Accelerated Education Programmes

A toolkit for donors, practitioners and evaluators
Acknowledgements

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

- Education in Crisis and Conflict Network
- International Rescue Committee
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Plan International
- Save the Children
- UNHCR
- UNICEF
- USAID
- War Child Holland

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The AEWG is an inter-agency working group made up of education partners working in Accelerated Education. The AEWG comes together bi-annually to share experiences and expertise in AE and provides an opportunity for dialogue around a more harmonised, standardised approach. Based on the aim for a more standardised approach to AE the AEWG has begun to develop guidance materials such as this pocket guide on international standards and sound practice for AE.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AE</td>
<td>accelerated education</td>
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<td>AEP</td>
<td>accelerated education programme</td>
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<td>AEWG</td>
<td>Accelerated Education Working Group</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>accelerated learning programme</td>
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<td>APEP</td>
<td>Afghanistan Primary Education Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>community-based organisation</td>
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<td>CEC</td>
<td>community education committee</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>education management information system</td>
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<td>GPE</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
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<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>IRC</td>
<td>International Rescue Committee</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>internally displaced person</td>
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<td>INEE</td>
<td>Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies</td>
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<td>MTBMLE</td>
<td>mother tongue based multilingual education</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organisation</td>
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<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
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<td>PTA</td>
<td>parent-teacher association</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>TEP</td>
<td>Teacher Emergency Package (from NRC)</td>
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<td>TPSTCC</td>
<td>Training for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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Introduction
Global commitments and accelerated education programmes

Globally, over 121 million children and adolescents are out of school, having never started or dropped out after enrolment.¹ The most vulnerable and marginalised – often displaced children and young people, ex-combatants, girls and children with disabilities – are more likely to find it difficult to get an education. 51% of refugees are under 18, and only half of refugee children are in primary school.²

Education not only provides vital basic skills and competencies, but offers stability, security and the promise of long-term peace. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Education 2030: Framework for Action have set a global compact to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong education for all’.

For children and young people who have missed out on education or had their education interrupted by conflict and crisis, poverty and marginalisation, accelerated education programmes (AEPs) are a way to realise this commitment. AEPs offer equivalent certified competencies to primary education, enabling a return to formal education at appropriate grades, or transition into work or other training.

Purpose of the guide

A large number of donor agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governments have set up AEPs.

There is a wide variety of such programmes, of differing quality and effectiveness, but no existing standard.

The inter-agency Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) reviewed and distilled a set of global good practices and guidelines for AEPs. This guide helps establish what is considered good practice, and is intended to evolve into a standard. Existing AEPs may not reach this standard. However, it is hoped that programmes will evolve and strengthen to meet the AEP principles of good practice set out here. These principles can also be used for advocacy purposes to promote improvements in AEPs.

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for those who finance, plan, design, manage and evaluate AEPs, including NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), government education authorities, and other education actors. The guide should be useful to programme managers, education advisers, policy makers, and anyone seeking to improve inclusive, quality education in contexts affected by crisis and conflict.
How is the guide organised?

The Pocket Guide is organised according to 10 principles of good practice in AEP.

**Learners**

1. AEP is flexible and for older learners.
2. AEP is a legitimate, credible education option that results in learner certification in primary education.

**System/policy**

3. AEP is aligned with the national education system and relevant humanitarian architecture.
4. Curriculum, materials and pedagogy are genuinely accelerated, AE-suitable, and use relevant language of instruction.
5. Teachers participate in continuous professional development.
6. Teachers are recruited, supervised and remunerated.

**Accelerated education centres**

7. AE centre is effectively managed.
8. AE learning environment is inclusive, safe, and learning-ready.
9. Community is engaged and accountable.

**Programme management**

10. Goals, monitoring, and funding align.

The guide contains key definitions, essential information, recommended actions based on good practice, indications of challenges and other points to consider, examples and case studies, and suggested reading. The following icons will help you to find these particular types of information:
The principles and the advice in this guide are based on a review of good practice and learning from AEPs worldwide, particularly those in conflict-affected and emergency settings. The principles clarify the essential components of effective AEPs. Each principle contains evidence-informed good practices. They offer key actions and indicators for the design, implementation and evaluation of accelerated education.
Accelerated education programme

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

Note: AEP replaces Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) and other terminology as the standard descriptive term.

How the principles were developed

An original set of 20 principles developed by Save the Children were tested through a review of a Save the Children International accelerated education programme in South Sudan. Based on this experience the principles were reduced to 12 which were identified through a review of AE literature and programme evaluations by Save the Children. The AEWG then reviewed the principles during a meeting in February 2016 and made significant modifications including re-writing, re-ordering and reducing the principles in order to align AE work across the 9 participating working group members. Please note when we use the word teacher we also include non-formally trained teachers, facilitators and volunteers. These are the 10 AE Principles which have been agreed by the AEWG.

We hypothesise that when all 10 principles are applied well, an AEP will facilitate significant, consistent educational gains for children and young people. Learners will be attending regularly, learning consistently, gaining recognised qualifications, and progressing into formal education, other training or employment.

The principles are aspirational. The complexities and challenges of working in conflict and fragility mean that many AEPs will not always be able to meet all of them. However, it is recommended that AEPs strive to meet these principles in their design, implementation and evaluation. The AEWG will field test this guide during 2016, and will revise its guidance based on further experience.

The principles are to be used in designing AEPs, developing funding proposals, reviewing and evaluating programmes, staff training, and developing local and national partnerships between the Ministry of Education and other agencies. The principles should be helpful for curriculum revision to meet the needs of AEP learners, and in setting up mechanisms to certify AEP learning achievement.
The principles can also be used in advocacy to promote good quality, well-resourced AEPs in all settings. Agencies can advocate for AEPs based on the principles to feature in Ministry of Education strategy, policy and budget lines, and for donors to finance quality, sustainable AEP delivery. Sharing, discussing and promoting the principles will be a useful first step.

Overview of AEWG principles for AEP

**Learners**

**PRINCIPLE 1**

AEP is flexible and for older learners

a. Target over-age, out of school learners (AEPs are typically for children and youth aged approx. 10-18).

b. Define, communicate, and assist national authorities to regulate age range for student enrolment in collaboration with the Ministry/ relevant education authority, community and formal schools.

c. Provide age-appropriate introductory level course for learners who have never been to school to improve readiness skills.

d. Make AEP class time, and location flexible, as required by the community, teacher, and above all, the specific needs of both male and female learners in order to ensure consistent attendance and completion.

**PRINCIPLE 2**

AEP is a legitimate, credible education option that results in learner certification in primary education

a. Include strategies and resources that ensure AEP learners can register for and sit examinations that provide a nationally recognized certificate.

b. Develop clear pathways that enable children and youth to reintegrate in a corresponding level in the formal system, vocational education or employment.

c. If national and annual examinations do not exist, develop assessment systems with the Ministry of Education/ relevant education authority that enable children to be tested and reintegrated in a corresponding level in the formal system.
System/policy

PRINCIPLE 3
AEP is aligned with the national education system and relevant humanitarian architecture

a. Integrate research on out of school and over age children into education sector assessments so that supply and demand issues related to AEP are explored, analysed, and prioritized.

b. Develop strategies and processes to engender political will, identify resources and integrate AEP into the national education system.

c. Develop clear competency-based frameworks for monitoring progress and achievement by level based on national education system or relevant humanitarian architecture curricula.

d. Use certified Ministry/ relevant education authority material where available.

e. Ensure budget provision for national and sub-national AEP staff within MoE/ relevant education authority.

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

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

a. Develop and provide condensed, levelled, age appropriate, competency-based curriculum.

b. Develop and provide teacher guides.

c. Ensure AEP timetable allows for adequate time to cover curriculum AE Principles AEWG May 2016.

d. When funding AE curriculum development, allow sufficient time (1-2 years), budget and provide long-term technical expertise.

e. Integrate ‘accelerated' education principles, pedagogy and practices throughout the curriculum, training components, and EMIS and Monitoring systems.
f. The AEP curriculum, learning materials and teaching methods are adapted to suit over-age children and reflect gender and inclusive education practices.

g. Prioritize the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills as the foundation for learning.

h. Integrate psychosocial well-being and life skills acquisition in the curriculum to address issues young people experience in fragile contexts.

