ASSESSING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL RESPONSE AND RESILIENCE OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES IN CONFLICT AND EMERGENCY ZONES: BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

BY CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF THE ECONOMIES OF AFRICA

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Executive Summary

Acknowledgment

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AEP: Accelerated Education Programme

CAPI: Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews

ECR: Education Crisis Response

FGD: Focus Group Discussions

GPS: Global Positioning System

HND: Higher National Diploma

IDP: Internally Displaced Persons

IRC: International Rescue Committee

JHS: Junior High School

MMC: Maiduguri Municipal Council

NCE: National Certificate in Education

OTL: Opportunity to Learn

OND: Ordinary National Diploma

OOSC: Out-of-school Children

PTA: Parent-Teacher Association

SHS: Senior High School

SUBEB: State Universal Basic Education Board

SBMC: School-Based Management Committee

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context of the Study

Despite the SDG target 4.1, which aims to achieve free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education for all girls and boys by 2030 such that relevant and effective learning outcomes are achieved, about 18.5 million children in Nigeria are currently out of school, of which 10 million are girls. Borno, a state in North-eastern Nigeria, is reported to be one of the top 10 states with about 54% out of school children (OOSC) and one of the leading cause of this high OOSC rate is the protracted crises and emergency situations in the state with the boko haram activities disrupting learning processes and settings. Conflict and emergencies disrupt the foundations of education, leaving millions of children and youth in these crisis zones without access to structured learning. A series of Accelerated education programmes (AEP) have been implemented as a means of reducing OOSC, increasing enrolment rates and improving learning outcomes in the state. Accelerated education programme (AEP) promotes access to primary and secondary education for disadvantaged groups and older out-of-school youth (Wali and Mustapha, 2019). In an AEP, the required learning is completed in a shorter span of time and the goal is completion of primary education or integration into the formal system at an age-appropriate level. The assumption is that older, more cognitively sophisticated children/youth will learn faster (Nicholson, 2006).

Apart from the disruption of the educational activities caused by crises, the prolonged exposure to violent conflicts, displacements, loss of lives, properties, and livelihoods also affect the mental health and wellbeing of children in these areas. The psychological toll on children living through continuous emergencies is enormous.This prolonged exposure to conflict and uncertainties means that many children are in a constant state of toxic stress (Save the Children, 2023). In such volatile contexts, children often grapple with profound trauma, anxiety, disrupted social networks, and, in extreme cases; withdrawal or isolation, which undermine their ability to learn and thrive. Children affected by crises and emergencies may experience displacement, malnutrition, separation from family and caregivers, physical/sexual violence, and other harmful practices. This could result in depression, low self-esteem, and poor brain development, as crises and emergencies may influence children's ability to concentrate on schoolwork and affect their mental and psychosocial health in the long term (UNICEF, 2021)

Several studies on AEPs have focused on how responsive and effective these programmes have been in bridging the educational gap resulting from crises without exploring ways in which the program has helped beneficiaries build resilience and cope with mental stress. A study on the impact of Accelerated Education Programs (AEP) on the psychosocial response and resilience of its beneficiaries in conflict and emergency zones is very crucial for understanding the holistic impact and effectiveness of AEP as an education intervention tool in emergency situations.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions

This study aims to evaluate the mental wellbeing, coping mechanisms, and support systems of children in conflict zones who are enrolled in the Accelerated Education Programs. To achieve it purpose, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

(i) What is the psychosocial well-being of beneficiaries participating in the Accelerated Education Program (AEP) within conflict and emergency zones?

(ii) What are the coping mechanisms employed by AEP beneficiaries to navigate educational challenges in a conflict environment?

(iii) How resilient are AEP beneficiaries in maintaining their educational progress despite the disruptions caused by conflict?

(iv) How effective are support systems (e.g., teachers and counsellors) within the AEP to enhance psychosocial well-being and educational resilience?

(v) What are the gender differences in the psychosocial response and educational resilience among AEP beneficiaries?

1.4 Relevance of the Study—Value addition

Oftentimes, studies have focused on the roles armed conflicts/crises play in the disruption of learning processes in Nigeria, how this has worsened out-of-school (OOSC) children in Nigeria, and the impact and effectiveness of the Accelerated Education Program intervention in restoring the education level. These studies, however, do not explore how these beneficiaries cope mentally in these conflict zones. This study intends to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the effectiveness of the Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) by evaluating the psychosocial well-being of the AEP beneficiaries. It will analyse the coping mechanism of these beneficiaries and highlight the support systems accessible to them within the AEP program.

1.5 Report structure

This report is presented in four main sections. Section 1 introduces the report detailing the background, purpose, and relevance of the study. Section 2 proceeds by describing the methodology, including the study design, pre-listing, sampling, and data collection processes. Section 3 presents the findings of the study, while Section 4 summarizes and makes recommendations based on the findings, highlighting key lessons learnt.

2.0 Methodology

2.1   Study design

The study is designed to focus on AEP beneficiaries who are currently enrolled in upper primary, junior high, or senior high secondary school. Such beneficiaries are expected to range from the age of 15 to 24. It is expected that during the AEP period, the beneficiaries would have received some sort of emotional and psychosocial support from the program. As such, two profiles of children were defined. These include:

Profile 1: Children who passed through the accelerated education program/intervention.
Profile 2: Children who did not pass through the accelerated education program/intervention.

2.2   Pre-Listing Exercise

A pre-listing exercise was conducted to collate a list of OOSC within the communities sampled for the study. This was done via a tracer effort, leveraging on various information avenues including leads by former AEP facilitators and AEP beneficiaries in a snowballing manner. For the purpose of tracing, the biodata of these children was collected, including their name, age, current educational status, the name of the AEP they benefited from, the period the program lasted, their current address, phone contact or that of someone through whom they could be reached, among others. This list aided the random selection of study participants in a 50:50 ratio between the children of profiles 1 and 2 respectively. In addition, the list which included contact information enhanced the identification of these children at their current locations, hence, facilitating the study.

2.3 Sampling Framework/ Procedure

2.3.1 Criteria for Selection of Local Government Areas

Three (3) local government areas (LGA) were selected for the study, namely Jere, Maiduguri Municipal Council (MMC) and Konduga. The selection of these LGAs was guided by two primary criteria. Firstly, they had prior experience with the AEP, which enabled the tracking of upper primary and junior high school cohorts as they progressed through to senior high school. Secondly, these LGAs are fairly accessible, considering the security situation in the northeast. Notably, during the height of the insurgency attacks, many affected LGAs experienced internal displacement, with a significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) seeking refuge in safer areas such as Jere, MMC, and Konduga. As a result, AEP interventions were implemented in these LGAs to provide support to the displaced individuals

2.3.2 Criteria for selection of communities

The study was conducted in 33 communities across the LGAs. Some of these communities are host communities while others are IDP camps. To ensure the study's validity, the selection of communities was primarily based on their prior experience with the AEP intervention, as not all communities within these LGAs had received such intervention. Hence, based on these criteria 11 communities were selected each from the three LGA (Jere, MMC, and Konduga).

2.4   Instrumentation/ Data Collection Tools

To assess the psychosocial response and resilience of AEP beneficiaries in Borno State, eight (8) survey instruments were developed to collect data at both school and community levels. These instruments were designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information, employing a mixed-methods approach for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The **quantitative instruments** were created and deployed using SurveyCTO, a versatile platform for data collection. This approach offered several advantages, including the use of skipping patterns to ensure that respondents were only asked relevant questions, data validation to flag inconsistencies, and built-in controls that minimized errors during data entry. The quantitative data collection was conducted through Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) using the SurveyCTO app. This method streamlined the process, allowing enumerators to efficiently collect accurate and high-quality data in real time. Similarly, the **qualitative instruments** were also coded and deployed on SurveyCTO. An interview guide was used for conducting interviews, and SurveyCTO was utilized to record these sessions directly. This integration allowed for seamless transcription and analysis without relying on external recording devices. The use of SurveyCTO for both quantitative and qualitative instruments ensured consistency, enhanced data quality, and simplified the overall data collection process. This dual approach, combining SurveyCTO's advanced capabilities with rigorous data collection methods, was instrumental in gathering detailed insights into the psychosocial resilience of AEP beneficiaries in Borno State.

2.5   Data collection processes

2.5.1 Enumerator training

A total of 8 experienced enumerators and 2 supervisors were recruited for the exercise. Training was provided for them in the design and objectives of the research. Particularly, enumerators were orientated on the purpose of the research and the design. Demo sessions were conducted using the actual instruments of inquiry. Enumerators were also subjected to quizzes on the administering of the assessment tool to ensure that they understood the procedure. This training and simulation process gave the opportunity for the enumerators to realize the possible scenarios they may run into on the field and the approach to handling them.

2.5.2 Quality Assurance Processes

A holistic data quality assurance was built into the entire data collection process from the survey design to the field operation. To ensure data quality, adequate data quality checks were put in place. The programming of the instruments on SurveyCTO put in place some initial controls to ensure that the right data was inputted. Supervisors checked the entries being made by the enumerators to ensure that the right entries were being made. A real time back-end monitoring of submissions was also done to ensure that appropriate responses were being gathered. GPS accuracy was captured to determine if enumerators visited the acclaimed location of the data collection. A backcheck was also done to establish the validity of the data collected.

2.6 Data analysis procedure

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were done using the gathered data. A data analysis template was produced to guide the data analysis and drive the salient insights from the data. This template specified the nature of analysis appropriate to generate insights on different issues as guided by the research questions. The data management involved the cleaning of the data to make it ready and useful for analysis. There will be descriptive analysis using tabulations and cross tabulations of frequencies with percentages. Based on these, visualizations were generated to summarize the findings. On the other hand, the recordings from the interviews were translated and transcribed from Hausa voice note to English text. These transcripts were checked for accuracy and later cleaned in preparation for analysis. The cleaned transcripts were eventually imported into Dedoose, an effective qualitative data analysis software to proceed with the analysis. Thematic analysis was done for these qualitative data. This involved coding of the responses in the transcript to generate themes which ultimately revealed the hidden patterns, hence insights from the dataset.

2.7 Ethical considerations (community and school entry)

Standard research ethics were observed during the study. Being social research carried out on human subjects, necessary approvals were sought from appropriate authorities. Sensitisation visits were made to ministries and community authorities. This became even more crucial as the location of the study, Borno state, is such a high security sensitivity given its conflict antecedents and the recent climate crisis. In the field, necessary ethics were also observed as the purpose of the research was clearly detailed to the prospective respondents whose consent was also sought before the commencement of each data collection encounter. Enumerators were adequately trained on child safety and protection protocols as primary subjects of this study are children and youth. To ensure adherence, an undertaking of compliance was signed by each enumerator before proceeding to the field

2.8   Gender, equity, and inclusion

The research project factored in gender equity and inclusion into the entire implementation process. The recruitment of enumerators ensured a fair gender balance. The team composition had not less than 50% female which enabled a male-female pairing of the enumerators. Adequate balance of female and male voices was also captured in the interview. As much as possible interviews were gender-based. Girls FGD were conducted by female enumerators while boys FGD were conducted by male enumerators.

2.9   Study limitations

This study faced a few limitations, one of which was the security constraints and recent flooding in the study area. These challenges restricted data collection to Local Government Areas (LGAs) that were confirmed to be safe and accessible, thereby limiting the geographical scope of the research.Another constraint is the fact that many of the AEP beneficiaries were displaced by the flooding and have migrated from the study location. Some of these beneficiaries that were not traceable could have been added to the AEP assessment evidence gathered in the study.

3.0 Study Findings

3.1 Demographic / Background Characteristics

3.1.1 Local Government Area

The tracer study on assessing the psychosocial response and resilience of AEP beneficiaries was carried out in various communities across the three selected Local Government Areas (LGA): MMC, Jere and Konduga, with 11 communities drawn from each LGA. These are communities where AEP has been implemented and where beneficiaries of the Programme could be found or where a tracer clue was available to locate the AEP beneficiaries.

The study examined the availability of teachers in these LGAs. Respondents who are headteachers were asked if they believed the supply of teachers in their school was sufficient. The results, presented in Figure 1, shows that in Jere LGA, 62.5% of respondents felt that the teacher supply was inadequate, while 37.5% disagreed. In Konduga, 60% of respondents considered the teacher supply inadequate and 40% believed that the teacher supply was sufficient. In MMC, 55.6% of respondents thought the teacher supply was inadequate, while 44.4% thought otherwise. Overall, going by the proportion of responses across the three LGAs, it can be concluded that there is an inadequate supply of teachers to meet the needs of schools within these communities.

Figure 1:

Response Distribution for: Adequate Teachers
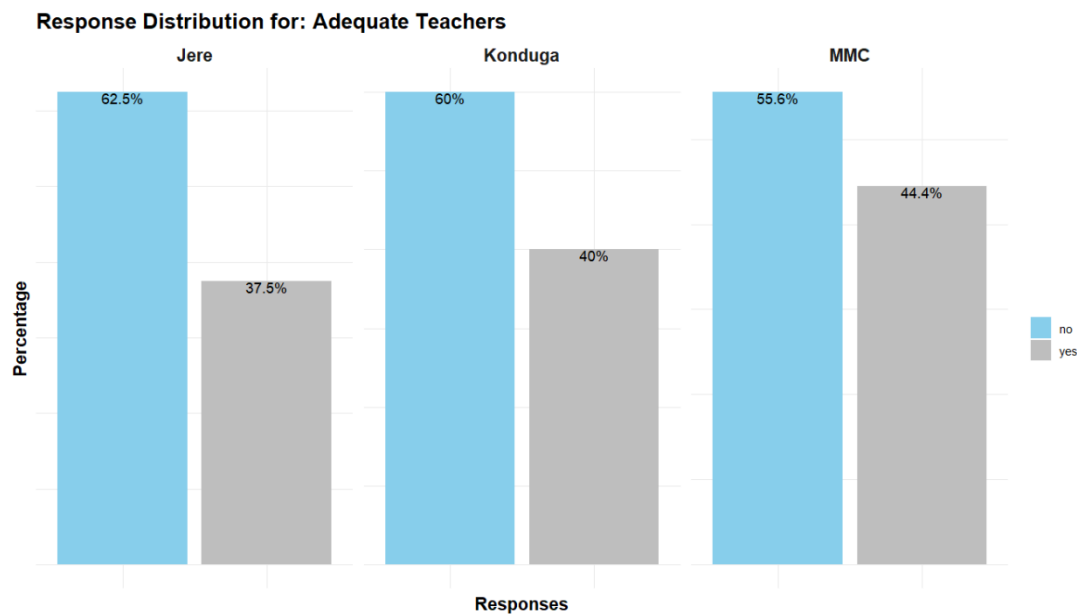
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

This finding indicates that despite the implementation of the Accelerated Education Program (AEP) in these areas, the schools are still struggling to meet basic staffing needs. The inadequacy of teacher supply could hinder the overall effectiveness of the AEP in promoting quality education and addressing the educational gaps of beneficiaries.

One of the reasons for this inadequacy could be the migration of teachers during the flooding. The flooding not only disrupted community life but also forced many teachers to relocate in search of safer environments or better opportunities. Many of these teachers lost their homes, personal belongings, and other properties to the disaster, creating significant emotional and financial strain. The challenge of rebuilding their lives and adapting to new locations further contributed to their unavailability for teaching. In addition, the stress of displacement and the need to focus on personal recovery left those who remained in their roles struggling to concentrate on their professional responsibilities. This exodus and instability among teachers significantly affected the teacher-student ratio, leaving schools understaffed and further exacerbating the challenges faced by AEP beneficiaries. The loss of experienced educators due to these environmental and economic pressures likely contributed to the widespread perception of teacher inadequacy in 2024.

Changes in context or perception could also be another reason for the inadequate supply of teachers. Between 2023 and 2024, there may have been changes in the availability of resources, funding, or policies affecting teacher deployment. In addition, the perceptions of adequacy may have shifted due to increased demand for education or greater awareness of educational standards, leading to heightened concerns over teacher shortages.

Furthermore, programmatic changes or challenges in the implementation of AEP may have contributed to the situation. Over the years, factors such as staff turnover, lack of funding, or delayed government interventions might have affected teacher availability, making it more difficult for schools to meet their staffing needs. These programmatic issues could have compounded the challenges faced by schools and communities, further impacting the effectiveness of AEP.

The findings emphasize the need for strategic interventions aimed at improving teacher recruitment, training, and retention in these LGAs. Addressing this gap is essential for ensuring that the program's objectives of improving access to education for vulnerable groups, particularly AEP beneficiaries, are achieved. Moreover, the perceived inadequacy of teachers highlights potential challenges in delivering effective learning outcomes and reinforces the need for continued support and monitoring.

3.1.2 Community

The communities selected for the studies are a mix of rural and urban communities. For the purpose of this study, a community is considered urban if it is within 1-hour radius of the district capital and rural if it is beyond 1-hour radius of the district capital or in a very remote area of the district. Jere, Konduga, and MMC had 87.5%, 80% and 94.4% respectively of communities within 1-hour radius of the district capital while Jere and MMC had 12.5% and 5.6% of communities beyond 1-hour radius of the district capital. Konduga had 20% of communities in a very remote area of the district. Given the distribution of these communities the availability of infrastructure and basic amenities therefore varies from one community to another across the LGAs. Despite variations in infrastructure and amenities across the LGAs, most communities have access to healthcare facilities. As shown in Figure 2, all respondents in Jere (100%) and the majority in Konduga (80%) and MMC (92.9%) reported the availability of healthcare centers in their areas. However, a small percentage of respondents in Konduga (20%) and MMC (7.1%) indicated a lack of access to these facilities. This perception may stem from the proximity of healthcare centers, which, while present in the community, might be located too far from certain households, particularly in remote or rural areas, making access difficult. Furthermore, environmental challenges such as flooding or poor road conditions could temporarily render these facilities inaccessible, reinforcing the perception of inadequate access among these respondents.

Figure 2:

Response Distribution for: Availabilty of Health Center
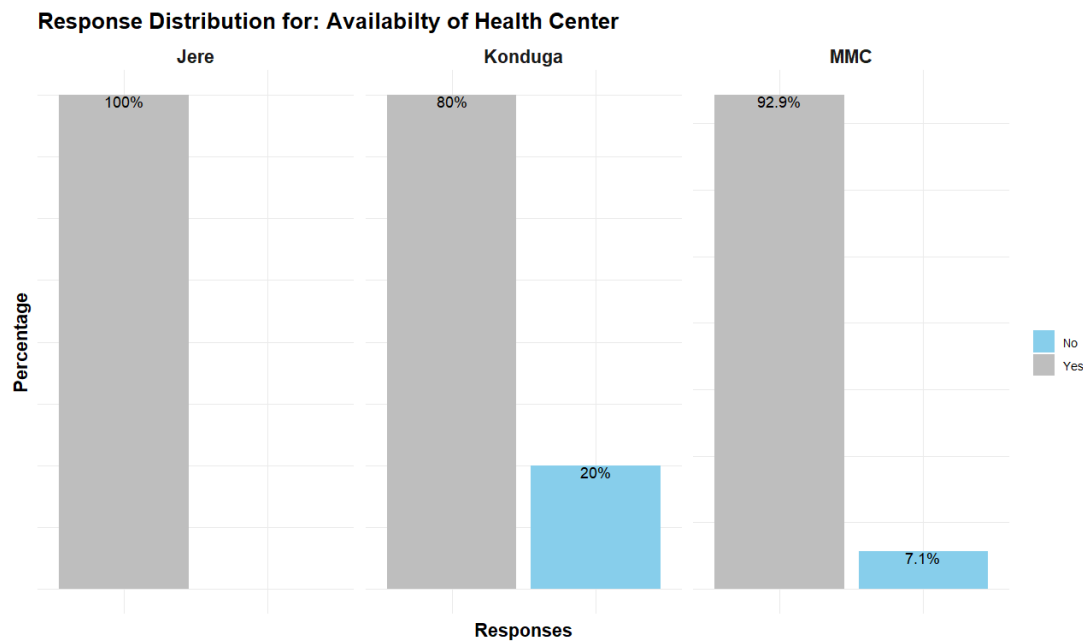
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

All communities within the LGAs reported access to drinking water, with boreholes identified as the primary source. The accessibility of clean water is relatively high, as shown in Figure 3. In Jere and MMC, all respondents (100%) stated that clean water is within a 20-minute walk from their homes, reflecting a high level of convenience. In Konduga, 80% of respondents also indicated that clean water is within a 20-minute walk, while 20% reported that it is within a 45-minute walk. These findings highlight significant progress in ensuring access to water within reasonable distances for most households across the LGAs.

The relatively short distance to clean water has several implications for the well-being of these communities. Firstly, proximity to water sources reduces the time and physical burden, especially on women and children, who are often tasked with water collection. This can free up time for other productive activities such as education, income-generating tasks, or caregiving. Secondly, access to clean water within a reasonable distance can improve health outcomes by reducing the risk of waterborne diseases, as individuals are less likely to rely on unsafe alternative sources. Lastly, the reliance on boreholes as the primary water source indicates the importance of maintaining these facilities. Regular maintenance and monitoring are essential to ensure their functionality and sustainability over time.

However, the variation in access within Konduga, where 20% of respondents must walk up to 45 minutes, highlights the need for targeted interventions to further improve water accessibility in more remote or underserved areas. Addressing these disparities can enhance equity across the LGAs, ensuring that all residents benefit from the advantages of close access to clean water. This highlights the importance of continued investments in water infrastructure and the need for community-based management systems to sustain access in the long term.

