**CENTER FOR EDUCATION**

# PROMISING PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTING ACCELERATED AND REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

## SNAPSHOTS FROM AFRICA AND ASIA

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## COVID-19 CONTEXT

By April 2020, 1.5 billion children and youth in 194 countries—over 85% of the world's learners—were affected by closures of education institutions (UNESCO, 2021). Early concerns about the negative impacts the pandemic would have on both learning continuity and learning loss have in many instances been shown to be true. On average students lost about a half years' worth of learning, negatively affecting the most vulnerable students worst. In many countries, sizeable portions of the school-age population chose not to return to school when they reopened. Beyond this, school closures led to many children and youth losing access to essential protection, health, nutrition, and mental health services, putting millions more at risk of child labor, early marriage and pregnancy, malnutrition, abuse, and exploitation. This was particularly true for the most marginalized learners, including those in poverty, girls/young women, learners with disabilities, and those already affected by pre-existing crises.

To respond to the pandemic, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Missions, implementing partners, and others designed and adapted educational programming and activities to prevent drop out and ensure all learners would return to learning; mitigate learning loss and support learning outcomes; ensure the wellbeing of learners, teachers, and educational personnel; and build the resilience of education systems to better respond to future crises. While there is now a sizeable body of global tools, guidance, and evidence helping USAID and partners to continue to respond to COVID-19 educational disruptions, evidence on why and how certain responses were able to mitigate learning loss and support learning continuity and wellbeing throughout the pandemic is only now beginning to emerge.

# IMPLEMENTING ACCELERATED AND REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

This thematic case study explores **promising practices in implementing accelerated education (AE)[1] and remedial education (RE)[2] during and beyond the COVID-19 response**. These responses fall within USAID's six priority areas for COVID-19 response.[3] USAID prioritizes this area as a way "to help learners get back on track," and a way for educators to "apply innovative catch-up strategies, meet diverse learning needs, and provide alternate pathways for (re)engaging the most marginalized, especially girls and learners with disabilities" (USAID COVID Factsheet, 2020). USAID sees this as "essential for an inclusive and resilient formal education system." Importantly, accelerated and remedial education opportunities remain critical, alternative pathways to re-engage learners who have dropped out of the education system or who need extra support to remain in the system.

In many instances, COVID-19 led to the focus and prioritization of learners who found themselves temporarily out of school due to health-related school closures, rather than the group of 258 million who were already out of school when COVID-19 hit. It has been found that RE and AE responses have thus far not been well represented in national-level COVID-19 education response and recovery plans and strategies, and many of those implementing such programs pre-COVID-19 found resources and attention diverted toward efforts to maintain learning continuity for those already in education (AEWG, 2022).

This case study draws on snapshots from three AE and RE interventions (see Box 1), and explores how they persisted during the pandemic and are now well poised to support the institutionalization of such approaches within education systems. The interventions varied in scale and scope, with one working in partnership with the government as part of the national response, and the other two at more local levels, working through community and local government structures. All three implementation organizations acknowledged the acute need to address the learning needs of out-of-school children and youth during the pandemic.

## BOX 1: FEATURED INTERVENTIONS

**Intervention:** Catch-Up Programme (CUP)
**Organization:** World Vision
**Location:** Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Ghana
**Overview:** A community-based program to support children ages 6 to 9 to catch-up on foundational literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills to successfully engage in formal education at their grade level.

**Intervention:** Ghana Learning Radio: National Reading Radio Program (NRRP)
**Organization:** FHI 360, Ghana
**Location:** Ghana
**Overview:** Technical and operational support to the government to roll out a nation-wide radio-based early grade reading program to support children whose education has been disrupted due to COVID-19.

**Intervention:** Speed School
**Organization:** Geneva Global
**Location:** Uganda
**Overview:** An accelerated education program delivered through both home-based and classroom-based learning during COVID-19 to provide out-of-school children a pathway into primary school via a condensed curriculum and activity-based learning.

