicative, the drastic differences

<sup>40</sup> DRC, War Child Canada (2016); Ghana School for Life, DFID (2015); Ethiopia SPEED Schools (2017); IRC DRC VAS-Y Fille

<sup>41</sup> “Learners in ALPs do not necessarily undertake the same assessments as in primary school and, where they do, these are not usually standardized tests. There is therefore a shortage of comparative data with the formal system within the same country” (Longden, 2014)

between the demographics and circumstances of students in regular programs versus AEPs makes it difficult to compare outcomes across groups. For example, if we assume M&E infrastructure is strong enough to accurately and comprehensively capture students' learning scores in both government schools and AEPs, scores could be higher among AEP 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level students than government school 3<sup>rd</sup> graders because students completing grade 3 in an AEP are older than 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in government schools—not because the AEP is more effective. Alternatively, students in AEPs may select into those programs; students who are older and have been out of school at least for some time that select into AEPs could be very motivated, scoring higher on average than their similarly-aged counterparts in government schools. Other types of selection issues could skew average scores down. For example, children and youth in AEP programs may have suffered grave abuses and conflict situations which compromised their learning ability without strong psycho-social support. These selection issues are extremely important when evaluating the effects AEPs have on learners. In Section 3, we return to these issues in more detail.

In the next section we describe outcomes collected for a subset of the programs we reviewed; we include these programs because they document how they measured outcomes. The programs and metrics reported here represent a subset of programs that had the funding or the capabilities to collect and report data. Because AEPs differ greatly, and because many of the outcomes reported are influenced by factors that are context-specific, any observations are purely suggestive and require clearly defined measures of success and more rigorous analysis.

## ACCESS TO EDUCATION

To measure access, we examine enrollment figures reported by various programs. Some programs only report one figure—e.g. how many students cumulatively enrolled in the program. Others provide a snapshot in time or data points over various years. However, the applicability of these raw figures, while useful for day-to-day operations, does not necessarily provide context on the magnitude of access and enrollment relative to the out-of-school population. In some cases, we calculated the percentage of out-of-school students enrolled in an AEP to contextualize the reach of the program.

**Table 10: Enrollment figures**

Program	Country	Enrollment	Gender
<b>IBIS ALP (Gordon, 2013)</b>	Liberia	2009-2013: 4,869 learners	47% female
<b>School for Life (Hartwell, 2006)</b>	Ghana	1996-2003: 50,000 students 2000: Annual enrollment of 9,000 students	Not reported
<b>BRAC (Chaboux, 2005; Ahmad &amp;</b>	Bangladesh	1994-2002: 1 million; 6.7% of all school aged children in BRAC	Not reported

Program	Country	Enrollment	Gender
<b>Haque, 2011)</b>		2010: 565,000 learners	
<b>APEP (Kissam et al., 2006)</b>	Afghanistan	2006: 240,000 learners out of 3.8 million out-of-school youth	56% female
<b>ALPP (Coyne et al., 2008)</b>	Liberia	2007-2008: 16,288 enrolled	Not reported

If an AEP is large enough, by definition, net enrollment rates should differ in the presence of AEPs. For example, Hartwell (2006) reports the net enrollment rate in the absence of AEPs, and how the net enrollment rate would hypothetically change if enrollment into the program were included. In School for Life Ghana, regional enrollment rates in Northern Ghana were reported at 69% in the year 2000. If the 9,000 students enrolled in School for Life Ghana were added to the net enrollment rate, the new rate would be 83.3%—a difference of 14.3 percentage points (Hartwell, 2006). In an attempt to understand the impact of BRAC non-formal primary schools on the net enrollment rate in Bangladesh, Haque and Ahmed determine that while the proportion of out-of-school children decreased from 23.4% in 1988 to 13.6% in 2008, this change cannot be attributed to BRAC schools since the government of Bangladesh also has various support programs (Haque & Ahmed, 2011). While the authors also try to compare the difference in the proportion of out-of-school children in villages with BRAC primary schools versus those without, they find no clear-cut results.

### **Completion and Dropout**

In reports that published the percentage of students who completed an AEP out of their total cohort, definitions of “completion” varied. Some programs defined completion as a passing grade on an exit exam, while others recorded completion as someone who passed through the program.

**Table 11: Completion and Dropout Figures**

Program	Country	Completion/Dropout
<b>APEP (Kissam et al., 2006)</b>	Afghanistan	15,000 completed program in 4 years 15,604 completed program in 3 years 49,272 completed program in 2 years During last year of operation: 90% of 6 <sup>th</sup> graders who were enrolled in APEP (last year of primary school) finished the grade 63% of students who completed indicated they would continue with education Dropout rate: 1 <sup>st</sup> grade: 5.9%; 4 <sup>th</sup> grade: 9.2% Government school dropout rate: 1 <sup>st</sup> grade: 15%; 4 <sup>th</sup> grade: 15%
<b>BRAC (Chaboux, 2005)</b>	Bangladesh	93-94% of those who enrolled completed program in early 2000s

Program	Country	Completion/Dropout
<b>IBIS ALP</b> (Gordon, 2013)	Liberia	35% dropout rate
<b>School of Life</b> (Hartwell, 2006)	Ghana	91% completed first cycle 68% completed program: completion rate equivalent across gender
<b>ALPP (Coyne et al., 2008)</b>	Liberia	1,674 graduated with Primary School Certificate (2006-2007) 2,649 graduated with Primary School Certificate (2007-2008)

Data on why students drop out are difficult data to collect, requiring follow-up with students who have since left the program. Reports speculated or reported anecdotal evidence of reasons for dropout. Three reports followed up with students who dropped out; students cited relocation and work commitments as top reasons:

- **IBIS, Liberia:** 35% of students dropped out; of these, 27% relocated to other communities; 21% dropped out due to work commitments (Gordon, 2013)
- **A Second Chance, Iraq Pilot:** 12% of students dropped out; 50% cited work as the main reason for leaving (Nicolls, 2004)
- **APEP:** 5.9% drop out in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, while 9% drop out in 4<sup>th</sup>; compared with 15% in the government school system. 53% cited that they left because their families moved to a more urban area (Kissam et al., 2006)

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Understanding what students in AEPs have learned, and whether an AEP improved learning outcomes for these children and youth, is complex. Factors to consider include:

- What is the goal of the AEP? Is the primary goal the attainment of basic literacy and numeracy skills, measured by progress towards an objective benchmark of knowledge in these topics, or to prepare students for the next phase, including government schooling, a vocational program, and/or employment? Is the AEP attempting to reintegrate students into primary education or transition them to the next level of education?
- What alternatives to AEPs are available to students in a particular context? For example, is an AEP the only educational option available to students? If so, does it make sense to compare AEPs to government schools? If it does make sense, should AEPs be outperforming government schools?

Documented discussions on learning outcomes primarily a) report average test scores in programs, but not necessarily against a national standard and b) compare these average scores against those in government schools.

Few programs had students in AEPs and students in government schools sit for the same exam; if they did, they did not report it. When students do take the same exam across government schools and AEPs or other alternative programs, comparing the average score can be misleading. Because students in AEPs and students in government schools differ in many ways (i.e. age, years in school, family education, poverty, degree of impact from conflict/crisis), there could be other factors external to the AEP influencing test scores.

A quasi-experimental study on the performance of learners in Ethiopia's SPEED Schools attempts to overcome this issue. The study sampled 625 learners from accelerated schools, government schools, and "improved" schools (government schools that had teachers attend the same teacher training as teachers from SPEED schools) respectively. In an attempt to generate a proper counterfactual, the authors used propensity score matching—that is, they calculated the probability that a learner is enrolled in a SPEED school based on different learner characteristics and used data on these characteristics of learners in government schools to calculate the hypothetical probability of a particular learner from a government school enrolling in a SPEED school. With this technique, the authors try to identify statistically similar learners in government and "improved" schools to those in SPEED schools. The matching is done using the observable learner characteristics. The underlying assumption required to conclude that the matched groups are similar is that if observable characteristics are similar, the unobservable characteristics are similar as well.