Figure 3:

Response Distribution for: Distance to Clean Water
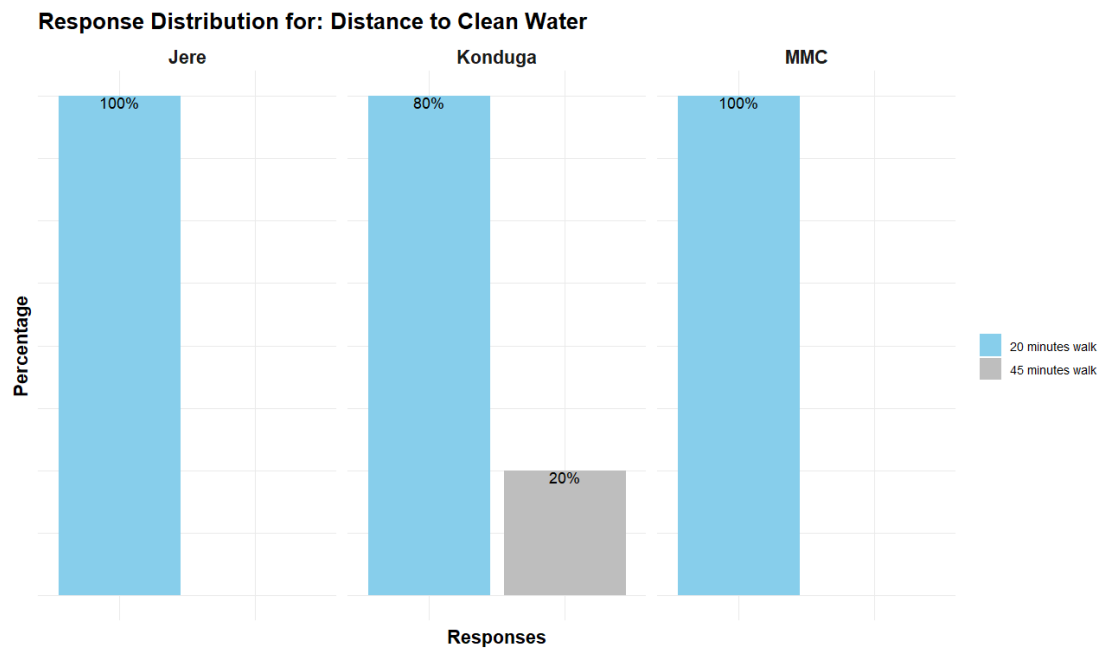
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

The analysis of sanitation facilities, as illustrated in Figure 4, reveals significant disparities among Jere, Konduga, and MMC. In Jere and Konduga, a majority of respondents (85.7% and 80%, respectively) affirm the availability of sanitation facilities in their communities. This suggests that these areas have made commendable progress in providing essential infrastructure, likely due to interventions by local governments, NGOs, or community organizations. The availability of these facilities supports better hygiene practices, reducing the risk of waterborne diseases and promoting overall community health.

However, the findings from MMC highlight a critical issue, with 57.1% of respondents reporting the absence of sanitation facilities in their communities. This lack of infrastructure poses serious public health risks, including the spread of diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid. In addition, environmental contamination from open defecation and improper waste disposal exacerbates the problem, creating unsafe living conditions and increasing the strain on local healthcare systems.

The clear disparity between MMC and the other areas highlights an urgent need for targeted interventions to address these challenges. Investments in sanitation infrastructure and comprehensive hygiene education programs are essential to mitigate health risks, enhance environmental safety, and improve the overall quality of life in MMC. Addressing these disparities is critical to ensuring equitable access to basic sanitation and fostering healthier, more resilient communities

Figure 4:

Response Distribution for: Availability of Sanitation Facilities
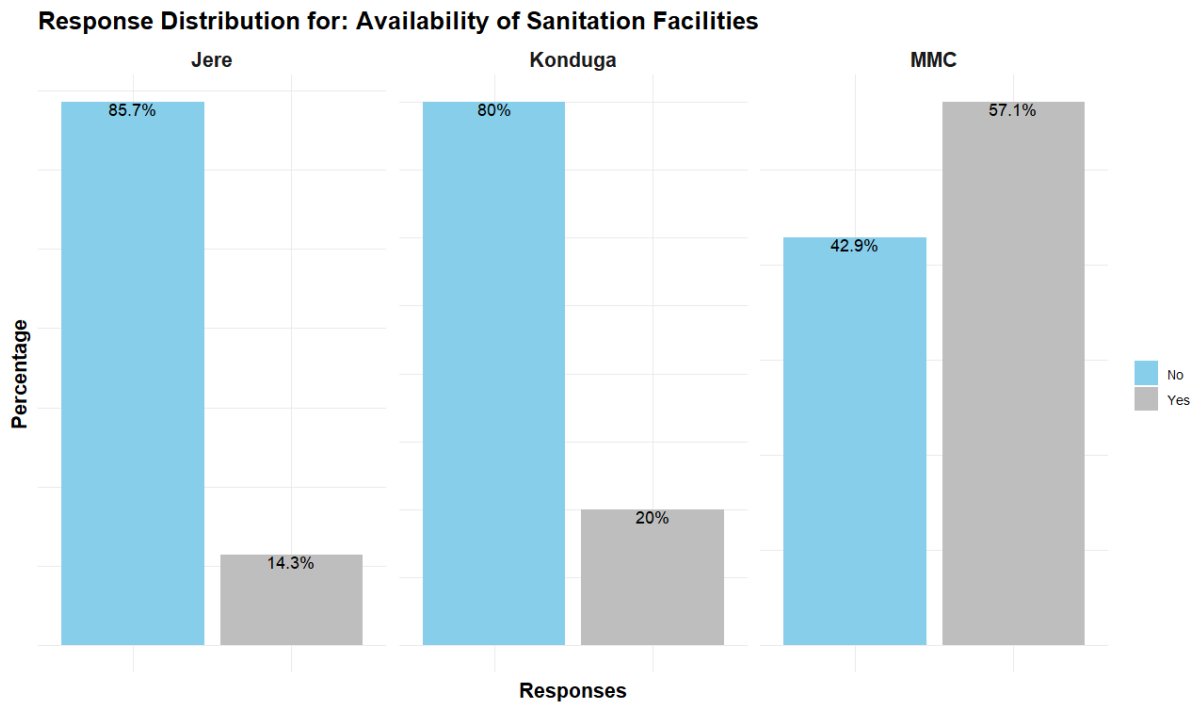
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

3.1.3 School-level contexts

3.1.3. Conditions of Schools Visited

A variety of factors have an impact on the overall condition of the schools visited. These include the school's location, the suitability of its classrooms and buildings, the average number of students per class, the availability of staff rooms for teachers, the condition of the furniture, access to computers, classroom ventilation, and the provision of toilet facilities, including separate facilities for male and female students. The infrastructure situation of the schools is not the same across LGAs. For example, there were different opinions regarding the condition of school buildings. Figure 5 shows the condition of school buildings across the LGAs derived from the observations made using a carefully designed school checklist. In Jere, 75% of the school buildings visited were in good condition and well kept. While 25% of the remaining school buildings visited were average and required some repairs. In Konduga, 80% of school buildings were average with some repair work needed, and 20% were in good condition. However, in MMC, 5.6% of schools visited were not in good condition at all, 44.4% were average with some repair work required and 50% were in good condition.

Figure 5:

Response Distribution for: Condition Of School Building
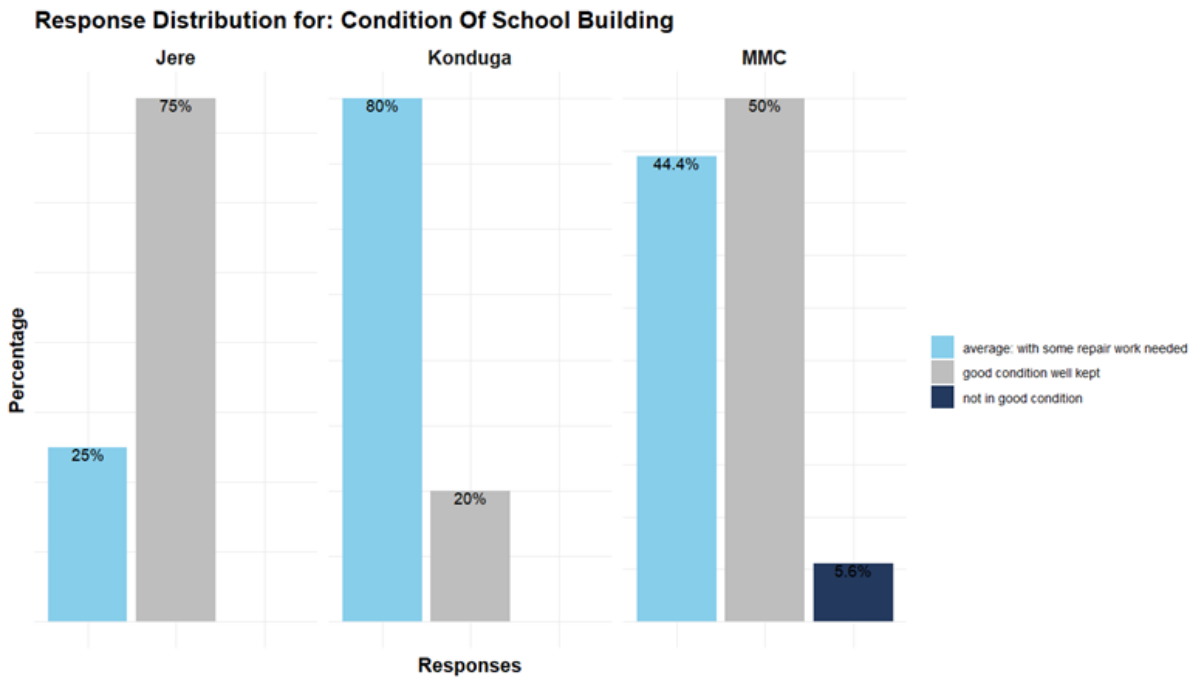
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

The availability of adequate classrooms in schools was assessed to determine whether there are sufficient learning spaces for students. As seen in figure 6, the majority of schools across the LGAs have adequate classrooms except in Konduga LGA where 60% of schools do not have adequate classrooms. In Jere, 87.5% of respondents believe that there are enough classrooms, while 88.9% of respondents in MMC share the same opinion.

Figure 6:

Response Distribution for: Adequate Classroom
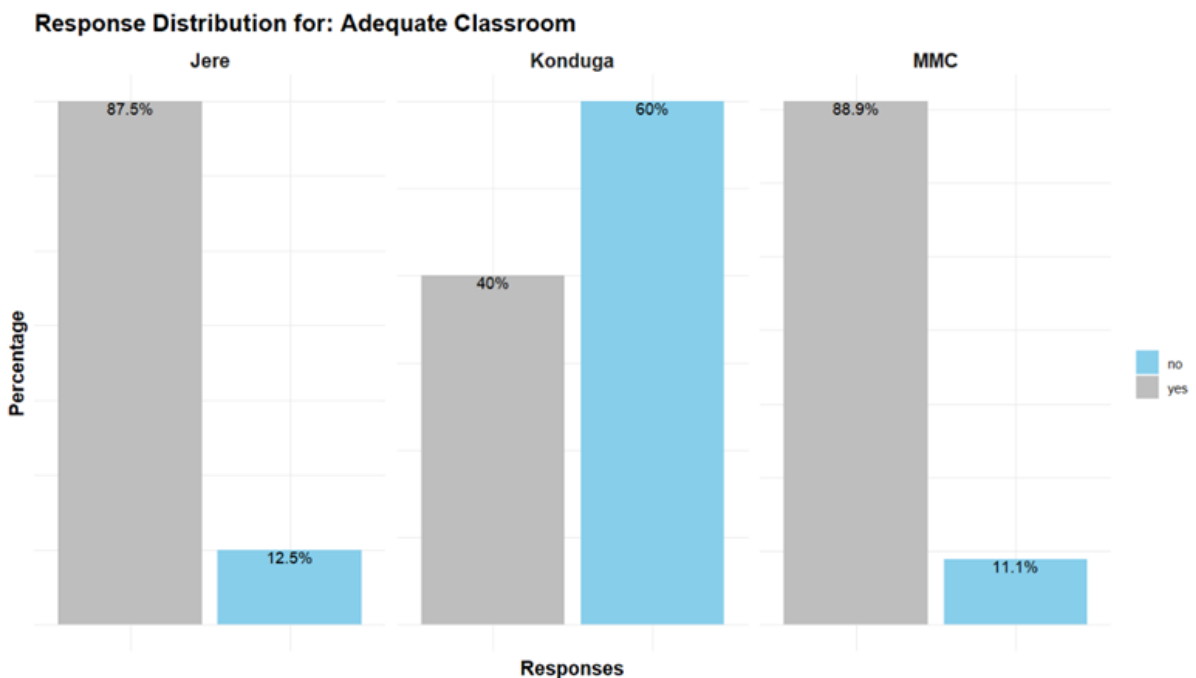
The observation on seating space in schools across Konduga, MMC, and Jere highlights significant inadequacies, with serious implications for the quality of education and learning outcomes (See figure 7). A majority of schools in Konduga (80%) lack sufficient seating spaces, followed by MMC (50%) and Jere (25%). Particularly troubling is the situation in MMC, where 5.6% of schools have no seating spaces at all, which can hinder effective learning and concentration. On a more positive note, adequate seating was observed in some schools, with Jere having the highest proportion of adequately equipped schools (75%), followed by MMC (44.4%) and Konduga (20%).

These findings suggest that a lack of adequate seating space, particularly in Konduga and MMC, may negatively impact students' comfort, focus, and overall academic performance. It could also contribute to lower school attendance and retention rates, as uncomfortable or insufficient seating may discourage students from attending classes regularly. Addressing these disparities requires prioritizing investments in classroom furniture and infrastructure to create conducive learning environments. Ensuring that all schools have adequate seating spaces is essential for promoting equity in education and improving learning outcomes across these local government areas.

Figure 7:

Response Distribution for: Availability of Sitting Spaces
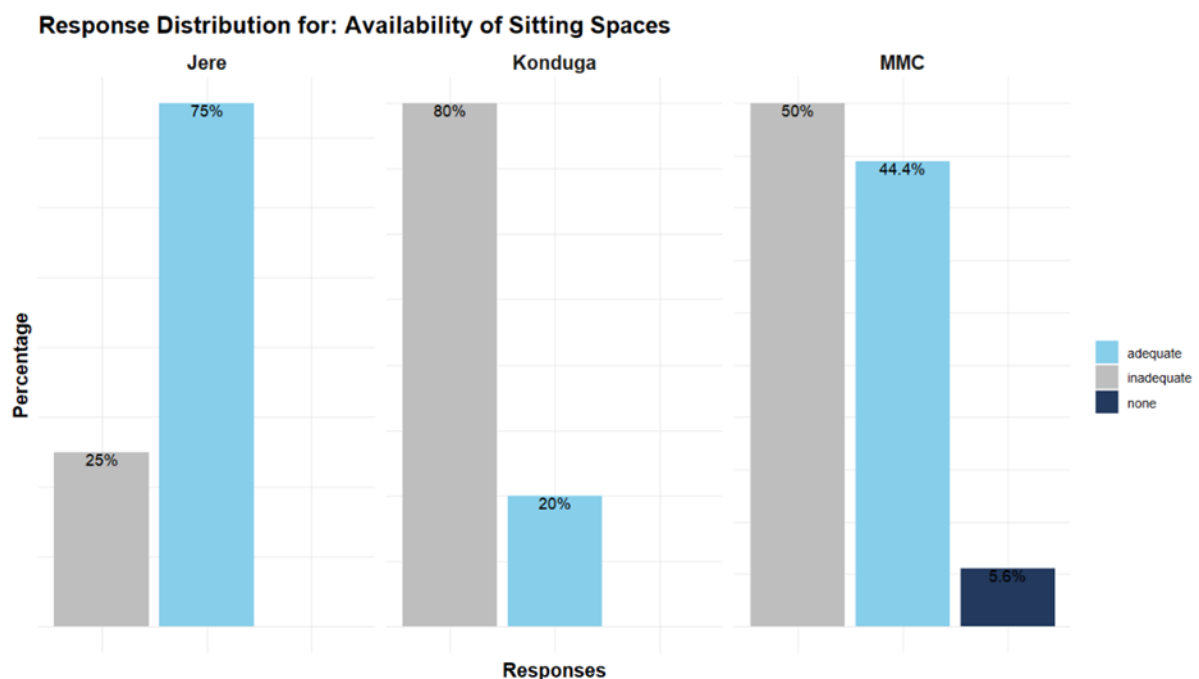
The availability of furniture within the schools was also examined as shown in Figure 8. The result shows that furniture in most schools across the LGAs is inadequate. In Konduga, 100% of respondents reported inadequate furniture, while 66.7% of respondents in MMC shared the same opinion. However, 75% of respondents in Jere reported adequate availability of furniture while no furniture was recorded for 5.6% of schools in MMC (Tracer & Assessment Study Data, 2024).

These findings have serious implications for the quality of education and the learning environment. In Konduga, where 100% of respondents reported inadequate furniture, the situation indicates a total lack of sufficient resources to support students' basic needs, creating significant barriers to effective learning. Similarly, 66.7% of respondents in MMC reported furniture inadequacy, with 5.6% of schools having no furniture at all. This means some students are compelled to sit on the floor or stand during classes, leading to discomfort and decreased focus, which can negatively impact their academic performance and engagement. On the other hand, Jere presents a relatively better scenario, with 75% of respondents reporting adequate furniture. This suggests that interventions in this LGA have had a positive impact on providing essential learning infrastructure. However, the pronounced differences across the LGAs highlight inequalities in resource distribution and access to quality education.

The lack of adequate furniture, particularly in Konduga and MMC, could contribute to low attendance and retention rates, as students may be discouraged by the poor learning conditions. In addition, the physical discomfort and lack of proper seating can hinder students' ability to participate actively in lessons, reducing overall educational outcomes. Addressing this challenge requires targeted investments in educational infrastructure, prioritizing schools with the greatest need. Ensuring the availability of adequate furniture in all schools is essential to creating conducive learning environments, fostering equity, and improving educational experiences for students across the LGAs.

Figure 8:

Response Distribution for: Availability of Furniture
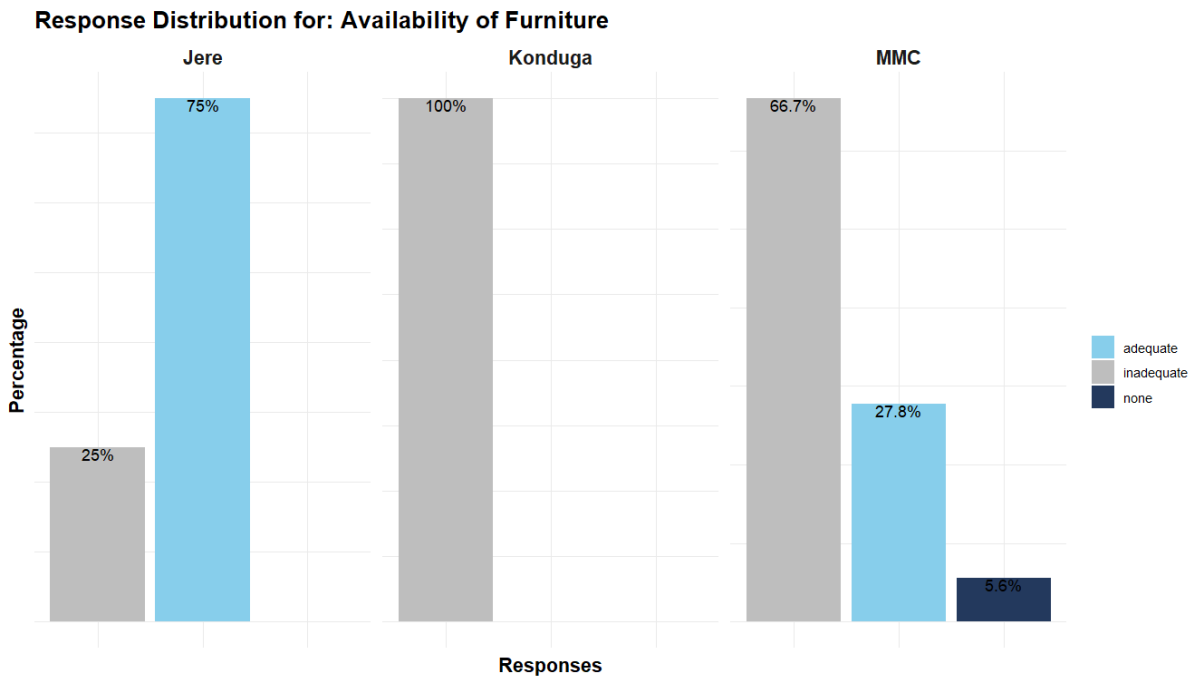
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

In the same vein, the ventilation within classrooms was also assessed, considering factors such as airflow, temperature control, and overall suitability for a conducive learning atmosphere. The result shows that most schools have adequate ventilation. In Jere and Konduga, 100% of respondents reported adequate ventilation. While in MMC 88.9% of respondents reported adequate ventilation and 11.1% reported inadequate ventilation (Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024).

Figure 9

Response Distribution for: Sufficient Class Ventilation
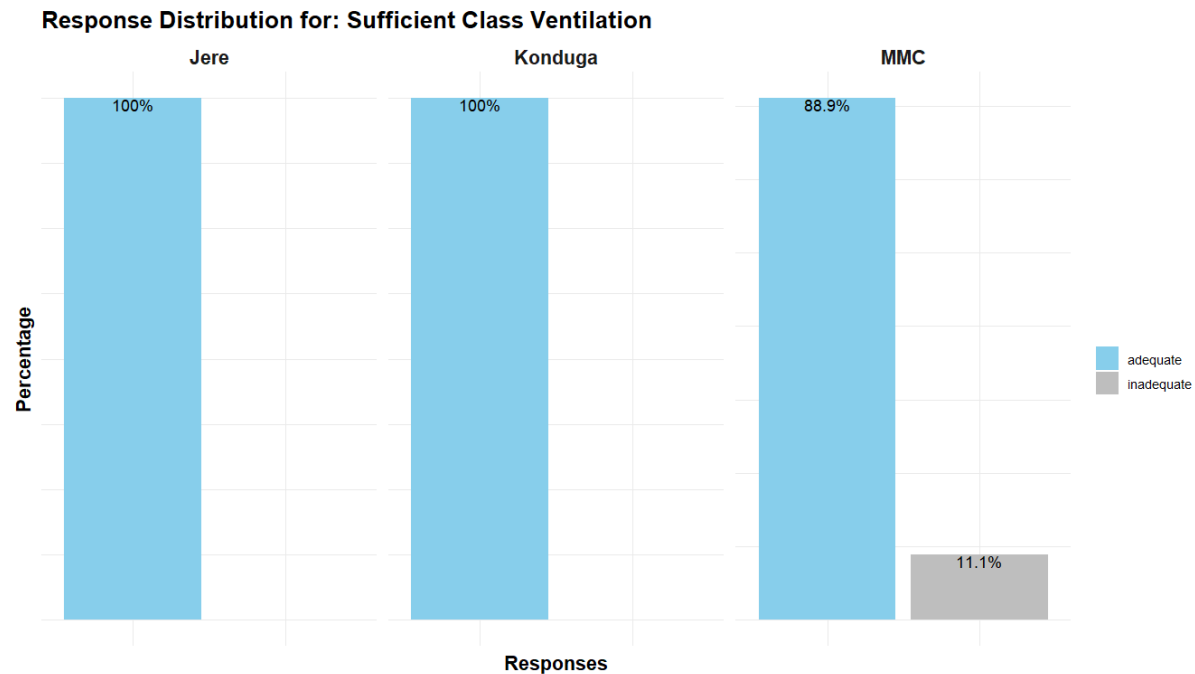
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

Recognising the importance of digital resources in modern education, the availability of computers in school was evaluated. Figure 10 shows that most schools have inadequate computers. 75%, 80% and 33.3% of respondents in Jere, Konduga, and MMC respectively, reported inadequate computers. Although a small portion of schools in Jere (25%) and MMC (11.1) have adequate computers, 55.6% of respondents in MMC and 20% in Konduga assert that there are no computers available in their schools.