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1 The Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) defines accelerated education as programs targeting disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and young people and provides the formal curriculum in a shorter time

2 The AEWG defines remedial education as programs that give additional support to children in school

3 USAID's six priority areas for COVID-19 response are: 1) partnering with ministries to safely and responsibly reopen schools and higher education institutions; 2) creating or utilizing distance learning platforms; 3) providing psychosocial support and protection services; 4) building emergency preparedness and response capacity; 5) institutionalizing remedial and accelerated education; and 6) engaging youth and higher education institutions as leaders in COVID-19 response.

The first sections of this case study describe the design, implementation, and effectiveness of the interventions. The latter sections identify the lessons learned for moving toward institutionalizing these types of actions within education systems, in line with USAID's stated priority on AE and RE during COVID-19. Specific attention is given to how these interventions were able to identify and mobilize existing resilience capacities within their contexts and assess and address the needs of populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

# METHODOLOGY

To identify interventions for inclusion in this research, a call for promising practices was put out through USAID's three learning networks: the Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN), the Global Reading Network (GRN), and the Higher Education Learning Network (HELN). Of the total 79 valid responses to the call, five were relevant to the theme of this report,[4] of which three were identified as having sufficient "promise" in terms of both their evidence-base and approach to systems strengthening. This case study is part of a set of three separate case studies[5] highlighting promising practices across three different USAID priority areas. The author of this case study undertook an extensive review of program data and documentation as well as interviews with key informants. Further detail about the methodology of this research can be found in the associated Synthesis Report.

## BOX 2: PROMISING PRACTICES

**"Promising" practices** are defined as those that enable learners to remain engaged with and participate in learning opportunities throughout the pandemic, address the psychosocial impacts of COVID-19, and/or seek to minimize or address learning loss in some way. These practices have an evidence base that indicates the impacts of their actions and where they have sought to move beyond immediate response measures toward strengthening education systems more broadly.

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4 Respondents were able to select up to two priority areas. Additionally, although interventions aligned themselves (or have been aligned) with one of USAID's priority areas for the purpose of this study, most interventions are in fact aligned with more than one priority area as, in many cases, priority areas were cross-cutting. For example, priority area #2—creating or utilizing distance learning platforms—features across many interventions, even though they were not categorized as such.

5 Two other case studies were conducted on promising practices in Engaging Youth and Higher Education Institutions In the COVID-19 Response and Implementing Accelerated and Remedial Education in the COVID-19 Response.

# THE INTERVENTIONS

In response to national-level studies demonstrating wide-spread learning loss as a result of school closures during the pandemic, **World Vision** pivoted its existing early grade reading program in three countries— **Cambodia, Ghana, and Zimbabwe**—to pilot a program to mitigate further learning loss and drop-out. **World Vision** deemed its existing program—Unlock Literacy—to be poorly suited to addressing those most at risk of learning loss, as it required a minimum level of literacy for learners to engage. Additionally, **World Vision** identified that the independent home-learning activities rolled out by Ministries of Education (MOE) in all three contexts also necessitated a minimum level of literacy. Therefore, by late 2021, **World Vision** had developed a pilot program that focused on children who had very low literacy levels as the target group. The adapted program—the **Catch-Up Programme (CUP)**—became a literacy and numeracy program to keep children (ages 6 to 9)[6] engaged in learning, which could be delivered in the home and/or through community structures.

**World Vision** designed the CUP to be responsive to contexts caught in cycles of school reopening and (re)closing, as public health policies demanded. Being community-based, the CUP was designed to be adaptive to both contexts when schools were open and when they were closed, acknowledging the "heavy lift" of catching up after the disruption, which learners and teachers would face once schools were open again. In this way, it was designed to support children returning to school—even those who did not attend previously—and staying engaged. **World Vision** regarded the CUP as an emergency response program to mitigate learning loss resulting from a disruption to education, with its previous programming being longer-term in focus. This definition of the CUP saw **World Vision** integrate elements into the program that it had not previously in its programming in these contexts, as it saw the pandemic context demanded them. Elements included social and emotional learning (SEL) and psychosocial support (PSS) elements, case management, and referrals for integrated programming.