The study was conducted over the course of one school year, which in the case of the SPEED schools is the equivalent to 3 regular academic years. Results indicate that learners in SPEED schools outperformed other learners in literacy and math. For literacy, regression results indicate that on average SPEED school learners achieved 10.8 more points (out of 45) during the endline exam compared with government school learners who on average achieved 22.4 points at endline. In numeracy test results (which employs the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment, or EGMA), learners in SPEED schools achieved approximately 9 points more than those in government schools (the numeracy test was out of 62 points, with government schools scoring 50.9 on average at endline. "Improved" schools did not report average scores higher than government schools in literacy, and did not show any statistically significant improvement over government schools in numeracy (Akyeampong et al., 2012b).

This study is distinct from other documentation on AEPs in its rigorous approach to data collection and analysis of the data. Some limitations do exist. Most notably, the study does not get around the possibility of unobservable differences amongst learners in government and speed schools. Are learners who make the decision to go back to school and enter SPEED schools, after being pushed out of the school system by factors out of their control, more motivated or resilient than learners in

government schools? Do they have parents more likely to encourage or push them than those in government schools? If so, these factors likely skew results in favor of SPEED schools. In Section 3, we discuss potential alternatives in evaluation design to try to account for these unobservable characteristics.

Several other programs administer the same exam as government schools (or record scores of learners that decide to sit for a national exam), but the most common figures reported are average scores across the two groups.

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**Table 12: AEP and Government Test Scores**

Program	Methodology	AEP Scores	Government Scores
<b>SPEED Ethiopia (Akyeampong et al., 2012b)***</b>	Quasi-experimental study (PSM: propensity score matching) n=1875  EGRA and EGMA administered to both schools	Literacy (out of 45): Baseline: 19 Endline: 38  PSM: 10.8 more points than government schools, conditional on baseline score  Numeracy (out of 65): Baseline: 51 Endline: 62  PSM: 9 points more than government schools, conditional on baseline score	Literacy (out of 45): Baseline: 15 Endline: 22     Numeracy (out of 65): Baseline: 43 Endline: 51
<b>BRAC Bangladesh (Nath et al., 2007)</b>	End of year learning achievement exam administered to random sample (AEP and gov. students; n = 1181).  Differences statistically significant.	Bangla: 50% English: 19% Math: 18%  7 percentage points gender difference in math; males outperformed females	Bangla: 38% English: 11% Math: 14%
<b>IBIS ALP Liberia (Gordon, 2013)</b>	ALP learners who sat the WAEC (West African Examinations Council) national qualifying exam	66% of those enrolled sat exam  68% of those who sat exam successfully graduated  45% female	Not reported
<b>School for Life Ghana (Hartwell, 2006)</b>	GES randomly surveyed 367 pupils from 17 SfL classes in 8 districts	51.8% read with comprehension and calculated with mastery  81.2% met minimum standards for literacy and numeracy	8.7% of 6 <sup>th</sup> graders achieved minimum competency in English (different exam administered to 10% of national sample of 6 <sup>th</sup> graders)

Program	Methodology	AEP Scores	Government Scores
<b>ALPP Liberia (Coyne et al., 2008)</b>	Level II and Level III examinations in Language Arts and Math: administered in 6 counties (202 in government schools, 311 in ALP level II, 293 in ALP level III)	Language Arts: Level II: ALP Reg CAII: 44% ALP Reg Part: 47% ALP Youth: 44%  Level III: ALP Reg CAII: 27% ALP Reg Part: 31% ALP Youth: 24%  Math: Level II: ALP Reg CAII: 45% ALP Reg Part: 46% ALP Youth: 44%  Level III: ALP Reg CAII: 28% ALP Reg Part: 30% ALP Youth: 24%	Language Arts: Level II: 41%  Level III: 28%  Math: Level II: 41%  Level III: 30%

\*\*\*For reasons discussed above, this study addresses concerns about comparability across AEP and comparison schools—even then, it does not overcome potential differences in unobservable characteristics that may explain why students' backgrounds, and not the AEPs themselves, may lead to higher test scores. Results from all studies listed here require more rigorous investigation to assess on how AEPs perform relative to alternatives.

On the surface, while reported data suggests AEPs are outperforming government schools, more rigorous studies are needed to isolate the specific impact that AEPs have on learning outcomes as opposed to other types of school programs and overcome the selection issues we mentioned.

## TRANSITION TO SCHOOL OR WORK

Several reports attempted to track the progress of students to understand their performance after they leave the program and mainstream back into government schools. However, the SPEED Ethiopia Transition study outlined several reasons why, without independent tracking, it was difficult to piece together data from AEPs: poor government school records that could not be linked to AEP data, lack of unique identifiers used in government schools, no tracking of dropouts or absenteeism, high teacher and administrator absenteeism, and the potential that government school records were exposed to the alteration of data by school officials (Akyeampong et al., 2014).

Three reports tracked the progress of learners after they exited the AEP. In a BRAC study, which randomly sampled 653 primary school learners from 59 schools in December 2009, authors reported that 83.6% of BRAC graduates transitioned from BRAC primary to secondary school versus 80% of mainstream school graduates,

who transitioned from government primary to secondary school. Authors ran a probit regression to determine what factors contributed to the likelihood that a learner will enroll in secondary school; BRAC graduates were 36% more likely to enroll in secondary school than their government school counterparts, when controlling for socio-economic status and other environmental factors. Dropout rates during the first year were high; 41% of BRAC graduates dropped out in the first year, while 45% of government school graduates dropped out in the first year. These dropout rates diminish and stabilize over time for BRAC students but not for government students; however, because of the high dropout rate, the sample sizes diminish small after the second year (Ahmed & Haque, 2011).

In Ethiopia, of 625 Speed School students in the quasi-experimental study, 160 transitioned to mainstream education. The program also conducted a separate tracer study of 250 Speed School students in Shebedino Woreda in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia (SNNPR). Of these, 237 were traceable and 57-75% were registered in a government school.<sup>42</sup> However, visits to some of these schools and reviews of attendance records showed that only 35% attended the school which they were registered to. Of those, only 39% were present at the school that day. A five-day review of attendance records for the students who were present revealed that around half of that 39% had attended either the last four or five days of school (Akyeampong et al., 2014).

A survey of secondary school officials in Afghanistan signaled a potential issue for AEPs attempting to mainstream their learners: is there space in government schools to transition into? While 90% of AL learners who enrolled in 6th grade finished the grade, 63% were said to be planning to continue with education (although it is unclear how many actually transitioned). However, 30% of AL classes indicated there was no school in which either boys or girls could continue their education. Formal school system administrators estimated only 40% of schools would have room to enroll both boys and girls, 30% said they would only be able to enroll girls, 16% would only be able to enroll boys. With these estimates, 14% of 6th grade graduates would be denied entrance solely because of space (Kissam et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, no study reviewed reports on the labor market experience of AEP graduates.

## LIMITATIONS

As demonstrated above, few reports documented outcomes related to AEPs, greatly limiting our ability to draw conclusions about AEP outcomes. Oftentimes, programs did not clearly define “success”—both in the objectives that the program intended to accomplish as well as in the way progress was measured towards those objectives.

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<sup>42</sup> The evaluation provided this specific range, noting uncertainties in the reliability of the data on where students were enrolled versus where they were actually attending.

A full discussion of the limitations of metrics was not explored. Comparison groups were not necessarily appropriate for contextualizing and understanding the performance of AEPs.

There is likely a significant publication bias, where programs that had the funding, ability, and time to put together a report or hire an external evaluator are overly represented. Programs that were replicated across multiple countries (e.g. NRC's ALPs) have a much heavier representation in the documented literature than other programs.

Understandably, in emergency contexts, it is difficult to systematically collect high-quality data. Oftentimes, processes and procedures set up in other resource-poor but more stable contexts do not translate directly to emergency ones. Furthermore, more complicated research designs that require preserving a control group may be especially hard to implement in an emergency context. As situations evolve, the objectives for a given project and the factors that may feed into these objectives may evolve as well; these factors greatly shape any understanding about what AEPs are responding to and what aspects of AEPs are effective in meeting these goals.

## BETTER MEASURING SUCCESS

Recommendations for how to better document, track, and report AEP outcomes are discussed in fuller detail in Section 3; definitions for enrollment, completion, dropout, and learning outcomes are defined in the “Outcome” column of Table 13.