The evaluation of computer availability in schools reveals significant deficiencies, which have critical implications for students' access to digital literacy and modern educational resources. The data highlights that 75% of schools in Jere, 80% in Konduga, and 33.3% in MMC have inadequate computers. Moreover, a significant proportion of schools in MMC (55.6%) and Konduga (20%) have no computers at all. While some schools in Jere (25%) and MMC (11.1%) report adequate availability, these numbers remain insufficient to meet the growing demand for digital resources in education.

The lack of computers limits students' ability to acquire essential 21st-century skills, such as digital literacy, research competency, and technological proficiency, which are critical for navigating an increasingly digitalized world. Studies have shown that access to computers and technology in schools can significantly enhance learning outcomes by promoting interactive and self-paced learning environments (Haleem et al., 2022; Kalyani, 2024). For instance, research conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)[1] highlights that equitable access to digital tools can bridge learning gaps and improve overall educational quality. On the other hand, the absence of such resources

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[1] https://www.unesco.org/en/digital-education/need-know

perpetuates the digital divide, disproportionately disadvantaged students in under-resourced schools and rural areas.

In the context of these LGAs, the disparities in computer availability exacerbate existing inequalities in education, limiting students' competitiveness in further education and the job market. The findings align with similar studies in developing regions, which have consistently pointed to inadequate digital infrastructure as a major barrier to achieving inclusive and equitable education. To address these gaps, targeted investments in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) infrastructure, teacher training, and student access to digital tools are essential. Integrating digital resources into the curriculum can help bridge the digital divide, enhance learning experiences, and equip students with the skills necessary for future opportunities.

Figure 10:

Response Distribution for: Availability of Computers
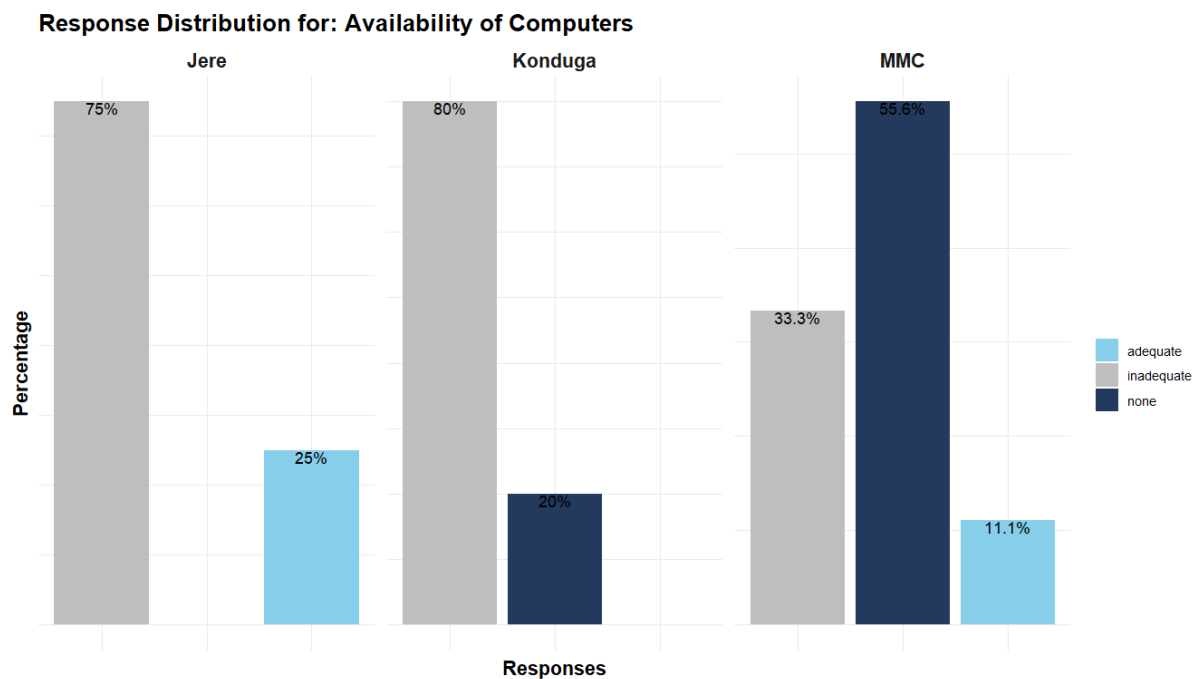
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

The availability of toilets in schools was also evaluated. Figure 11 shows that most schools across the LGAs have adequate toilets, except in MMC where 55.6% of schools have inadequate toilets and 5.5% have none. In addition, the condition of these toilets were assessed and results show that 75% of toilets in Jere, 80% in Konduga, and 83.3% in MMC were in good working condition. Toilets were also separated by gender. In Jere, 87.5% of respondents reported separate toilets for male and female, while 80% of respondents in Konduga and 88.9% in MMC shared the same opinion.

Figure 11:

Response Distribution for: Availability of Toilets
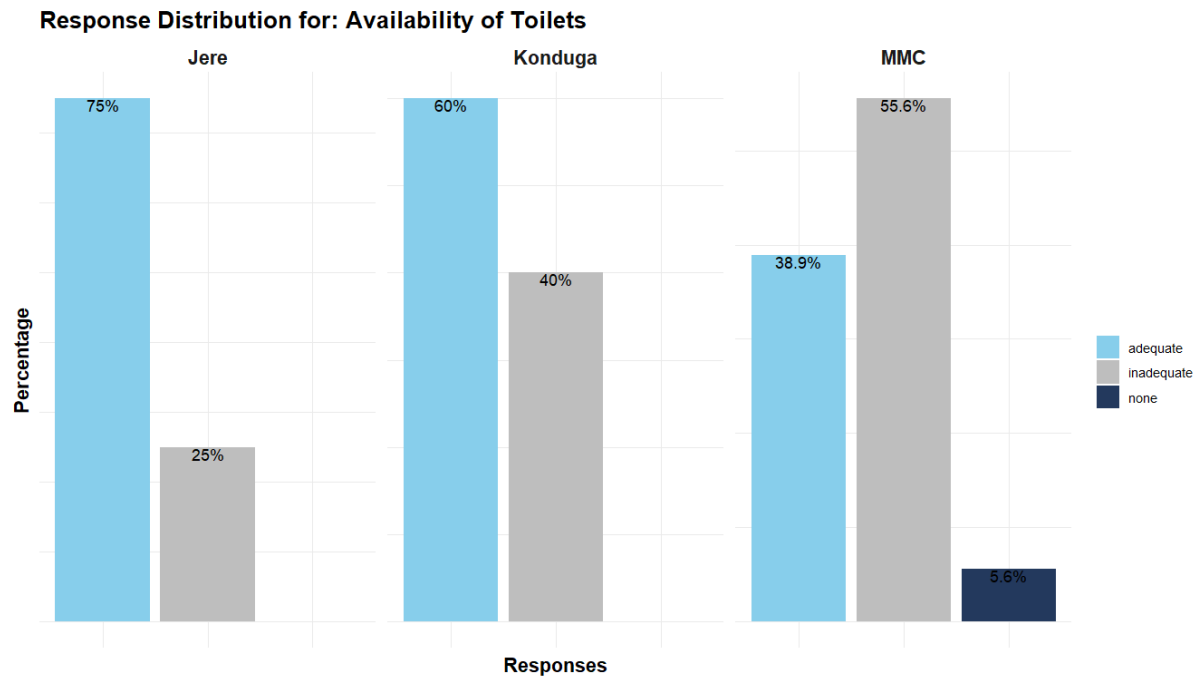
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

3.1.4 *Background characteristics of AEP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries*

The background characteristics of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the AEPs reveal distinct differences that highlight the programme's effectiveness in targeting disadvantaged populations. These characteristics highlight AEP's success in reaching and supporting individuals who face significant barriers to education, demonstrating the programme's commitment to promoting social equity. The study examined various background characteristics, including sex, age, household living condition, class, displacement duration, and emergency type. However, no significant demographic differences exist between AEP and non-AEP beneficiaries.

In terms of the sex distribution of AEP students (see figure 12), 53.7% of respondents across the LGAs are girls and 47.3% are boys. This highlights AEP's success in not only bridging the education gap and increasing access to education for marginalised groups but also ensuring gender equality and equity.

Figure 12:

Response Distribution for: Sex
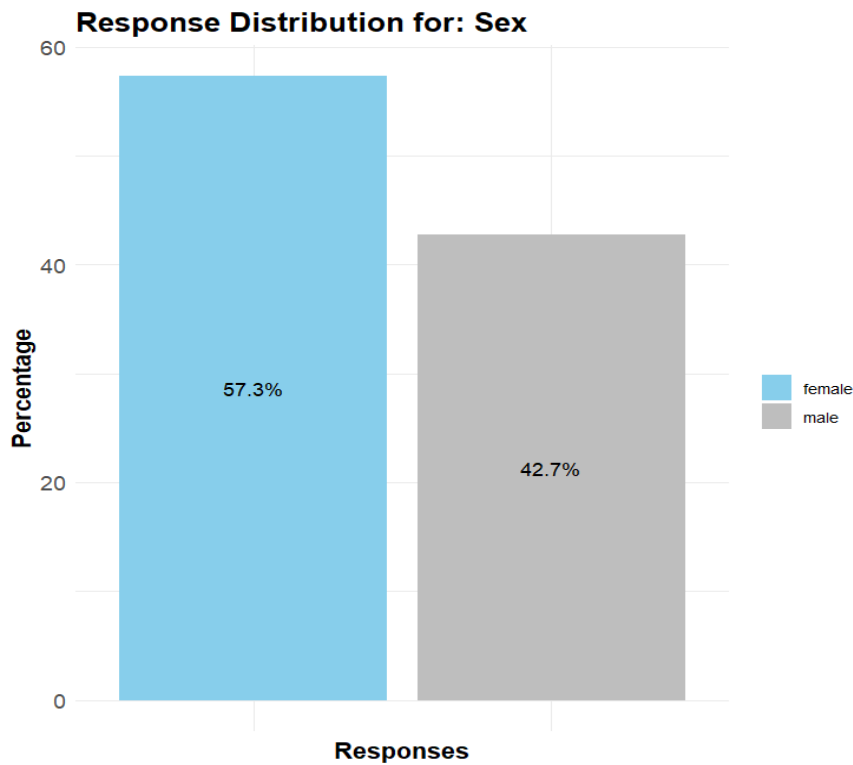
Source: Tracer & Assessment Study Data, November, 2024

The localities where AEP (87.5%) and non-AEP (87.9%) beneficiaries reside are predominantly urban centres, within one-hour radius of the district capital. Only a marginal percentage from both groups reside in rurally deprived areas; 12.5% of AEP beneficiaries and 12.1% of non-AEP students.

The age distribution for both AEP and non-AEP falls between ages 12 - 20 with 52.6% (AEP) and 50.5% (non-AEP) between ages 12 -15. 37.5% (AEP) and 41.4% (non-AEP) between ages 14 - 17, and 6.2% (AEP) and 8.1% (non-AEP) between ages 16 - 20.

Majority of AEP and non-AEP beneficiaries are in the class category of junior high school (83.3%, AEP and 81.9%, non -AEP). Only a few percent of students are in primary and senior high school. The percentage of students in primary school is 4.2% for AEP beneficiaries and 3% for non-AEP students. While the percentage for senior secondary school is 12.4% for AEP beneficiaries and 15.2% for non-AEP beneficiaries.

An insight into the type of emergency that caused the displacement of respondents showed that 67.7% (AEP) and 63.6% (non-AEP) were displaced as a result of armed conflict in their communities while 32.3% (AEP) and 36.4% (non-AEP) were affected by flooding in the area. Also, the majority of the respondents from both groups reported to have been displaced within the last two years, 53.1% (AEP) and 54.5% (non-AEP). This implies that despite efforts from the government to ensure security in these communities over the years, armed conflict still persists and continues to be a socio-economic threat in these areas.

3.2 Headteachers' and Teachers' Insights on the Transition and Retention of Accelerated Education Program (AEP) Beneficiaries in Crisis and Emergency Contexts

3.2.1 Access to Education and Quality of Education

The majority of headteachers and long-serving teachers expressed that crises and emergencies (especially recent conflicts and flooding) have significantly disrupted student enrollment and attendance in their schools. Safety concerns, financial constraints, and transportation challenges were highlighted as primary barriers to accessing education. Many students have relocated or withdrawn, leading to significant challenges in schools. Students relocating from conflict-affected or unsafe areas often enroll in schools within safer zones, overwhelming the already available limited resources and infrastructure. The closure of nearby schools due to damage or insecurity has further increased pressure on operational schools, as displaced students transfer to these facilities, further increasing enrollment beyond capacity. Withdrawals in some areas have also resulted in the consolidation of classes, reducing the number of functioning classrooms while increasing the student-to-teacher ratio in those that remain. These challenges, combined with pre-existing infrastructure limitations, have exacerbated the strain on schools, making it difficult to provide an adequate learning environment. leading to overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, and damaged facilities. Teachers also noted that trauma-related emotional stress has further impeded the ability of both students and educators to engage effectively in the learning process.

"The crisis has affected the children in terms of gender, admission, and the financial aspect. Previously, we had up to 3,000 students, but now we are less than 1,000. This situation has significantly affected the school's output" **- (Principal, Auno, Konduga)**

"When students don't come to school, if you teach a topic and the turnout is low, you have to repeat it when more students return the following week. We also lack teaching aids, which makes the situation more challenging." **- (Headteacher, MMC)**

"The flood disaster affected the students' performance, their enrolment, and the school environment. Because of the psychosocial situation in society, people are more concerned about feeding and welfare than education." - **(Principal, Jere)**

"Both age and gender have been affected psychologically and socially. Before the crisis, things were very good, students were healthy psychologically, morally, and educationally. But now, some come to school very late, and many are disturbed." **- (Principal, MMC)**

"Sincerely speaking, the turnout of female students has significantly declined due to the crisis. Many have fled to escape gangs that abduct and abuse female children. While the turnout of male students has also decreased, it is not as low as that of female students." **- (Headteacher, Konduga)**

"The quality of education has gone beyond low. We have to rush the syllabus because students are not coming, and it is affecting the teachers as well." - **(Headteacher, Jere)**

"The challenge teachers are having is the lack of children to teach in the class. The children are starved, have no clothing or shelter, and are psychologically disturbed." - **(Principal, MMC)**

"We need support because we don't have computers or other essential things. By encouraging the students and letting them know we are in this together, we try to keep them motivated despite the challenges." - **(Principal, Konduga)**

In response to these challenges, NGOs and local governments have implemented temporary solutions such as learning tablets, radio-based education, training of teachers, and psychosocial support programs. While these interventions have helped to some extent, the respondents stressed that they often fall short of addressing fundamental issues, including the lack of facilities and essential resources. Continued assistance, particularly in the form of investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and emotional support, was emphasized as critical to ensuring sustainable improvements in educational access.

"NGOs like AGILE and UNICEF have been instrumental in training the teachers. The government has also provided significant support in enhancing teacher capacity through various training programs." - **(Principal, MMC)**

"Our school was renovated with support from the government, and educational materials were provided by the Governor and NGOs." - **(Principal, MMC)**

"There has been no additional support provided, and we have to tolerate the challenges and accept responsibility for the students. Teaching requires patience and the ability to bring yourself to the level of the children. The crisis has affected nine blocks of toilets, our offices, tables, classrooms, boards, writing materials, and chairs. Currently, we have only six classrooms, with only two in good condition. We lack ICT centers, libraries, and adequate furniture. Due to these limitations, students are often merged into one class to be taught." - **(Principal, Jere)**

3.2.2 Teacher Capacity and Wellbeing

The interviews with head teachers revealed that the capacity and well-being of teachers have been significantly impacted by the ongoing crises. Many head teachers noted that teachers face challenges such as emotional stress, limited resources, and logistical issues, which hinder their ability to perform effectively in the classroom. Trauma caused by the crises has not only affected teachers' mental health but has also reduced their motivation and engagement with students. In addition, the lack of teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient infrastructure further strain teachers' capacity. Some head teachers shared that the transportation challenges and inadequate accommodations for teachers exacerbate these issues, leading to increased stress and absenteeism.

"The teachers are not in a good condition to teach because, while they are away, they are concerned that something might happen to their loved ones." - **(Principal, Konduga)**

"It touched me too. My house was flooded while I was away helping my mother. I prayed for relief, and when the water receded, the school was repaired, and we returned. Even now, I am not confident. We just thank God for the teaching and accept whatever comes." - **(Principal, MMC)**

"The flood affected about 30 teachers. Their motivation and skills were reduced. Due to the flood disaster, some teachers now live far away, which causes them to come late. This has affected teaching and learning in the school. During the crisis, we taught with fear, but now, with improved security, we teach confidently." - **(Principal, MMC)**

"Initially, I was traumatized, and it affected me emotionally. But with the training I went through, I am now able to do what is expected of me and handle my emotions effectively. Some of us are not experiencing stress. I am confident that I can deliver the lesson perfectly and that I have the resources to do the job. We thank God we are not stressed, but we do need clean water". - **(Principal, Jere)**

"During the crisis, we taught with fear, but now, with improved security, we teach confidently. However, during school hours, we are often absent-minded, and most of our teachers are affected. We are faced with the challenge of how to resolve this problem." - **(Principal, Konduga)**

"Transportation issues, especially after the flood disaster, have caused delays, with teachers arriving late. Despite this, I ensure the smooth running of the school as much as possible." - **(Headteacher, Jere)**

Despite these challenges, headteachers acknowledged that support from NGOs and government initiatives has helped improve teacher capacity to some extent. Training programs, professional development workshops, and emotional support initiatives were highlighted as crucial in reducing teacher stress and improving retention. However, headteachers emphasized the need for continued support, particularly in providing resources such as ICT centers, libraries, and transportation support, to enhance teacher capacity and ensure their well-being.

3.2.3 Community and Parental Involvement

The crisis has both strained and strengthened the relationship between schools and local communities. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) have kept in touch through meetings and activities, but there have been some difficulties, like decreased attendance and strained trust. Parental participation varied; some parents made sure their children went to school and provided supplies, while others were constrained by survival priorities. Support from the community has been essential, with local government agencies and organizations offering security, teaching assistance, and resources. Although the degree of support varied throughout schools, initiatives including volunteer teaching, supply distribution, and flood recovery activities by local groups have

strengthened educational stability. During the crisis, parents have also actively participated in decision-making and resource management at the school.

4.0   Completion of JHS and Transition to SHS

4.1   Scale and Proportion of AEP Graduates: Transition, Completion, and Gender Dynamics

Table 1: Completion, and Retention of AEP Beneficiaries

		LGA

	TOTAL		JERE		MMC		KONDUGA	
JHS Completion Rate -2023	**71.88%**		**61.84%**		**65.79%**		**94.92%**	
JHS Completion Rate - 2024	**72.23%**		**60.12%**		**66.64%**		**94.66%**	
SHS Retention Rate - 2023	**37.75%**		**28.16%**		**28.95%**		**63.14%**	
SHS Retention Rate - 2024	**38.82**		**29.22%**		**28.55%**		**64.45%**	
Gender	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
JHS Completion Rate 2023	33.62%	66.38%	58.59%	41.41%	56.19%	43.81%	93.94%	6.06%
JHS Completion Rate - 2024	35.55%	64.45%	57.57%	42.43%	54.77%	45.23%	84.14%	15.86%
SHS Retention Rate 2023	18.69%	81.30%	15.63%	84.37%	46.67%	53.33%	60.61%	39.39%
SHS Retention Rate - 2024	15.46	83.15%	17.77%	82.23%	46.67%	53.55%	59.01%	40.99%

Source: Tracer & Effectiveness Study Data, November, 2024

The AEP tracer study, as shown in Table 1, highlights notable trends in junior high school (JHS) completion and senior high school (SHS) retention rates among beneficiaries for 2023 and 2024. In 2023, the overall JHS completion rate stood at 71.88%, with an improvement in 2024 to 72.23%. SHS retention rates also saw a slight increase, moving from 37.75% in 2023 to 38.82% in 2024.

The completion and retention rates varied significantly across local governments. In 2023, Jere had a JHS completion rate of 61.84%, which slightly declined to 60.12% in 2024. MMC saw an increase from 65.79% in 2023 to 66.64% in 2024, while Konduga saw 94.92% in 2023 and experienced a minor dip to 94.66% in 2024. SHS retention rates also showed local government specific dynamics. Jere's retention rate rose from 28.16% in 2023 to 29.22% in 2024, while MMC saw a slight decrease from 28.95% to 28.55%. Konduga continued to lead in SHS retention, improving from 63.14% in 2023 to 64.45% in 2024.

The gender context of completion and retention rates among AEP beneficiaries highlights that in 2023, female beneficiaries had higher JHS completion rates (66.38%) compared to males (33.62%). This pattern continues in 2024, with female completion rates at 64.45% and male rates at 35.55%. Similarly, SHS retention rates for females were higher in both years, increasing from 81.30% in 2023 to 83.15% in 2024, while male retention saw a minor decline from 18.69% to 15.46%.

However, the gender dynamics varied across local governments. In Jere, male beneficiaries had higher JHS completion rates in both 2023 (58.59%) and 2024 (57.57%), while females outperformed males in SHS retention, improving from 84.37% in 2023 to 82.23% in 2024. In MMC, males had higher JHS completion rates (56.19% in 2023, 54.77% in 2024), while female SHS retention was consistently higher, moving from 53.33% in 2023 to 53.55% in 2024. Konduga maintained its unique pattern, with males consistently outperforming females in JHS completion (93.94% in 2023, 84.14% in 2024) and SHS retention (60.61% in 2023, 59.01% in 2024).

5.0 Psychosocial well-being of the AEP and non AEP beneficiaries and their coping mechanisms

5.1.1 *Experiences of Children affected by Conflicts And Emergencies*

Respondents highlighted significant disruptions to education caused by the conflict in Borno State. Many reported that their schools were destroyed, forcing them to halt schooling for extended periods. When classes resumed, they often had to learn under trees due to damaged infrastructure, while others faced the challenge of walking long distances to school or relying on community support for transportation. Despite these difficulties, some students continued attending school, demonstrating resilience. However, floods exacerbated these challenges, displacing families, destroying belongings, and converting schools into shelters, which further disrupted classes and added emotional distress.

Perspectives on the learning experience in the emergency zone were mixed. While some respondents appreciated having experienced and adequate teachers, others noted teacher absenteeism due to safety concerns and threats. Educational resources were often insufficient, with many highlighting a lack of textbooks, chairs, and desks. Inadequate or damaged infrastructure further hindered learning, and safety concerns led to a decline in teaching staff. Overall, respondents expressed gratitude for the dedication of available teachers but stressed that resource shortages, safety risks, and poor facilities continue to undermine the quality of education.