**PRINCIPLE 5**

**Teachers participate in continuous professional development**

a. Work directly with teacher training Institutes and national structures for AEP teacher training to align AEP methods with national teaching standards.

b. Provide certified professional development for AEP teachers.

c. Provide pre-service and continuous in-service teacher professional development courses on subject knowledge and AEP methodology.

d. Build inclusion, gender-sensitivity and protection practices into the AEP teacher training.

e. Ensure teachers are provided with regular support and coaching to help improve the quality of classroom instruction.

**PRINCIPLE 6**

**Teachers are recruited, supervised and remunerated**

a. Recruit teachers from target geographic areas, build on learner’s culture, language and experience and ensure gender balance.

b. Ensure teachers receive fair and consistent payment on a regular basis in line with relevant education authority/other implementers commensurate with the hours they teach.

c. Ensure teachers sign a code of conduct.
AE centres

**PRINCIPLE 7**

**AE centre is effectively managed**

a. Fiscal, supervisory, monitoring & evaluation systems in place.

b. Set up systems for student record keeping and documentation especially for mobile communities to enable integration with formal education.

c. Collect accurate data to monitor progress on learning, student enrolment, attendance, drop-out, retention, completion and transition/integration to formal education disaggregate by gender, age group, disability.

d. The centre management committee (e.g. PTA), should be representative of the community, trained and equipped to support AE management.

**PRINCIPLE 8**

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

a. AEP classes are free, and there are no fees for uniforms or material.

b. Apply (inter) national standards or guidelines to ensure basic standards of safety and quality for the learning environment.

c. Ensure access to water and separate latrines for girls and boys, and provision of sanitary materials when relevant AE Principles AEWG May 2016.

d. Budget for maintenance and upkeep of facilities.

e. Resource AEPs with a safe shelter, classroom furniture and teaching learning supplies and equipment.

f. Information is provided to students and teachers on reporting mechanisms and follow up of exposure to violence and GBV.

g. Follow recommended relevant education authority guidelines for teacher pupil ratio, but not greater than 40 pupils per teacher.
PRINCIPLE 9
Community is engaged and accountable

a. AEP is located within an engaged and supportive local community.

b. AEP is locally led, and when necessary, technical expertise is provided externally.

c. Provide comprehensive community sensitisation on the benefits of AEPs.

d. In areas with frequent movements of IDPs / refugees, conduct continuous needs assessments and community sensitisation on education.
Programme management

**PRINCIPLE 10**

Goals, monitoring, and funding align

a. Overarching program goal is centred on improving skills and increasing access.

b. Make M&E systems for data compilation and analysis compatible with the Ministry/relevant education authority.

c. Develop, apply, and regularly report on Monitoring and Evaluation framework directly linked to the program goal (theory of change, logical framework, other).

d. Exit strategies and/or a sustainability plan included in the AEP design.

e. Program is adequately funded to assure sustained minimum standards (INEE) for infrastructure, staffing, supplies, supervision and management.
PRINCIPLE 1

AEP is flexible for older learners

- Target over-age, out of school learners (AEPs are typically for children and youth aged approx. 10-18).
- Define, communicate, and assist national authorities to regulate age range for student enrolment in collaboration with the Ministry/relevant education authority, community and formal schools.
- Provide age-appropriate introductory level course for learners who have never been to school to improve readiness skills.
- Make AEP class time, and location flexible, as required by the community, teacher, and above all, the specific needs of both male and female learners in order to ensure consistent attendance and completion.
AEPs provide flexible opportunities for studying a condensed curriculum that enables transition into mainstream, formal schooling, or provides recognised and relevant certification and skills for the labour market.

AEPs have been used in times when children and young people have had their education interrupted by conflict and crisis, when schools have been shut down, or where the school system has been very limited. AEPs have also been used to help street and working children and other poor and marginalised groups.

In some countries with very large out-of-school populations, AEPs have formed a significant component of alternative or second-chance education opportunities, and played a long-term role in education system strategy.

AEPs are aimed at children and young adults aged 10-18 years. These children and young people may want to access education but are unable or unwilling to enter formal schooling with younger children. AEPs, which have the goal of completing at least the primary cycle of education and achieving basic literacy and numeracy skills, are designed to meet this group's needs.

Younger children are unlikely to benefit from AEPs, as the accelerated rate of learning is inappropriate for their stage of development.

Younger children are preferably included in local primary education at the appropriate grade for their age, while older adults should have opportunities to learn through adult learning services.

Barriers to over-age children entering formal education

In some countries (such as Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo) there are legal requirements that prohibit children older than a certain age from entering primary school.

Whether legally allowed or not, having over age children in regular formal classrooms can have negative effects.’ ... ‘Older children may be legally allowed to enter primary school at any age (for example, Nepal and Sierra Leone), but may not want to attend the early primary school grades with children’... ‘aged 6 to 8, [and] they may be bored with the content and methodology of primary education. They need a more relevant and appropriate pedagogy and environment.
It creates a very difficult teaching and learning climate as the range of maturity and cognitive development is too wide for the average teacher to cope with, and it is psychologically damaging for the overage student to be placed with a class of children well outside his or her peer group.

In addition, from a public policy or educational planning perspective, the presence of large numbers of over age students in the school can lead to the misperception that more of the age appropriate group (that is, 6 to 11 year olds) is enrolled in primary school than is the case. This is a problem in emergency and post conflict situations’. ‘An accelerated learning programme has the advantage of allowing an over age student to pick up and complete the primary curriculum even in its telescoped form, with

**Flexible timetabling** is necessary for AEPs seeking to reach over-age children, who often have to earn money or work for their families. Flexible timetables can involve starting late in the morning after early chores or work; running classes in the evening after work; or having no school on market day or during harvest time. The key is to negotiate timetables with learners and their communities.

Flexibility can be hampered by local structures and assumptions. AEPs sometimes mimic formal school programmes, which are not sufficiently flexible for learners who have already been unable to go to school. This can often happen with very large programmes. **Nicholson (2007)** notes that education officials have required AEPs to meet in regular schools in the afternoon. In South Sudan they were required to hold to the regular school timetable, effectively creating a split shift system, albeit one that moves through the curriculum twice as fast. The smaller the programme, the more flexible timetabling has tended to be (War Child, Children in Crisis; NORC, 2015).
The “Bridging Tomorrow” project in Côte d’Ivoire, and other AEPs developed by NRC in the past, have proved to be an effective approach to address the overwhelming numbers of out-of-school children and youth. Strong evidence exists, across all of NRC’s AEPs, that its activities to date have provided access to education for children or youth who were over-aged and unable to (re)enrol in the formal school system, or for children affected by displacement who did not otherwise have access to the formal schooling system within their host communities.

NRC has worked with the government in Côte d’Ivoire to develop and approve a harmonised accelerated education approach that effectively creates pathways for children to re-enter the formal education system. ... [The project] allows out of school children to follow a one-year accelerated programme and be reinserted into the formal system. By targeting villages and schools in the Western part of Côte d’Ivoire (Guémon, Cavally and Tonkpi regions), NRC is able to assist IDPs most affected by the 2011 crisis as well as vulnerable children at risk of dropping out due to the age limit.


Further Reading

3. INEE Term Bank for key definitions of alternative education programmes, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
**PRINCIPLE 2**

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

- Include strategies and resources that ensure AEP learners can register for and sit examinations that provide a nationally recognized certificate.

- Develop clear pathways that enable children and youth to reintegrate in a corresponding level in the formal system, vocational education or employment.

- If national and annual examinations do not exist, develop assessment systems with the Ministry of Education/ relevant education authority that enable children to be tested and reintegrated in a corresponding level in the formal system.
At an early stage, AEPs need to negotiate agreement between the Ministry of Education and schools or colleges for the accreditation needed to certify AEP learners’ completion of primary education and allow entry to further study or training.

Wherever possible, aim to have AEP learners taking formal primary leaving examinations to achieve primary completion status. In Liberia, ALP learners sat for the West Africa Examination Council primary examination (Nkutu et al, 2010).

Aim for learners to take a mock certificate test in the final phase of an AEP cycle – the same test as the national examination. The proportion and characteristics of learners falling below expected learning levels can then be tracked across each year of the AEP programme, and priority given to boosting their achievement.