As the pilot served to inform **World Vision** scale-up in other country offices under its Education Continuity in Crisis initiative, it was designed with an intentional learning agenda and strategy. This demanded close collaboration between global and country levels of **World Vision** staff, and adaptations to staff levels of effort to monitor and measure implementation and results. That the pilot

## BOX 3: ACTION LEARNING TO INFORM SCALE UPS

With the intention to scale-up the CUP to other education in emergencies (EiE) contexts, **World Vision** launched its pilot around a clear learning agenda. Its approach to action learning was guided by a framework of inquiry based on a set of simple considerations co-created with the pilot team. The pilot team included education and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team members at both global and field levels. **World Vision** notes that very considerable learning was captured through the process, which has been used to adapt the CUP for scale-up.

**World Vision** notes a limitation of the action learning approach was that it did not start systematically until the implementation phase of the program, missing important learning during the design phase. The first set of tools developed were for field offices to conduct consultations and assessments with communities, including children. Assessment results informed ongoing dialogue and decision-making between global and field levels on program development and refinement.

All action learning has been captured in Learning Reports to be shared through global working groups and used to inform a tool under development in partnership with the AEWG. Learning has also been integrated in **World Vision**'s internal programming resources for scale-up.

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6   The decision to target this age group was based on global literature that suggests that younger students are more vulnerable to learning losses arising from school closures.

projects were being implemented while program resources were being developed proved a challenge, but was also necessary in ensuring concurrent response and learning in the pandemic context.

During the pandemic, **FHI 360** provided technical expertise, support, and resources to the **Ghana** MOE and Ghana Education Service (GES) to design and implement their **National Reading Radio Program (NRRP)**. The NRRP was designed as a supplementary program during school closures, for children who had suffered education disruption, accessible to both children in-school and out-of-school (OOS). The program delivered an early grade[7] reading program, as well as important health, safety, and social protection messages for families during the pandemic. Based on its history of providing technical support to the MOE and GES in Ghana, and its existing partnerships with them, at the onset of the pandemic **FHI 360** rapidly extended its MoU with the education authorities and pivoted its donor[8] funding agreement to immediately start developing the NRRP by mid-May 2020.

The NRRP aimed to mitigate learning loss in reading and language skills in English and Ghanian languages. Content was adapted for the program from **FHI 360**'s previously classroom-based reading program—the Transition to English Program—which had commenced national roll-out in early 2020 but was shut down at the onset of the pandemic. As English and Ghanian language content for the classroom-based program was already government-approved, adaptation of the content was rapid, involving various stakeholders. A partnership with the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and public/private partnerships with other radio providers were mobilized to ensure nation-wide coverage. **FHI 360** engaged education authorities and teachers in the writing and translation of radio scripts and the development of student worksheets. They also trained MOE and GES officials on key M&E activities[9] identified by the government as essential to be able to monitor and measure the results of the large-scale program. Other implementation actors[10] were engaged to help support outreach, and printing and distribution of materials. The radio program was rolled out by June 2020, reaching 1.6 million learners. It engaged community leaders to support listenership at local levels, with the intention to also support children who were OOS prior to the pandemic, and other vulnerable children where possible, acknowledging a limitation of the nation-wide response being its inability to track the learning outcomes for the 2% of OOS children represented in the program evaluation.[11]

During the pandemic in **Uganda**, **Geneva Global** adapted its **Speed School** initiative from a program usually delivered in a classroom setting to a home-based learning program, engaging the support of caregivers to keep learners engaged in learning during the pandemic. The program condenses the official Primary grade 1 (P1) to Primary grade 3 (P3) curriculum into one year, supporting OOS, over-age learners—9 to 14—to transition into P4 at formal school. In response to the pandemic, **Geneva Global** extended the program from one to two years in seeking to continue to support learner readiness to transition to school post pandemic.