5.1.2 Emotional and Psychological Challenges

AEP beneficiaries reported that the crises disrupted their motivation and academic progress. Prolonged school closures and displacement caused emotional distress, with many students expressing feelings of discouragement. Fear of recurring violence and uncertainty about the future also negatively impacted their mental well-being.

On the other hand, Non-AEP beneficiaries also noted significant psychological effects, including fear, trauma, and stress due to the destruction and interruption of their education. Many reported falling behind in their studies and struggling with the loss of routine and support systems during the crises.

5.1.3 Resilience and Determination

Despite the challenges, AEP beneficiaries demonstrated resilience, viewing education as a pathway to overcome adversity and achieve their ambitions. Many channeled their fear and distress into motivation to succeed, remaining determined to pursue their goals. Aspirations to become professionals, such as doctors or teachers, kept them focused and driven.

Similarly, while some non-AEP beneficiaries struggled to maintain their motivation, others adopted strategies like prayer, self-motivation, and focusing on their goals to cope with the emotional toll of the crises. Family members and teachers provided crucial emotional support and encouragement, helping them regain focus and stay committed to their education.

5.1.4 Support Systems

AEP beneficiaries emphasized the importance of guidance and encouragement from parents, elders, and community members in helping them navigate challenges. Psychosocial support provided through programs and activities, such as games and counseling sessions, helped students manage their stress and emotional challenges. Teachers also played a key role in creating a supportive and nurturing learning environment.

In contrast, non-AEP students faced significant financial constraints that hindered their ability to pay fees and purchase learning materials, further exacerbating the challenge of accessing transportation to schools. The combined effects of climate and armed crises led to the loss of lives, property, and educational resources, making education unattainable for many learners. While most students acknowledged having qualified teachers, many of these teachers left due to the crises. In addition, students highlighted the poor state of school buildings, lack of clean water, and inadequate toilet facilities, all of which were consequences of the destruction caused by the crises.

5.2. Adaptation to Educational Disruptions

In the face of educational disruptions caused by school closures, displacement, or conflict, children, individuals and communities demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. Many students continued learning by attending community-led lessons, which provided an alternative to formal schooling and ensured education persisted despite challenges. Others turned to peer collaboration, learning together in informal settings like under trees, or relied on technology by accessing online resources or listening to educational radio programs. Personal efforts, such as self-directed study through textbooks and notes, further highlighted the determination to maintain education. However, not all students could sustain this momentum, with some ceasing their studies entirely due to insecurity or other barriers.

Adjusting to these changes required emotional resilience, mutual support, and gradual adaptation. Many students found strength in their faith, framing the disruptions as "the will of God," which provided emotional grounding and a sense of purpose. Peer support also played a pivotal role, as friends encouraged one another and shared experiences to navigate challenges together. For others, the gradual adaptation process or the presence of structured alternative lessons offered much-needed stability and a sense of normalcy. These diverse strategies underscore the importance of community-driven solutions, resourcefulness, and collaboration in sustaining education during times of crisis.

5.3. Coping Mechanisms employed for Navigating Educational Challenges

The prolonged conflict in Borno State significantly disrupted the educational journey of many students, impacting their motivation and academic progress. Many experienced setbacks due to school closures and limited resources, but the support of parents, elders, and community members played a crucial role in encouraging resilience. For some students, the conflict strengthened their resolve to pursue education as a pathway to overcome adversity and achieve professional aspirations, such as becoming doctors or community leaders.

To navigate these challenges, AEP students adopted a range of coping mechanisms. Emotional support from parents was central to their strategies, as families encouraged them to remain calm and focused on their studies. Parents also provided material support, such as school

supplies and guidance, to keep students engaged in their education. Many students found solidarity with peers and siblings, leveraging shared determination to fuel their motivation and build academic resilience. Community members further contributed by organizing lessons, facilitating transportation, and creating informal learning opportunities. Students often turned to studying with friends, seeking guidance from more educated individuals, and participating in community-organized lessons to maintain continuity in their education during disruptions.

AEP programs also played a critical role by incorporating psychosocial interventions, such as games and counseling sessions, to help students process trauma and build emotional resilience. These activities enabled students to channel their fears into motivation, focusing on future aspirations to sustain their determination. The combined efforts of family, community, and programmatic support ensured that many AEP students remained academically focused despite the difficult circumstances.

Non-AEP beneficiaries similarly employed various coping mechanisms to address the challenges of disrupted education. Many relied on self-study or assistance from peers, often borrowing textbooks or creatively managing limited resources by using one notebook for multiple subjects or inheriting materials from siblings. External support from NGOs and government programs provided some relief, while radio-based educational programs offered an alternative means of learning, ensuring continuity amidst the disruptions. Community-led initiatives, such as lessons conducted by volunteers and informal group studies, were vital for sustaining learning, and some students benefited from family members acting as tutors. Prayer and positive reinforcement from family and teachers provided emotional strength, helping students cope with stress and uncertainty. Despite these challenges, many non-AEP students remained determined to succeed, with some taking on odd jobs to fund their education and stay focused on their aspirations.

Both AEP and non-AEP beneficiaries demonstrated remarkable resilience and creativity in navigating educational challenges. Drawing strength from community support, self-motivation, and innovative approaches, they persevered in their academic pursuits despite the adversity of their circumstances.

"The crisis affected my studies, but with encouragement from my parents and the support of NGOs providing school materials, I remained focused on my goals." - **(AEP Student, MMC)**

"When my house and school books were destroyed by the flood, I felt discouraged, but I stayed motivated to study because I want to help others in the future." - **(AEP Student, Jere)**

"Studying became harder when schools closed, but my elder siblings taught me at home, and I used their books to continue learning." - **(Non-AEP Student, Jere)**

"Even when I had to combine five subjects in one notebook, I never stopped learning because I know education is my key to a better life." - **(Non-AEP Student, Konduga)**

"When I wanted to give up, my mother told me stories of successful people who faced hardships, and that gave me hope to continue." - (**Non-AEP Student, Konduga**)

5.4 Effectiveness of Support Systems

5.4.1 Support and Intervention Strategies

During the flood crisis, many families lost their farmlands, which served as their primary source of livelihood. This devastation led to widespread school closures, forcing teachers to seek alternative means of income and disrupting students' education. Representatives from the LGAs emphasized that education is a fundamental human right as enshrined in the Child Rights Act of 2003, forming the basis for Education in Emergencies (EiE) programs aimed at maintaining learning during crises. They reiterate that Local government efforts have been instrumental in creating safe and conducive learning environments, often in collaboration with security personnel, to protect students. In addition, organizations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Plan International, CASFORD, and Save the Children have established temporary learning centers and implemented Accelerated Education Programs (AEP) to help affected students continue their studies. The Local Government Authority (LGA) has further strengthened these initiatives by supporting referred learners and fulfilling its constitutional mandate to provide education. The local government has demonstrated resilience and commitment through various initiatives aimed at sustaining education during emergencies. Advocacy groups have been established to promote Education in Emergencies, engaging communities and encouraging participation. Talent shows in rural areas like Konduga have provided students with platforms to showcase their skills while inspiring peers to value education. The local government collaborates closely with schools, NGOs, and community leaders, organizing end-of-term review meetings with key stakeholders like UNICEF and OTL to evaluate progress and refine strategies. This synergy ensures that NGO efforts complement those of the LGA, fostering sustainable educational interventions. With substantial financial and operational support from the local government, these initiatives have significantly enhanced the resilience and continuity of the education system, even in times of crisis.

"During the flood, most families in the community had their farmlands destroyed, which was the major source of livelihood for these families. Schools were closed, and even the teachers were forced to seek alternative means of livelihood, greatly affecting the learners. Organizations like IRC, Plan International, CASFORD, and Save the Children have done very well in supporting education, with some going further to establish temporary learning centers for the students. What I usually propagate among teachers and even parents is to create advocacy groups. We go into communities to advocate for education in emergencies. We also organize talent shows for our young learners in Konduga, where rural students showcase their skills and advocate for the importance of education to their peers. I invite all the educational actors active in Konduga, such as UNICEF, CASFORD, OTL, and others, to our end-of-term review meetings. Here, we discuss their work, challenges, and how we can restrategize to ensure we succeed. This approach has significantly contributed to the success of our work in supporting education in emergencies." – (**Education Secretary, Konduga**)

"Education is a fundamental human right of every child, as outlined in the Child Rights Act of 2003, and one of the major responsibilities of the LGA is to provide education to its people. Any support given by NGOs is to supplement the efforts of the LGA, and there is a strong synergy between the NGOs, the LGA, and the community to ensure this right is upheld" **-
(Education Secretary, Jere)**

"The local government has contributed massively to making the learning environment conducive for learners and ensuring their safety by collaborating with security personnel. Programs like Opportunity to Learn (OTL) have also provided significant support, and we collaborate with them to accept learners and provide the necessary assistance. In addition, NGOs work closely with us by mobilizing the local community through community and religious leaders, sharing best practices to ensure the sustainability of every intervention." **–
(Head Facilities Manager, MMC)**

Key non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have previously worked on education interventions shared valuable insights into their efforts during emergencies. According to the respondents, NGOs have played a vital role by actively working with local communities and collaborating with them to identify and address educational needs. They emphasized the importance of recognizing vulnerable groups, such as out-of-school children and orphans, and bringing attention to the unique challenges these groups face. Through close engagement with communities, NGOs have highlighted critical gaps in education and mobilized resources to meet these needs.

The NGOs reported implementing initiatives such as enrolling children in elementary and secondary schools and educating parents about the importance of education. These measures have been instrumental in ensuring access to education for children affected by conflict and emergencies. However, respondents noted that financial constraints often limit their ability to provide long-term solutions, hindering the sustainability of their programs and their capacity to address systemic challenges in the education sector.

In addition to direct interventions, respondents highlighted their collaboration with local organizations and community leaders to promote education and strengthen the resilience of the education system. They cited examples such as organizing competitions, skill-building programs, and other community-driven initiatives designed to enhance learning outcomes and promote a sense of shared responsibility for education. These efforts have not only supported children but also empowered communities to take an active role in improving their educational systems.

Overall, the NGOs emphasized the importance of ongoing community engagement and capacity building to improve educational outcomes and support children in times of need. They acknowledged that while immediate relief efforts are critical, long-term investments in strengthening local education systems are essential for promoting resilience and ensuring sustainable progress in conflict-affected areas.

"In our NGO, we have conducted various community trainings, including financial management and cooperative skills, benefiting both teachers and community members. We are now proposing skill acquisition programs to further support educators and strengthen local capacity." - **(NGO Official)**

"Through community engagement, we have identified and enrolled out-of-school children, educated parents on the value of education, and even facilitated skills training for caregivers. Despite funding challenges, we strive to impact lives and build resilience by collaborating with local leaders and partners." - **(NGO Official)**

"We engage community leaders through advocacy, social mobilization, and sensitization. While addressing broader needs, we identify out-of-school children and encourage parents to enroll them in school." **(NGO Official)**

5.4.2 *Impact on Educational Outcomes*

The respondents highlighted various strategies and achievements in addressing educational challenges during crises. One major issue was the lack of teacher motivation and students' irregular attendance. To tackle this, a unified school calendar and administrative structure were implemented, ensuring uniformity across schools. Daily devotion and meditation sessions were introduced, incorporating a spiritual element to improve students' focus and engagement. The Local Government Authority (LGA) has played a crucial role by supporting learning outcomes and fostering collaboration with communities, whose input has proven valuable in aligning educational efforts with local policies. Significant progress has been made in tracking student performance through the introduction of record-keeping systems, which were previously absent. Leadership from the state government, including the governor and education commissioner, has inspired stakeholders to prioritize education for vulnerable populations, leading to a substantial reduction in out-of-school children in Borno State from 2 million to 700,000.

The local government has maintained and improved education quality through robust monitoring and accountability measures. School heads are required to hold weekly staff review meetings and report to education supervisors, while the Education Secretary conducts regular school visits. These efforts have ensured consistency and progress even during emergencies. Respondents emphasized the vital role of NGOs, whose support includes providing scholastic materials and establishing temporary learning centers. Despite occasional communication barriers with NGOs, respondents acknowledged that these challenges offer opportunities for learning and system improvement. The collaboration between the LGA, schools, NGOs, and community leaders has created a conducive and secure environment for education during crises, fostering resilience and better learning outcomes for students.

"One of the surprising challenges we faced was that teachers were not motivated to attend school, and students lacked the understanding that attending school daily from Monday to

Friday should be a routine. To address this, we designed a unified school calendar, which provided a structured framework across all schools. We also introduced devotion and meditation sessions for learners, which offered a spiritual element and had a significant positive impact. Before now, most schools did not keep student records or exam results, but this has changed with our constant monitoring, supervision, and inspection. We made it mandatory for school heads to not only oversee teaching and learning but also to ensure other school activities run smoothly, guided by the unified calendar. School heads now hold weekly review meetings with their staff and report to the local education supervisor. As Education Secretary (E.S.), I personally visit at least three schools weekly, which has led to noticeable improvements. However, challenges remain. Key issues include communication barriers with actors and a lack of transparency regarding their activities and budgets. We need full involvement as custodians of education in the LGA to better align efforts. Constant activity review meetings have been instrumental in addressing these gaps and ensuring progress." –
(Education Secretary, Konduga)

NGOs have significantly improved beneficiaries' educational outcomes during times of crisis, especially when it comes to expanding access to education and ensuring its continuation. They have given young people access to education, particularly in underprivileged areas, by establishing learning centers and working with other partners like UNICEF and the local government. Although there are still certain challenges to overcome, like problems with the upgrading process and the requirement for additional system overhaul, their capacity-building initiatives have also helped teachers grow. A major obstacle to attaining long-term educational accomplishment has been the region's persistent security challenges, notwithstanding the advancements. Although there are still gaps that need to be addressed, stakeholders acknowledge the efforts of NGOs and believe that the advantages exceed the disadvantages. The focus now is on ensuring continued support and overcoming obstacles to long-term educational improvement.

"Most of our activities are tailored to community needs, supported by partners like UNICEF and state-led initiatives such as the Agile project. While we have seen significant progress through these collaborations, we recognize there are still wide gaps to address." - **(NGO Official)**

5.4.3   Capacity Building for Teachers

Efforts to enhance education during crises in Borno State have included a focus on equipping teachers with the tools and skills needed to adapt to challenges. The LGA representatives revealed that a textbook has been developed to guide teachers' operations during emergencies, alongside regular training sessions and workshops organized with the collaboration of NGOs. These programs provide teachers with manuals, templates for lesson planning, and methodologies to improve instructional effectiveness. The state government has played a crucial role, investing millions of naira in teacher welfare and training to improve their capacity, keep pace with a digitized world, and adapt to crisis scenarios. This investment has

significantly elevated teaching quality, with many parents now opting for public schools due to the noticeable improvements. Training initiatives have positively impacted classroom dynamics, with teachers reporting that lessons are easier to manage and more engaging, benefiting students directly.

The local government and NGOs have also prioritized teachers' emotional and psychological well-being, recognizing its critical role in effective learning. By offering profound incentives and creating a supportive environment, the local government ensures teachers remain motivated and resilient during crises. Respondents highlighted that this holistic approach— addressing both professional capacity and emotional health—has fostered a better learning culture. Teachers' feedback underscores the practical benefits of these efforts, as improved methodologies and support mechanisms have transformed teaching and learning environments. These collective initiatives by the state government, local authorities, and NGOs have created a robust framework for education during emergencies, directly enhancing the quality of education and contributing to significant strides in student outcomes and school performance.

"We organize workshops on managing school activities and provide teachers with guides and manuals, thanks to the support of NGOs. We have seen significant changes in teaching methodology and pedagogy due to numerous training and workshops facilitated by both the government and NGOs. Teachers are now better equipped, and parents are increasingly enrolling their children in our schools over private ones. These efforts, along with teacher incentives, have profoundly impacted both educators and learners, greatly improving the quality of education." – **(Head Facilities Manager, MMC)**

NGOs have significantly contributed to building teacher capacity in crisis-affected areas through a variety of training initiatives. These programs, which include cooperative societies, financial management, and skill development, are tailored to address specific challenges such as security risks and geographical vulnerabilities. Teachers also highlighted that new technologies, such as e-learning tools, have been introduced through these initiatives, enhancing not only the education system but also their personal skills and teaching methodologies.

In addition, some teachers mentioned receiving psychosocial support from NGOs to help them cope with the trauma caused by living and working in conflict zones. Respondents noted that student performance has been used as an indicator of the effectiveness of these programs, with many stating that the training has positively impacted educational outcomes. However, despite these advancements, teachers emphasized that further support is needed to enhance their efficiency and build resilience in the education system. Continued investment in teacher training and well-being is seen as crucial for sustaining and improving the quality of education in these challenging environments.

"Teacher capacity building is ongoing in collaboration with the state and local education bodies, evolving to meet changing needs. From computer training to e-learning for younger students, these efforts have significantly strengthened the education system." - **(NGO Official)**

5.4.3 Resource Allocation and Management

The local government of Borno State has demonstrated a strong commitment to prioritizing education during emergencies by strategically allocating resources based on accessibility, student populations, and existing gaps in the education system. Respondents credited the state governor and education commissioner for their dedication and timely support, which has been essential in addressing educational challenges. Financial and material resources from the state government have been effectively channeled to local levels, ensuring timely responses during crises. Monitoring and inspection mechanisms, such as reporting systems and community involvement, play a key role in ensuring transparency, justice, and equity in resource distribution. These efforts are supported by the participation of local communities and monitoring bodies, such as SMBC, which help oversee and account for the use of resources. Respondents emphasized that effective planning and constant evaluation ensure that educational materials and resources are distributed equitably, fostering trust and accountability within the system. Despite these achievements, challenges persist, including insufficient funding and security manpower. Respondents noted that limited financial resources hinder the Local Education Authority's ability to fully address educational needs during crises. Security concerns, particularly the lack of adequate personnel to ensure the safety of students and staff, remain an issue, prompting formal requests for additional support from the state government. However, many respondents highlighted that the local government has made significant progress, with education now functioning smoothly in the recovery phase following the recent flood. By prioritizing education as a cornerstone for development, the governor has ensured that resource allocation decisions address specific school needs, such as facility weaknesses, to maximize impact. These targeted efforts underline the belief that investing in education is key to broader national development, enabling long-term resilience in the education sector.

"We focus on accessibility, student numbers, and identifying gaps in the education system. Through monitoring, inspection, and reporting, we assess these areas and provide the necessary support where possible. However, a significant challenge we face is the lack of funding. The LEA is financially handicapped, with no provisions to address these needs effectively, leaving us unable to fully meet the demands." - (**Education Secretary, Konduga)**

"The credit goes to the governor and the commissioner for their unwavering commitment and determination, which have been key to our progress. Through careful planning and mapping, we ensure justice, equity, and fairness in resource allocation, avoiding both overutilization and under-utilization. Transparency is maintained, as everyone can see the process and its outcomes. We are now in a recovery phase, and normalcy has returned, even after the flood. His Excellency prioritized education, giving it the lion's share of resources because he recognizes it as the cornerstone of development. If you want to develop any nation, the first step is to strengthen the education sector. Once education is developed, every other aspect of development becomes easier."– **Education Secretary, Jere**

Setting priorities and allocating resources for education in times of crisis have presented several difficulties for NGOs. Despite the fact that education is regarded as a priority, funding constraints have reduced the amount of resources available, leading to a concentration on particular interventions such as student support and enrollment. The NGOs' financial management includes procedures like retirement plans and adherence to internal finance, human resources, and procurement regulations. They also employ small work plans to direct how they distribute their resources. However, the NGOs have had trouble obtaining direct funding, especially because of political obstacles and cumbersome systemic procedures. Despite these obstacles, the NGOs' resource allocation strategies have had a significant impact on offering educational assistance, however there is a pressing need for more significant funding and systemic improvements to enhance the effectiveness of their interventions

5.4.4 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The local government has actively engaged the community in supporting students and schools during education crises through initiatives like the establishment of the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC). This committee, made up of community members, plays a key role in managing school affairs and addressing challenges. Regular meetings with the SBMC and other stakeholders ensure that the community is involved in decision-making and problem-solving. By developing safety plans for schools and collaborating on critical issues, these engagements foster a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, helping to strengthen education systems during emergencies.

Community involvement has proven to be essential in building resilience in the education sector. One successful example is the transformation of Amarwa Primary School, where community contributions, such as providing daily meals, led to a significant increase in student enrollment. Similarly, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and SBMCs have empowered communities to address school-related challenges, including raising funds for infrastructure improvements. The local government also adapts its approach to cultural and contextual challenges, ensuring that educational initiatives are sensitive to community values, such as proper dressing and respectful conduct, thus fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

By collaborating closely with community leaders and stakeholders, NGOs have successfully engaged local communities and increased awareness of the value of education in periods of crisis. The goal of advocacy work is to persuade parents to send their children to school and to pursue further education. Since they are well-respected individuals who make sure that their communities fulfill their educational responsibilities, community leaders are essential in promoting these programs. In order to recognize and effectively address educational needs, NGOs also work with local stakeholders. Enrolling children in school and ensuring their ongoing education through active parental involvement are examples of successful practices. NGOs are sensitive to cultural differences and modify their strategies to conform to local customs.

5.4.5 Long-term Resilience and Sustainability

The local government has adopted several strategies to ensure the sustainability and resilience of its educational interventions. Respondents noted that fostering a sense of shared responsibility among community members and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) has been crucial. School Development Plans have also been implemented to sustain educational outcomes over time. In addition, awareness campaigns aim to address cultural challenges, such as poor maintenance practices, by educating communities about the importance of preserving school infrastructure. These efforts reflect the government's commitment to long-term solutions through collective action.

To build local capacity for future educational emergencies, the government has focused on continuous training, particularly for SBMC members, to clarify their roles and responsibilities. Respondents highlighted the positive impact of these efforts, with communities increasingly taking ownership of schools and working towards sustainable solutions. Regular evaluation mechanisms, including community engagement and visible improvements in infrastructure and teacher training, have been used to measure the success of interventions. In addition, collaboration platforms like review meetings and effective communication strategies during crises ensure stakeholder alignment and streamlined support, despite challenges like delayed responses and cultural differences.

NGOs prioritize long-term sustainability by making sure that parents of children enrolled in educational programs receive training and skill development to improve their ability to meet the needs of the children. Although they now rely on assistance from foreign partners, they have plans for local capacity building in the event of future educational emergencies. Monitoring community improvements, such as livelihoods, which support the sustainability of the educational system, is one way to assess the efficacy of interventions. NGOs use robust monitoring and assessment procedures to guarantee adaptation. Regular communication tactics and coordination with other humanitarian players, like UNICEF, aid in informing stakeholders. Although obstacles like network problems and security concerns have affected in-person meetings, coordination activities are being carried out through data exchange at sector meetings and virtual engagements.