Testing will ideally take place soon after the AEP cycle has been completed, and with enough time for learners to move smoothly into the next stage of education.

Teachers and AEP management need to plan extra support for learners requiring it prior to testing. Ask learners where extra explanation or practice is needed, and whether they will have trouble attending tests. Arrange testing at convenient and accessible places and times.

Delays between the end of AEP cycles and the scheduling of primary leaving exams led to poor test performance and lower transition into education for AEP graduates in South Sudan (IBIS, 2012).

Further Reading


PRINCIPLE 3

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

- Integrate research on out of school and over age children into education sector assessments so that supply and demand issues related to AEP are explored, analysed, and prioritized.
- Develop strategies and processes to engender political will, identify resources and integrate AEP into the national education system.
- Develop clear competency-based frameworks for monitoring progress and achievement by level based on national education system or relevant humanitarian architecture curricula.
- Use certified Ministry/ relevant education authority material where available.
- Ensure budget provision for national and sub-national AEP staff within MoE/ relevant education authority.
- In a humanitarian context, work with the Education Cluster or appropriate sector/donor coordination group to ensure the AEP is part of a co-ordinated sector response.
AEPs are most successful when integrated into the wider education system and owned by the government or relevant education authority, even where systems are weak and where AEPs are implemented and/or funded by other organisations. AEPs can work to strengthen the wider education system when approved and accredited by the government or relevant education authority, and aligned with national curriculum and assessment content and procedures. Many governments incorporate AEPs into education sector plans.

In some countries, long-term AEPs are classified under non-formal education and play an integral role in delivering education for all. Whichever approach is taken, ideally AEPs are embedded in the education system and supported by communities.

In many countries, NGO/UN and government AEPs run side-by-side, or the government works closely with non-government partners and donor agencies to oversee AEPs. In Ghana, Schools for Life successfully tackled the major challenge of out-of-school children in the northern region over 20 years, stimulating demand for formal education. The approach’s success provided a scalable model for Ghana Education Service to roll out countrywide.

Sierra Leone’s Complimentary Rapid Education Programme and South Sudan’s Accelerated Learning Programme are examples of long-running AEPs with full government ownership.

Sierra Leone’s 2014-2018 Education Sector Plan, ‘Learning to Succeed,’ identifies AEPs for over-age children as a key intervention to support primary school enrolment and completion:

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology ‘will partner with other non-state actors to provide accelerated primary education for older children and youth between the ages of 10 and 15 years old. This would allow learners to complete the primary school curriculum in three years rather than the usual six years. This model was used successfully immediately after the war to educate many of the young people who had missed out on schooling. The courses would be offered through already existing community education centres or in existing schools using trained facilitators. Those who complete the three years will be eligible to take the end of primary school exams and transition to junior secondary schools.’
AEPs in the Education System

- Programme design
- Community support
- Management, resources, materials
- Key actors in AEP
- MoE/education system support Financing, technical assistance (eg officials)
- Good governance & social justice

TEACHERS

- Formal primary schooling
- AEP learner
- Non-formal education (incl. TVET)

DONORS

POCKET GUIDE: Accelerated Education Programmes
Education sector assessment describes the education system using data and indicators from EMIS and provides an analysis of successes, weaknesses and difficulties. Sector analysis relies on this, along with additional surveys and existing research. Additional information is collected only when existing evidence is insufficient and only for key areas. Sector analysis can be a summary or an update of the main issues identified. Consulting all key stakeholders during the analysis helps to build a strong diagnosis and agreement on key issues, main determining factors, and tentative conclusions.

**KEY AREAS TO COVER:**

- Context, including macro-economic, demographic, socio-cultural and vulnerability analysis.
- Existing policy environment.
- Costs and financing.
- Education system performance and capacity.

It may not be possible to collect all the missing data in the available time. If so, one component of the AEP programme may be advocacy for the development of a comprehensive information system. The absence of complete data sets need not deter the planning process if well-argued designs can be made on the basis of the available data.

Source: adapted from UNESCO Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation (2015)

When planning an AEP, carry out an **education sector assessment**. This includes analysis of government systems, gaps and weaknesses in provision; existing agencies working in education and their programmes; and community needs. It also includes engaging with relevant stakeholders to agree policies and approaches. Find out if such an assessment has already taken place as part of existing education sector planning and policy development. Use this information to guide AEP design and implementation.
Investing time and effort in strong partnerships is a key factor in the success of an AEP. The Afghanistan Primary Education Programme (AEP) review (2006) found that strong collaboration and regular contact between consortium representatives at different levels generated good understanding of what the work should involve, and built resilience and co-ordination when funding was interrupted. If an opportunity arises to establish an AEP in a new area, convene a group of partners to oversee development of the programme. This helps to ensure harmonisation and set standards for quality, accountability, and certification, across all the education service providers.

Such partnership groups include:

- the government/Ministry of Education
  - well-networked, credible local NGOs and CBOs; a managing agency (whether a department of the Ministry of Education, a national or international NGO or contractor, or a UN agency);
  - teaching and teacher training institutions; teacher or school representation;
  - financial, monitoring and research experts with education expertise (ideally staff embedded in implementing agencies);
- local communities.

Establish partner roles and agreements from the start. In addition to routine contractual arrangements between donors and implementing agencies, a memorandum of understanding with the government is advisable. This formalises the common agreement, intention and course of action between parties. Operational details can be covered by an additional protocol. These measures can protect AEPs against high staff and ministerial turnover in fragile contexts.

Support ownership, co-operation and consensus through regular management and education meetings. Capacity building and knowledge sharing among partners can be key to a programme’s success. Cluster meetings, sector co-ordination meetings, and non-formal education working group meetings are often the venues for this dialogue.

Signed memoranda of understanding and protocols (including vital operational details) between government and implementing partners ensure AEPs are supported with a common vision and that anticipated outcomes are shared. Experience from the Afghanistan Primary Education Programme showed that the absence of such agreements can have serious consequences for a programme’s success. In this case, the rights of children to transfer to mainstream schools were not always recognised and became a major barrier to learner progression.
In situations of humanitarian crisis, it is good practice to ensure AEPs are part of the co-ordinated response for providing education to affected populations, including IDPs and refugees.

The Education Cluster, or the appropriate donor co-ordination group, is an open formal forum for co-ordination and collaboration on education in emergencies. It is led by UNICEF and Save the Children and mandated by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Working with the Education Cluster ensures a co-ordinated education response to emergency and helps plan how the AEP will be integrated into ongoing education development initiatives. The Cluster works closely with key partners, such as INEE, to share standards, technical resources and guidance, and with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) on bridging humanitarian and development financing and co-ordination.

The Cluster contributes to the development of Humanitarian Response Plans. Including AEPs in these plans is important for securing funding.

Working with the Cluster maximises potential to build partnerships and engage with members ready to commit resources (staff, expertise, products, funding) to activities that help realise the Cluster work plan. For an AEP, this might include partnerships with World Food Programme (WFP) for school feeding, UNICEF for supplies, and so on.
Further Reading


Figure 1. Source: Global Education Cluster Strategic Plan 2015-2019
PRINCIPLE 4

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

a. Develop and provide condensed, levelled, age appropriate, competency-based curriculum.

b. Develop and provide teacher guides.

c. Ensure AEP timetable allows for adequate time to cover curriculum AE Principles AEWG May 2016.

d. When funding AE curriculum development, allow sufficient time (1-2 years), budget and provide long-term technical expertise.

e. Integrate ‘accelerated’ education principles, pedagogy and practices throughout the curriculum, training components, and EMIS and Monitoring systems.

f. The AEP curriculum, learning materials and teaching methods are adapted to suit over-age children and reflect gender and inclusive education practices.

g. Prioritize the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills as the foundation for learning.

h. Integrate psychosocial well-being and life skills acquisition in the curriculum to address issues young people experience in fragile contexts.
Accelerated learning is not only about learning faster or omitting subject matter (although this is one aspect of accelerated curricula). It is about how learners learn best, using a variety of methodologies that enable them to learn more effectively and at an accelerated pace (Baxter and Bethke, 2009).

**Accelerated learning pedagogy** is learner-centred, active, participatory and varied to include everyone’s needs and circumstances. Teaching is age-appropriate and aims to support different learning styles. The recognition of child and brain development principles is particularly important as AEP learners are over-age for the level at which they are studying and can often learn faster than their younger counterparts.