> ## BOX 4: "LISTENING GROUPS" TO REACH VULNERABLE CHILDREN
>
> Acknowledging barriers for some children in accessing the national reading response—particularly children who were OOS prior to the pandemic and other vulnerable children—**FHI 360** and partners engaged the support of community leaders to conduct outreach throughout their communities in order to understand how to best support all children to benefit from the radio program. Communities were encouraged to engage local teachers to set up "listening groups" in community centers and other central locations, so that children without radios at home could also benefit from the program. Program data shows that the number of communities hosting listening groups at community centers increased over time.

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7  Kindergarten through grade 4.
8  USAID, Ghana.
9  For example, in data management, data tracking, analytics, accountability and reporting, and other areas for system strengthening.
10 Namely Right To Play, UNICEF, and Lively Minds, Ghana.
11 Results from *USAID Partnership for Education: Learning – Ghana Learning Radio: Reading Program: Ghana Endline Study*, 2022, supplied by FHI 360.

When the MOE released a policy in May 2021 allowing learners in transitional grades[12] to return to the classroom in shifts to prepare for their exams, **Geneva Global** acquired official permission from district education officials for Speed School students to also come to class for in-person teaching programs. By the time classrooms closed again, learners had acquired sufficient skills and knowledge to participate in the home-based learning model, through which they received an activity-based learning packet to complete with caregivers, and were supported remotely by facilitators.

As part of its COVID-19 response, **Geneva Global** also launched a mobile phone-based SMS skill-building strategy alongside rigorous online training sessions for the school inspectors and other agents responsible for training and supporting the Speed School facilitators. Through this, an online community of practice was forged, which helped to keep facilitators engaged in teaching and learning, and ready and motivated to return to the classroom, when possible. The SMS service also served to share skill-building and SEL messages with caregivers, aiding them to support their child's learning, as well as public health messages. **Geneva Global** engaged a private sector company—Frontline SMS—to support with sending SMS en masse.



PHOTO BY KASHISH DAS SHRESTHA FOR USAID

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12 Grades 6, 9, and 12.

# OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

To facilitate the pilot process, including rapid learning and adaptation, World Vision elected to use a measurement tool new to them to monitor and measure results. The Diagnostic and Proficiency Assessment tool—the DAP[13]—was identified as the most effective tool to support initial needs assessments and inform and adapt CUP programming in the three operational contexts. Country offices used the DAPA as a screening tool to identify the most vulnerable children for inclusion in the program—which were children who gained the lowest proficiency scores on the DAPA[14]—and for sorting them into learning levels for instruction. The tool also was used to assess learner progress after participation in the CUP.[15]

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## BOX 5: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES THROUGH EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

When reflecting on his experience during COVID-19, one **Speed School** master trainer from a partner Primary Teachers College observed the anecdotal significance of the community liaison components of his work during the pandemic in working toward social and emotional outcomes at a community level. He said that, during a time of social isolation, facilitators and community members turned to him, not only for technical advice, but also to help them maintain hope in the future and stay connected with each other. He noted that this was important in helping community members realize that they were not alone in their pandemic-related challenges.

This, in turn, reinforced his own moral purpose during the pandemic. "During the pandemic, I learned that I am useful not only for the learners but also for the community at large… Education became the most important thing for people during COVID-19… Helping them to remain positive and focused on education was the most important thing I could do to help build resilience."

