

## Post-Covid catch-up: world could recoup \$1trn a year by using proven ‘accelerated learning’ approaches for pandemic-affected children

- Global study highlights key lessons from accelerated learning across Africa and beyond, condensing three school years into one
- Foundation offers governments [evidence-based guide](#) to inform catch-up learning, calls for education to be placed at heart of pandemic recovery

**Zurich, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022** - The world economy could recover more than US\$1 trillion a year from future GDP lost to the pandemic, *if* countries use proven ‘accelerated education’ approaches to help children catch up on lost learning, an educational foundation said today.

[Education.org](#), a non-profit initiative to bring the world’s best available evidence into the hands of education leaders, calculates that using effective accelerated learning practices could slash projected pandemic-related earnings losses, allowing governments to recover US\$42 trillion over the lifetime of the young people affected.

The calculation builds on [McKinsey estimates](#) of earning losses, combined with Education.org’s analysis of accelerated education experiences worldwide. This research shows how the most effective of these initiatives condense three school grades into a nine or ten-month period, cutting the length of instruction by two-thirds. They achieve this through approaches that include compressing the curriculum to focus on literacy and numeracy, supporting educators to teach in a more child-focused, activity-based way, and forging strong links with communities to support the learning and wider wellbeing of vulnerable young people.

As many children will soon begin a new academic term, and governments prepare for the United Nations [Transforming Education Summit](#) in New York on 19 September, Education.org’s founder and CEO Dr Randa Grob-Zakhary said the time had come to move beyond outlining the scale of the global learning crisis, to acting aggressively on the evidence to solve it.

“Our estimates quantify the economic gains that could be made if countries apply the best lessons drawn from a decade of accelerated education, used in many countries to help children missing school due to extreme poverty, conflict, refugee crises and the Ebola epidemic,” she said.

“While COVID-19 has ushered in the worst educational crisis in history, with huge implications for the futures of a generation of children, the good news is that leaders can accelerate learning for all children if they put in place thoughtful policies based on the evidence.”

Children worldwide on average [lost eight months](#) of learning to full or partial school closures during lockdowns, but this figure masks wide variations. According to [latest figures](#) from the World Bank, United Nations and partners, 70 per cent of 10-year-olds in low and middle-income countries are now unable to read a simple written text, up from 57 per cent pre-pandemic.

While accelerated education techniques have normally been used to help integrate out-of-school children into formal education systems, Dr Grob-Zakhary said the lessons from them can also help the millions of children who are in school but have fallen behind.

Until now, guidance for education leaders on how to use accelerated education to close learning gaps has been highly fragmented and has not taken national contexts into account. To address this gap, Education.org has packaged a wide range of global evidence, much of it previously unpublished, into a [Evidence Synthesis](#), and a [High-Level Policy Guidance Document](#), outlining the steps education leaders can take to strengthen accelerated learning in their countries.

Ethiopia's "Speed Schools" are highlighted as an effective example. Over the past decade, they have helped more than 250,000 out-of-school 9–14-year-olds into education, transitioning 95 per cent of them into formal schooling with higher-than-average results. Speed Schools are so successful they have been adopted by the government, with a dedicated Speed School Unit, and the model has spread elsewhere.

As well as Ethiopia, Education.org's peer reviewed analysis includes a deeper look at accelerated learning experiences in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Uganda. It highlights the importance of:

- Starting with a thorough assessment of the national or local situation in each country
- Anchoring accelerated learning into existing national education plans, curricula, and calendars
- Implementing policies for the flexible assessment, placement, and promotion of learners
- Supporting the role of communities in enrolling, teaching, and retaining children in school

With the UN Transforming Education Summit (16-19 September) setting out to tackle 'the profound structural flaws of education systems worldwide', Dr.Grob-Zakhary said the lessons of accelerated learning programmes have a wider role to play in reimagining education systems to tackle a profound global crisis which saw 258 million children out of school even before the pandemic.

"In the successes of accelerated education programmes across Africa and beyond – in their pragmatism, their child-centred approach to learning, and the support they give to teachers and communities - we believe lie some of the answers for how the world could fast track educational recovery and transform education systems from the bottom up," she said.

#### **Notes to editors:**

- For more information, interviews with Dr Grob-Zakhary and in-country partners, plus case studies from accelerated education across Africa, please contact:
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- To read Education.org's research, please visit: <https://education.org/accelerated-learning>

#### **About Education.org**

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