Older learners learn well through peer-to-peer approaches where they can learn from each other. This social interaction is important for them to strengthen their social support networks.

Teachers avoid didactic pedagogies. Instead they guide and facilitate learners to find out for themselves, and have a firm grasp of what learners are expected to discover.

Accelerated approaches to learning emphasise the influence of self-belief and motivation on learning, preferred ‘learning styles’ (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic), harnessing different types of intelligence and the ways in which information is retained and recalled. **Accelerated learning does not simply fast track learners or facilitate learners to ‘catch up.’** Accelerated learning approaches begin with the individual needs of learners, motivating and actively engaging them to learn as efficiently as possible through learner-centred, fun and interesting activities.

> It is accelerated because it allows learners to fulfil their potential and reach a level of achievement that may seem beyond them.”

(Nicholson, 2007).

Learning is deeper, faster and more efficient (Charlick, 2004). Students better understand their own learning preferences, develop life-long skills and learn how to learn.
The roots of accelerated learning

Accelerated learning has been used for more than 30 years. The approach is informed by research into the brain, showing which classroom practices maximise learning. AEPs have adopted accelerated learning principles. Leading authorities in the field of accelerated learning include Hank Levin, Alistair Smith, Colin Rose, Eric Jenson, Barbara Given, Dave Meier, M.J. Nichol and J. Vos.

Alistair Smith was one of the first practitioners to write about the application of accelerated learning methodology with children in classrooms. He combined the accelerated learning principles and practices that focused on the learner, with more school-focused factors effective in raising learner achievement in a learning environment.

For further detail see NORC (2015) and Nicholson (2007).

Accelerated learning approaches focus on curriculum relevance and streamlining. AEPs in emergency and developing country contexts go further by also compressing or condensing curricula, while using accelerated learning pedagogy. This condensing is a responsibility ideally assumed by ministries of education, but in reality it is often done by implementing agencies, in close consultation with education authorities.

Overlaps and repetition within curricula are removed. Teaching and learning approaches are designed to ensure that subject matter is mutually reinforcing; often inclusive of socio-emotional learning (International Rescue Committee, IRC), local relevance (Ghana Schools for Life), conflict resolution, and livelihood preparation. Learners need to be even more intensively supported by teachers, as topics are covered rapidly. [NORC 2015, plus Baxter and Bethke 2009, Longden 2013, Nicholson 2007].

AEPs in developing countries can take various forms, depending on what learners need:

- **Comprehensive programmes** – a full accelerated cycle of primary schooling, culminating in primary leaving examinations.

- **Hybrid or modular programmes** – learners participate in AEPs to cover the missed curriculum, which allows them to transition to grade-appropriate levels in formal schools following placement tests.

- **Short-term programmes** – learners complete, for instance, two years in one year when schooling has been disrupted for a very short period of time.

AEPs usually condense two years of the primary curriculum or three years into one.
AEP curricula based on essential elements of the national curriculum help learners transition into mainstream, formal schooling or technical and vocational training. If AEP curricula do not already exist, agencies delivering AEP can advocate for and support their development, through review or design assistance. Working with national curriculum and child development experts will ensure the AEP curriculum covers essential content and is tailored to learners’ needs.

**How accelerated?**

AEP rates of acceleration have ranged from covering 1.25 years of the primary curriculum in one year – in Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee’s Primary Schools (BPS) – to covering three years of the curriculum in one – in School for Life in Ghana. The most common rate of acceleration is for two grades of primary school to be covered by one year of the AEP.

The first three grades of primary are often covered faster than the last, on the basis that older learners will be able to learn lower-level skills more quickly. However, acceleration rates need to be decided based on what will be challenging for learners. The rate may be much slower where a particular primary year needs more work, such as Grade 5 in Malawi, which is the transition to learning in English.


Acceleration can be achieved by condensing all primary subjects, but when a partial curriculum is used, non-core subjects such as art, sport and music are often dropped (NORC 2015; Longden, 2013; Baxter and Bethke, 2009).

AEPs tend to focus on building core competencies in basic literacy and numeracy skills, usually in the local language/mother tongue.

**Language** can be a major barrier for learners who have been out of school with little exposure to the language of formal education, and for those displaced from their original communities. Initial assessment should identify learners’ first languages and cultural backgrounds, and set up appropriate language of instruction and curriculum content to help them understand lessons easily and learn any other languages they need.
If the language of formal school is different to that used by learners at home, AEPs will need to teach in their local language while building up skills in the second language. More of the formal school language can be added gradually to each lesson, after learners have practised concepts and skills in their first language. This approach, known as mother tongue based multilingual education (MTBMLE), is being adapted by governments in a range of crisis-affected settings, such as South Sudan (Ministry of Education Science and Technology South Sudan, July 2015).

Life skills and livelihood activities can be added to curricula to make education relevant and engaging for learners. However, programmes need to ensure that curricula do not become overburdened, hampering acceleration and creating unwieldy schemes of work. Integrating features from learners’ lives into lesson plans and materials makes issues of community health, water, sanitation and livelihoods part of language and mathematics teaching.
Longden's 2013 study of AEP curricula for the UNESCO Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report includes a number of valuable, detailed curriculum case studies from post-conflict and developing country contexts, including Bangladesh, Tanzania, Liberia, Brazil and Malawi.

**AEP learning materials** are designed to help learners consolidate knowledge and skills, and are appropriate for the curriculum being taught. This is combined with the use of inclusive, conflict-sensitive materials, which eliminate negative stereotypes and address social justice, or other subject areas directly relevant to the context.

Materials may need to be developed in more than one language: learners' first language or mother tongue, so that they can learn to read easily with understanding; and the main language of formal school and/or business.

As well as textbooks, AEP learners will need plenty of additional learning materials, especially for building literacy. These need to be appropriate for the curriculum being taught, conflict sensitive and inclusive in approach. They may also need to be developed in different languages.

It can be helpful to organise community book banks for lending reading and learning materials, supervised by volunteers. Or it may be better to give each learner a package of reading materials.

Reading materials will need to be replaced every few years due to wear and tear, even if they are in a library or book bank. The cost of replacement needs to be budgeted for, unless there is already a government budget for AEP learning materials.
Experience from Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) ALP in Burundi

The ALP Burundi curriculum focused on the core subjects of Kirundi and mathematics and also offered physical education, health education, nutrition, environmental education, culture, civics and ethics. French was introduced towards the end of the one year course. Learners were expected to complete two years learning within the 10 months. ALP materials provided free in the centres included a kit or box of teaching/learning materials for one year, a teacher’s guide, one exercise book per child, a cloth alphabet and a figures chart and some small wooden cubes.

Language textbooks were available in the mother tongue at a rate of just under one book for two children. ALP centres included two classrooms and two teachers; a total of 120 pupils organised into two shifts per day, that is, four daily classes of 30 pupils each taught by the two teachers. The ALP schools functioned under plastic sheeting like the ‘temporary’ primary schools or in permanent brick structures, although some started under trees.’


AEP educators will need high quality, detailed teaching and content guides, including detailed model lesson plans. These must relate clearly to the AEP curriculum and take educators through specific steps in delivering the curriculum using accelerated learning pedagogy. Guides will be most efficient within the tight timeframes of AEP if they are in languages that teachers can read easily.
Further Reading


PRINCIPLE 5

Teachers participate in continuous professional development

a. Work directly with teacher training institutes and national structures for AEP teacher training to align AEP methods with national teaching standards.

b. Provide certified professional development for AEP teachers.

c. Provide pre-service and continuous in-service teacher professional development courses on subject knowledge and AEP methodology.

d. Build inclusion, gender-sensitivity and protection practices into the AEP teacher training.

e. Ensure teachers are provided with regular support and coaching to help improve the quality of classroom instruction.
If it looks likely that educators will be lacking in key skills or knowledge, develop a **twin-track training package**. One track will be for teaching methods. Educators can be trained in accelerated learning pedagogy (see Principle 4), even if they lack formal teacher training.

The other track will be for boosting knowledge in essential content areas. In some areas, where educators only have lower primary or very weak upper primary education, this second track will cover most of the upper primary curriculum. It could also cover the written and spoken languages needed for teaching, and additional life skills.

