COMMUNIQUE

2nd HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SCALING EDUCATION INITIATIVES IN EMERGENCIES (EiE) WEST AFRICA (ACCELERATE+)

A CALL TO ACTION BASED ON RESEARCH EVIDENCE TO SCALE EDUCATION INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT IN WEST AFRICA (Sept 30th, 2026)

WE CALL UPON:

The African Union (AU)
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
United Nations/ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/UNESCO
Global Partnership for Education/ Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE/KIX)
International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
The International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Accelerated Education Working Group
Ministries of Education across Africa
Ministries of Finance across Africa
UN agencies including UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO and WFP

> **"The primary and most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of a people is ignorance."**
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> **"Call for action: Governments, international organisations, and other education stakeholders in West Africa should scale up and sustain financing for the multiple emergencies affecting education. This should include integrating emergency education financing into national and sectoral budgets to ensure continuity of learning, including scaling of proven and cost-effective innovations."**

Education is the most important human right and fundamental mechanism for nurturing and protecting children, sustaining social harmony and building resilience during crisis. In fragile, conflict and violence (FCV) contexts, educational systems are often disrupted due to violence, insecurity, school closures, displacement of people, teacher shortages, destruction of school infrastructure, food insecurity, psychosocial distress and poverty. Education in Emergencies (EiE) is a global issue that requires global attention. UNICEF (2026) describes education in emergencies as extremely vital because safe learning environments offer children protection, continuity of learning, psychosocial stability and an opportunity to recover from crisis related disruptions. Against this background, the Advancing Education Solutions in West Africa (ACCELERATE +) was conceptualized and implemented in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Nigeria (see www.associatesforchange.org).

The **Second high-level Conference on Research Evidence to Scale Education Innovation and Investment in West Africa** was convened on September 29 and 30, 2026 in Accra, Ghana. This high-level conference attracted over 150 EiE, accelerated, and foundation learning experts, policymakers, academics, and

community-based actors to examine how education systems can respond to emergencies, scale innovations and strengthen resilient learning.

The conference was organized by Associates for Change (Ghana), the Centre for the Study of the Economies of Africa (Nigeria), and CERFODES (Burkina Faso) with support from Global Partnership for Education–Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE-KIX)– through Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Other partners included the Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training (NORRAG), KIX Africa Hub 19 and 21, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa and UNICEF. Also participating were the University for Development Studies, University of Ghana, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the University of Cambridge (UK), Carleton University (Canada), Nimba University (Liberia), and the University of Kyambogo (Uganda). EiE innovators included Geneva Global (Ethiopia, and Uganda), Africa Population and Health Research Centre (Kenya), Dignity Education Vision International (India), School for Life (Ghana), NABOCADO, the Ghana Institute of Linguistics GILLBT (Ghana), Horn of Hope and Kanem Borno (Nigeria), EDUCO and Terres Des Hommes (Burkina Faso). These and many others shared global and local experiences on the impact of educational innovation, financing and scaling in contexts of fragility, conflict and emergency.

The conference focused on practical educational pathways for reaching out-of-school children in fragile and conflict affected areas of West Africa, supporting teachers with psycho-social support and empowering girls and boys through foundation literacy and social emotional learning. The conference focussed stakeholders on moving from evidence to policy, action, investment and implementation, with particular attention to scaling education innovations in emergency contexts of West Africa, drawing on experience from Eastern and southern Africa.[1] The conference provided the opportunity to serve as a bridge between evidence generation and policy uptake.

Education in Emergency (EiE) is crucial in Africa since it contributes to reducing future loss of national productivity, especially among youth. Furthermore, collaborative efforts are needed in order to achieve the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2026-2035, and SDG 4 particularly if millions of children remain out of school. The latest test data indicates that out of the 16 West African countries, the annual economic loss is USD 27 billion due to the lost productivity resulting from out-of school children and adolescents (OOSCY), whose number currently stands at over 42 million. In the last 10 years, the number of OOSCY has increased by 12%, with economic loss increasing by USD 5 billion. At the national level, 10 out of 16 West African countries, experience a loss equivalent to over 100% of their national education budgets, with countries experiencing the most productivity loss being Nigeria, Senegal, Niger, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. The conference made a strong case for increased investment in out-of-school children as both an educational and an economic priority. Analysis presented at the conference estimates that West Africa loses approximately $27.8 billion annually, equivalent to 3.9% of regional GDP, because of educational exclusion. Exclusion at the primary level alone accounts for an estimated $15.41 billion, or 55.3% of the total annual loss. These estimates underscore that the cost of inaction is substantial and that investment in reaching excluded children should be viewed not only as a social obligation but also as an investment in human capital and economic productivity.