Furthermore, as the donor community provides more guidance on standardizing the concept, approach, and implementation of AEPs through inter-agency working groups such as the AEWG, it would be beneficial to develop a homogenized set of metrics that can be collected by programs themselves to provide guidance to implementing partners on what metrics to collect and how to measure them. Guidance on underlying instruments, data collection processes, and standards would greatly increase the quality, and likely the availability, of such data, especially during the program monitoring process. This data can be used both by donors and implementers to better understand progress towards goals and how to improve programming.<sup>43</sup>

## SECTION 3: EVIDENCE BUILDING AND LEARNING

Ultimately, policy makers and practitioners are interested in understanding how AEPs are progressing towards their goals, whether they are the right policy tool for a

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<sup>43</sup> At the time of this report, the AEWG was working on a generic set of indicators for AE as well as a generic theory of change.

particular context, what components of the AEP are integral to success, and how to better program them to optimize access, learning, transition to formal schools, and employment outcomes, among other goals. A number of other research tools can help us better understand and improve AEPs, including performance monitoring, performance evaluations, process evaluations, qualitative techniques such as case studies, tracer and longitudinal studies, and impact evaluations. Evaluations, in particular, provide us with the tools to answer questions of effectiveness.

The contexts in which AEPs are administered pose challenges to conducting rigorous monitoring and evaluation. AEPs often serve as an emergency measure; the ability to establish reliable systems for collecting monitoring and evaluation data depends on the level of funding for the program, existing infrastructure, and the level of stability and fragility of the country. Given constrained resources, in cases where M&E data has been collected on AEPs the focus has been on accountability and reporting, with less focus on evaluation and measuring the effects of the program. These issues, it seems, have led to less documentation both around the mechanics of AEPs in practice, as well as monitoring and evaluation data and analysis reported around AEPs.

While complex, these challenges are not insurmountable. They are essential to overcome if we aspire to discuss results, learn what works and under what conditions, and understand how to ultimately improve programming. Below, we discuss potential research questions that correspond to the purpose and context in which an AEP might be implemented. We then provide guidelines on the relevant research design, metrics, and data that can be used to answer each research question, sensitive to the context and purpose of the programs.

When thinking about potential research designs for AEPs, we structure the conversation around a standard definition of AEPs, where the AEP:

- Is a flexible age-appropriate program that promotes access to education
- Occurs in an accelerated time frame
- Targets out-of-school, over-age children and youth (typically those aged 10-25) who missed out or had their education interrupted due to poverty, violence, conflict or crisis, typically for a year or more
- At minimum, aims to provide learners with equivalent competencies as in the formal system, with learners transitioning to mainstream education or completing an entire primary cycle

Given that AEPs are often deployed in crisis and conflict-affected environments where the context is insecure, volatile, and the needs of beneficiaries may be evolving, certain programs will likely progress to meet changing needs. However, the discussion below assumes that the fundamental goals of the program do not change.

## DEFINING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Broadly, policy makers and practitioners are interested in knowing some or all of the following:

(1) Is a particular AEP successful in meeting the goals it has set out to achieve? As Section 1 and 2 demonstrate, the goals of each AEP can differ depending on the education context and target population. However, an AEP could include some or all of the following goals for its out-of-age and out-of-school students:

- a) Increase access to education
- b) Help students achieve a certain level of knowledge in an accelerated fashion, as determined by the program: this could include the completion of basic education, completion of primary and/or secondary education, or meeting a certain standard of functional literacy and numeracy<sup>44</sup>
- c) Improve the psycho-social wellbeing of students
- d) Reintegrate students into formal education or vocational education upon completion of the AEP
- e) Improve employment opportunities in the longer-term

The potential impacts of AEPs may be far-reaching and somewhat intangible. AEPs, for example, could influence social cohesion and trust in government. These potential consequences of AEPs, while important to document, are difficult to gauge and often compete with research resources that are trying to measure more immediate access and learning outcomes. When thinking about measuring effectiveness, our recommendations focus on more immediate, tangible outcomes that are integral to most AEP success: including access, learning outcomes, psycho-social wellbeing, integration into formal and/or vocation schools, and employment outcomes.

(2) Is an AEP the right policy option? How does it compare to the alternatives? We could extend the above question to better understand whether an AEP is the right programmatic option for the problem at hand. For example, policymakers may want to compare the effectiveness of the AEP against a bridging program or catch-up program or may want to understand how effective the acceleration aspect of the program is in improving learning outcomes.

Furthermore, in the select instances where attending formal school is an option for over-age students who could be serviced by an AEP, it may make sense to compare AEPs to the formal school option to understand how AEPs compare as an option for over-age students.

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<sup>44</sup> Save the Children, (2016)

*(3) What components of an AEP are essential in bringing about these outcomes?*

*What is the relative effectiveness of these components?* AEPs, in practice, tend to include multiple components, including smaller class sizes, ongoing teacher support, flexible timetables, active learning and interactive methodologies, compressed curricula, higher quality infrastructure and supplies than formal schools, and more community involvement. It is difficult to know which of these components, and which combination of components, are important for improving well-being, protection, access, learning scores, and longer-term outcomes (Burde et al., 2015). Section 1 provides a broad understanding of the profile of AEPs and what components, historically, AEPs have included.

To come to a consensus on the components of programming critical to AEPs, the Accelerated Education Working Group has agreed upon 10 principles for effective practice (see Annex 4 for a full list of the principles). We can use evaluations to better understand which of these principles are necessary for producing outcomes and what the contribution of a particular component might be. Does providing bridging or supplementary classes for students before they enroll in an AEP improve learning outcomes? What is the impact of AEPs that use government certified teachers versus teachers trained in AEP principles? What about paid vs. volunteer teachers? What is the impact of using more child-centered approaches and/or active learning as opposed to more traditional methodologies that some programs employ? Does increased community engagement lead to improved learning outcomes and, if so, what is the best way to improve community engagement? These are illustrative examples of components of AEPs that we may want to test for success; an expanded list of research questions can be found in Table 13.

## DEFINING IMPACT

### *Understanding Context*

A challenge in creating general guidance on how to evaluate AEPs is that AEPs are incredibly context-specific. The kind of environment, target beneficiaries, and available education options for out-of-school, over-age children and youth are just some of the factors that define a particular AEP's objectives. These objectives directly inform the research questions we are trying to answer and the outcomes we may want to measure.

For example:

- Does the program aim to increase access for out-of-school, over-age children and youth in areas where there are no other schooling options for them?
- Does the program aim to reintegrate learners into primary education or transition to the next level of education?
- Does the program aim to provide a protective environment for excluded children and youth?

The various objectives of AEPs define the different outputs that need to be measured; therefore, the measurement of the success of program interventions should also reflect that diversity. While we broadly understand the aims that AEPs share by definition, what we want to know and track about AEPs may differ by the specifics of an AEP. The type of research questions we have will vary by the objectives of the AEP. Context will also define the need for and the type of counterfactual we use to understand the relative impact of the AEP. Finally, context will also determine the type of outcomes one can and will measure.

### ***Defining the Counterfactual***

We define an “effect” as a change that is attributable to or is caused by a particular intervention. We measure effect by comparing what happened when an individual participated in a program against what would have happened had the individual hypothetically not participated in the program. We call the conceptual individual or group that did not receive the intervention the **counterfactual**. While this hypothetical analog is impossible to reenact, we can approximate the counterfactual using various approaches that allow us to identify a valid comparison group to mimic this counterfactual. An important consideration in selecting a comparison group is to understand how this comparison group may be different from the group receiving the intervention.

Students who do not attend formal school (e.g. over-aged learners, children/youth forced to work, and victims of crisis or conflict) often face drastically different circumstances than those who do attend formal school. Furthermore, among those excluded from formal schools, students who enroll in AEPs are different than those who do not. These characteristics could heavily influence the student’s attendance, academic performance, and longer-term outcomes, clouding our assessment of whether or not resulting outcomes are a function of the AEP itself or other issues; as a result, we cannot directly compare outcomes across these groups to determine the impact of an AEP. Determining the effectiveness of an AEP necessitates an understanding of the difference between the types of students that “select” into a particular AEP.

As demonstrated in Section 2, there is a strong tendency to compare outcomes of AEPs against outcomes in formal schools to gauge their relative performance. If the context is appropriate, comparing scores against formal schools may be used as a very rough guide; however, these formal schools rarely serve as a proper counterfactual.

In what follows we analyze different situations where an AEP may need to be evaluated. We explain the constraints and alternatives to finding the appropriate counterfactual group in different contexts and when evaluating different AEP designs.