Use the forthcoming **Training for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts** package for the teaching methods component of an AEP educator training programme (TPSTCC; Refugee Teacher Working Group, 2016).

If there is already a teaching methods training manual in place for AEP teachers, for example as part of government policy or as a legacy from previous AEP projects, review the manual against the TPSTCC package and update it. If conflicting advice is found between the TPSTCC package and the planned training methods manual, resolve this among programme partners as soon as possible.

Ensure that regular in-service professional development is provided to all educators, including training on accelerated learning pedagogy and subject content. **Cluster-based training**, combined with centre-based supervision and support for teachers, is likely to be more effective than central, cascade training. Build in plenty of opportunity for practice and application of new methods.

Teachers who experienced didactic pedagogies in their own education may struggle with unfamiliar learner-centred and inclusive approaches. Conflict and crisis-affected education systems may lack capacity to provide training in accelerated learning methodologies. Building in staffing and time for ongoing support and supervision is key.

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**Teacher training**

**Teacher training for AEPs needs to incorporate following** (adapted from Baxter and Bethke, 2009)

Ensure teachers are trained in child protection basics and teacher code of conduct.
Incorporate the fundamentals of rights-based, learner-centred, activity-based learning. All training needs to use and model this methodology and be group based, with activities and games and open discussions as well as research and ‘worksheets’.

Work with teachers on the concepts of compressed or condensed curricula or the materials developed for teaching/learning so that the teachers understand that a condensed curriculum:

- Eliminates the overlap and repetition of traditional subjects
- Uses the cross-fertilisation of subjects to reinforce (rather than repeat)
- Uses interactive teaching methodology (to eliminate/ minimise revision).

Provide the opportunity for subject strengthening if required.

- A training model (cascade with vital follow up, or spiral) for the teachers is needed that is interactive and based on discovery learning and the aspects of teaching that the teachers themselves are supposed to implement. This would need to be an initial 8-10 days with regular (twice a year) follow-ups of 3-5 days.
- Ensure a strong mentoring and support system for the teachers. Cyclical training is needed: 10-18 days in the initial phase; with 3-5 days during each vacation period.
- Consistent and continuous professional development sessions and mentoring are important.

Processes that maintain high teaching motivation – such as network training, peer-to-peer, professional development – need to be built into the programme.

In most crisis contexts teachers will need considerable support in planning learner-centred, inclusive lessons which engage girls, boys, learners with disabilities, and those affected by psychosocial issues. Teachers may need to be provided with as much teaching and learning material as possible. At least initially, they are unlikely to have the experience to produce their own materials (see Principle 4).

All AEP teachers benefit from regularly meeting in groups and helping each other. Educators and trainers can be encouraged to come together at centre and cluster level to discuss how to help learners who are struggling, or how to vary their teaching techniques. Managers can schedule regular time for teachers to observe each other’s lessons and offer constructive feedback.
NRC’s meta evaluation

NRC’s meta evaluation found that inexperienced teachers appreciated model lesson plans and similar resources:

Availability of appropriate teacher resources has been critical for teachers’ sense of professional efficacy. There have been concerted efforts on the part of NRC to ensure that its AE teachers have the required resources and materials to do their job well.

While emphasis is also put into developing teacher and student-made resources in many programmes, the existence of a clear and structured manual or guide, along the lines of the Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) pack, is highly appreciated and valued by teachers.

These teachers often enter into the classroom without previous experience. Having a detailed, step-by-step guide for delivery of individual lessons, or at least a framework of model lessons, has been identified in several evaluations as affording them an important ‘crutch’ to rely on at the outset. (Shah, 2015, p.39)

Whenever possible, negotiate with the government (and include in any memoranda of understanding) steps for the accreditation of AEP educators, to facilitate their transition to full teaching status. This is a key contribution to the longer-term strengthening of the teaching workforce and wider system, and is likely to reduce AEP staff turnover.

Further Reading

4. Training for Primary School Teachers in Crisis Contexts (TPSTCC) package (forthcoming)
PRINCIPLE 6

Teachers are recruited, supervised and remunerated

a. Recruit teachers from target geographic areas, build on learner’s culture, language and experience and ensure gender balance.

b. Ensure teachers receive fair and consistent payment on a regular basis in line with relevant education authority/other implementers commensurate with the hours they teach.

c. Ensure teachers sign a code of conduct.
Educators are best recruited from the local community, and where possible, qualified to a recognised national standard. Share calls for teachers through the community education committee (CEC) / parent-teacher association (PTA) (see Principle 7). Select a committee to make decisions on recruitment for all teachers, and make recruitment criteria widely available.

It is important to seek a good balance of female and male teachers, as well as teachers who speak learners’ first language. If not enough female teachers can be recruited, consider female assistant teachers instead.

Select teachers using competency-based assessment. Ask candidates to demonstrate teaching skills and discuss their motivation. Where national competence criteria exist, use them to assess the teacher’s performance when teaching a sample lesson. Interviews with teachers will establish their motivation and approaches, and need to cover child protection issues. Make a background check on teaching candidates where possible, and ensure that all recruits sign a code of conduct against violence, discrimination or abuse.

Questions to help identify ideal AEP teacher characteristics:

1. What level of education do teachers need in order to teach the condensed curriculum?
2. What level of experience with teaching or working with young people would be helpful?
3. What attitudes towards young people, girls, minorities, people with disabilities, etc., will be necessary?
4. What languages are teachers likely to need to speak, read, write?
5. What additional skills or knowledge will be needed to teach the life skills or practical skills which are in demand?

Consult with partners, particularly CBOs and local leaders, about the extent to which these qualities and skills are available. Use the information to begin identifying areas of teachers’ knowledge that need boosting through training.

Where life skills/ practical skills are in demand, but teachers are unlikely to have these, investigate whether anyone in the local area can provide demonstrations to AEP learners.
Recruitment will depend on government policies and the availability of people who can teach in the operating context (camp versus host community, etc.). Sometimes an AEP will prioritise unqualified or volunteer educators. At other times teachers who are already on the government payroll will be allocated to the programme, or a mix. Avoid poaching teachers from other institutions.

It might be necessary to use teachers from the host community, some of whom are employed already by schools. For instance, they might be free to teach in the afternoon, if their school teaches only in the mornings. However, teaching in the AEP could take time away from their marking and lesson preparations or extracurricular activities for their main school. Make sure the teacher’s school has given permission for them to take part in AEP. Work closely with the school management to reduce any negative impact. Using retired teachers can also be helpful.

Co-ordinate the salary for AEP teachers with other education actors (e.g. through the education cluster or sector working group) and with reference to the Ministry of Education/civil servant salary scale. Advocate for suitable AEP educator salaries in comparison to teachers within government schools or humanitarian programmes (taking into account different levels of skill).

If educators are recruited in a host community, incentives for transportation and/or accommodation may be required, for instance if AEP is implemented in a refugee camp and educators have to relocate to villages in that area.

Several evaluations, such as Save the Children in South Sudan (2015); IBIS in Central Equatoria (2012) and UNICEF’s AEP work in Liberia (2011) reported that high teacher turnover was a particular problem in AEPs, related to insufficient salary or erratic payments.

Once educators’ skills have been developed through initial training and practice, they are likely to find work as para-teachers or in other education programmes, especially if their existing programme appears to be coming to an end or their salaries are not being paid on time.

Establishing reliable payment mechanisms and strong lines of communication with educators is important. Good relationships between teachers and PTAs/CECs can be key. The short timeframes of AEP teaching cycles make it particularly important to reduce disruption in teacher attendance or retention due to payment problems or perceptions that the salary is not competitive or secure.
Work with relevant authorities to ensure AEP educators are included on the official payroll. Where national government is not able to pay AEP educators, establish transparent mechanisms for payment at an early stage of the programme. Connect to existing monitoring and transparency systems to ensure that timely payment is happening; or make sure that educators are regularly canvassed on how promptly they are paid.

**Plan for some educators to leave AEP after a year or two.** Other NGO programmes may offer better salaries; teachers may find jobs in schools as contract or para-teachers; some may have children or their families may move away. Prepare for unavoidable turnover by allocating a budget for regular training of replacement educators.