5.4.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

The local government employs structured monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure the effectiveness of its educational interventions. Respondents noted that detailed plans outlining needs and challenges are developed and serve as a guide when engaging with stakeholders offering support. Monitoring and evaluation exercises generate reports that include recommendations, which are then consolidated to identify priority areas for immediate action. This process ensures that interventions are systematically managed, continuously improved, and aligned with the community's educational needs.

Feedback from Alternative Education Program (AEP) beneficiaries and teachers is gathered through structured channels to enhance support efforts. Reports from schools are collected by supervisors, reviewed during end-of-term meetings at both the school and LGA levels, and complemented by input from collaborating NGOs. In addition, the local government uses changes in learner behavior and classroom outcomes as indicators of teacher effectiveness. Feedback mechanisms also allow for critical issues to be escalated to appropriate authorities, enabling responsive and well-targeted educational initiatives.

NGOs employ flexible monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks that are customized for every educational initiative and include metrics that may be changed in response to project requirements. M&E, a fundamental component of their operations, ensures continuous evaluation and improvement. Through sector-level meetings, teachers and AEP beneficiaries provide feedback, encouraging cooperation and insight exchanges. NGOs have modified their strategies to meet various requirements, such as enrolling children, enhancing teacher ability, or assisting caregivers, based on lessons learned from previous crises. Evaluations are essential for directing future interventions since they give NGOs feedback on their progress, allowing them to modify their tactics and enhance their influence on educational results.

6.0. Gender Differences in Psychosocial Response and Resilience

The psychosocial response and resilience of students in conflict-affected areas revealed distinct gender-based differences. Female students were particularly vulnerable to the challenges posed by the crisis, with many facing threats of abduction, violence, and early marriage. These factors often led to lower school attendance among girls compared to boys, as families prioritized their safety over education. Despite these challenges, female students who remained in school demonstrated remarkable resilience, often outperforming their male counterparts in determination and focus. Teachers noted that the girls' motivation was fueled by their aspirations to break societal barriers and secure a better future.

"Sincerely speaking, the turnout of female students has significantly declined due to the crisis. Many have fled to escape gangs that abduct and abuse female children. While the turnout of male students has also decreased, it is not as low as that of female students." **- (Student, Konduga)**

The females are more serious than the males because they are motivated and driven to succeed ***(Headteacher, Jere)***

"Despite all the problems that affected my area, I never stopped attending evening lessons. I was enrolled in 2022 after being raped, but I refused to let that stop me. I want to be like educated people, and I don't want to give up on my education." **- (Student, Konduga)**

Male students, while facing fewer barriers to attendance, were not immune to the psychological toll of the crises. Many boys took on additional responsibilities, such as working to support their families, which often distracted them from their studies. The emotional burden of providing for their households, coupled with the stress of navigating a conflict-affected environment, impacted their academic focus and overall well-being. However, boys demonstrated resilience by finding ways to balance their educational pursuits with their family obligations, often relying on peer networks for academic and emotional support.

Both genders employed distinct coping mechanisms. Female students often relied on emotional encouragement from mothers, who played a central role in motivating them to stay in school. Boys, on the other hand, frequently sought solidarity with peers, sharing responsibilities and supporting each other emotionally. Teachers and community members provided vital support for both genders, ensuring that students had access to guidance, counseling, and resources to cope with the challenges of continuing education amidst conflict.

6.1 Gender Dynamics in Educational Access and Support During Emergencies

Gender differences in educational access and support during emergencies in Borno State reveal distinct challenges and progress. Respondents highlighted minimal gender-specific challenges in most cases, emphasizing that boys and girls were generally treated equally, with resources and opportunities distributed without discrimination. However, certain gender-specific obstacles persisted. For instance, girls often faced cultural restrictions that prevented them from attending evening lessons or fully participating in school activities due to household responsibilities or societal expectations, such as early marriage. Boys, on the other hand, were occasionally pulled out of school to assist with farming or family businesses, impacting their attendance and academic performance.

Community and parental support played a vital role in addressing these challenges and motivating both genders to stay in school. Respondents noted that awareness campaigns and community-driven initiatives had significantly influenced parental attitudes, leading to a stronger emphasis on education for both boys and girls. Parents increasingly recognized the importance of schooling, particularly for girls, and began to support their pursuit of both Islamic and Western education, as well as vocational skills. Community leaders also stepped in to advocate for gender equity in education, fostering a supportive environment for learners.

While gender-based inequalities in education were not entirely eliminated, interventions from NGOs and local governments helped address disparities. Programs that focused on guidance, counseling, and moral support enabled many students to overcome obstacles and stay motivated. Despite challenges, progress was evident in the increased participation of both genders in education, with parents and community members playing a crucial role in fostering resilience and hope for the future.

*"The girls are not allowed to stay out late, so some cannot fully participate in the lessons since they are held in the evenings." - (**SBMC Chairman, Jajel, Konduga**)*

*"For the girls, they have to do house chores before coming to school, and this sometimes affects their activities in school. Even the boys are sometimes taken to farms or markets during school sessions." - (**Elder, Gwange, MMC**)*

*"We practice and promote equality for all. Both boys and girls are treated the same, and resources are distributed equally. There is no difference; the way we expect the boy child to study in school is the same way we expect the girl child to study as well." – (**Community Leader, Jere**)*

"One of the major difficulties we encountered was getting the children to return to school after the flood. However, with the involvement of the community head, this challenge was resolved. He ensured that every parent sent their children back to school. During the time of the insurgency, parents had completely given up on their children going to school. But with awareness campaigns and evening lessons, parents now trust the process and support their children, especially the girls, to stay in school." - (**Ward Head, Konduga**)

"We focus more on girls' education because they are the most vulnerable. We want them to get both Islamic and Western education so they can guide their lives and learn a skill." - (**Community Leader, MMC**)

"Now we are more enlightened, and we know education is important for both boys and girls. Both genders, when educated, will work for the benefit of their communities and the nation." - (**Community Leader, Konduga**)

*"The expectations of people have changed drastically. We have not reached where we want to be, but we are far from where we started. We thank God for these initiatives. Many learners, both boys and girls, have passed their examinations and are now volunteering in their communities, working in health centers, or with community organizations." – (**Religious Leader, Jere**)*

7.0.   Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1   Conclusion

The Accelerated Education Program (AEP) in Borno State has been instrumental in addressing the educational and psychosocial needs of children affected by conflict and emergencies. By condensing several years of curriculum into shorter, more accessible timeframes, AEP has enabled children who missed out on formal schooling due to displacement and insecurity to re-enter education and acquire essential literacy and numeracy skills. Beyond academics, the

program has emphasized psychosocial support, recognizing the emotional and psychological toll of conflict on children. Through activities such as peer engagement, counseling services, and teacher mentorship, AEP has helped build resilience, allowing students to navigate their challenges with determination and hope.

A critical factor in the program's success has been the involvement of communities, NGOs, and government agencies. Community support has been vital in ensuring that children can participate in and benefit from the program, while NGOs and government initiatives have provided much-needed funding, infrastructure, and policy backing. However, despite these achievements, significant gaps remain. Limited resources, inadequate teacher training, and the lack of gender-sensitive interventions have hindered the program's ability to reach its full potential. In addition, while AEP has made strides in addressing immediate educational and psychosocial needs, questions about the program's long-term sustainability persist, particularly in maintaining funding, scaling interventions, and integrating beneficiaries into formal education systems. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders to ensure that the gains made through AEP are preserved and expanded, providing a brighter future for children in Borno State.

7.2 Recommendations

To build on the successes of the AEP and ensure sustainable educational outcomes, the following recommendations are proposed for different actors:

(i) Local Government Authorities (LGAs)

Local Government Authorities (LGAs) play a critical role in strengthening the educational system, particularly in areas affected by conflict, such as Borno State. To improve the quality and sustainability of programs like the Accelerated Education Program (AEP), LGAs must prioritize key areas of intervention. First, improving teacher retention and capacity building is crucial. Continuous teacher training programs should be implemented to equip educators with the skills needed to address the unique challenges faced by students in conflict-affected regions. Offering incentives such as competitive salaries, housing allowances, and transportation support can help retain qualified teachers, especially in remote and underserved areas where educational infrastructure is sparse.

Another priority for LGAs should be enhancing resource allocation to ensure that educational materials, infrastructure, and funding reach the schools and students who need them most. This requires transparent processes and regular monitoring to identify and address specific gaps, particularly in rural areas that are often overlooked. Equitable distribution of resources, guided by data-driven assessments, can significantly improve the learning environment and outcomes for all students.

Finally, Local Government Authorities (LGAs) must strengthen community engagement to build a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for education. Collaborating with community leaders, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and School-Based Management

Committees (SBMCs) promotes trust and accountability, enabling LGAs to address cultural and social barriers to education, such as resistance to educating girls or children with disabilities. By involving local stakeholders in decision-making processes, LGAs can tap into community knowledge and develop tailored strategies to encourage school attendance among marginalized groups. This inclusive approach ensures that education policies and initiatives align with community needs, creating a resilient and effective educational system that addresses the diverse challenges faced by students in Borno State.

(ii) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in complementing the efforts of Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to improve education in conflict-affected regions like Borno State. NGOs should expand psychosocial support programs to address the emotional and psychological needs of both students and teachers. Scaling up counseling services and trauma-focused interventions enables NGOs to help mitigate the long-term impact of conflict and displacement. These programs should be integrated into the Accelerated Education Program (AEP) curriculum to ensure holistic development, equipping students and educators with the resilience needed to navigate their unique challenges.

To promote educational equity, NGOs should implement targeted gender-sensitive interventions that address the cultural and social barriers faced by female students, such as early marriage, safety concerns, and societal expectations. Programs should include awareness campaigns, mentorship opportunities, and measures to provide safe transportation or secure school facilities. These initiatives can foster an environment where girls are empowered to pursue and thrive in education.

In addition, NGOs should enhance access to digital learning tools to bridge the digital divide and improve educational outcomes. Providing e-learning platforms, computers, and internet connectivity to AEP centers and underserved schools can enrich students' learning experiences while preparing them for future opportunities in an increasingly digital world. Focusing on these areas allows NGOs to create a transformative and sustainable impact, contributing to an inclusive and equitable educational system for students in Borno State. Their targeted interventions address critical gaps and ensure that education is accessible to all, even in challenging contexts.

(iii)   **Communities and Parents**

Communities and parents play a crucial role in strengthening education systems. They should promote awareness about the value of education to promote a culture that prioritizes learning. Advocacy campaigns led by communities and parents can highlight the long-term benefits of education, especially for girls, by showcasing its potential to rebuild communities, reduce poverty, and create opportunities for future generations. These efforts should address cultural and social barriers, challenging misconceptions and reinforcing the shared responsibility of ensuring access to education for all children.

Active involvement in school activities and decision-making processes is equally important. Parents can engage in Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) to help shape policies and ensure that schools are responsive to the needs of their children. Beyond participation, communities and parents can contribute resources, whether financial, material, or through volunteering, can significantly enhance school infrastructure, improve learning environments, and support student well-being. These collective efforts not only strengthen the educational system but also create a sense of ownership and shared responsibility, building resilience and community development.

(iv) Policy Makers and State Governments

Policy makers and state governments have a critical role in transforming education systems, particularly in regions like Borno State where conflict has disrupted learning. Prioritizing education in budget allocation is a key step toward addressing systemic challenges. Substantial resources must be directed toward supporting Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs), improving school infrastructure, and ensuring teacher welfare through competitive salaries and professional development. Adequate funding signals a commitment to building a resilient education system that caters to the needs of all students.

Implementing long-term plans is equally important. State governments should develop and institutionalize emergency education frameworks that ensure continuity during crises. These frameworks should include clear guidelines for rapid deployment of resources, flexible curriculum adaptation, and integration of psychosocial support services to mitigate the impact of emergencies on students and teachers. Establishing such plans would help safeguard education against future disruptions, providing a stable foundation for students even in challenging circumstances.

Facilitating partnerships is another vital strategy for sustainable impact. Governments must strengthen collaboration with NGOs, international agencies, and private sector stakeholders to pool resources and expertise. Partnerships can accelerate progress by leveraging external support for innovative solutions, such as digital learning platforms, gender-sensitive initiatives, and infrastructure development. Strengthening these collaborations enables state governments to create a comprehensive and inclusive education system capable of addressing current challenges while preparing for future opportunities.

(v) International Agencies and Donors

International agencies and donors play a crucial role in supporting education.

They should prioritize providing financial support to scale Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) and similar initiatives, focusing on infrastructure development, teacher training, and the provision of learning materials. Adequate funding can address critical gaps, ensuring that schools have the necessary resources to meet the needs of students and educators grappling with the challenges of displacement and insecurity.

Equally important is the need for consistent monitoring of program impact to ensure resources are used effectively. International agencies and donors should conduct regular assessments of funded programs to evaluate their effectiveness, pinpoint areas for improvement, and refine interventions. Using data from these evaluations enables the scaling and adaptation of successful models to similar contexts, extending the reach and sustainability of educational initiatives. Such efforts ensure that international support contributes to meaningful, long-term outcomes, transforming educational systems and empowering communities to rebuild and thrive.

7.3 Key Lessons Learned

Students participating in Accelerated Education Programs (AEP) demonstrated remarkable resilience, navigating disrupted learning environments with determination. Despite the challenges posed by conflict, displacement, and insecurity, many students engaged in self-study, informal peer education, and community-led learning initiatives to maintain their education. This resilience highlights the critical role of psychosocial support and structured learning opportunities in promoting students' ability to adapt and thrive, even in adversity.

The integration of psychosocial support into AEP interventions has proven essential for addressing the emotional and psychological toll of conflict. Counseling services and trauma-focused activities provided through these programs significantly enhanced the mental well-being of both students and educators. These interventions helped participants cope with the aftermath of trauma, enabling them to stay engaged in learning and remain motivated despite the difficult circumstances.

Teachers, however, faced substantial challenges in these settings, including emotional stress, safety concerns, and a lack of adequate resources. Many educators experienced burnout due to the high demands of teaching in conflict-affected areas. Targeted training programs and professional development initiatives provided by NGOs and local authorities were instrumental in improving their instructional quality and retention. These efforts equipped teachers with the skills and resilience needed to support students effectively.

Female students encountered even greater barriers to accessing education, facing issues such as safety concerns, cultural constraints, and early marriage. Targeted gender-sensitive interventions addressed these challenges through awareness campaigns, mentorship opportunities, and measures to ensure girls' safety. These programs were vital in promoting higher enrollment and retention rates for girls, who often exhibited exceptional motivation and determination to continue their education.

Community and stakeholder engagement played a crucial role in the success of AEPs. Collaborative efforts with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), and local leaders created a sense of ownership and accountability.

These partnerships ensured that interventions were aligned with local needs and priorities, thereby strengthening the overall impact of AEP programs.

However, significant gaps in infrastructure and resources continue to undermine the effectiveness of AEPs. Issues such as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate seating, and shortages of teaching materials highlighted the need for targeted investments in educational infrastructure. Addressing these gaps is crucial for creating conducive learning environments that support the academic and personal growth of students in conflict-affected regions.

7.4 **Research Areas for Further Investigation**

For future research, it is recommended that the long-term outcomes of Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs) be thoroughly evaluated to understand their sustained impact. Specifically, investigating the academic, social, and economic trajectories of AEP graduates would provide valuable insights into how these programs shape beneficiaries' lives and contribute to community development. Understanding whether AEP graduates are able to transition successfully into formal education, vocational training, or employment would highlight the program's broader implications for breaking cycles of poverty and promoting social mobility.

In addition, future research should focus on the inclusion of beneficiaries living with disabilities, a group excluded from this study. Examining the effectiveness of AEPs in supporting students with disabilities to continue their education would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's impact. This line of inquiry is essential to assess whether AEPs are meeting the unique needs of these students and to identify areas for improvement to ensure that education is accessible to all.

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ANNEX

Confidence in Handling Unexpected Challenges (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: believe I can handle unexpected challenges
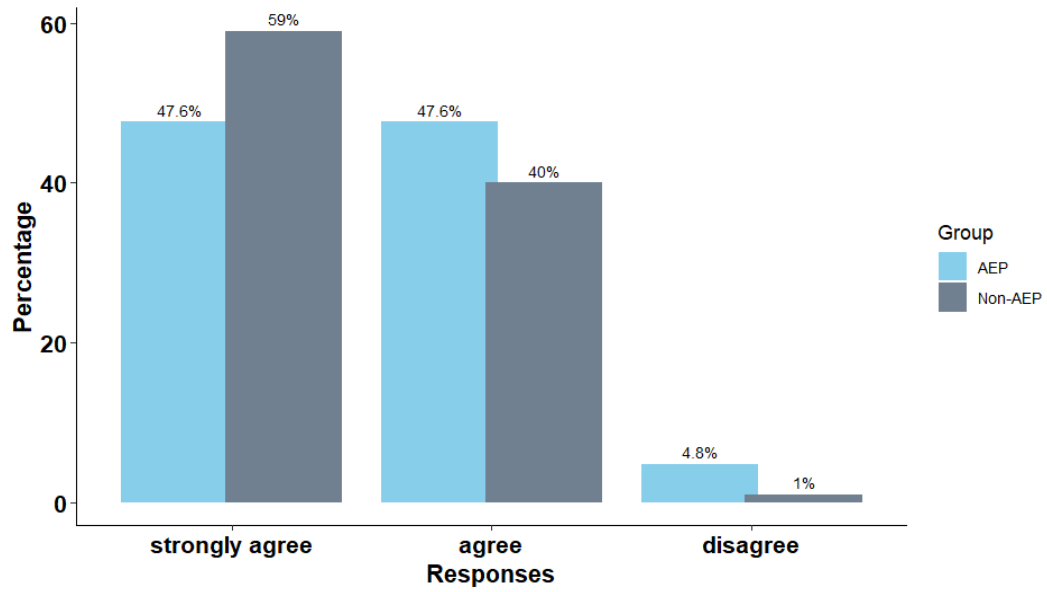
Ability to Manage Difficult Situations (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I feel confident in my ability to manage difficult situations
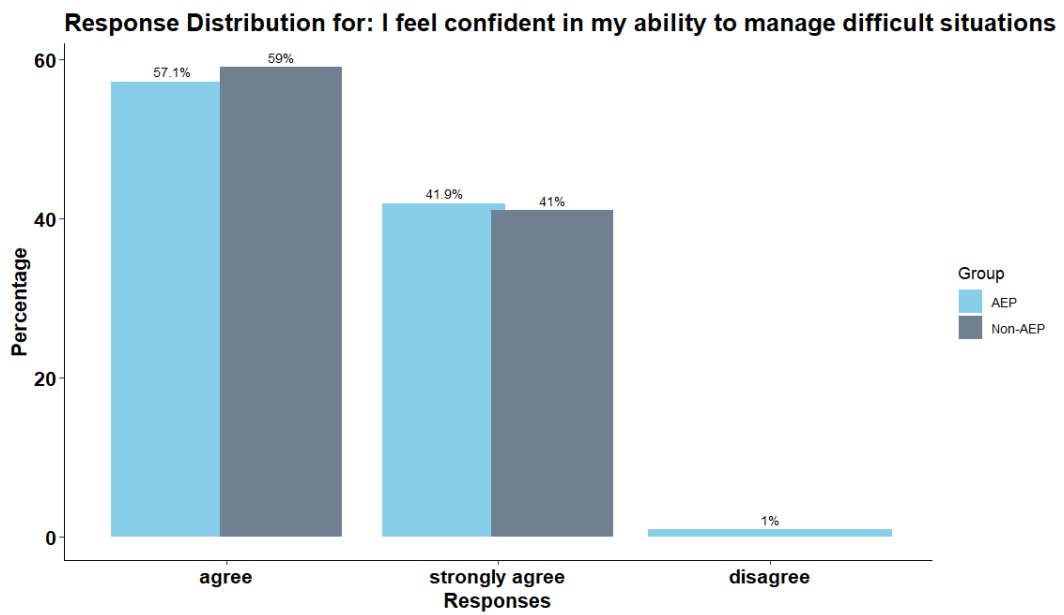
Staying Calm Under Pressure (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I can stay calm under pressure
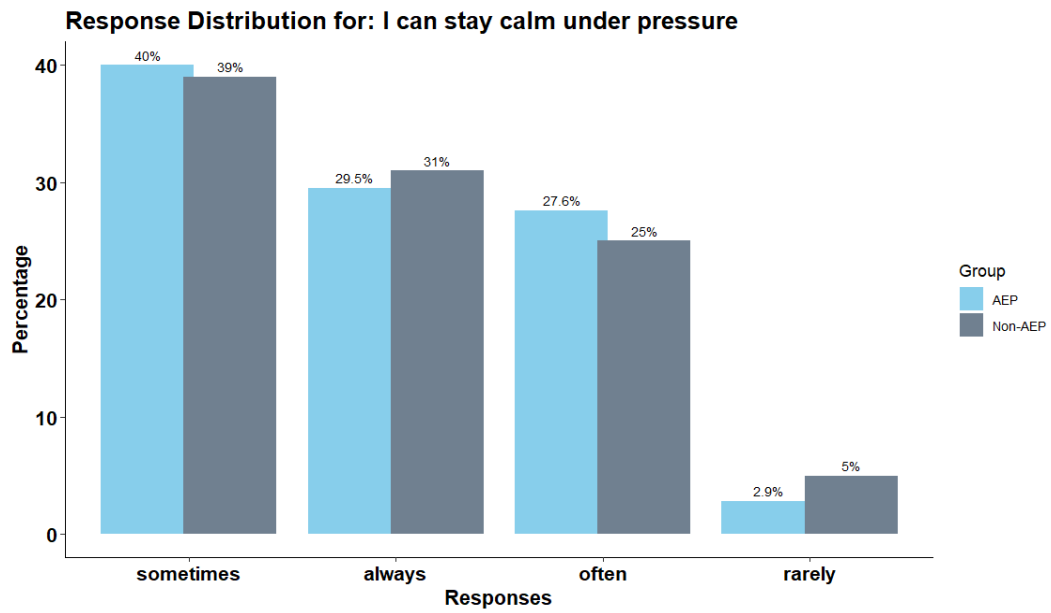
Emotional Control in Difficulties (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I am able to control my emotions when I face difficulties
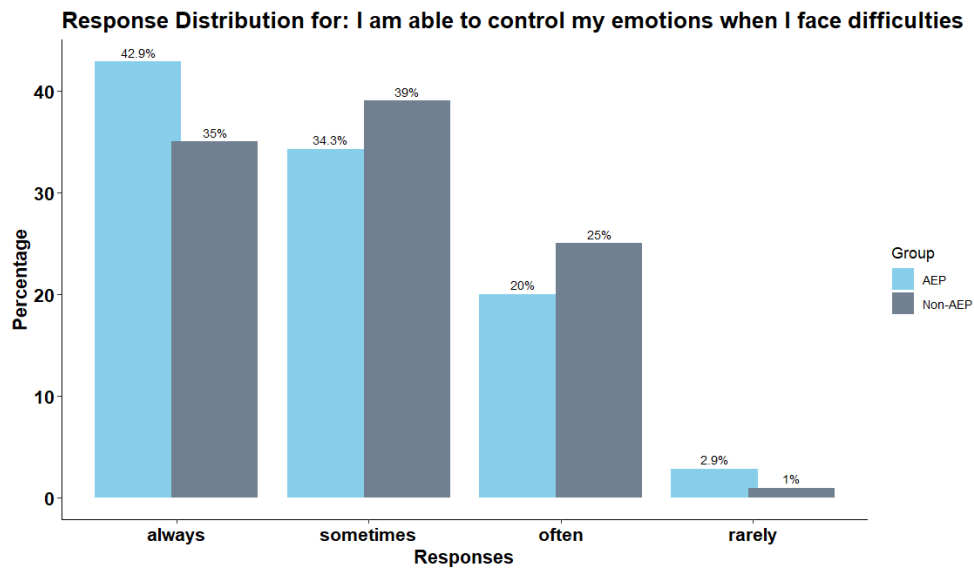
Support from Friends/Family (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I have friends/family who support me
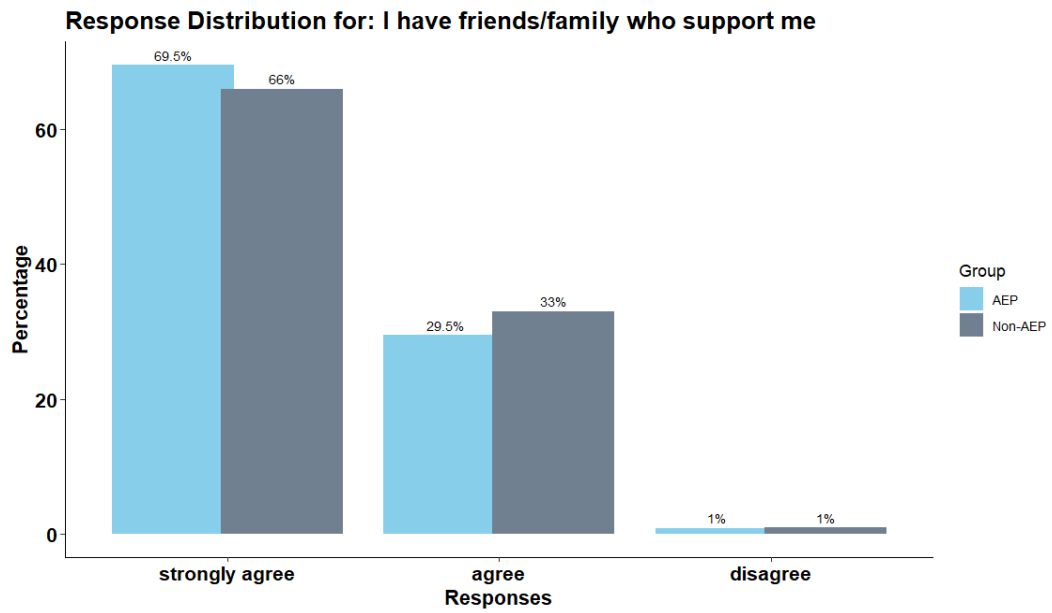
Reliance on Others for Help (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I can rely on others when I need help