#### ***(1) Context: targeted beneficiaries do not have an available alternative to your AEP***

If an AEP is the only option available to out-of-school, over-age students in a particular setting, then, by definition, AEPs will increase access. Examples of situations where this may be true include schooling for nomadic groups where there are no alternatives available, situations where over-age learners are barred from attending formal school and can only attend the AEP or some sort of alternative programming, situations where young mothers are excluded from enrollment, or a war-torn region where there is no other schooling option available to children and/or youth other than the AEP. In these situations, students' only alternative to the AEP is to not attend school.

In contexts where AEPs are the only option, we face a selection problem. The students that opt into attending an AEP do not randomly select into it; rather, they likely share some similar observable and unobservable characteristics that distinguish them from students that did not choose to attend an AEP (e.g. motivation, socio-economic status, psycho-social trauma, etc.) and therefore the comparison between the two groups is not straightforward. However, short of self-instruction, when the AEP is the only available schooling option, it is safe to assume that the only mechanism influencing learning scores or completion rates for students is the introduction of the AEP. Consequently, in the absence of any other available option, to understand whether students have attained a certain level of knowledge or have graduated from the program, measuring these shorter-term outcomes for the AEP alone can tell us what the effect of the AEP is on its enrolled population.

Note that in many of these situations, it may not be useful to compare the outcomes of students that attend AEPs to those who attend formal schools, even if they exist. If an AEP is implemented in a situation where over-age students who enroll in an AEP are excluded from the formal school system due to their age, then formal schools do not provide a useful counterfactual—the individuals that select into the formal school are fundamentally different than those in the AEP, mainly because they have not had the experience or the circumstances that excluded them from the formal school system in the first place. In many cases, the alternative to AEPs for over-age students is simply not attending school or gaining any education at all—the exception is an alternative education program that exists outside of the AEP or formal school and permits these students to enroll.

For measuring longer-term outcomes, such as employment opportunities or marriage age, we should measure outcomes for students that attended an AEP against those of a similar profile who do not attend an AEP, employing a quasi-experimental design that can overcome or reduce selection problems.

AEPs are developed to complement the formal school system not parallel it, so a direct comparison can never really be achieved. If the AEP target group is those who are excluded because they are over-age, then one of the key variables for comparison is age equivalency. If the learners in the AEP did not enroll in formal school because of location or cultural exclusion, then there are contextual

circumstances that are different enough to those attending formal school as to make a direct comparison impossible.

(2) Context: targeted beneficiaries (out-of-school, over-age children and youth) have other options of schooling; we want to compare AEPs to one of these alternative options

If there are other alternatives available to these students, then we can compare outcomes across these options to understand how the AEP performs relative to them towards the same objective or goal.

In limited contexts, it could be that formal schooling is a viable alternative for out-of-school, over-age children and youth. In cases where formal schooling is an alternative, however, we still have to be cautious in comparing scores to formal schooling and using formal schools as a counterfactual. Take, for example, a village where formal schooling is offered, and there are out-of-school children and/or youth. They can either: a) not enroll in school at all, b) enroll in the formal school, or c) enroll in the AEP. Students that choose to go back to school may be more motivated than the average learner, overcoming a number of obstacles to attend AEPs despite having been pushed out of the school system by factors out of their control; alternatively, over-age students who for whatever reason did not enroll in formal school may also suffer disproportionately from psycho-social trauma. Not only do formal schools and AEPs differ as learning systems, the characteristics (observable and not observable) of learners in each program can be different as well. We therefore have to be very careful about a straight comparison between average scores across different types of schools or education programs. If learners are not allocated randomly into the AEP or the formal school, then there is selection bias and the groups are not proper counterfactuals of each other.

In addition to formal schools, there could be other alternatives to AEPs that fulfill the same objectives as their AEP counterpart, such as bridging programs, emergency response programs such as the Teacher Education Package (TEP), programs that employ a partial curriculum, remedial programs, or adult literacy programs. The comparison group would be context-specific, depending on the aims of the AEP and target beneficiary group of a particular AEP.

If we wanted to understand the effectiveness of an AEP relative to another education option, we would need to carefully design a study to avoid selection bias. In these cases, we might employ a randomized allocation of students to AEPs and an alternative, tracking the progress of these students in each option. By randomly assigning students to each option, we avoid any issues of selection that might occur with out-of-school, over-age children and youth that have a particular characteristic systematically selecting into one type of education program over another.

(3) Program design: We are interested in understanding what components of AEPs work and how to improve them

Impact evaluations can help us understand what components or modalities of AEPs are most successful at achieving certain goals. This could involve swapping out a certain aspect of an AEP, testing a certain aspect (e.g. the level of acceleration, interactive methodology, teacher training, etc.), or adding an additional aspect to understand whether it enhances performance and improves outcomes in general. In these cases, identifying a counterfactual is important because it can allow us to isolate the impact of the change in programming or the value added by the additional component.

To learn about the importance of different AEP components, more than one type of AEP could be offered. The population of out-of-school, over-age children and youth can then be randomly assigned to different variations of AEPs to compare them and measure the contribution of the particular component.

### ***Defining and Measuring Outcomes***

Below we provide definitions and methods for measuring outcomes associated with AEPs; however, depending on the objectives and research questions associated with a particular AEP, not all of these outcomes may be applicable, and there may be more project-specific outcomes that are of interest to track.

**Access:** Measures of access can include, but are not limited to enrollment, retention, and completion. Out-of-school enrollment rates can be calculated as a percentage of the out-of-school, age-appropriate population that enrolls in an AEP over the estimated out-of-school population in an area. Completion rates can be calculated as the percentage of students that successfully complete the AEP, although the criteria for “completion” should be clearly defined. Dropout rates can also be determined using a clear definition for dropout from an attendance roster (e.g. students who have not attended school for at least the last two weeks).

This data can be captured through administrative data, mainly attendance rosters in the school and collated by the program. While challenges can arise when capturing this data in the field, especially given the scarcity of reliable education census data in these contexts to measure out-of-school enrollment rates, the proliferation of mobile technology can aid in capturing this data in a more systematic and cleaner process, especially when it comes to completion and dropout data particular to one or several AEPs.

**Knowledge attainment:** Test scores measure student ability in reading, writing, comprehension, mathematics, etc. AEPs administer examinations to gauge the progress of students in attaining certain levels of knowledge in math, reading, writing, etc. Simple knowledge assessments calibrated at a student level can help us understand whether a student has achieved a certain competency level in a subject. However, it is important to remember that if making comparisons across groups, the instrument used needs to be standardized.

Longer-term outcomes: An important component of assessing AEPs is understanding what happens to students after the program. Different programs have different goals and terminal points; some endeavor to transition students back into secondary school or technical/vocational education (TVET), while others are only meant to provide a terminal primary school education. Ultimately, all programs aim to provide an education that improves long-term outcomes for their students, including employment, wages, quality of life, as well as many other intangible benefits. In the medium-term, these outcomes can include the percentage of students that transferred to formal education and the percentage of former AEP students that drop out of secondary school.

Longitudinal studies and panels that follow students during and after their participation in an AEP can help answer these questions on transitions.

Psycho-social outcomes: Oftentimes, AEPs service students who have experienced trauma that disrupted their childhood development. Whether implicitly or explicitly, AEPs aim to improve their students' mental health as measured, for example, by psychological distress levels, depression, and/or behavioral problems.

While they have yet to be commonly employed to measure the performance or effectiveness of AEPs, context appropriate tools such as the Child Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Scale (CPSS), Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA), Child Psychosocial Distress Screener (CPDS), or Childhood War Trauma Questionnaire (CWTQ) can help gauge distress levels of students attending an AEP.

## COLLECTING DATA IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS

Given that AEPs are often implemented as a response to a crisis or conflict, it is reasonable to assume that not every AEP is a candidate for evaluation. This is especially true in contexts where AEPs are implemented in insecure, unpredictable environments—where the safety situation is not stable, the AEP is not necessarily implemented in full force or is constantly evolving, and resources are directed towards other needs. However, AEPs are implemented in a spectrum of contexts, including more stable, secure, and predictable situations. Examples include AEPs implemented in countries surrounding conflict-afflicted areas with refugees or in post-conflict countries where the environment can be conducive to collecting systematic data and conducting an evaluation.