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**Further Reading**


PRINCIPLE 7

AE centre is effectively managed

a. Fiscal, supervisory, monitoring & evaluation systems in place.

b. Set up systems for student record keeping and documentation especially for mobile communities to enable integration with formal education.

c. Collect accurate data to monitor progress on learning, student enrolment, attendance, drop-out, retention, completion and transition/integration to formal education disaggregate by gender, age group, disability.

d. The centre management committee (e.g. PTA), should be representative of the community, trained and equipped to support AE management.
For AEPs of more than one year, it is ideal if teachers are allocated to remain with learners through grades 1-3 to sustain learning and psychosocial support.

Set up regular collection and reporting of data on enrolment, attendance, drop-out rates, and selected learning outcomes. Develop a shared understanding of how each term is defined and measured. Ensure that this data is disaggregated to identify impact on the specific out-of-school groups targeted by the programme.

Programme monitoring and management can use information about attendance difficulties to determine whether budgetary or logistical changes are needed. This can be done through regular review of committee meeting notes, participatory programme reviews, and meetings between programme management and representatives of community and learner committees.

It is useful to arrange meetings with primary or secondary schools and vocational colleges to coordinate their intake of AEP graduates. Formal school principals can be given a learner profile for each learner who is interested in joining the school. This is a basis for a discussion on the interests and priorities of each learner, and the likely support needs they will have on entering formal school.

A school/college welcome day could be organised for graduating AEP learners shortly before term starts, to help them feel comfortable in the school environment and get to know teachers and school rules and processes.

Many AEP evaluations have identified the value of tracking graduates to produce evidence on whether AEP leavers are achieving intended further education or employment (NRC, 2011; Sonnenberg, 2011). This information is vital to know whether AEPs are fit for purpose. AEPs should aim to keep records on graduates and leavers for six months after they leave, wherever possible. Learners can be asked to give contact details (such as mobile phone numbers for themselves or relatives) to the AEP when they leave, so that evaluators can follow up to find out how they are doing.

This will be particularly helpful if learners or communities are likely to move around.

Building the capacity of local education authorities to supervise and monitor AEP centres helped make IBIS in South Sudan more effective and sustainable.
IBIS’s best practices

IBIS’s best practices in education systems strengthening included:

- Capacity-building of local government officials in education management and administration through on-the-job training;
- Practical skill development of ALP teachers through continuous formative supervision in key pedagogical areas;
- Second and train government counterparts as technical education staff to facilitate knowledge and skills transfer in local government offices;
- 20 education staff from state, county and payam Education Offices participated in the supervision and monitoring of ALP as part of bi-weekly in-situ mentoring and supervision by IBIS ALP trainers;
- Government counterparts from each county received intensive, ongoing capacity-building from IBIS in teacher training, monitoring and support supervision. They used IBIS’s formative supervision and CPD model in five core areas: community advocacy for education, AES management and administration and monitoring and evaluation of education programmes. Counterparts then worked with IBIS staff and local government officials to implement and monitor the ALP in the three counties.

Source: IBIS, South Sudan, 2012
Further Reading


PRINCIPLE 8

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

- AEP classes are free, and there are no fees for uniforms or material.
- Apply (inter) national standards or guidelines to ensure basic standards of safety and quality for the learning environment.
- Ensure access to water and separate latrines for girls and boys, and provision of sanitary materials when relevant AE Principles AEWG May 2016.
- Budget for maintenance and upkeep of facilities.
- Resource AEPs with a safe shelter, classroom furniture and teaching learning supplies and equipment.
- Information is provided to students and teachers on reporting mechanisms and follow up of exposure to violence and GBV.
- Follow recommended relevant education authority guidelines for teacher pupil ratio, but not greater than 40 pupils per teacher.
Reviews of AEPs (NORC, 2016; IBIS, 2012) have found that drop-out and poor attendance are common when predictable challenges – such as finding money to pay for ‘hidden costs’ of attendance – have not been planned for.

School-related costs (transport, learning materials, uniform, etc.) need to be minimal, and removed whenever possible. This can be done through: negotiating access to existing Ministry or programme budget lines for supporting vulnerable learners; deciding in advance which items the programme itself will budget for; and encouraging communities to mobilise resources (see Principle 9).

Attendance/drop out can also be affected by centre management: lack of appropriate gender separated latrines (which particularly affects adolescent girls), lack of school breakfast and/or energy boosting snacks; and teachers’ absenteeism. Responding to refugee population movements may also be important.

Centre management should decide how to manage competing demands on learners’ time which may reduce attendance. Should class times be changed in consultation with the community? Is advocacy needed to reduce learners’ family or work duties, particularly for girls? Are learners at risk of recruitment into armed groups? Working closely with learners and the community (see Principles 8 and 9) will allow these problems to be addressed.

‘Inclusive’ means that all learners are welcomed, take part in activities, and make progress in learning (Ainscow, 2005). While educators, learners and community members are asked to look for challenges faced by all learners, there is an additional emphasis on learners with special needs which put them at higher risk of exclusion (Rieser et al., 2013). In an AEP this might be children and young people with disabilities, IDPs, ex-combatants, and young mothers.
Factors influencing retention in Liberia

“Free, Fun and Flexible” are the three words that were repeatedly heard from current and former ALP learners when asked what they liked about, and what had kept them in, the NRC ALP.

Flexibility of the school time-table and provision of ALP classes in the afternoon has enabled the learners to balance their domestic responsibilities with their academic pursuits.

The availability of scholastic materials and other resources have been an incentive for regular school attendance. NRC provides children with a student kit (copy books, stationery, school bag) which has ensured that the learners have the basic materials to actively participate in class.

Regular teacher attendance is what distinguishes the NRC ALP.

Both current and former ALP learners reported that they liked going to school because “the teachers were always there and taught them well”. Participatory teaching methodologies and teacher attendance have added to the perception of the NRC ALP as providing quality education, particularly when compared against the government schools where teacher morale and attendance is a huge problem.

Physical Education (P.E) was very much appreciated by all the learners interviewed. Sports provide learners with an opportunity to build friendship, enhances team work and self-esteem which are important factors in school retention.


AEP infrastructure will need to be set up according to INEE standards on inclusive access and learning environments, as well as any relevant national standards.

The next step is facilitating inclusion in the day-to-day management of the AEP. This can include:

- reaching out to make sure IDPs and others who have been displaced by conflict or crisis are consulted about what they need to take part in the AEP;
- guiding educators on managing classroom space for learners with sensory impairments;
- monitoring to see whether boys and girls are participating equally;
- offering young people affected by crisis psychosocial support from educators.
Keeping an AEP centre on track as a **safe, welcoming and inclusive space** can be done by training and mentoring CECs or PTAs (see Principle 9) to monitor exclusion and protection issues, look out for learners who are struggling, and monitor teachers. Committees can be given guidance on taking action to support learners, and on when to take issues to AEP management and local government, for example, when sexual abuse has been identified. They may be able to work with local leaders and government to advocate for an acceptable outcome.

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**UNHCR defines safety and protection in education for people affected by conflict or emergencies as follows:**

- Girls and boys have equal access to education at all levels and are treated equally in the classroom.
- Exploitation and abuse do not take place at schools, and schools have effective reporting and referral mechanisms for abuse, including consequences for perpetrators of SGBV (sexual and gender based violence) and other abuses.
- There is a teacher Code of Conduct and a mechanism to ensure it is monitored and enforced.
- The community is engaged to ensure the protection and security of all students.
- The distance between home and school is not too great and does not pose safety risks.
- Cultural issues that interfere with educational participation are met with innovative thinking.
- Any social cohesion tension is addressed by inclusive or peace education programming.
- There is access to potable water and hand-washing facilities with soap.
- There are sufficient numbers of gender-segregated (**and disability-accessible**) latrines.

School buildings are safe and there is school fencing.

- If there is malnutrition and problems with food access for targeted learners, there is a school feeding programme.

(Adapted from **UNHCR, 2015**, p.5)
NRC’s TEP in Burundi (1999-2011) restricted class sizes to 30-35. Evaluation found that this was a major contributor to the programme’s success – 95% of participants transitioned to primary school.

Teachers were also supported to take an explicitly inclusive approach, focused on ensuring that displaced children, returnees and girls were well supported and engaged.

However, tracer studies showed that some children were excluded – ‘forced out’ – because of their ethnicity (NRC, 2012). Tracking particular groups of learners can be valuable in enabling a programme to become more inclusive. Taking a peace education approach may have been one way for TEP to address issues of exclusion by ethnicity.

