

Launch Event for Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG)
Talking Points by Ita Sheehy

What is the Accelerated Education Working Group?

The Accelerated Education Working Group is made up of education partners working in Accelerated Education. The working group is currently led by UNHCR with representation from UNICEF, UNESCO, USAID, NRC, Plan, IRC, Save the Children, the Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN), and War Child Holland.

We started in late 2014, when UNHCR invited a small number of education partners working in the area of Accelerated Education to participate in the formation of a working group.

Our overall goal is to strengthen the quality of Accelerated Education programming through a more harmonized, standardized approach.

Why do we have an AEWG?

Globally, Accelerated Education programs are being employed with more frequency to address the overwhelming numbers of out-of-school children and youth, and while there is widespread agreement on the need for such programming among agencies and governments, there is insufficient validated documentation that provides guidance, standards, and indicators for efficient program planning, implementation, and monitoring.

In practice, Accelerated Education takes different forms in different countries, and even within countries.

Moreover, there is little significant documentation on the impact of such programming, including how far we are contributing to learning achievement and how successful we are at facilitating pathways between accelerated programming and formal and non-formal education.

To address some of these specific challenges related to Accelerated Education, starting with the lack of guidance and standards, the working group was formed in late 2014.

What do we do?

You'll find out more about what we've been doing today, but overall, we share experiences and expertise and provide an opportunity for dialogue around a more harmonized, standardized approach.

Based on the aim for a more harmonized approach to Accelerated Education, the working group has developed guidance materials and tools based on international

standards and sound practice that we are launching today.

One of our first tasks was to develop an accepted definition of Accelerated Education, which is:

A flexible, age-appropriate program, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth. This may include those who missed out on, or had their education interrupted by, poverty, marginalization, conflict, or crisis. The goal of Accelerated Education Programs is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.

Our definition emphasizes the importance of flexibility and certification.

There are many examples of Accelerated Education Programs that do not provide any certification. If AE programs do not result in certification or are not recognized by Ministries of Education then students end up with a 'qualification' that has no legitimacy and which does not allow them to transition to the next level.

The working group also defined several other key program definitions to provide clarity with what accelerated education isn't. You can find these key program definitions in your pack.

Objectives and Activities for 2017

I'll end by telling you a little more about what we plan to do.

We have three areas of focus: advocacy, evidence, and the dissemination and use of the tools guidance and tools.

Our first area is advocacy. We will focus on improving Accelerated Education policy and systems through advocacy at both a national and international level through the development of key messages, a policy brief, and engagement plans for donors and Ministries of Education.

We will communicate and promote key messages through blogs, websites, and webinars and at international education conferences and events.

I'd like to point out that there is a new Accelerated Education page on the INEE website and we also have all our new materials on the Education in Conflict and Crisis Network website too.

Our second area of focus is evidence. Earlier this year the working group finalized its learning agenda, which you will hear more about later, to strengthen the evidence base for Accelerated Education through research and knowledge management. Now

we hope to establish partnerships and conduct research.

Our last area of focus is to improve Accelerated Education programming through the development, promotion, and dissemination of Accelerated Education guidance and tools, including the translation into additional languages of the tools that we are launching today, as well as the development of an Accelerated Education toolbox containing a how-to guide, Accelerated Education indicators, log frame and monitoring tools.

Conclusion

Our overall goal is to strengthen the quality of Accelerated Education programming. The collaboration between agencies in the Accelerated Education Working Group, which is our strength, has given us a wide breadth of technical expertise and experience, working at different levels and from a variety of organizations, which has improved the development of the tools and guidance materials.

We hope that through the dissemination and use of these tools the quality of Accelerated education programming will improve for the most vulnerable and marginalized who are most likely to find it difficult to access and complete their education.