Participation in Community Activities (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I feel connected to my community

Response Distribution for: I try to find solutions to my problems
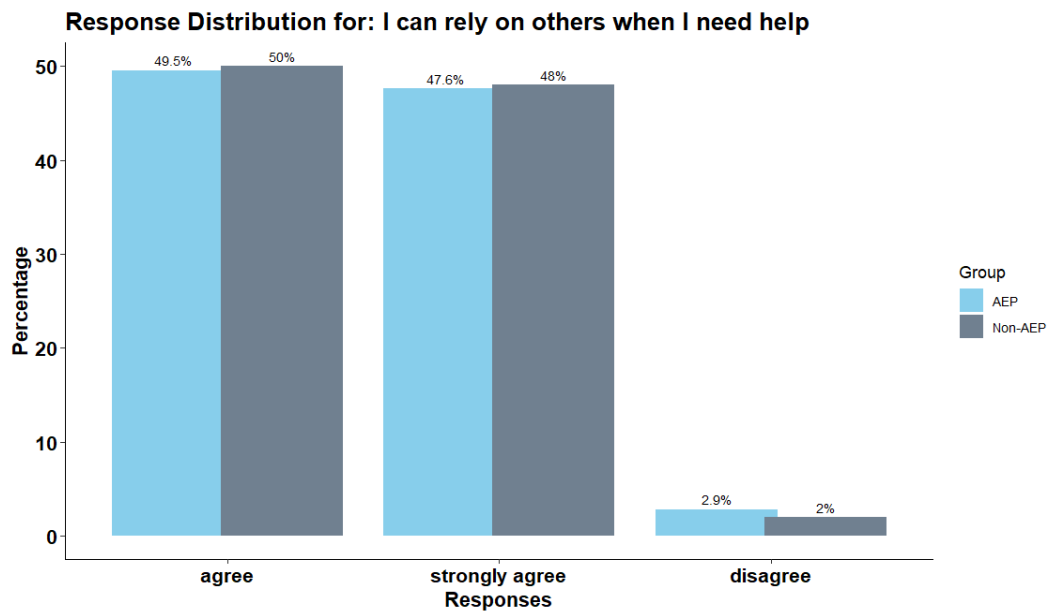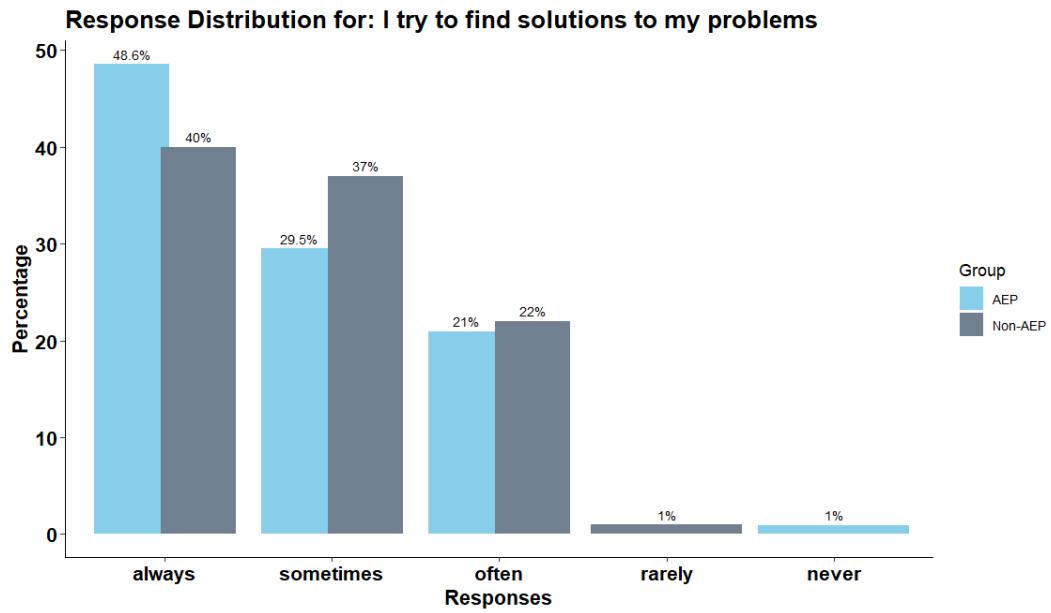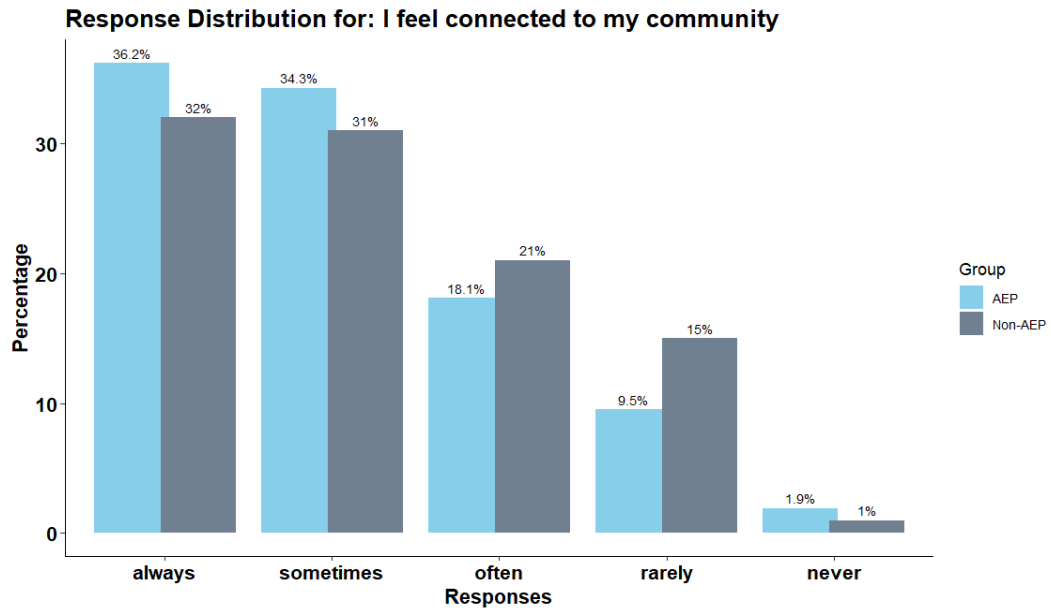
**Response Distribution for: I approach problems with a clear plan**
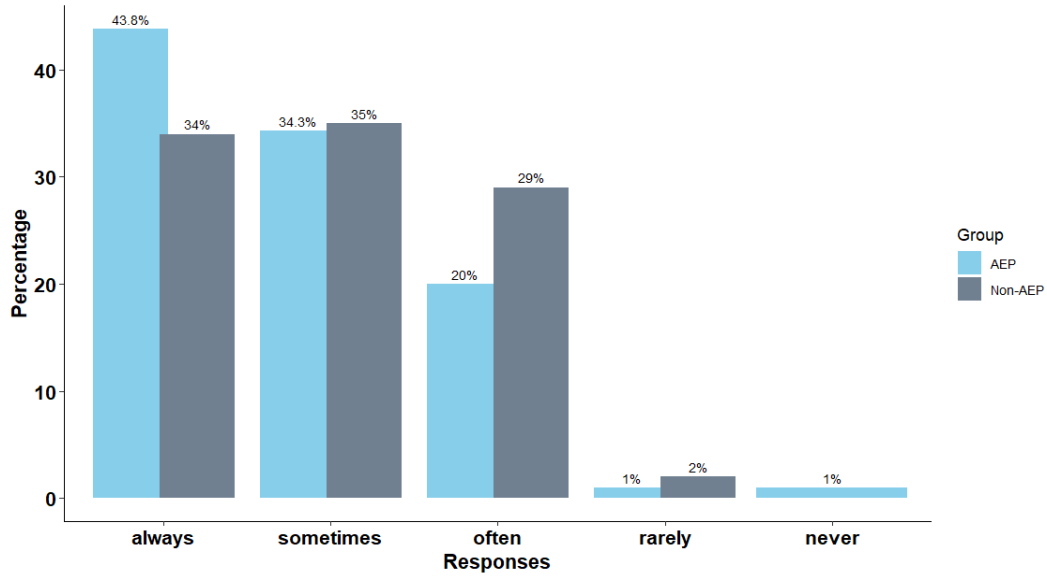
Response Distribution for: I use positive thinking to cope with stress
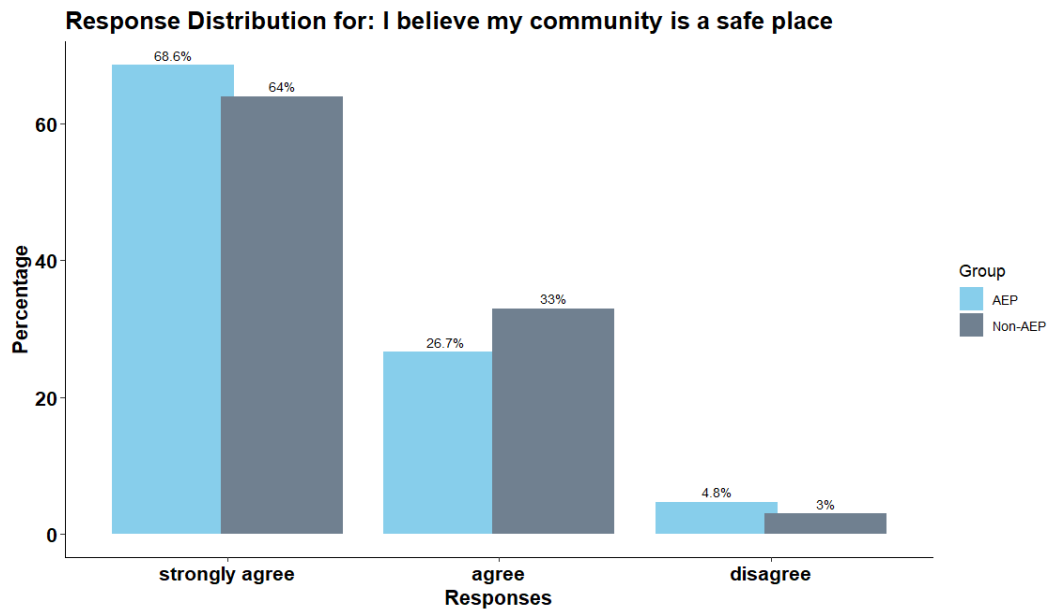
## Participation in Community Activities (AEP vs. Non-AEP)
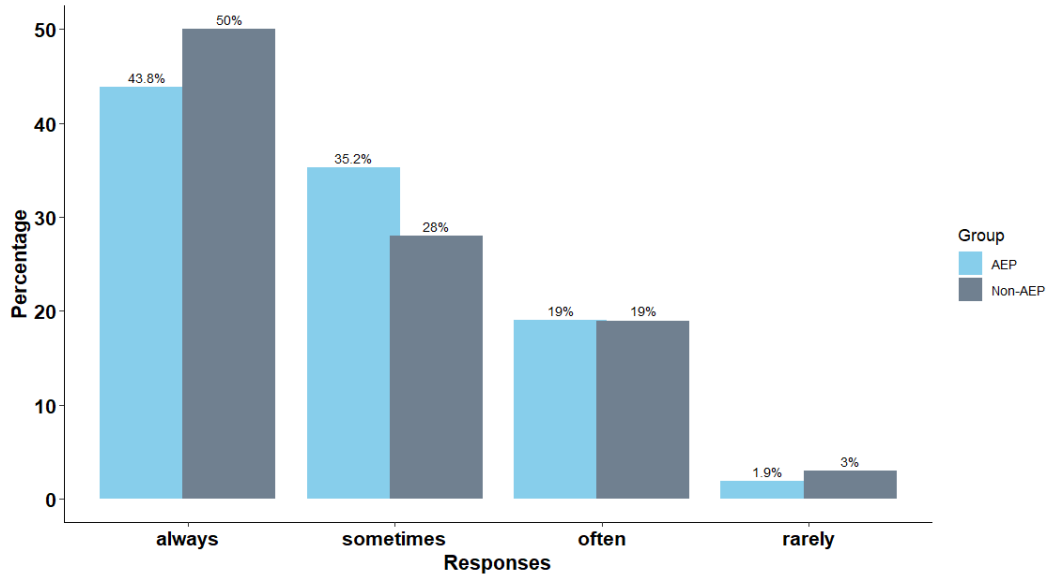
Response Distribution for: I participate in community activities
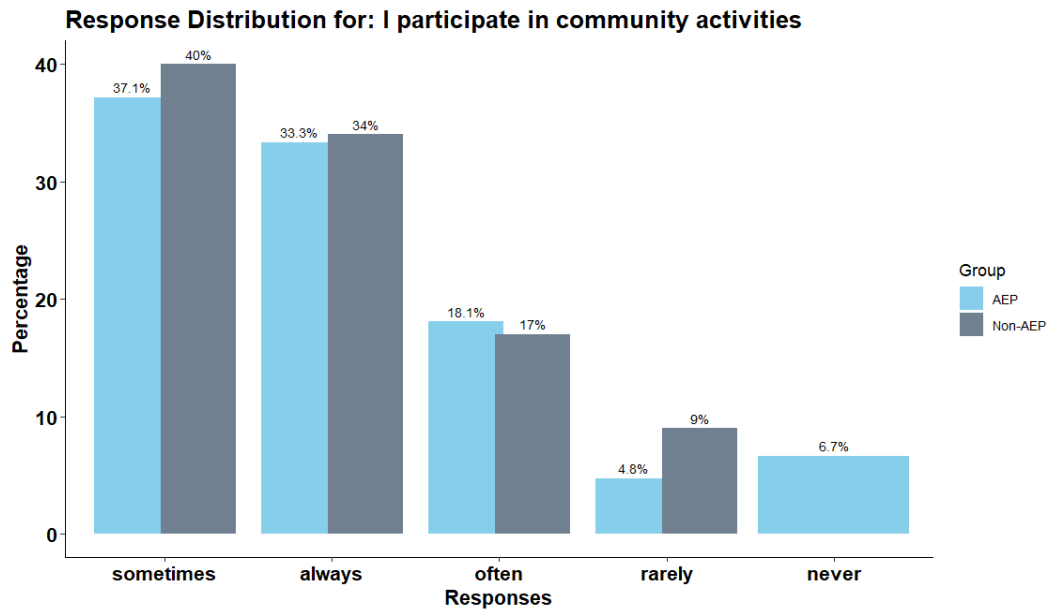
Relaxation Practices (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I engage in activities that help me relax
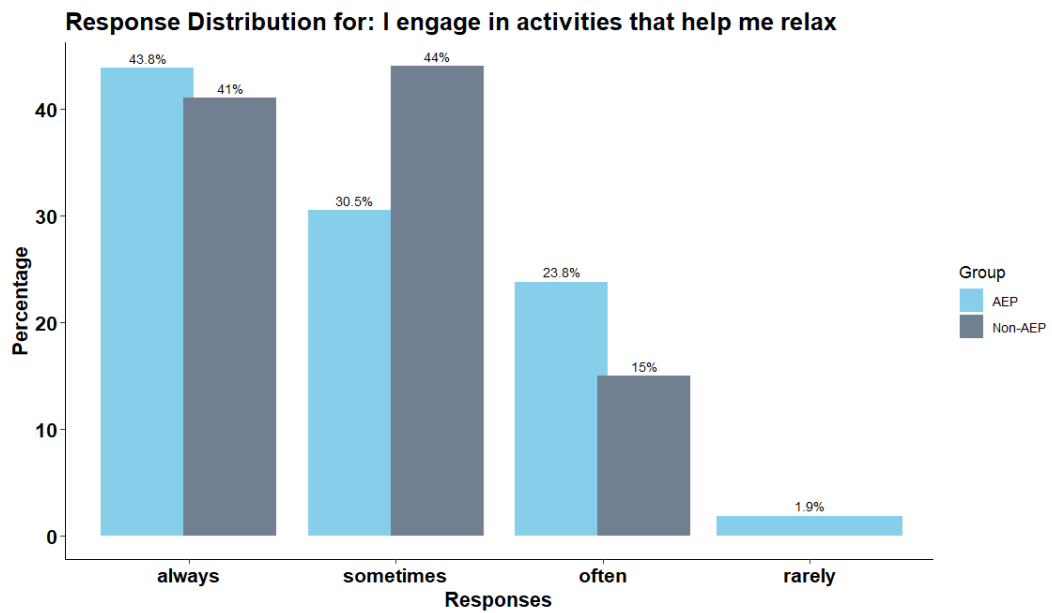
Perception of Community Safety (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I believe my community is a safe place

Access to Educational Resources (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I have access to necessary educational resources
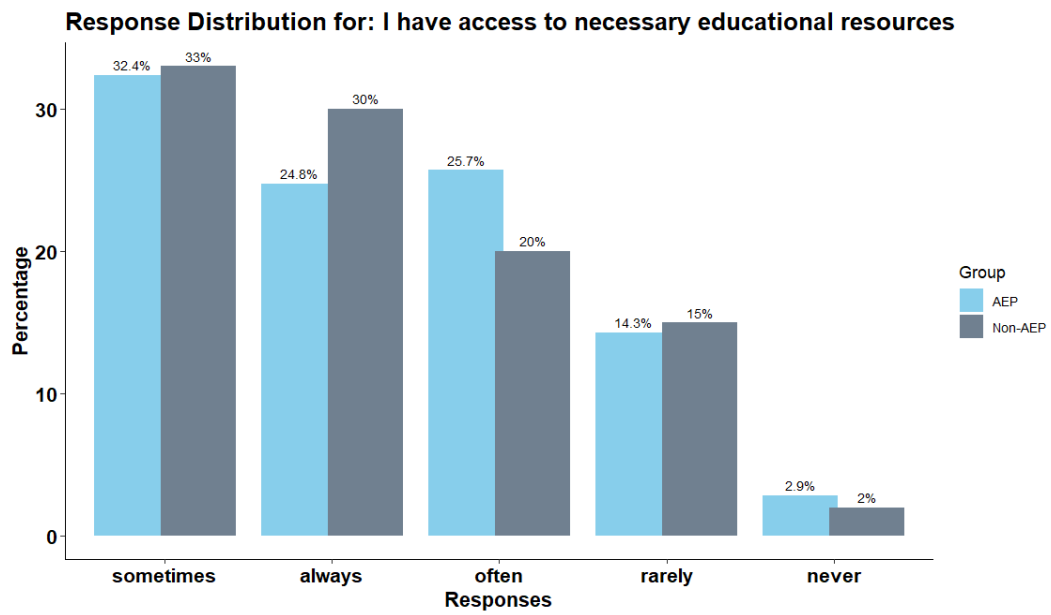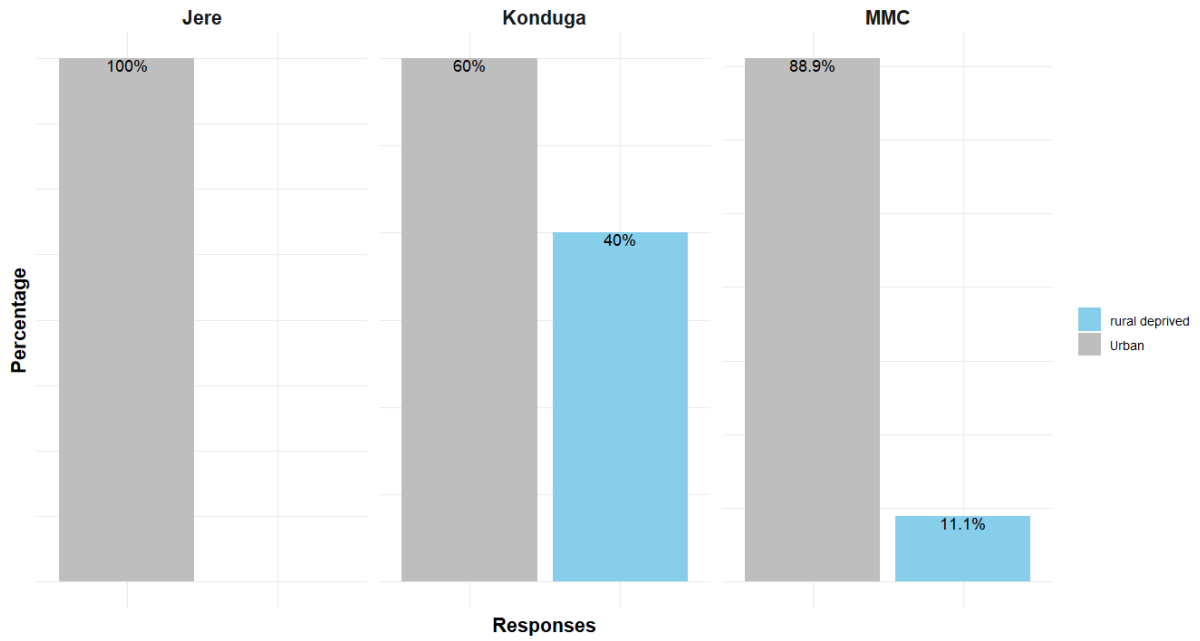
Access to Medical Care (AEP vs. Non-AEP)