Getting inclusion and protection right is vital for AEP learners, as they are among the most excluded. Barriers which might be overcome by learners with more economic or social resources may be insurmountable unless AEPs are fully focused on supporting those who may be struggling.

When working to build inclusion and protection in AEPs, consider that older and younger learners may be learning together; teachers may not have had the same training in protection or inclusion that formal teachers have; and learners may feel some stigma or discrimination about not being in formal school.

If a teacher is identified as using physical violence or committing sexual assault/harassment, they should be taken out of teaching duties immediately until a review has taken place, in accordance with codes of conduct. If a teacher is on the Ministry of Education payroll, there may be limitations around how the Ministry responds to breaches of the code. This does not take away the need to address the issue.
Each AEP location can benefit from having a diverse group of 8-10 learners – girls, boys, from displaced and host communities, with and without disabilities – who meet regularly and act as the voice of children and young people. **Student committees** often:

- identify learners who need extra support to attend or participate in learning;
- raise problems with learning (teaching methods and styles, materials, etc.) which may be leading learners to drop out;
- share learners’ priorities for curricula and recreational facilities;
- raise protection and safety concerns;
- highlight concerns about transition out of AEP which may cause learners to leave early;
- monitor attendance and drop-out, and follow up with families to encourage re-enrolment.

Teachers can be asked to **talk to learners who have missed classes**, or who seem disengaged or worried in class. Questions to consider might include: Does the learner need glasses? Are they exhausted from work or walking? Do the pace and type of activities in lessons need to be changed? Could a learner’s first language be used more, or could some learners translate for others?

The CEC and head teacher or AEP manager, once alerted, can **talk to the learner’s family** and find a way to solve the problem. Is there a need for psychosocial support; is stress or trauma preventing learners from attending or concentrating? Is there a benefactor in the community who can help with food, healthcare or clothing costs?
By definition, the effort to target the most marginalized populations, including nomadic/pastoralist communities, refugees/IDPs, girls, ethnic minorities, and former youth combatants, follow the principle of “Do No Harm”. The Gambella programme in Ethiopia used mobile ALP centers and flexible timetables to ensure classes were accessible to historically marginalized pastoralist populations. Additionally, the programme was aware of ongoing conflict between different ethnic communities and recruited teachers with the same cultural and linguistic background as their students. Learning and teaching materials were also developed in different languages (Anis, 2007). The RISE pilot programme in Iraq and the Community Based Education Centers in Kabul Afghanistan also clearly identified potential exclusions and responded to them by obtaining buy-in via community mobilization techniques (Nicolls, 2004; Rowse and Weir, 2014) … approaches to inclusion need to be carefully considered. For example, anecdotal evidence on a catch-up programme in Burundi suggests some students dropped out of the programme because they were stigmatized as former combatants (Sempere, 2009). While not explicitly an ALP, the principle remains the same; these unintended consequences have the potential to foster or exacerbate conflict, i.e. to “do harm”.

Source NORC report, p.25
Further Reading

1. INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery
2. INEE (2009) Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction
7. UNHCR (2015), Education and Protection, Issue Brief 1, Education Unit, Division of International Protection, Geneva
PRINCIPLE 9

Community is engaged and accountable

a. AEP is located within an engaged and supportive local community.

b. AEP is locally led, and when necessary, technical expertise is provided externally.

c. Provide comprehensive community sensitisation on the benefits of AEPs.

d. In areas with frequent movements of IDPs / refugees, conduct continuous needs assessments and community sensitisation on education.
Siting AEP centres close to where learners and their communities live is essential. For example, a World Bank research project found that in the western Sahelian region of Chad, 80% of enrolled children came from the 8% of villages that had schools located in them.

For AEP success and sustainability, community engagement is critical from the start. This engagement comes in the form of awareness campaigns and active participation in programme planning and management, as well as ongoing discussion of the benefits of education to sustain participation, particularly among girls. Working with partners who have strong existing links with communities can ensure credibility, trust and the capacity for rapid mobilisation and scale-up of AEPs.

Communities are often given responsibility for selecting appropriate accommodation for the AEP, identifying learners and facilitating their enrolment (especially the most vulnerable), determining timetables and, in some cases, recruiting teachers/facilitators to the programme.

Fostering community involvement and participation

IBIS’s experience of implementing an ALP in South Sudan highlights the importance of community engagement and advocacy, both for the overall success of the programme and for ensuring access for girls. A review of programme learning identified community engagement as an important implementation challenge:

Community ownership of the ALP is fundamental to sustainability of the programme and the enrolment, retention and completion of learners. Community support for education programmes, including contributions to school development, is critical to meet the needs of South Sudan’s school-going age population, which is underserved due to government budget gaps and shortages in funds to implement education programmes. PTAs and head teachers play a vital role in supporting the ALP and engaging community members in education advocacy campaigns. Concentrated efforts to maintain and increase community support for the ALP are critical to sustaining the programme in the future and ensuring community members send their children to school and keep them there.


Communities may be asked to provide in-kind or actual resources as a prerequisite for establishing an AEP. For example, the TEACH programme in Ethiopia required communities to donate land for the construction of their education centres (Ethio-Education Consultants, 2008).
CECs and PTAs (or other locally used terminology) may already exist and can provide an important entry point for AEPs. Where they do not exist, they may need to be established with local support and broad, inclusive representation.

CECs/PTAs can model equity and inclusion. This has been the case in Ghana’s Schools for Life where women make up the majority of representatives on the committee and take a leading role. The committee also ensures that at least 50% of learners enrolling are girls. Fostering the successful involvement of girls in AEPs can require house-to-house visits by community members and Mullahs, as seen in the Children in Crisis programme in Afghanistan (Rowse and Weir, 2014).

CECs/PTAs can also mobilise external funding, manage resources (teaching and learning materials, book banks, etc.), organise safe transport for vulnerable children or those with mobility issues, feed back issues and challenges to AEP teachers or managers, and monitor learner and teacher attendance. CECs/PTAs have a role to play in child protection, including ensuring AEP learning spaces are safe and protective environments.

Facilitators or leaders of AEP community committees can be trained to identify and act on issues affecting attendance in a constructive way, sometimes mobilising resources to help the poorest, or disabled learners who need equipment like wheelchairs, attend.

Programme monitoring should promote community accountability, often coordinated through CECs. It is good practice to consult communities, and learners living within those communities, about all AEP implementation and management issues, and to support communities to build relationships with district education officials where these don’t already exist.

Community capacity building

Training and ongoing support of PTAs/CECs can be helpful as they take on new roles and responsibilities.

Key areas for training/support include financial accountability and administration, participatory leadership and child protection. Capacity building
in income generation will help CECs and the wider community to sustain their role beyond the life of the AEP.

There are a number of excellent training manuals and guidance notes already in existence, such as ESSPIN Nigeria’s School Based Management Committee Training Manual and INEE Good Practice Guide: Community Education Committees. Check for available training manuals and resources with local and national partners, as these will have been designed appropriately for the context.

Some AEPs use outreach workers (often instead of PTAs/CECs) in the local community who aim to reach excluded children. Outreach workers have been very effective in increasing enrolment, attendance and completion. They are usually individuals selected from the community who are known and trusted by the community and who know the context.

They may identify and support children who are at risk of dropping out and raise community awareness of the importance of education. Budgets are needed for outreach workers, including funding for their training and for modest resources to enable them to solve minor problems and get children back into education (War Child Holland, n.d.).

Communities can be resistant to or lack interest in AEPs. This may happen when girls’ enrolment is emphasised. Advocacy can help. Tensions can arise when there are unrealistic or unmet expectations of learner progression and accreditation/certification. Community engagement can fall away if anticipated results do not materialise. Regular dialogue and effective monitoring helps address such issues.

Further Reading


5. World Bank (2003) Bringing the school to the children: shortening the path to EFA. Education Notes series
PRINCIPLE 10

Goals, monitoring, and funding align

a. Overarching program goal is centred on improving skills and increasing access.

b. Make M&E systems for data compilation and analysis compatible with the Ministry/relevant education authority.

c. Develop, apply, and regularly report on Monitoring and Evaluation framework directly linked to the program goal (theory of change, logical framework, other).

d. Exit strategies and/or a sustainability plan included in the AEP design.

e. Program is adequately funded to assure sustained minimum standards (INEE) for infrastructure, staffing, supplies, supervision and management.
Make sure that goals and targets respond to initial education sector assessment and other background data (see Principle 3). How well-founded are assumptions that an area of work will lead to better education access and skills for the targeted out-of-school groups? Does the theory of change and/or logical framework reflect realistic working assumptions for the success of the AEP?