In less stable contexts, there are options for collecting simple monitoring data or training teachers to administer simple assessment tools to better understand the performance of a particular program. These data can also be used for an evaluation. The use of technology and mobile data collection tools that employ smart-phones or simple texting, or tablets systems that connect to servers can enable implementing partners on the ground, or teachers themselves, to report data to a central repository

for analysis. These techniques do not necessarily require the mobilization of fieldworker teams and can generate structured data accessible from anywhere in the world. These approaches have been used in the health sector to track treatment compliance and vaccination, for example, and are very incipient in the education sector, where they have been used to track student attendance. They are usually affordable, easy to set up and manage, and reliable. While there is an initial investment setting up the system, once set up the system is accessed and managed remotely.

## **DESIGNING THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

The context, research question, counterfactual, and outcomes determine the research design and methodology of the evaluation. In Table 13, we provide guidelines of the type of research design and outcomes to measure based on the context and research assumptions associated with a particular research question.

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**Table 13: Research Agenda Matrix**

What is the effect of AEPs on access, completion, learning, and longer-term employment outcomes?				
<i>Assumption: There are no available school alternatives to AEPs for the targeted beneficiaries (over-age learners that are barred from attending formal school, nomadic groups with no formal education access, etc.)</i>				
Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
Access and retention	What is the impact of the AEP on out-of-school enrollment?	Percentage of out-of-school, age-appropriate population that enrolls in the AEP	Estimate out-of-school population in area Calculate % of take-up based on AEP enrollment	Administrative data Area survey
	What is the rate of completion of the AEP?	Percentage of the student cohort that successfully complete the AEP (Note: make sure completion is clearly defined. Is it passing a grade standard? Measured by passing an exam? Gaining certification?)	Simple estimation of the proportion of students completing the program	Administrative data
	What is the rate of dropout in the AEP? Why are students dropping out?	Dropout rates	Calculate dropout rates annually	Administrative data Short student follow-up survey after dropout
Quality	What is the effect of the AEP on student learning outcomes?	Student ability in reading, writing, comprehension, mathematics, etc.	Simple knowledge assessment calibrated at student level. (Note: can be compared with formal school but only for guideline.)	Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, National Tests, etc.

Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
	How successful is the AEP in integrating students into formal education?	Rate of transfers to formal education	Estimates of crude rate of transfers to formal education, and rates taking into account level/age dropout rates in the area.	Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students
	What is the effect of AEP on student employment?	Probability of finding employment Type of job; wage; job conditions	Estimate the rate of employment X months after AEP graduation and that for out-of-school youth. (Can be compared with formal school graduates but only for guideline)  Impact evaluation (quasi-experimental study) that follows students who either were enrolled or completed AEP and follows a group of out-of-school, over-age children and youth who did not participate in AEP.	Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students (tracer study)

**What is the effect of AEPs on access, completion, learning, and longer-term employment outcomes relative to another education program/alternative?**

*Assumption: We are attempting to weigh the effect of the AEP relative to another available alternative. This could be formal schooling or another non-traditional schooling option, such as an emergency response program, bridging program, remedial program, etc.*

Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
Quality & Retention	<p>What is the effect of the AEP on student learning outcomes as compared with another educational option, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Student's ability in reading, writing, comprehension, mathematics, etc.?</li> <li>■ Absenteeism?</li> <li>■ Completion?</li> <li>■ Dropout?</li> </ul>	<p>Student performance in reading, writing, comprehension, mathematics, etc.</p> <p>Absenteeism rates</p> <p>Completion rates</p> <p>Dropout rates</p>	<p>Impact Evaluation, randomized allocation of students to AEP and other educational option (e.g. bridging program, formal school)</p> <p>Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design</p>	<p>Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, National Tests, etc.</p> <p>Administrative data, and short survey follow-up of students</p>
	<p>How successful is the AEP in integrating students into formal education compared to another educational option?</p> <p>(Only applicable if transfer option exists)</p>	<p>Rate of transfers to formal education</p>	<p>Impact Evaluation, randomized allocation of students to AEP and other educational option (e.g. bridging program, formal school) or quasi-experimental approach</p> <p>Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design</p>	<p>Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students</p>

Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
	What is the effect of AEP on student psychosocial wellbeing and mental health?	Student mental health: Psychological distress levels Depression Behavioral problems Etc. as appropriate	Impact Evaluation, randomized allocation of students to AEP and other educational option (e.g. bridging program, formal school) or quasi-experimental approach Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design	Context appropriate tools, for example Child Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Scale (CPSS) Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) Child Psychosocial Distress Screener (CPDS) Childhood War Trauma Questionnaire (CWTQ), etc.

**What is the most effective combination of AEP components and how does that vary by context? What components work best for specific student groups/contexts?**

*Assumption: more than one type of AEP is available or can be programmed*

Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
<i>Teacher profile, selection, training, and support</i>	What is the impact and cost-effectiveness of AEPs that use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ paid teachers vs. volunteer teachers</li> <li>■ MoE-certified teachers vs. uncertified teachers</li> <li>■ intensive teacher training vs. those that use short teacher training</li> </ul> on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ teaching quality?</li> <li>■ learning outcomes?</li> </ul>	Learning Outcomes: Student performance in reading, writing, comprehension, mathematics, etc.  Rates of retention, Rates of transfer to formal education if applicable	Impact Evaluation with two treatment arms or quasi-experimental approach.  Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design.	Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, Teacher survey Classroom observations National Tests, etc. Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students

Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
<i>Pedagogy</i>	What is the impact and cost effectiveness of AEPs that use child-centered approaches vs. more traditional methodologies?	Student performance Rates of retention, Rates of transfers to formal education if applicable	Impact Evaluation with two or more treatment arms or quasi-experimental approach  Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design.	Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, National Tests, etc. Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students
<i>Curriculum Design</i>	What is the impact of 1) a compressed curriculum, 2) a partial curriculum, and 3) a curriculum that is both compressed and partial on learning outcomes?	Student performance Rates of retention, Rates of transfers to formal education or TVET if applicable	Impact Evaluation with two or more treatment arms or quasi-experimental approach  Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design.	Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, National Tests, etc. Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students
<i>Flexible Timetable</i>	What is the impact of a more flexible time table versus a traditional time table on attendance, completion, and learning outcomes?	Student performance in reading, writing, comprehension, mathematics, etc. Absenteeism rates Completion rates Dropout rates	Impact Evaluation with two or more treatment arms or quasi-experimental approach  Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design.	Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, National Tests, etc. Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students
<i>Added component</i>	What is the added value and cost-effectiveness of introducing a bridging program prior to enrollment in an AEP?	Student performance  Rates of retention, Rates of transfers to formal education if applicable	Impact Evaluation with two or more treatment arms or quasi-experimental approach  Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design.	Externally conducted tests such as EGRA, EGMA, PIRLS, TIMSS, National Tests, etc. Administrative data and short survey follow-up of students

Topic	Research or Evaluation Question	Outcome(s)	Method(s)	Measurement/ Instruments
<i>Mental Health</i>	What is the impact of psychosocial support components of AEPs?	Student mental health: Psychological distress levels Depression Behavioral problems Etc. as appropriate	Impact Evaluation with two or more treatment arms or quasi-experimental approach.  Cost effectiveness/ cost-benefit analysis to be included in evaluation design.	Context-appropriate tools, for example Child Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptom Scale (CPSS) Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA) Child Psychosocial Distress Screener (CPDS) Childhood War Trauma Questionnaire (CWTQ)

## SECTION 4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AEPs are designed to promote access to education in an accelerated time frame for disadvantaged, out-of-school, over-age children and youth who have missed out on education or had their education interrupted due to crisis and conflict, poverty, and marginalization. AEPs are as diverse as the contexts they respond to. In many ways, they differ so greatly that attempting to group them together to draw general conclusions about their programming is like comparing apples to oranges.

However, at their core, AEPs share common purpose around several structural elements: they compress or modify their curriculum to introduce a degree of acceleration into their programming, and they are ultimately aimed at increasing access to out-of-school, over-age children and youth. Understanding the variety of ways AEPs are implemented and how they accomplish or deviate from these crucial characteristics is critical to understanding how to improve AEPs to better serve out-of-school, over-age children and youth.