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Assessment results suggest that the majority of CUP learners made gains in their literacy and/or numeracy skills. For example, in Ghana, gains in skills were observed in 95% of learners. Of these, all had entered with low proficiencies.[16] Additionally, 26% of learners in Ghana achieved proficiency[17] within the rapid time period of the CUP pilot. Analysis of the Cambodia cohort revealed that learners with the lowest proficiencies at the start of the CUP made the most progress.[18]

Users of the DAPA appreciated its simplicity and practical application during the CUP pilot, which enabled it to be used more readily for programmatic adaptation and learning. For example, it supported in-country program teams to more readily capture learning progression and adapt content accordingly from session to session, and it supported global advisors in shaping its use in future implementation of the CUP in other contexts. **World Vision** notes a limitation of its data collection being the lack of measurement of SEL outcomes during the program, especially given the significant investment of SEL content and methods unique to the CUP. Despite this, implementers in all three countries perceived that learner confidence increased through participation in the CUP and observed SEL gains for facilitators and caregivers involved in the program.

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13  The DAPA is an adapted version of Pratham's ASER assessment tool. One tool measures numeracy and another literacy foundational skills aligned with UNESCO's Global proficiency framework in grades 1 and 2.

14  For example, in Ghana, 97% of CUP learners had literacy scores of 0 (no letter recognition) or 1 (only letter recognition, no word reading).

15  As almost all CUP learners across the contexts were simultaneously attending both school (whether in person or remotely) and the CUP, the results indicate only contribution, not attribution, of the program. No counterfactual group was monitored.

16  Score of 1 in letter recognition, or score of 2 in reading grade-1 level words.

17  When proficiency is defined as skill level 4. Proficiency level 4 includes reading a simple paragraph and answering factual questions for simple comprehension

18  Results from *Catch-Up Programme: Action Learning Report*, World Vision, 2022, supplied by World Vision.

In their endline study,[19] **FHI 360** and the MOE/GES used the ASER assessment tool to measure learning outcomes at four intervals: prior to the commencement of the NRRP (baseline), two midline points, and at the endline. Frequent data collection was used to both capture overall impact and inform needed adaptations to the content of the radio programming. For comparative purposes, assessments were conducted in identified districts with both children who listened to the NRRP and children who did not. Children assessed were between 7 and 9 years old, including both children who attended school[20] before the pandemic and those who did not. Interviews were also conducted with caregivers, community leaders, and children to understand the extent and depth of home-learning engagement.

**FHI 360**'s data showed that those who listened to the NRRP had higher mean ASER level scores[21] and had higher likelihoods of improving upon their ASER level (by at least one level) from the previous period. Additionally, the impact of the NRRP was strongest during the first midline when schools were closed and children had no alternative source of education, compared with the second midline by which time schools had re-opened.[22] ASER assessment results indicated that children's outcomes improved across all demographic and geographic dimensions,[23] with those with caregiver support at home achieving stronger results.

Unlike the other two interventions that developed new measurement tools or systems during the pandemic, **Geneva Global**'s Speed School continued capturing data with the same tools and approaches as prior to the pandemic. Results showed that, of the 6,900 children who enrolled at the onset of the pandemic, nearly 81% of them completed the two-year program, which allowed them to transition to formal education in 2022. Of this group, 76.6% qualified for P4 and the remainder for P3. It is important to note that the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) promoted all P3 entrants in 2020 to P4 in 2022. As such, the results of this cohort are not directly comparable with those of cohorts from the pre-COVID-19 period, and placement in P4 does not necessarily indicate that all classes completed the full curriculum.

**Geneva Global** notes that, whereas its data collection in previous years served largely for impact and accountability purposes, during the pandemic it used this information more to adapt both its approach and content, particularly in terms of learning how to better provide remote support. For example, it used

## BOX 6: CHALLENGES WITH ACCESSING AND GENERATING EVIDENCE ABOUT OOS LEARNERS DURING COVID 19

During social distancing measures and school closures, accessing children and youth in safe ways became a challenge. Formal education institutions provided one avenue through which children could be accessed with interventions. However, children who were OOS before the pandemic were, at times, overlooked by responses. In the case of Speed Schools, the local government already had established methods of identifying and accessing OOS children and youth that, during the pandemic, continued to effectively serve this purpose. In contexts where this mechanism was not already established, OOS children were at risk of becoming further marginalized in the response.