After the initial design, re-consult with out-of-school stakeholders and their communities to check whether the approach is likely to meet their needs, and what changes are required.

AEPs should be anchored in national budgets. AEP programmers can collaborate with government officials on planning and budgeting in the immediate inception phase, when programming decisions that have long-term impact are being made. While a number of Education Sector Plans include AEPs, relatively few include specific budget lines and this is a key matter for advocacy.

Using initial assessment and learning from community engagement (Principles 3 and 7), plan how the programme should identify and respond to financial issues which are likely to keep learners from attending. If cash transfers or similar incentive schemes are needed to reduce widespread cost barriers, bring in specialists in developing cash transfers or link the AEP to well-established cash transfer programmes.

**IDPs in Puntland**

NRC’s support to IDPs in Puntland successfully supported transition of 1,000 ABE graduates to formal schools. A voucher system incentivised enrolments, but was widely regarded as unsustainable and underestimated the risk of later drop-out from the formal system. The voucher system did, however, influence family decisions on whether to retain children in school and impacted positively on girls’ enrolment. (Lodi, 2011).
Full assessment of cash transfer schemes prior to implementation will ensure they are appropriate. Such schemes can have unintended consequences, such as attracting learners out of mainstream schools and into AEPs, and causing learners to drop out after they transfer to other education settings when incentives are not available.

Which targets and objectives are most relevant for marginalised groups such as girls?

The NORC review found three different ways of articulating gender goals in the AEP literature:

**Targeting:** Some projects specifically target girls and women by:

- Making the programme available to girls and women only, generally because they had previously been excluded and there was an identified need to help them compete on an equal basis in the formal school system (an example includes Udaan in India).
- Searching out female teachers to teach in an all-girls or mixed-class environment.

Examples of programs that do this include BRAC Bangladesh and COPE Uganda (Chaboux 2005; Dewees 2000).

**Modeling behavior and awareness:** Some programs, such as Udaan India and South Sudan SSIRI, also attempted to ensure (via teacher training and/or awareness raising) that classes had a constructive, inclusive approach where girls were called upon equally, teachers responded positively to girls’ questions and comments, lessons included messages about equal rights, or community mobilizers sensitized local leaders to the importance of educating their girls.

**Quotas:** There were also programs that included gender equity as a goal by mandating that specific percentages of beneficiaries must be female. This gender parity approach, particularly when it is programmed in isolation, is the weakest of the programme options.’ (NORC, 2016).

In UNICEF’s Liberia AEP, difficulties with securing follow-on funding, and poor communication, meant that teachers left the programme en masse, leaving learners stranded (Manda, 2011).
Generating strong data on the relevance and impact of AEPs is the most effective way to secure funding after an initial phase. Establish clear understanding with the government and donors about what evidence they will need to continue or expand funding.

**Monitoring and evaluation experts** can be asked at an early stage to advise on what claims can be made about an AEP, based on the type of data it is possible to collect. It will be useful to know:

1. whether an AEP is effective against its objectives, compared to other ways of providing education to the same target groups (counterfactuals);

2. what outcomes can be directly attributed to this AEP.

In some settings, for example, AEP learner test results can be compared to those from government schools, but in others, the life circumstances of learners in AEPs and schools are too different for their test results to be meaningfully compared (NORC, 2016).

Monitoring and evaluation systems for AEPs are best when they are designed to align with existing systems for data compilation, such as EMIS, which support efforts to achieve Education for All/SDG goals.

Evidence is only useful when set against clear objectives. AEPs have historically been weak in setting objectives and goals, and producing data to show that the assumptions made in setting targets were proved in practice.

> “...objectives are often not well articulated in programs: is a programme aiming for reintegration into primary education or transition to the next level of education? Is it simply to become literate and numerate so as to operate in a small market economy or is it about a larger empowerment? Is the programme overwhelmingly implemented to “get kids off the streets”... or to reach higher levels of literacy and numeracy? With the variety of objectives (either stated or inferred) there are (or should be) the same variety of outputs, and so the measurement of “success” of programme interventions should also reflect that diversity.”

(NORC, 2016).

In addition to the usual good practice issues for programme budgeting, some **budget, cost and monitoring** considerations are specific to AEPs:
Annual per learner recurrent costs need to be considered, such as enrolment costs, educator and supervisor salaries, supervision and training, management (including PTA/CECs) and operations (rentals, fuel, overheads). Indirect costs such as uniforms, transportation and learning materials need to be covered, either partially or fully.

Communities may supply land and other infrastructure, labour and materials. Capital costs to expect include classrooms, educator accommodation, water and sanitation facilities.

Significant start-up costs – including facilities, vehicles, curriculum development, materials, community and radio campaigns, and local/international consultants – need to be considered.

Cash transfers and other incentives, such as feeding programmes (which may be provided by partners such as the World Food Programme), need budgeting for delivery, management and monitoring.

Small flexible budget lines to help learners are a good idea, particularly for those affected by disability. Some learners may need wheelchairs or other assistive devices, and many need support for glasses to be able to learn. Such a budget line can be managed through a grant fund for centre committees to control and supplement with community contributions; or through direct allocation to teachers and learners by AEP management, based on teachers’ recommendations and discussions.

Additional tuition for learners identified as needing a boost before certification tests is a common additional cost.

There can be significant challenges around the procurement of teaching and learning materials, which will have disproportionate impact on the tight timeframes of AEPs. Manufacturers may be unable to produce orders at short notice, and finding good translators for local-language materials may be difficult. AEP centres may not be part of central supply routes and delivery arrangements for mainstream schools. Learners may drop out if teaching does not begin as planned, or if delivery failures cause communities to lose trust (IBIS 2012). This is a particular problem with an accelerated curriculum, when delays mean double the learning will be lost.
Detailed **advance planning** will reduce these risks. Back-up plans can be made to support teaching in the event of extreme weather or conflict causing delays to the delivery of materials. It may be possible to make photocopies of materials locally, or share basic information with teachers through mobile phone networks, using SMS or MMS. Nearby formal schools may have materials that could be borrowed and adapted. Prioritising communication and collaboration around material supply will maximise recovery from problems. In many countries, UNICEF has taken responsibility for the provision of textbooks country wide. AEP providers can advocate with UNICEF to have AEP material added to their national distribution.

**procurement and delivery of materials**

Several AEPs have reported **challenges with procurement and delivery of materials**, which have compromised key relationships. In NRC’s Liberia programme, a patchy relationship and weak collaboration with the Ministry of Education at national level was seen as the cause of supply problems.

Subsequent priorities for the programme included relationship building and greater support to ministry capacity (Bang et al, 2010). APEP Afghanistan experienced procurement issues which were worsened by gaps in funding, weaknesses in supplier capacity, and challenges with terrain in remote areas.

Many of the districts in which APEP operated were remote and mountainous and 45% of all AL classes were in rural areas. These were frequently cut off for months at a time by snow in the winter and spring flooding also made some classes difficult to reach.

Aware of the difficulties within their provinces, the implementing partners requested that class, teacher and student supplies be delivered before the passes closed. This was not always possible. In some cases, the implementing partner would use camels and set off over the mountains on foot to deliver books in time for the first day of classes.

...When the reduced kits for teachers and students were distributed, there was tension between the communities and implementing partners. The reduced kits were interpreted by communities as evidence of corruption and that implementing partners had skimmed off supplies for their own gain. The inclusion in the Trainer’s Manuals and Mentor’s Guides of comprehensive kits lists and changes helped allay the communities’ concerns. (Nicholson, 2006).
Further Reading


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Bringing the school to the children: shortening the path to EFA. Education Notes series http://goo.gl/RpGYTd.
This guide is for those who finance, plan, design, manage and evaluate AEPs, including NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), government education authorities, and other education actors. The guide should be useful to programme managers, education advisers, policy makers, and anyone seeking to improve inclusive, quality education in contexts affected by crisis and conflict.