This study outlined the different ways that AEPs are implemented, with careful consideration of their context. In addition, this study found a high degree of variability in the intensity and quality of implementation of various components of accelerated learning and education. These key findings are detailed below:

- **Some programs included more content but not necessarily more instruction time.** Theoretically, a critical component of AEPs is longer sessions of instruction time; ideally, the teaching methodology is interactive and learner-centered, and other aspects of multiple-intelligence learning (such as music, the arts, and sports) are incorporated. Because of the “accelerated” nature of AEPs, they should also compress the curriculum and include condensed content. A review of the available documentation on programs shows that expanded learning time was the exception, not the norm. Furthermore, many of the programs reviewed included complementary subjects in their curriculum (e.g. life skills subjects, peace, civics, environment, HIV/AIDS, landmine education) which were responsive to the context but not necessarily designed to respond to the multiple intelligences approach. In addition, none described how much time was given to these subjects. Given that time is limited, it is likely not viable to add these subjects alongside interactive child-centered pedagogy while attempting to cover more ground in a shorter amount of time.
- **In a few cases, funding cycles did not necessarily allow cohorts to complete the AEP cycle.** In crisis and conflict-affected environments, where AEPs are often seen as an appropriate response, funding cycles are most often single-year cycles. This can make planning for programs such as AEPs incredibly

difficult— for example, if a program that requires a minimum of three years of funding for its cohort to complete the program receives single-year funding, that cohort cannot complete the AEP.

Most of the programs reviewed in these settings fulfilled at least one cycle, ranging from three to five years. However, there were several programs where the number of years the program was implemented did not match the number of years required to run a full program. Funding for only one cycle implies that the program was not in existence long enough to see more than one cohort of learners graduate from the program. If learners are still part of the cycle when the program ceases, it could be assumed to be detrimental to their education—they likely cannot transition to formal schools due to limited skills and knowledge base, sit external exams because their education has been interrupted again, or, if the program was established to relieve contextual issues such as location or exclusion, cannot access another school.

- **The smaller the program, the more flexible the timetabling.** Very large programs tended to mimic the timetable of formal school systems; scheduling parallel classes to formal school programs detracts from the real flexibility of the schedule. In some cases, teachers were recruited from the formal system and the school operated split shifts, (double-shifting) utilizing teachers and classrooms—in these cases, any “flexibility” was to suit the teacher and the venue rather than the learner.
- **In some programs, children or youth who are school-age, or younger, enrolled in AEPs instead of attending formal schools—a disadvantage to target beneficiaries as well as school-age or younger students.** Theoretically, learner recruitment in AEPs is based on greatest need first—prioritizing learners who are over-age and who have missed most schooling (but who are not adults). Unfortunately, there is little documentation on how learners are selected for AEPs. In some situations, it appears that AEP enrollment operates on a first-come, first-served basis. In some programs, reports indicate that children and/or youth are tested prior to entry, but there is much more evidence (particularly in older programs) where children and/or youth who were school age (and younger) simply attended AEPs instead of formal schools: if the classes are free, and materials are provided, it is likely irresistible. A wider age group could limit the potential for AEP classes as a means of social protection, the ability to ensure that age-appropriate content is utilized, and the ability to speed up the curriculum if the teacher needs to slow down teaching to take account of younger students.
- **Where information on teacher selection was available, teachers were typically recruited from the community, with completion of at least secondary school required.** While several programs did recruit teachers from the formal education system, who were asked to teach a second shift after their regular teaching post, the norm was to recruit teachers from the community—oftentimes, as volunteers. Some programs also documented explicitly giving

female teachers preference in selection; however, the prevalence of minority group representation was less clear. Few programs required teachers to be formally certified or to have received formal teaching prior to being recruited to teach; rather, programs required that potential teachers completed at least secondary school, up through Grade 8 to Grade 12.

- **Documentation on teacher training was very thin.** Unfortunately, the documentation on the training provided to teachers, especially the content of the curriculum, was thin. Trainings appeared to have two major objectives: subject mastery and child-centered methodology, although without more thorough documentation and reporting of training content it is difficult to pinpoint what is taught in these trainings. Reports did document the length of teacher trainings, and how often refresher courses were provided. Several courses provided trainings that ranged from three to four weeks, although others provided training for just a few days. Training ranged from elective units in a pre-service course to the more usual in-service courses. At least two of the programs reviewed did sustained teacher training, such that teachers could move into a teacher-training institute. Most reports did not document the quality of teacher training; those that did stated that the training was insufficient or ineffective. However, in an emergency response (such as in crisis and conflict-affected environments) teacher training has a low priority in comparison with provision of access and teaching/learning materials. Teacher training takes time to develop and expertise to implement, both of which may be in short supply in an emergency.

Two important recommendations come out of reviewing documentation on the implementation of AEPs:

- **Recommendation: Provide standard program guidance.** Given the variability around the implementation of AEPs, the AEWG should develop guidelines (similar to Annex 2) for program implementers around the following issues:
  - Curriculum modification; core subjects and partial curriculum vs. condensed subjects and integration; complementary subjects (multiple intelligences), needs-based subjects (e.g. health and sanitation, peace and human rights)
  - Interactive methodology; use of group work, discovery learning, child-centered programming, and activity-based learning
  - Teacher selection; level of formal education; qualifications; specific training for interactive methodology); endorsement by the community; and motivation
  - Teacher training; subject mastery; pedagogy for interactive learning, constructive classroom management
  - Programmatic planning including access, teacher training, curriculum modification, teacher selection, ensuring community buy-in
  - Sustainability planning

- ***Recommendation: Improve documentation around AEP implementation.***

Overall, reviewing documentation around program design and implementation of AEPs raised several gaps that could be better documented and shared to enhance our understanding of how AEPs are implemented in practice.

Descriptive research, both qualitative and quantitative in nature can contribute to our broader understanding of how AEPs are currently programmed and what we may want to improve upon and investigate further. Annex 3 outlines a series of questions around how AEPs are designed, structured, and implemented prompted by this review. Better documenting this information could be achieved by having independent evaluators gather this information through process evaluations or observational studies. The questions in Annex 3 could also be solicited and addressed better in solicitations, proposals, monitoring data, and evaluation designs from implementers.

This review also set out to understand how AEPs are progressing towards their goals, whether they are the right policy tool for a particular context, what components of the AEP are integral to success, and how to better program them to optimize access, learning, transition to formal schools, and employment outcomes among other goals. Due to a lack of documentation around outcomes, which is partly attributable to the less stable, crisis and conflict-affected environments in which many AEPs operate within, these questions were difficult to assess. However, key findings did emerge from the review:

- **M&E systems are not necessarily strong enough to collect systemized data.**

A limited number of descriptive reports collected and reported data on a) enrollment, b) attendance, c) dropout rates, and d) select learning outcomes. This may be, in part, the function of programs working in an emergency context. In the 44 programs on which we reviewed documentation, only eight reported some or all of the above data. Even then, several referenced weak M&E systems or recommended that data on outcomes be collected on a more regular basis.

- **AEPs may be outperforming formal schools, but more rigorous research is needed.**

Most programs that did report learning outcome scores indicated, on average, AEP students outperformed those at government/formal schools. There was a strong tendency to compare outcomes of AEPs against outcomes in formal schools to gauge their relative performance. However, when these data are reported, it is difficult to understand what the reported metric conveys about an AEP's success. For one, sometimes exams taken by AEP students versus formal school students are not equivalent. Furthermore, formal schools may not be the best comparison group, as students who attend AEPs often face drastically different circumstances than those that attend formal schools. These characteristics could heavily influence the student's attendance, academic performance, and longer-term outcomes, clouding our assessment of whether or not resulting outcomes are a function of the AEP itself or other issues.

- **Very few programs tracked longer-term outcomes, while those that do indicate mixed results.** Three studies we reviewed attempted to track longer-term outcomes relating to transition of AEP students to formal school, absenteeism in formal schools, and dropout rates in formal schools. We did not encounter any studies that tracked long-term outcomes such as employment and wages. These studies show mixed results in the medium term (absenteeism and dropout rates were high among AEP students who transitioned to and attended formal school, but in some cases these students still out-performed students who attended formal primary schools).

Evaluations are appropriate for discussing questions of effectiveness—important questions about AEPs that have yet to be fully tackled. In Section 3, we provide key considerations to enable policy-makers, practitioners, and researchers to begin to answer questions of effectiveness regarding AEPs. In addition, there are a variety of other research methods that should be employed to better understand how AEPs are implemented, whether they are being implemented in the quality and structure that was originally intended, and if not, why they are not and how they have evolved with their context. These research methods include, but are not limited to performance monitoring, performance evaluations, process evaluations, and qualitative techniques such as case studies.