Additionally, as a subgroup in broader responses, time and resource limitations meant it was not always feasible to measure the impacts of interventions on OOS children. Although the nation-wide NRRP response was designed to accommodate the needs of children both in and out of school prior to the pandemic, and although data collection for the program was large (though not representative) across all regions of Ghana, measuring program effectiveness for the relatively small subgroup of OOS children proved a limitation.

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19  Results from *USAID Partnership for Education: Learning – Ghana Learning Radio: Reading Program: Ghana Endline Study*, 2022, supplied by FHI 360
20  Students in Basic 1 to Basic 3.
21  With a likelihood of scoring in levels 4 or 5, which are the highest levels.
22  Learners who listened to the NRRP during the first midline had a higher ASER level by 0.356. Listeners also had higher ASER levels by about 0.212 (out of 5) and by 0.15 (out of 5) at second midline and endline, respectively.
23  Patterns by sex and grade level across subgroups were relatively stable and similar to that of the overall sample.

feedback data from its SMS service to inform content development for further facilitator/caregiver capacity development and networking, and used informal feedback from facilitators to help shape ongoing training and strategic planning with implementation partners.

Although **Geneva Global** ramped up its training and engagement activities with facilitators and caregivers during the pandemic, and sought to support its psychosocial and material wellbeing, time and resource limitations during the pandemic meant that the impacts of these actions have yet to be measured beyond the rate of transition into formal education. **Geneva Global** noted this as a limitation of its data collection during the pandemic. It also noted an inability—thus far—to trace retention and academic performance of students who re-enrolled in school as a result of the Speed School initiative. It reports plans to study the academic performance and social integration of transitioned learners, starting from previous cohorts (completed in 2022) and henceforth including the COVID-19 cohort. **Geneva Global** is also about to commence a longitudinal study with the Development Research and Social Policy Analysis Center (DRASPAC) on the retention of learners from previous cohorts in learning during the pandemic.

# PROMISING PRACTICES

This section of the report considers the factors that have allowed the interventions to identify and mobilize existing assets, resources, networks, and knowledge in the education system—otherwise known as resilience capacities (see Box 7)—to both have impact on their target populations and begin to explore how to scale beyond these immediate response measures.

At the onset of the pandemic, all three interventions were faced with decisions about the scale of their COVID-19 response and methods for measuring the results of each. **World Vision decided to implement a small-scale pilot program in three country offices with the idea of generating evidence to inform a subsequent global scale-up of a new model of catch-up programming**. **World Vision** now has a solid evidence base and a suite of programming resources to inform potential scale-up in 13 additional country offices implementing EiE programming and fundraise for it. **World Vision** continues to test, develop, and generate evidence around the CUP model in other emergency contexts, such as the Venezuela response.

**Alternatively, FHI 360 built on both its existing programming and partnership with government to launch a large-scale response from the outset and generate evidence around it.** The NRRP attempted to reach a national audience via radio. As an early grade reading intervention—the type that already attracted significant investments in Ghana prior to COVID-19—generating evidence around

| **BOX 7. RESILIENCE CAPACITIES** |
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| **Absorptive resilience capacities** – The ability of learners, schools, communities, or institutions to minimize exposure and sensitivity to shocks and stressors through preventative measures and appropriate coping strategies to avoid long-term negative impacts. |
| **Adaptive resilience capacities** – The ability of learners, schools, communities, or institutions to make informed choices and changes in response to longer term social, economic, and environmental change. |
| **Transformative resilience capacities** – The ability of communities and institutions to establish an enabling environment for systemic change through their governance mechanisms, policies and regulations, cultural and gender norms, community networks, and formal and informal social protection mechanisms. |
| *Source: USAID's Transforming Systems in Times of Adversity: Education and Resilience* |

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24 Part of the scale limitation was the guidance and tools were being developed during implementation.

the impacts and efficacy of this program was at the forefront of program design, for which a wide-spread, longitudinal study was conducted.