Response Distribution for: I can obtain medical care when needed

Response Distribution for: School Type
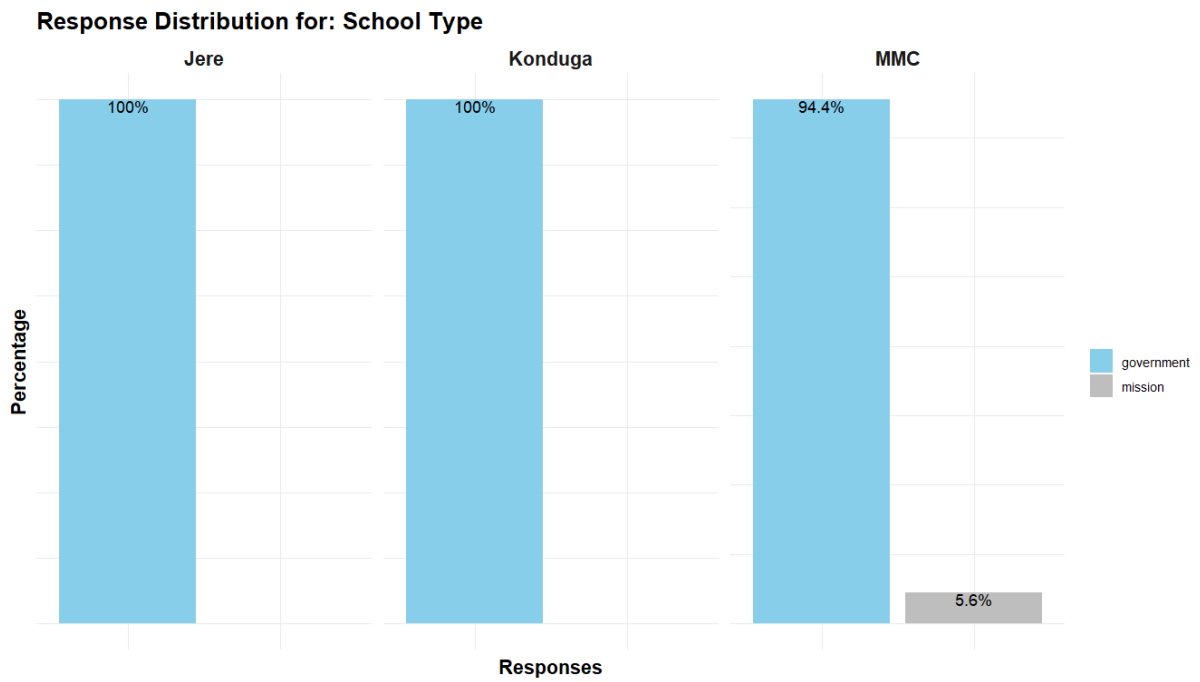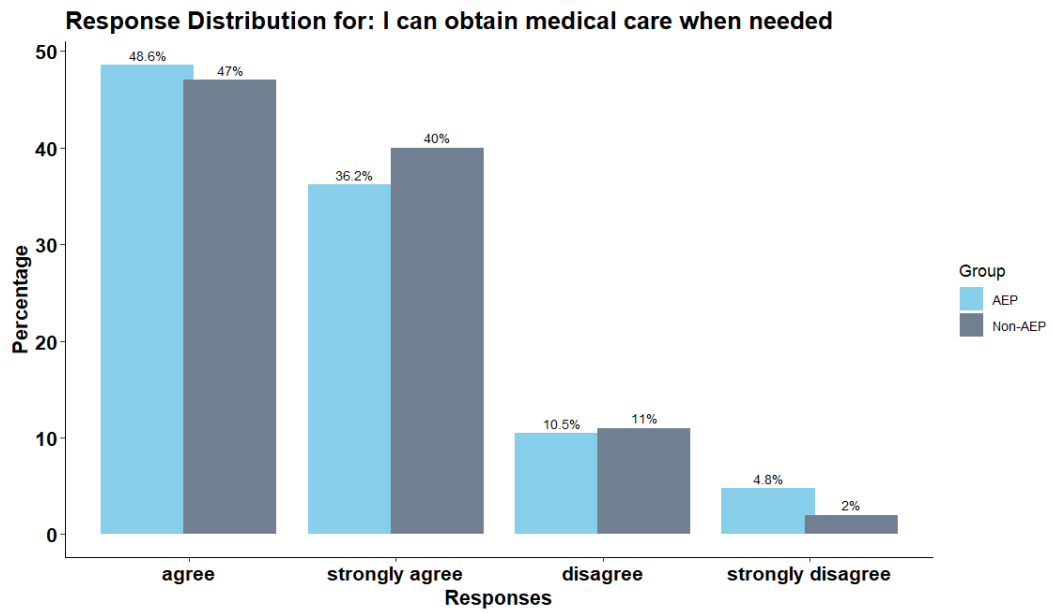
Response Distribution for: Locality

Jere	Konduga	MMC

Legend:
- rural deprived
- Urban

Y-axis: Percentage
X-axis: Responses

Jere: 100% (Urban)
Konduga: 60% (Urban), 40% (rural deprived)
MMC: 88.9% (Urban), 11.1% (rural deprived)

Response Distribution for: School Location

Jere	Konduga	MMC

Legend:
- beyond a one-hour radius of the district capital and considered rural
- the very remote area of the district
- within a one-hour radius of the district capital

Y-axis: Percentage
X-axis: Responses

Jere: 87.5% (within a one-hour radius), 12.5% (beyond a one-hour radius)
Konduga: 80% (within a one-hour radius), 20% (the very remote area)
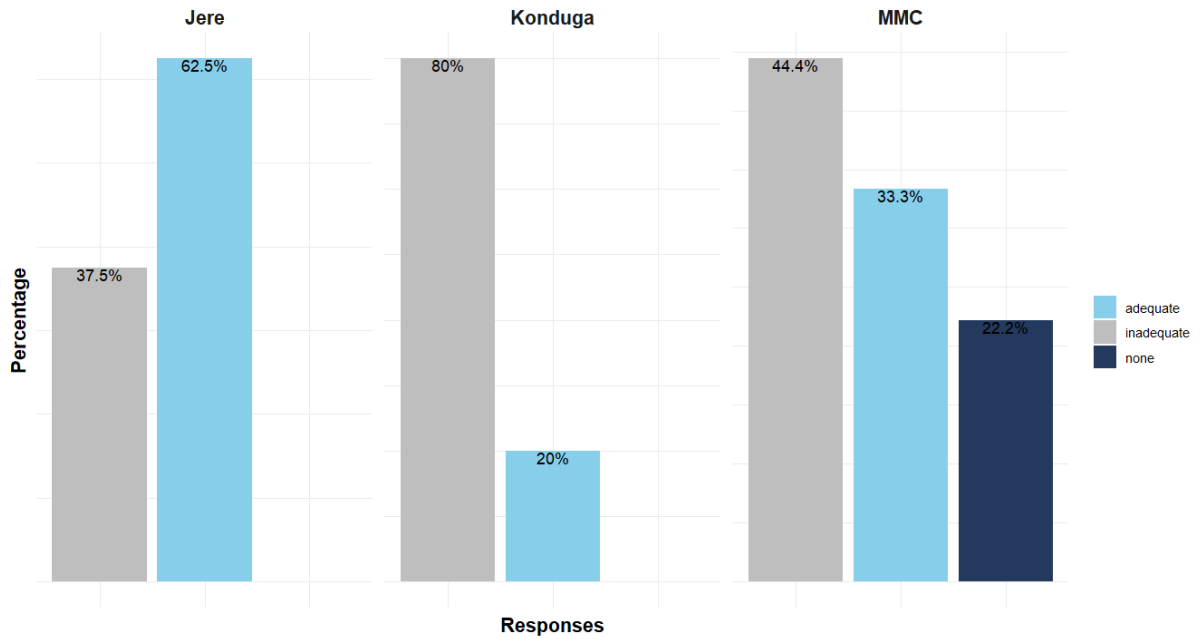MMC: 94.4% (within a one-hour radius), 5.6% (beyond a one-hour radius)
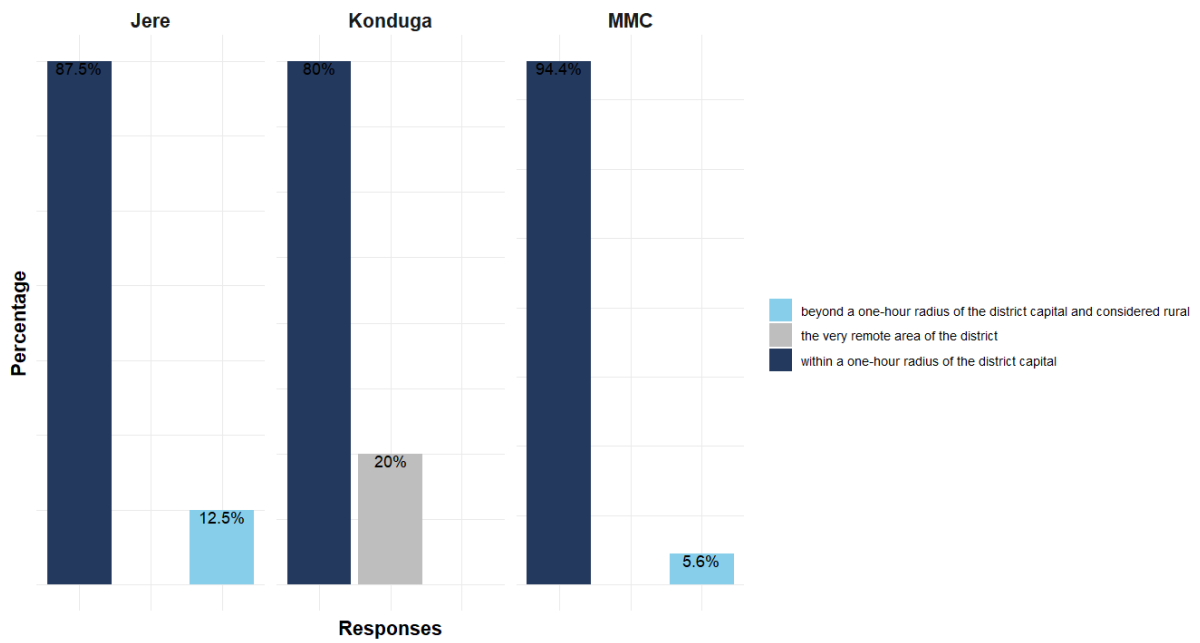
Response Distribution for: Condition Of School Building
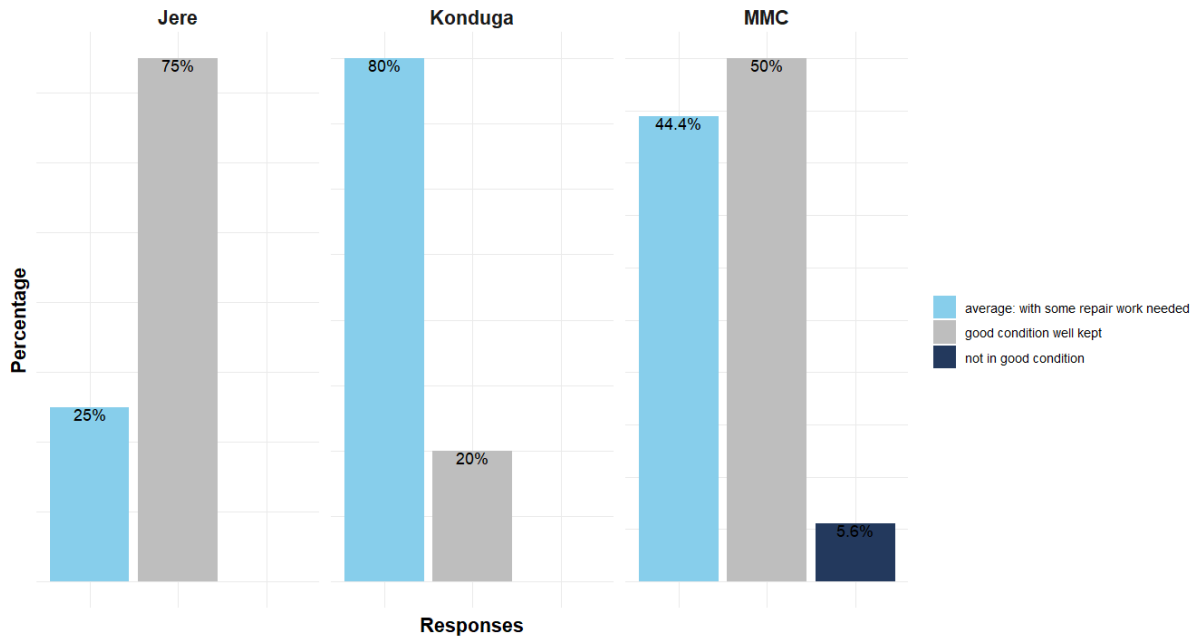
Response Distribution for: Class Size
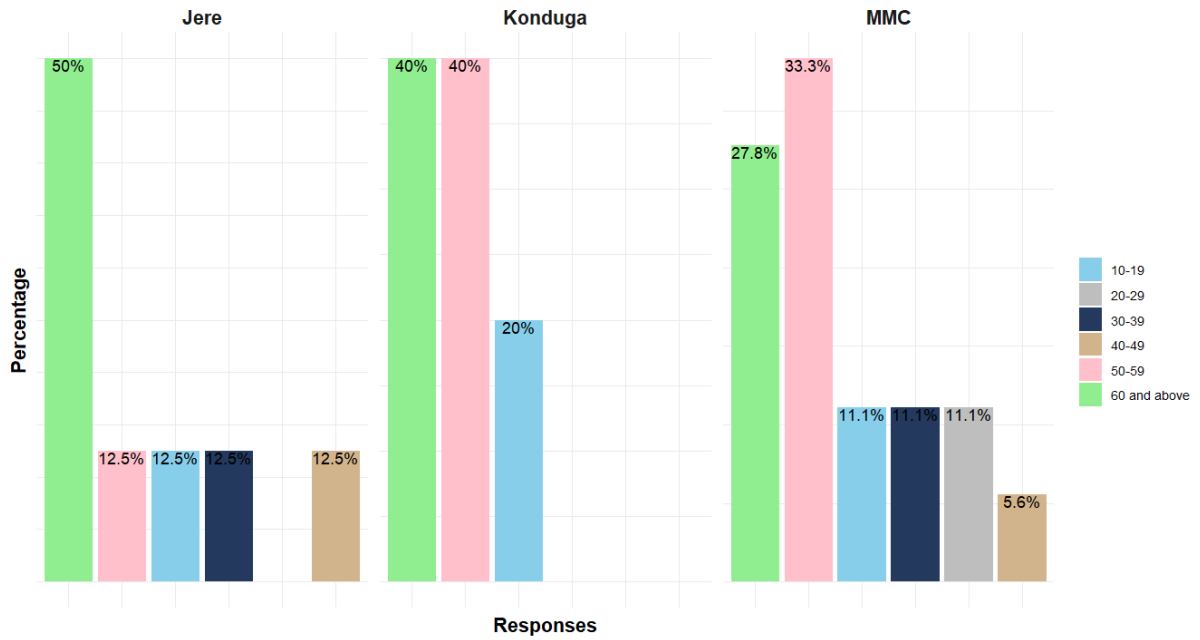
Response Distribution for: Availability of Staff Room

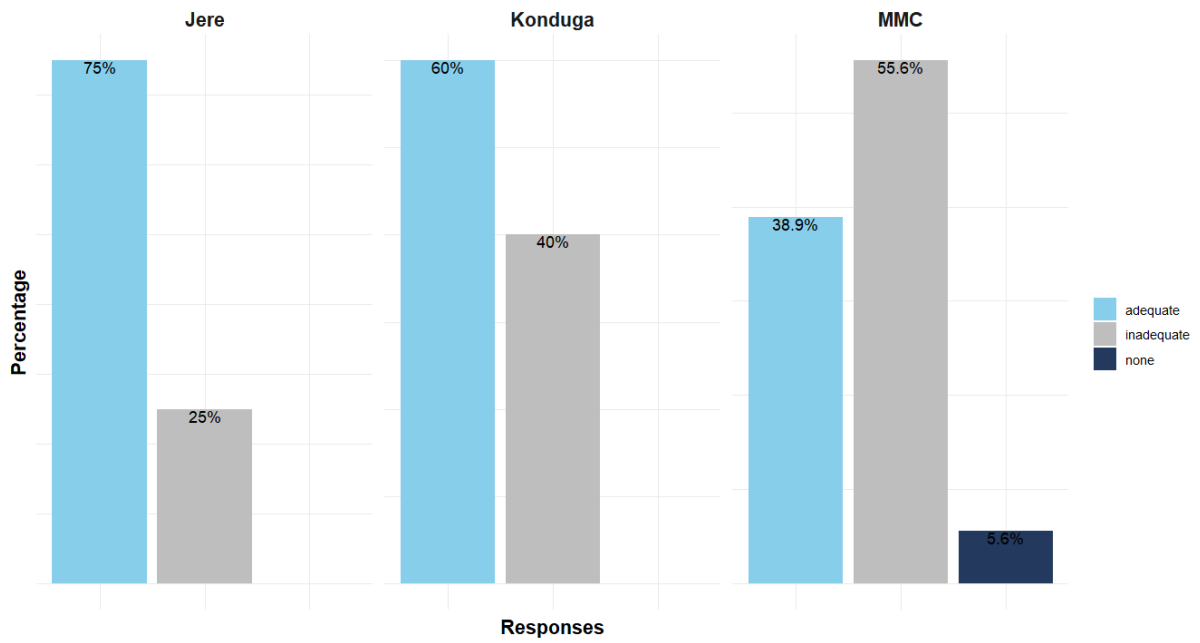### Jere

Konduga

MMC

Percentage

Responses

adequate
inadequate
none

Response Distribution for: Availability of Sitting Spaces

Jere

Konduga

MMC

Percentage

Responses

adequate
inadequate
none
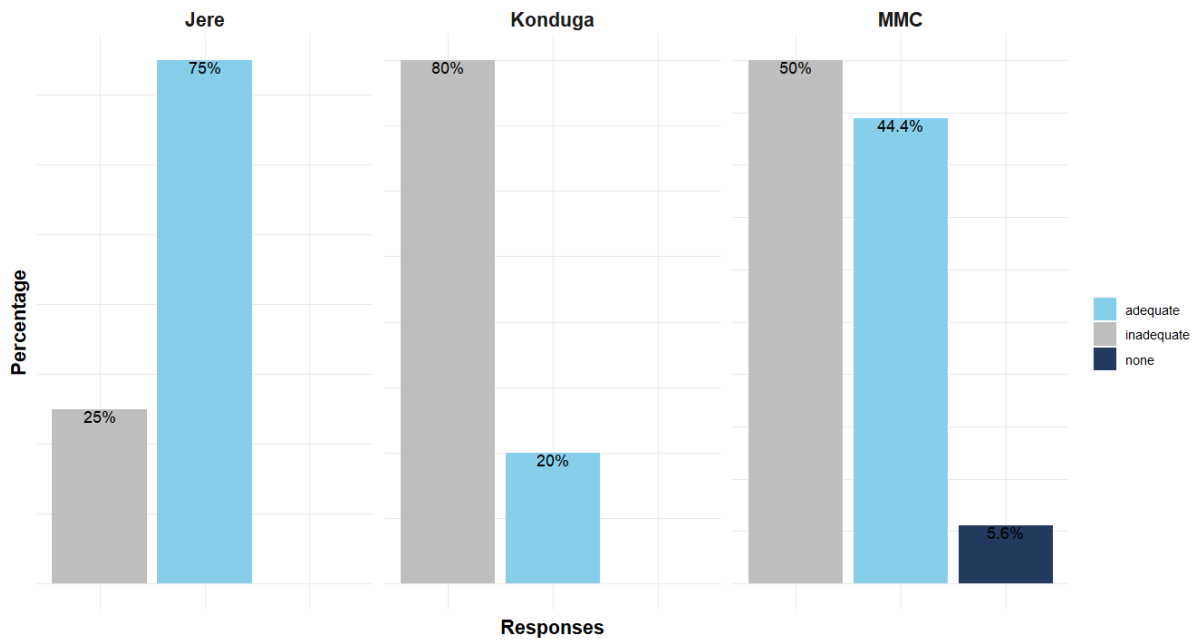
Response Distribution for: Availability of Urinal System

Jere

Konduga

MMC

- adequate
- inadequate
- none

Percentage

Responses

Response Distribution for: Availability of Toilets

Jere

Konduga

MMC

- adequate
- inadequate
- none

Percentage

Responses

Response Distribution for: Sufficient Class Ventilation

Jere — 100% (adequate)
Konduga — 100% (adequate)
MMC — 88.9% (adequate), 11.1% (inadequate)