Below are our recommendations for continuing to build the body of evidence around how AEPs are structured and implemented, how they perform, and ultimately how effective they are at accomplishing their goals:

- **Recommendation: Standardize outcomes and reporting.** As the donor community provides more guidance on standardizing the concept, approach, and implementation of AEPs through inter-agency working groups such as the AEWG, it would be beneficial to develop a homogenized set of metrics that can be collected by programs themselves to provide guidance to programs and implementing partners on what metrics to collect and how to measure them. Guidance on underlying instruments, data collection processes, and standards would greatly increase the quality, and likely the availability, of such data, especially during the program monitoring process—this data can be used both by donors and implementers to better understand progress towards goals and how to improve programming.
- **Recommendation: Utilize evaluations and tracer/longitudinal studies to help researchers, practitioners, and policy makers better understand whether and how AEPs can be more effective.** Outcomes in AEPs are complicated to measure, especially given that the populations of AEPs often face drastically different circumstances than those who attend formal schools. Evaluations can help us better answer whether AEPs are effective, whether they are the best policy option, how they compare to other alternatives, and what combination of characteristics associated with AEPs are essential in bringing

about improved learning outcomes. Longitudinal and tracer studies can help track medium-term and longer-term outcomes for AEPs, including transition to and performance in secondary school and employment outcomes.

Because AEPs are often implemented in crisis and conflict-affected environments, there is often hesitation around proposals that require structured data to be collected in relatively unstable contexts. The proliferation of mobile-based technology and data collection tools will provide, in the coming years, more avenues for reliable data collection:

■ ***Recommendation: Utilize mobile technology to collect and systemize data.***

In less stable contexts, there are options for collecting simple monitoring data or training teachers to administer simple assessment tools to better understand the performance of a particular program. These data can also be employed for evaluations. The use of technology and mobile data collection tools that employ smart-phones or simple texting, or tablets systems that connect to servers, can enable implementing partners on the ground. Using this technology, teachers themselves may be able to report data to a central repository for analysis. These techniques do not necessarily require the mobilization of fieldworker teams, and can generate structured data that can be accessed from anywhere in the world. These approaches have been used in the health sector to track treatment compliance and vaccination, for example, and are very incipient in the education sector, where they are been used to track student attendance. They can be affordable, easy to set up and to manage, and reliable where infrastructure is available and capacity is present. While there is an initial investment setting up the system that requires visiting the program location, once set up the system is accessed and managed remotely.

With the ever-increasing intensity of crisis and conflict globally, the role of providing access to education for out-of-school, over-age children and youth cannot be overstated. As we continue to utilize AEPs to help bring those who did not have educational opportunities during the formative years of their life due to crisis and conflict back into the educational fold, we must clarify our understanding of what works well within AEPs; what should be modified, adapted, and changed; and ultimately how to improve the effectiveness of these programs. It is our sincere hope that this review propels policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in that direction.

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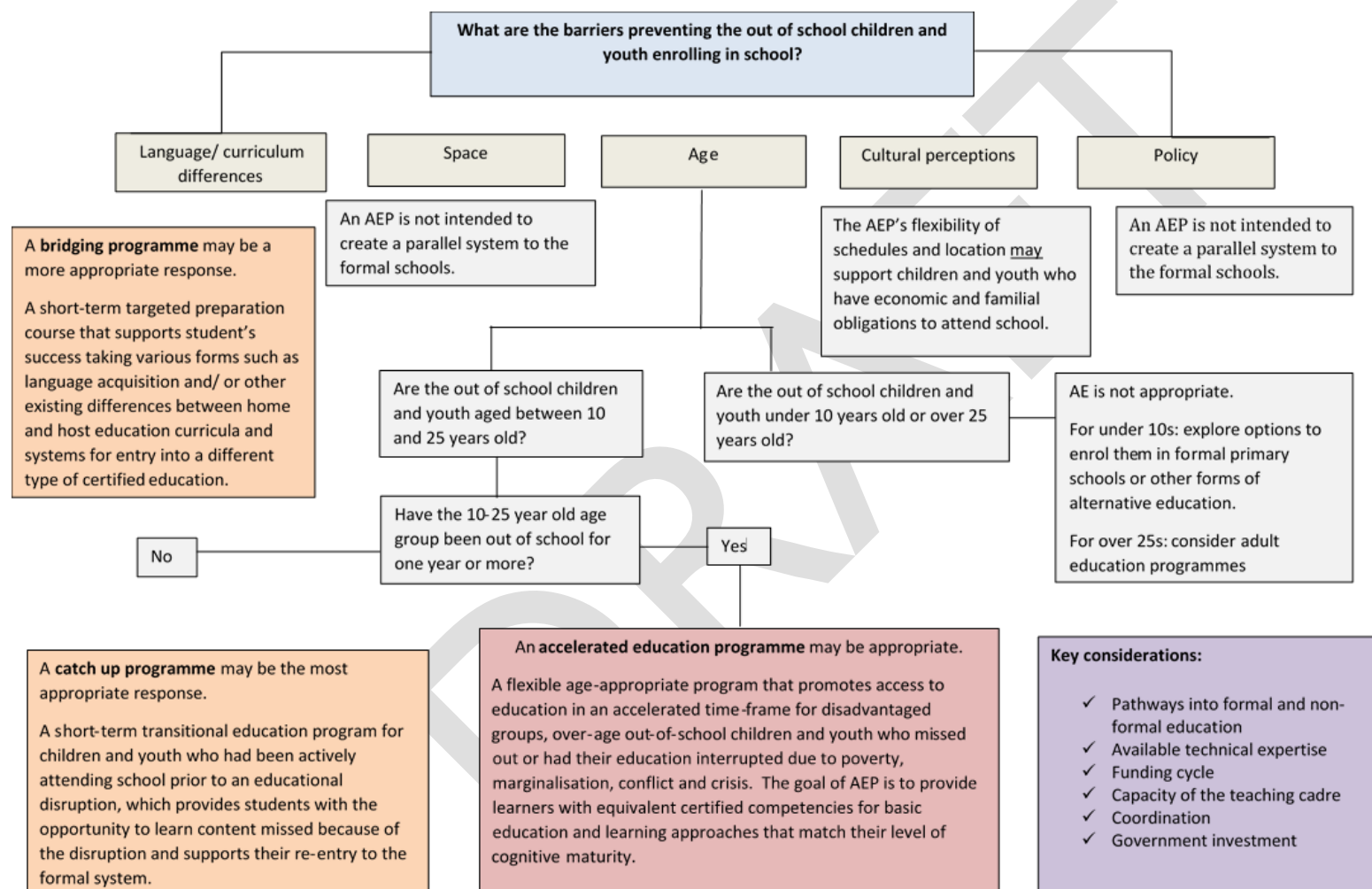
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## ANNEX 1: KEY INFORMANTS

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## ANNEX 2: AEWG ACCELERATED EDUCATION FLOW CHART



## ANNEX 3: REPORTING INFORMATION TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AEP IMPLEMENTATION

### Design and Structure of AEPs

#### Program objectives:

For a given program, what are the objectives of the program, specific to the context of the program?

#### Curriculum and Learning Time:

Are curricula adapted for AEPs, especially with an increased degree of acceleration? If so, how? For example:

- Is the curriculum compressed?
- Is the curriculum pared to essentials?
- Is repetition and revision eliminated?

Are enhanced learning time and multiple (non-academic) intelligences utilized in the development of the program? Specifically:

- Is the learning period (daily/weekly) increased?
- What elements are put in place to respond to the concept of multiple intelligences?
- For a given AEP, is extra learning time included in the curriculum relative to the normal school schedule?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of a compressed curriculum, a partial curriculum, and a curriculum that is compressed and partial?

#### Duration of Programs:

- What constitutes a cycle of the program?
- How many cycles were implemented/have been implemented?
- If the program ceases mid-cycle, what happened to learners who were enrolled in the program?

#### Class Size:

- What class size was intended as part of the program? What was the average class size during implementation?
- What was the intended age-range of the class? What age-range enrolled in the class? What proportion of those enrolled are considered over-age learners?

#### Flexibility of Timetabling:

- What form does the flexibility of timetabling take?
- Does the learning timetable change according to the seasons?