What Works in Education in Emergency contexts

The good news is that governments, development partners and other EiE stakeholders now know what works, have access to evidence that provides frameworks for replication of what works at scale, and are integrating EiE into their education systems. But for these successes to be sustainable, more is needed from the duty bearers including governments and international bodies like the Africa Union and UN agencies. In the interim, stronger political good will and leadership is imperative to ensure resource allocation and accountability for results. In the medium term, financial investment and consolidation of what works in various contexts should

[1] The term scaling within the context of this conference thus refers to process of increasing the reach and uptake of and sustaining proven education innovations beyond their initial settings, while adapting them to different contexts and needs.

be secured with a goal of ensuring that resources for learning and wellbeing reach not only the system, but every school-age child and adolescent at risk of exclusion. In the long term, alternative and accelerated learning pathways as well as psychosocial and emotional support instruments for EiE should be institutionalised. The evidence of accelerated education programming (AEPs) is undisputable in over 20 African countries where it has been scaled and has resulted in savings for government by ensuring foundation learning is achieved in less than one year. This is due to high-quality materials and community-based educators driving the AEP programming with government and non- state actors.

In order for Governments to reach the targets under the SDG 4, they will need to:

1. Develop a wider definition, scope and understanding of Education in Emergencies (EiE) in order to move beyond a narrow, crisis-only framing of EiE to one that recognizes the full scope of conflict disruptions, displacement, climate shocks, and other crises affecting learners' access to education. Evidence generated through humanitarian and development programmes should be systematically incorporated into national policy, planning, budgeting, and education management systems.
2. Finalize and review their country-specific EiE policy framework to ensure coordinated, sustainable, and context-responsive interventions.
3. Integrate EiE strategies into national education planning, programming and budgeting, including preparedness and contingency arrangements for crisis-affected communities. This ensures EiE is not treated as an ad hoc, donor-driven response but is embedded in how governments plan and fund education before a crisis occurs.
4. Increase funding for operationalizing EiE Regional Frameworks, supported by the Regional Thematic Technical Working Group under the Africa Union. A shared regional framework should better align each country's EIE policies around common standards and priorities for EiE, while a dedicated working group would provide the ongoing technical coordination needed to implement and sustain it.
5. **Strengthen government leadership and ownership.** Governments should play a stronger role in financing, planning, coordinating, and implementing EiE. While donors and NGOs have played an important role in testing innovations and developing evidence on effective approaches, sustainable scale requires greater government ownership to move to scale on well tested and cost-effective solutions (e.g. Accelerated Education programming).
6. **Strengthen education data and research systems** so that governments can identify risks, measure learning loss, and use evidence to guide policy, planning and investment. This includes generating and collecting data to harmonize tools for monitoring and evaluation along with collaboration with other organisations doing similar work.
7. **Increase and protect public financing for priority allocations to education in emergencies**
    - Governments should progressively increase education spending and establish dedicated mechanisms for financing EiE. A clear and measurable budget commitment to EiE, would potentially begin with approximately 5-7% of the education budget for Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) and community-driven Early Childhood Education (ECE).
    - Extractive industries (and other businesses) should allocate a percentage of their profits to "corporate social responsibilities," especially in areas where conflict and other emergencies have impacted education of children.
8. **Invest in proven and cost-effective approaches for reaching out-of-school children. Greater investment** should be directed towards delivery models with evidence of effectiveness in reaching excluded children and supporting meaningful learning. Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) represent one such approach, particularly for children whose education has been disrupted by conflict, displacement, poverty, or other emergencies. Governments should assess how AEPs and other evidence-based modalities can be incorporated into national education plans, financing frameworks, and pathways for transition into mainstream education.
9. **Invest in communities as partners in education delivery and resilience.** Communities are key actors in sustaining education during emergencies and should be integrated into policy design and implementation. Investment should support community driven approaches, capacity, local education infrastructure, community-led education delivery, and mechanisms for identifying and

supporting children at risk of exclusion. EiE should also be better integrated into broader social protection, disaster preparedness, and conflict-prevention and management systems.

10. **Invest in teachers, including teachers with special needs, serving in underserved crisis-affected communities**
    Supporting teachers must be a core action for emergency preparedness, including teacher wellbeing, psychosocial support, professional development, safety and appropriate deployment. Governments and partners should develop appropriate incentives, professional support, safeguarding mechanisms, and hardship arrangements for teachers serving in difficult and underserved locations. Community-based educators and volunteers play an important complementary role and should receive appropriate training, supervision, and support. Training in Psychosocial Support (PSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is needed to empower teachers who are willing to serve in crisis-affected areas. Selection of teachers trained in PSS should be localized in areas of high risk.
11. **Shift from short-term response to effective long-term sustainable investment.** EiE should not be treated solely as a temporary humanitarian intervention. Financing and planning frameworks should connect emergency response with recovery, resilience, and long-term human capital development. This requires stronger coordination between humanitarian, development, and government financing systems so that children affected by crises can enter, remain in, and progress through quality education.

Scan for Education in Emergency EiE Research Outputs

High-level Conference resources

Scan to Access Conference Resources

Scan for EiE Outputs

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