Legend:
- adequate
- inadequate
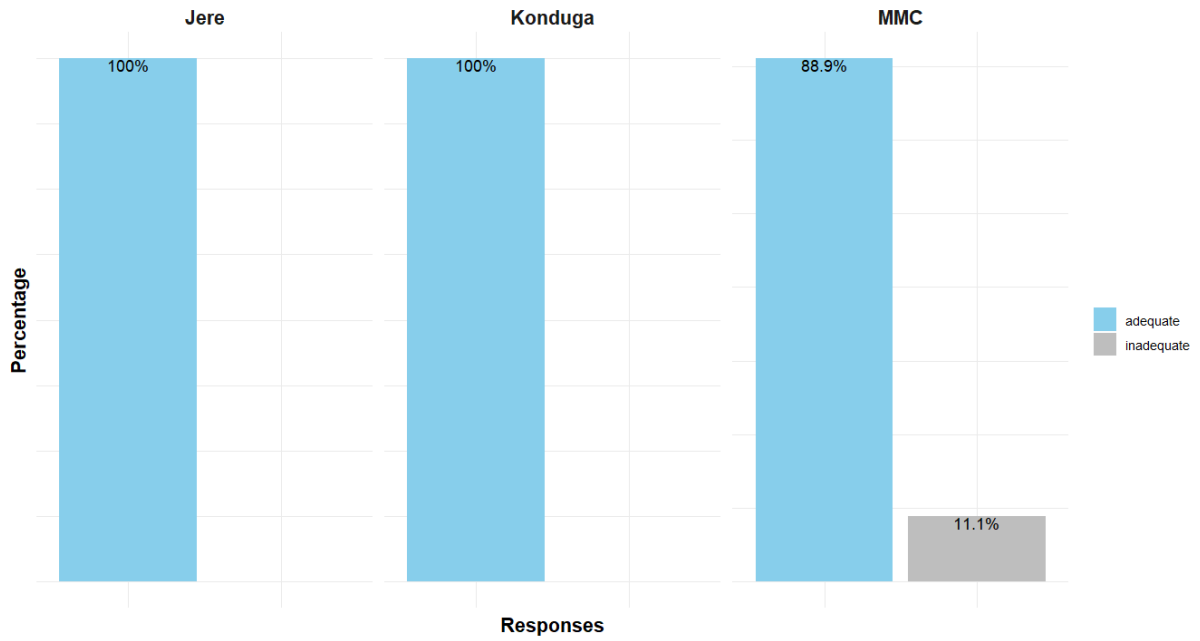
Response Distribution for: Energy Sources

Jere — 62.5% (solar energy), 25% (No energy source in the school), 12.5% (National Grid (PHCN))
Konduga — 40% (solar energy), 20% (No energy source in the school), 40% (National Grid (PHCN))
MMC — 55.6% (solar energy), 33.3% (No energy source in the school), 5.6% (National Grid (PHCN)), 5.6% (Diesel or Petrol Generators)

Legend:
- Diesel or Petrol Generators
- National Grid (PHCN)
- No energy source in the school
- solar energy
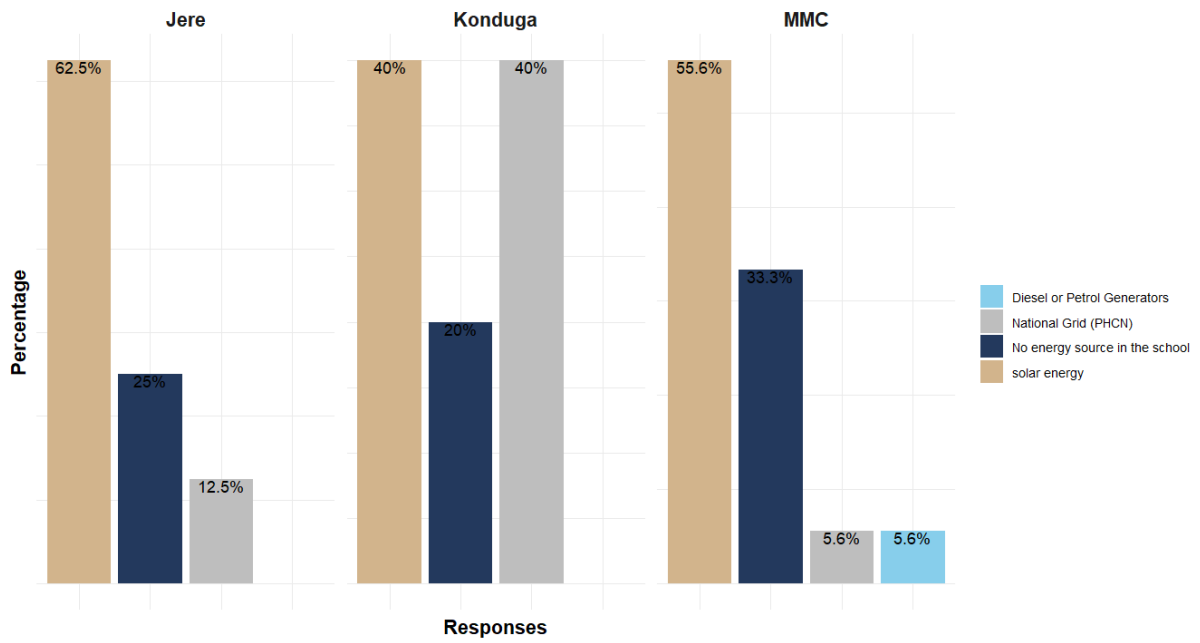
Response Distribution for: Separate Toilet by Gender

Jere

87.5%

12.5%

Konduga

80%

20%

MMC

88.9%

11.1%

Percentage

Responses

- no
- yes
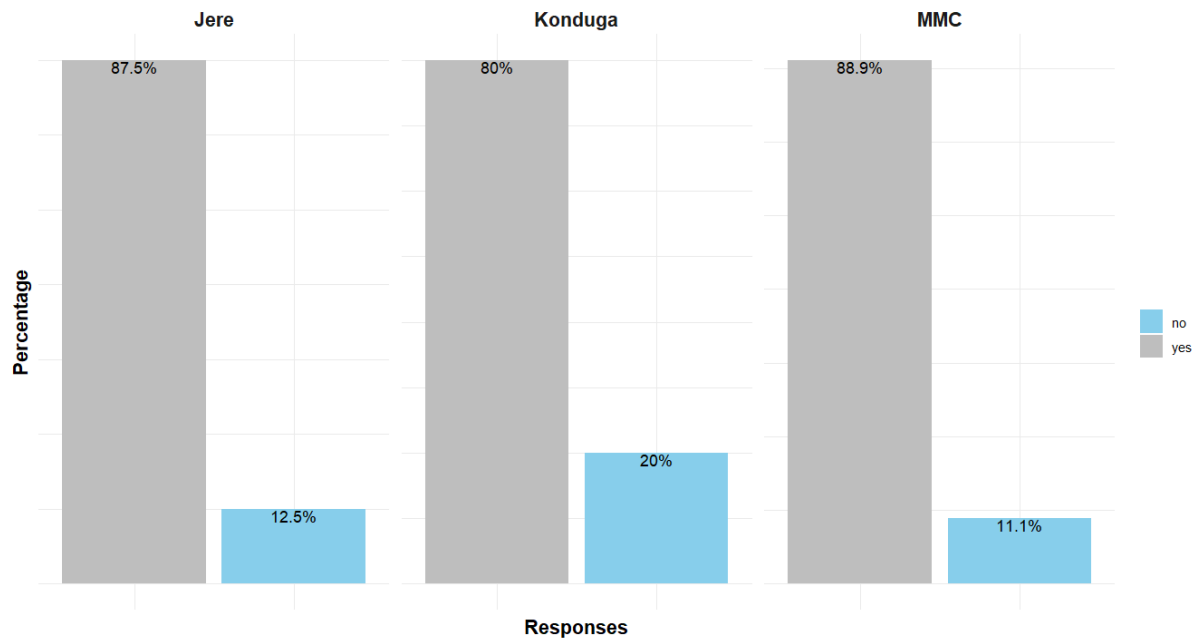
Response Distribution for: Condition of Toilet

Jere

75%

25%

Konduga

80%

20%

MMC

83.3%

16.7%

Percentage

Responses

- not-working
- working condition
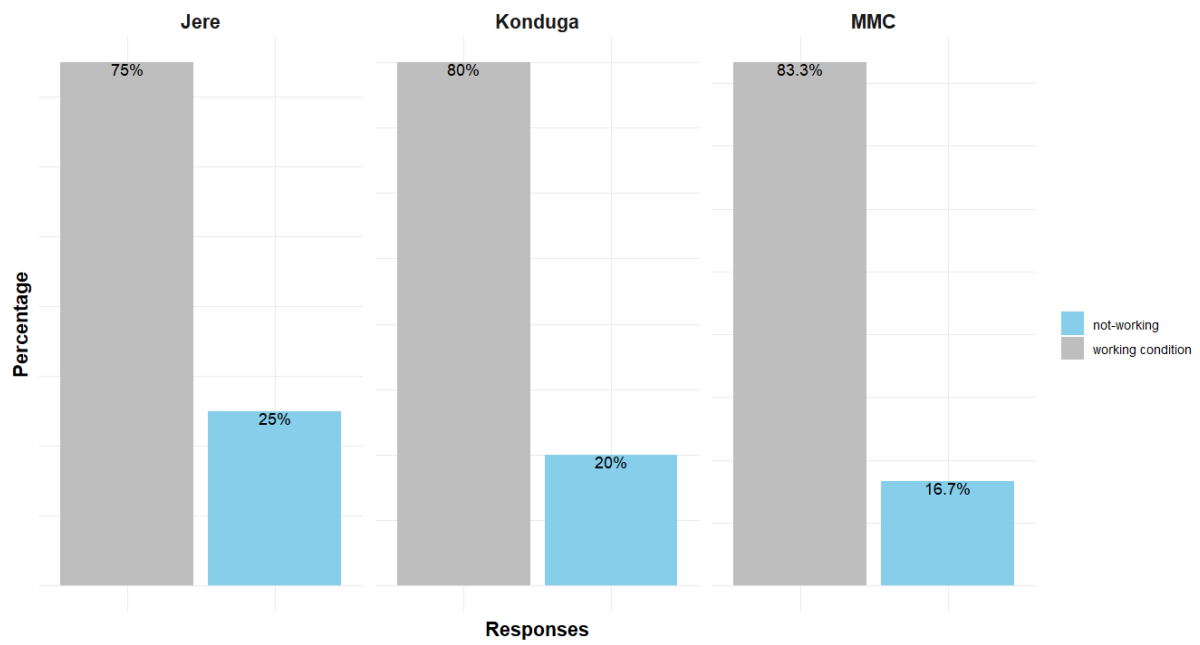
Response Distribution for: Availability of Drinking Water

Jere	Konduga	MMC

borehole

piped water supply from tap
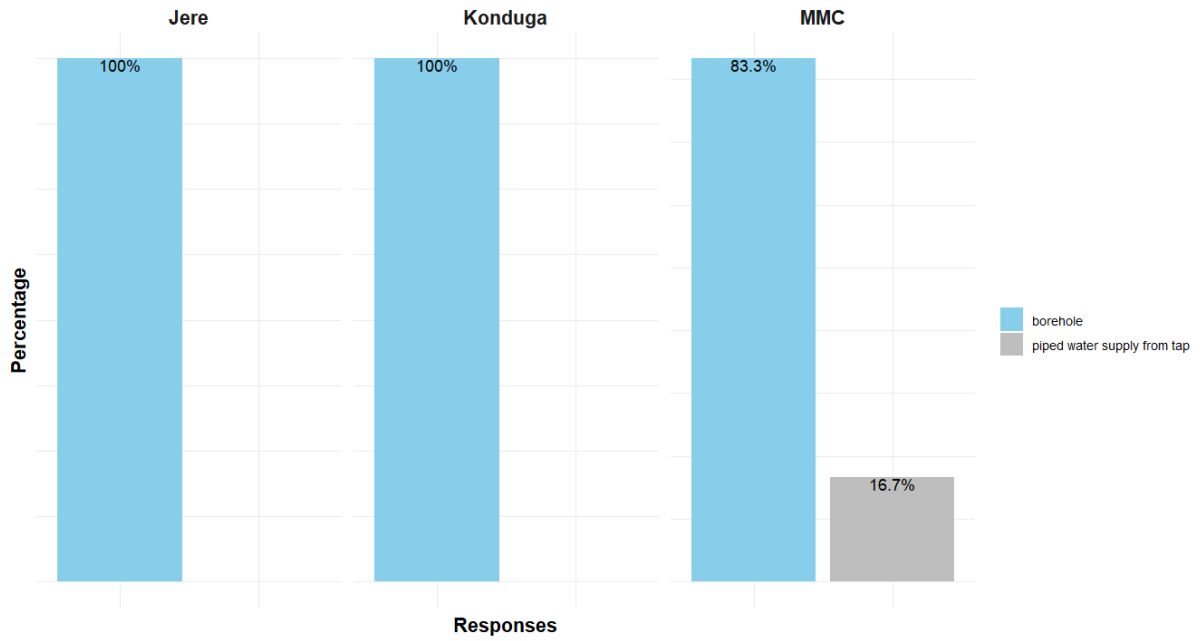
Response Distribution for: Psychological & Emotional Impacts of Crises

Jere	Konduga	MMC

moderate negative impact

no impact

severe negative impact

significant positive impact
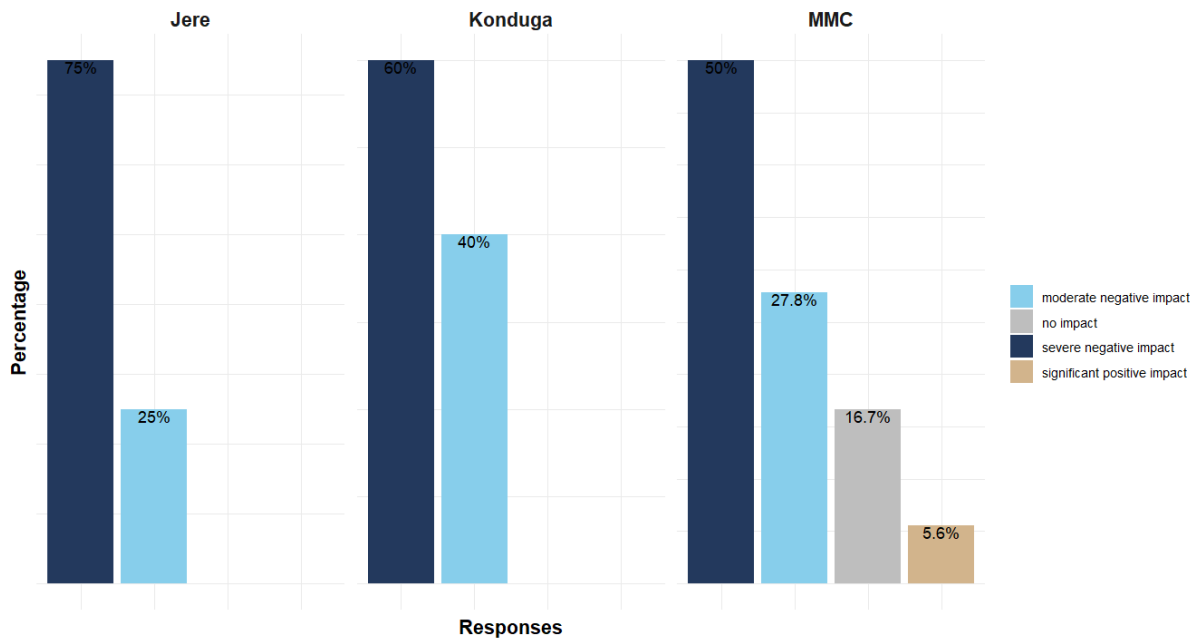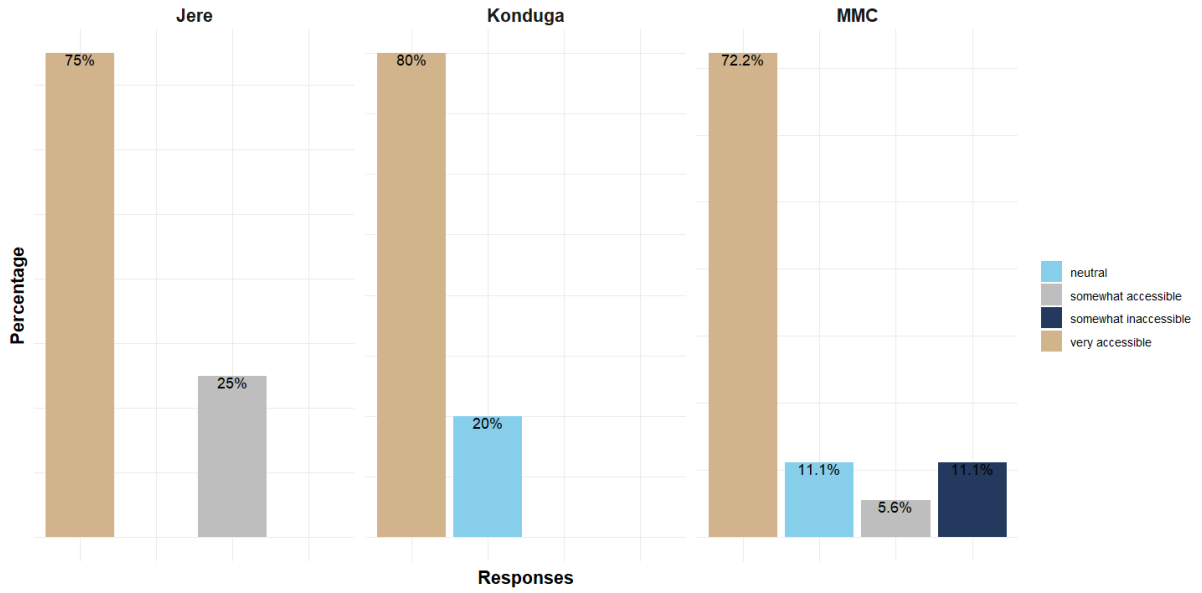
Response Distribution for: Impact of Crises on R/ship with fellow Teachers
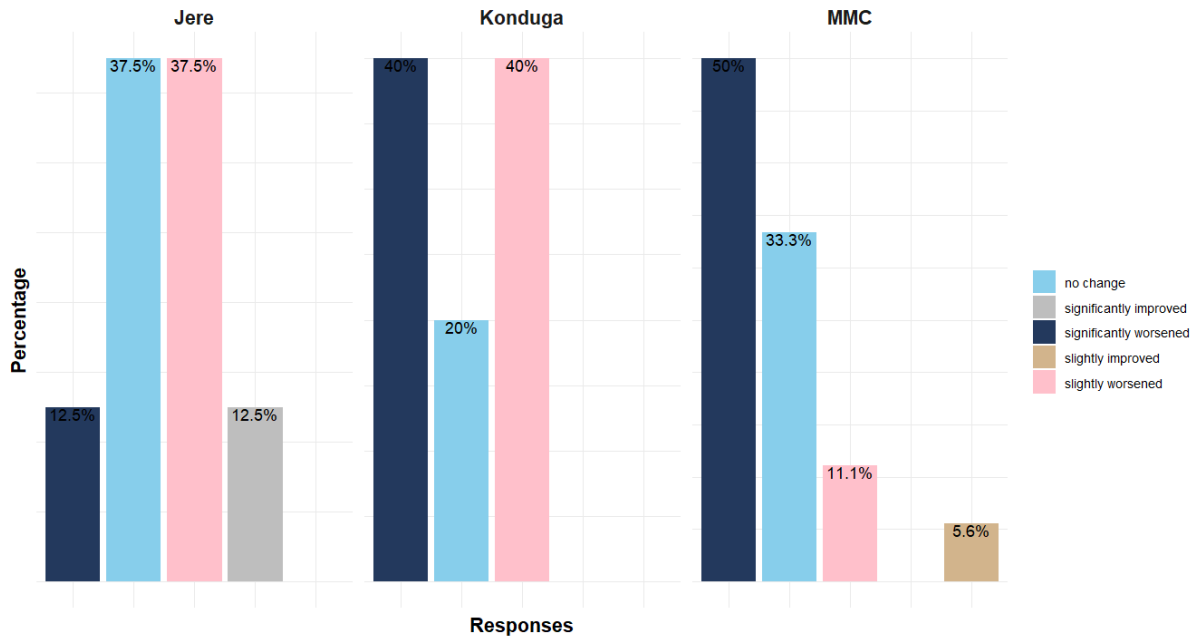
Response Distribution for: How significantly do observed signs of trauma/distress impact the overall classroom environment?
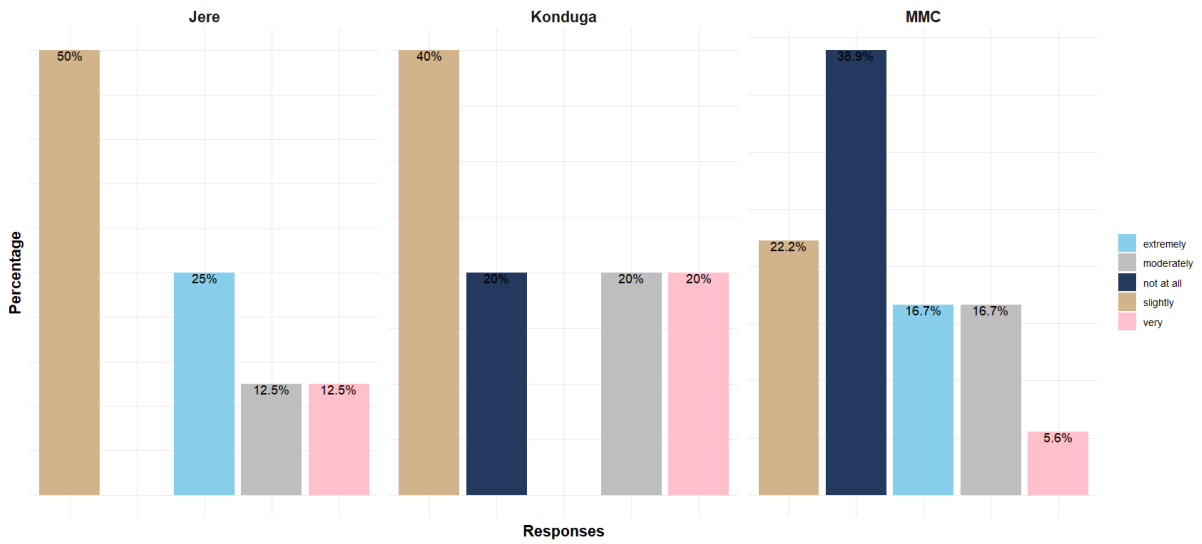
Response Distribution for: Accessibility of Counselling Service for Students

Jere — Percentage vs Responses

- 75% (very accessible)
- 25% (somewhat accessible)

Konduga

- 80% (very accessible)
- 20% (neutral)

MMC

- 72.2% (very accessible)
- 11.1% (neutral)
- 5.6% (somewhat accessible)
- 11.1% (somewhat inaccessible)

Legend:
- neutral
- somewhat accessible
- somewhat inaccessible
- very accessible

Response Distribution for: Effectiveness of Counselling Service

Jere — Percentage vs Responses

- 75% (very effective)
- 25% (effective)

Konduga

- 60% (very effective)
- 40% (effective)

MMC

- 77.8% (very effective)
- 16.7% (effective)
- 5.6% (neutral)

Legend:
- effective
- neutral
- very effective