In all cases, **mechanisms for learning and generating evidence from the interventions extended beyond learning for formative assessment and accountability to include learning for program design and adaptation in the unpredictable COVID-19 context**. As AE and RE actors in a context of potential large-scale learning loss, implementers noted that the pandemic forced them to more closely examine learning gaps and learning loss than they had previously done. To do this, **FHI 360 and World Vision turned to the well-established DAPA and ASER tools, adapted to their contexts**. Both partners note that they will continue to use these tools in future programs due to their simplicity, rigour, and reliability. **FHI 360 also capitalized on the pandemic to address weaknesses in national education data collection**, by supporting the government to strengthen the use of mobile data collection nationally and to strengthen national M&E capacity. One government focal point interviewed noted that the mobile approach will be the "benchmark for monitoring education programs in Ghana moving forward."

**In program design, scope, and implementation, all three interventions remained responsive and adaptive to the unpredictable COVID-19 context and the cycle of school closures and openings**. For example, **Geneva Global** relied on a new communications modality—SMS—to bolster the existing responsiveness of its Speed School approach when supporting facilitators and caregivers to maximize the available teaching and learning space during the pandemic. While many Speed School facilitators already had received training on identifying and drawing on community and household level resources and support, COVID-19 provided them an opportunity to action out of necessity. Additionally, to work around the closure of its learning spaces, **Geneva Global prioritized the mobilization of caregivers to oversee and support their children's learning during home-based study**. In the case of NRRP, when schools reopened, the MOE/GES and **FHI 360** provided guidance to teachers on how to continue to incorporate radio sessions in the classroom, so that it could become a fixture of both **distance and in-person learning**.

All three interventions **leveraged and scaled up their existing partnerships across the sector to expedite their emergency responses**. **World Vision** drew on its existing reputation and credibility in delivering quality education programs, and on its partnerships with both government and community stakeholders in already targeted areas, to launch its pilot programs. This allowed it to rapidly engage community volunteers and gain required approvals for programming. As these actors already were aware of **World Vision** principles and approaches—especially in targeting the most vulnerable with their programs— program acceptance and engagement were expedited.

**FHI 360 was able to use the pandemic as an opportunity to experiment with a new modality of early grade reading support delivered en masse and, based on its long-standing relationship with the MOE, to address more systemic shortcomings**. This influenced systemic change beyond the initial pandemic response, contributing toward greater systemic resilience.

Both **FHI 360** and **Geneva Global invested in new partnerships, including with private sector actors**, to bolster their responses. **FHI 360** and the MOE engaged a range of radio stations—both public and private—to ensure the reach of the NRRP. Also seeking to bolster the reach and effectiveness of components of its intervention, **Geneva Global** engaged the services of a private, U.S.-based SMS messaging service. In both cases, partners plan to continue utilizing the products developed through these partnerships for the value they bring to increasing program scope and impact.

The three interventions deployed various resources, tools, and guidance in the design and implementation of their programs. In the development of the CUP, **World Vision** drew on AEWG and other guidance and

resources.[25] The resources informed the design of the program at a global level, which it then translated for use at a field level. Both **Geneva Global** and **FHI 360** drew on existing, internal content and programs to develop their respective responses during the pandemic. Both also drew on government content and curriculum, which ensured their alignment with government priorities, and would directly reinforce learning upon the return to formal education classrooms. Both organizations also capitalized on their interventions reaching populations at a household and individual level to **support and/or deliver complementary services and messages on PSS, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) to household members**.

# LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT BUILDING RESILIENCE

This final section of the report considers what we have learned from these interventions with regard to adapting to crises, building and demonstrating resilience, and moving beyond addressing an immediate emergency to being embedded within longer-term education programming, particularly for marginalized groups.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has not only identified inequities with the education system but, in many ways, also has exacerbated them. All three organizations noted that the **nationally led education responses in their respective contexts were not adequate to serve the needs of all children, particularly OOS children and youth**. Engaging OOS children in its program was also a challenge in **World Vision**'s CUP pilots which, in light of this, has since (re)examined its target group and, post pandemic, aspires for the CUP to be accessible to OOS children. **FHI 360** attempted to engage marginalized learners in its intervention through community level structures such as "listening groups."

**Facilitators and caregivers** in **Geneva Global**'s response **reported that the exclusion of OOS children from national-level COVID education response catalyzed their desire to develop an independent response to the issue**. Additionally, facilitators reported that, as their skills levels increased through Speed School capacity development opportunities, so too did their motivation to continue. This, they felt, resulted in a virtuous cycle in which they were better able to address the learning needs of OOS children, who responded by persisting with their learning, thus reinforcing their moral imperative. **Geneva Global** also noted that the pandemic has prompted them to reflect internally as an organization about education in crisis contexts and adapt its ways of working. When challenged, they saw the benefit of better mobilizing caregivers and home environments in Speed Schools, especially when the psychosocial wellbeing and basic needs of all stakeholders are addressed through the program.

All three interventions were challenged during the pandemic to strike a balance between the nation-wide risk of learning loss and the capacity of their intervention to deeply address it. While **FHI 360** prioritized scope and reach over depth, engaging over 1 million students in weekly literacy activities, research shows that radio-based interventions, if not designed with marginalized learners in mind from the start, are seldom able to meet their learning needs. Meanwhile, **World Vision** prioritized depth of learner engagement in the program over scope, limiting the number of learners in the pilot program to only 600 learners in its largest program (Zimbabwe). **Geneva Global** chose to maintain its pre-pandemic cohort of 6,900 students in 230 classes. The choices each organization made reflect **strategic identification and mobilizatio** of 1) its own institutional capacities to design and maintain the intervention; 2) existing contextual capacities to support the intervention; and 3) its capacity to learn and generate evidence from its actions to inform future response. In this way, all three interventions ensured that they **not only absorbed the shock of COVID-19, but leveraged it as an opportunity for responsive, adaptive interventions**.

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25 AEWG's Catch-Up Programmes; COVID-19: Pathways for the Return to Learning; and 10 Principles for Effective Practice, USAID's Tool 3.3 Return to Learning, and UNESCO Global Proficiencies framework.

The pandemic context also prompted these three organizations to internally **reflect on their positioning within the education sector and in regard to the "humanitarian-development nexus."** For example, **World Vision** noted that its inclusion of PSS and other protective elements in its response challenged the organization to consider where its education work sits in relation to that of child protection. It has generated evidence of the benefits—for both facilitators and learners of including such elements in its education programming—and will now include PSS and SEL as a core component of its capacity development activities moving forward. Additionally, field-level staff in some of **World Vision**'s country offices are now acknowledging the important role that education can serve as part of wider responses to the endemic challenges of poverty, famine, and natural disaster, having witnessed the power of the CUP in action and education's ability to support not only learning but also wider community wellbeing.

# CONCLUSION

COVID-19 has proven beyond a short-term disruption to the system to be an ongoing stress to learning outcomes, the effects of which are likely to be felt for years to come. These three interventions have moved from simply acting to minimize negative impacts of the pandemic to improving learning and retention including for marginalized learners. They also are creating enabling conditions for systemic change by generating evidence around their interventions and supporting the government to better meet the educaiton needs of children and youth across their contexts, especially those marginalized by mainstream responses. In order to truly meet the needs of OOS and marginalized children, it is important to make them a clear priorty from the start, frame actions around them, bring them into discussions—including around the design of the response—and then monitor their outcomes.

*A synthesis of the findings of this and the other two case studies in the set is available.*
*This case study was prepared by Julie Chinnery, Kayla Boisvert, and Ritesh Shah under the United States*
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