### Beneficiaries of AEPs

- Given the target beneficiaries of a particular AEP, what are the objectives of the program, specific to the context of the program?
- Are learners selected to participate in AEPs? If so, how?
- Do programs employ a screening process (e.g. testing prior to entry, age determination)?
- Are beneficiaries allocated to needs-specific classes according to previous background, abilities, life experience?

### Teacher Selection, Training, And Retention

## Teacher Selection, Training, And Retention

### Teacher selection

- How were teachers selected for the program?
- Are teachers certified? If so, by what party?
- Are the teachers volunteers?
- If they are paid, who is paying teachers?

### Teacher training and retention:

- What training models are used to train AEP teachers? What are the contents of the training? Is the training tailored to the specific education level and experience of the teachers? How is this achieved?
- Is the training tailored to the specific pedagogy of accelerated learning?
  - Are teachers trained to employ interactive teaching techniques?
  - Are teachers trained in activity-based learning? Group work?
- What is the quality of instruction?
- Do teachers leave the training feeling equipped to teach?

### Teacher retention

- What are the rates of teacher absenteeism?
- What are the rates of teacher retention?
- What steps did the AEP take to minimize absenteeism and optimize retention?

### Teacher/Learning Materials

- Are there specially developed teaching/learning materials for the program?
- If general textbooks are used (as per the formal curriculum) in what way are they modified in their use for the AEP?
- What is the learner/learning material ratio?
- Are teaching/learning materials developed locally?
- Are teaching/learning materials developed that replace textbooks?

## Conflict Sensitivity

Does the AEP purport to have an element of conflict sensitivity?

Is there a principle of "Do No Harm?" How is it implemented (or described)?

Is there a specific curriculum component that responds to the conflict-sensitive context? (e.g. Human Rights, Tolerance, Peace, Inclusion, Conflict Resolution)

Does the pedagogy and classroom ambience reflect the principles of a conflict-sensitive approach?

## Gender Sensitivity

If an AEP describes its programming as gender-sensitive:

How does it aim to be gender-sensitive? For example, could we classify the component as systemic (e.g. AEP targets only girls) or programmatic (curriculum asks teachers to discuss gender in class, reflect principles of inclusion in teaching)?

Do teaching practices in the classroom reflect a gender equity approach?

Is programming exploitative, accommodating or transformative?

Are teaching and learning materials gender-neutral/sensitive?

Are the teachers trained in the principles of gender inclusion? What form does the training take?

What percent of the learning day is focused on issues of gender?

Are the subjects offered gender-specific? In what ways?

### **Costs Associated with Learning**

Does the AEP agency charge school fees (in order to be aligned with formal education)?

What do AEPs do with funds, and where are funds directed?

Is there an opportunity cost associated with attending the AEP? How are these costs overcome or minimized?

Are there other costs associated with attending the AEP (uniforms, learning materials, food, transportation)?

DRAFT

## ANNEX 4: TEN PRINCIPLES OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION (DEVELOPED BY AEWG)

### LEARNER

#### ***1: AEP is flexible for older learners***

- a) Target out-of-school, over-age children and youth (AEPs are typically for children and youth aged approx. 10-18)
- b) Define, communicate, and assist national authorities to regulate age range for student enrollment in collaboration with the Ministry/relevant education authority, community and formal schools
- c) Provide age-appropriate introductory level course for learners who have never been to school to improve readiness skills
- d) Make AEP class time and location flexible, as required by the community, teacher, and above all, the specific needs of both male and female learners in order to ensure consistent attendance and completion

#### ***2: AEP is a legitimate, credible education option that results in learner certification in primary education***

- a) Include strategy and resources that ensure AEP learners can register for and sit examinations that provide a nationally recognized certificate
- b) Develop clear pathways that enable children and youth to reintegrate in a corresponding level in the formal system, vocational education or employment
- c) If national and annual examinations do not exist, develop assessment systems with the Ministry of Education/relevant education authority that enable children and youth to be tested and reintegrated in a corresponding level in the formal system

### SYSTEM/POLICY

#### ***3: AEP is aligned with the national education system and relevant humanitarian architecture***

- a) Integrate research on out-of-school, over-age children and youth into education sector assessment so that supply and demand issues related to AEP are explored, analyzed, and prioritized
- b) Develop strategies and processes to engender political will, identify resources, and integrate AEP into the national education system
- c) Develop clear competency-based framework for monitoring progress and achievement by level based on national education system or relevant humanitarian architecture curricula
- d) Use certified Ministry/relevant education authority material where available
- e) Ensure budget provision for national and sub-national AEP staff within MoE/relevant education authority

- f) In a humanitarian context, work with the Education Cluster or appropriate sector/donor coordination group to ensure, the AEP is part of a coordinated sector response

***4: Curriculum, materials and pedagogy are genuinely accelerated, AE-suitable and use relevant language of instruction***

- a) Develop and provide condensed, levelled, age-appropriate, competency-based curriculum
- b) Develop and provide teacher guides
- c) Ensure AEP timetable allows for adequate time to cover curriculum
- d) When funding AE curriculum development, allow sufficient time (1-2 years), budget and provide long-term technical expertise
- e) Integrate “accelerated” education principles, pedagogy and practices throughout the curriculum, training components, and EMIS and Monitoring systems
- f) The AEP curriculum, learning materials and teaching methods are adapted to suit over-age children and youth and reflect gender and inclusive education practices
- g) Prioritize the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills as the foundation for learning
- h) Integrate psychosocial well-being and life skills acquisition in the curriculum to address issues young people experience in fragile contexts

***5: Educators participate in continuous professional development***

- a. Work directly with teacher training Institutes and national structures for AEP educator training to align AEP methods with national teaching standards
- b. Provide certified professional development for AEP educators
- c. Provide pre-service and continuous in-service teacher professional development courses on subject knowledge and AEP methodology
- d. Build inclusion, gender-sensitivity and protection practices into the AEP educator training
- e. Ensure educators are provided with regular support and coaching to help improve the quality of classroom instruction

***6: Educators are recruited, supervised and remunerated***

- a. Recruit educators from target geographic areas and build on learners culture, language and experience
- b. Ensure educators receive fair and consistent payment on a regular basis in line relevant education authority/other implementers commensurate with the hours they teach
- c. Ensure educators sign a code of conduct

**AE CENTRE**

***7: AE Centre is effectively managed***

- a) Fiscal, supervisory, monitoring & evaluation systems in place

- b) Set up systems for student record keeping and documentation especially for mobile communities to enable integration with formal education
- c) Collect accurate data to monitor progress on learning, student enrollment, attendance, dropout, retention, completion and transition/integration to formal education disaggregate by gender, age group, disability
- d) The center management committee (e.g. PTA) should be representative of the community, trained and equipped to support AE management

**8: *AE learning environment is inclusive, safe, and learning-ready***

- a) AEP classes are free, and there are no fees for uniforms or material
- b) Apply (inter) national standards or guidelines to ensure basic standards of safety and quality for the learning environment
- c) Ensure access to water and separate latrines for girls and boys, and provision of sanitary materials when relevant
- d) Budget for maintenance and upkeep of facilities
- e) Resource AEPs with a safe shelter, classroom furniture and teaching learning supplies and equipment
- f) information is provided to students and educators on reporting mechanisms and follow up of exposure to violence and GBV
- g) Follow recommended relevant education authority guidelines for teacher pupil ratio, but not greater than 40 pupils per teacher.

**9: *Community is engaged and accountable***

- a) AEP is located within an engaged and supportive local community
- b) AEP is locally led, and when necessary, technical expertise is provided externally
- c) Provide comprehensive community sensitization on the benefits of AEPs
- d) In areas with frequent movements of IDPs / refugees, conduct continuous needs assessments and community sensitization on education

## **PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT**

**10: *Goals, monitoring, and funding align***

- a) Overarching program goal is centered on improving skills and increasing access
- b) Make M&E systems for data compilation and analysis compatible with the Ministry/relevant education authority
- c) Develop, apply, and regularly report on Monitoring and Evaluation framework directly linked to the program goal (theory of change, logical framework, other)
- d) Exit strategies and/or a sustainability plan included in the AEP design
- e) Program is adequately funded to assure sustained minimum standards (INEE) for infrastructure, staffing, supplies, supervision and management.