Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Africa Code Week (ACW) Women Empowerment Program (WEP)

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

38 African countries

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- ☐ Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- ☐ Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- ☐ Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- ☑ Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- ☐ Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Camden Education Trust (CET), SAP, Irish Aid

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Quality education
Barriers for girls
Africa
Africa Code Week
Women Empowerment Program
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
Teacher training
Female leadership
Digital learning
Gender equality
Inclusion
Social impact
Innovation

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The ACW Women Empowerment Program is a unique Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program designed to equip African female teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully teach, inspire, mentor, and prepare girls for tomorrow's tech workplace. - It brings together African female teachers and educators in Computer Science and STEM to foster an educational, collaborative, and innovative environment that supports the work of SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 17. - It provides a bilingual, activity-driven, group-based, 'multimodal' approach to professional development across 38 African countries. - The program is proving to be a scalable CPD with every WEP event and workshop cycle being designed for both in-country and continental delivery. - Its sustainable growth relies as much on its ability to welcome new participants as on the way it guides them through a structured leadership and upskilling pathway.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)
   This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

   i) Which population was affected?
   ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
   iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

   With 1 out of 3 children missing out on remote learning because of today's unprecedented challenges, the role of teachers in community-based societies has never been so central. Reinforcing female teachers' leadership is even more crucial to prepare girls for a tech-centric future where $12 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025 by advancing women's equality (McKinsey Global Institute).
   SAP, UNESCO YouthMobile, Irish Aid, the Camden Education Trust and the Moroccan Ministry of National Education trusted that capacity-building programs such as ACW were the best place to start, empowering teachers in the classroom and targeting girls at a young age through fair access to education and representation. This is how they launched the first Women Empowerment Program (WEP) in Rabat, Morocco in 2019.

   This unique Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program equips African female teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully teach, inspire, mentor, and prepare girls for tomorrow's tech workplace. It builds female educators' capacity to not only increase girls' access to digital learning but also address health and educational barriers impacting girls in their communities.
   The WEP is pursuing 3 goals:
   1. To provide a program enabling female educators to build leadership capacity.
   2. To create a program enabling female educators and their students to build digital skills
   3. To build female educator capacity to address health, and educational barriers impacting girls in their communities.
   Three years, a global pandemic and a resulting 20 million girls who might not go back to school later, the WEP is leveraging virtual platforms to upskill female teachers across more countries and to collect precious data on the ground for applied research purposes - measuring the WEP influence in communities as well as capturing the impact of the COVID crisis on girls' access to education in Africa.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)
Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:
i) What are the main activities carried out?
ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

The WEP provides professional development to female educators across Africa seeking to deepen leadership expertise to enhance teaching and learning in a 21st century context. It provides events and workshops designed to support women working across educational organisations addressing barriers impacting women and girls accessing health, technology, and education services in their communities.

The series was designed to 'create an experience that brings together African women teachers and leaders to share experiences, learn new skills, and form an ongoing community of practice, and also to provide high-level professional development for participants in the areas of leadership, communications, digital skills, gender equality, global citizenship, and resilience'.

- To facilitate teacher enrolment across the various school calendars, the WEP offers two 7-week series every year with a number of special events running in between.

- ACW Ambassadors and WEP staff nominate applicants with each applicant then evaluated in accordance with the Program Recruitment Protocol.

- Workshop 1 covers the setup of tools and equipment for online teaching and learning, and workshops' 2 to 7 include group work, with time to focus on a skill or competency (including leadership, storytelling, design thinking, communication skills through pitching an idea, taking part in a gender challenge and end of series challenge, and wellness).

- Each workshop follows the same structure involving group work, a live music performance, a 'fireside' activity with invited speakers, a technical or skills challenge, 'teachers corner', a 'mindfulness' session' complemented by group project work.

- Project work follows the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design Five Stage Design Thinking Process (Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test) with teams delivering projects which capture solutions addressing topics including girls access to education, and technology and infrastructure barriers.

- All workshops are delivered online with zoom video conferencing. Both facilitators and participants use WhatsApp groups to communicate and collaborate throughout the series.

- Workshops and materials are provided in English and French. Separate streams run for English speaking and French speaking participants with two interpreters working in real time during each session providing language support.

- The WEP leverages the UNESCO Media Information Literacy (MIL) curriculum to enable educators and learners to develop critical thinking and problem-solving competencies as a fundamental part of lifelong learning. The curriculum highlights an array of intersecting skills to transform interactions within constantly changing information and online/offline learning environments.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)
   To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:
   i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
   ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
   iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

   A. Progression Model
   The WEP is a fast-growing family of 381 alumnae across 38 countries to date. As a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program, the WEP's sustainable growth relies as much on its ability to welcome new participants as on the way it guides them through a structured leadership and upskilling pathway:
   • New participants enter the program through nomination by WEP Alumnae or ACW Ambassadors or through open call registration.
   • At the end of a series, participants are encouraged to volunteer as 'facilitators' in future cycles and trained accordingly.
   • Facilitators are invited to present at WEP global events and trained accordingly.
   • Facilitators are encouraged to move into a leadership role contributing content into future sessions as co-moderators and trained accordingly.
   • Co-moderators are encouraged to implement ACW WEP chapters locally with communications support available.

   B. Research Findings
   CET has invested in research over the past 2 years to shape and improve WEP program offerings against our objectives, address barriers and challenges, disseminate our findings and report methods so others can learn from our experiences and last but not least, inform policy. It revealed the WEP to be an accessible online context for female educators to continue in their professional development during a period of significant educational change, and uncertainty, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

   First, research reveals how the WEP delivers on its key program goals:
   1. Research provides evidence of female educators building leadership capacity through attending ACW WEP workshop cycles – with 90% of participants self-identifying as a leader at the end of each series.
   2. Research captures evidence of panelists sharing digital expertise, and educators applying digital skills and using the design thinking process to create projects that respond to SDG's 4 and 5 challenges.
   3. Research provides evidence of the use of the event / workshop methodology and group work to support educators address 'health, community, education, technology and policy' barriers to girls' education, with educators using the program as a platform to amplify their stories and experiences. In 2022, the WEP also set out to explore the barriers to girl education in Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings from the research informed a paper which will be due for publication in Q4 2022.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)
    To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:
    i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
    ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
    iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The WEP is a shining example of like-minded partners at work in support of SDG17. In line with the Irish government's policy outlined in A Better World, the diplomatic missions of Ireland in Africa have been working hand in hand with SAP and CET to onboard female teachers and girl mentors into the WEP. Their support has helped enroll over 94 participants and 14 facilitators from 30 countries into the September 2021 series alone.
A true WEP highlight, panel discussions provide an acclaimed platform for intelligent discussion and open debate. Global advocates for girls, policy makers, scholars, change makers: the WEP brings together high-level experts on the strategic topics pertaining to SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 17. Since 2019, the team had the honor to welcome 20 policy makers, authors, pedagogues, industry experts and ambassadors from 10+ countries.

The progression model works so well that in 2022, it evolved from four to five stages, now offering facilitators with the opportunity to present at WEP global events and to be trained accordingly.

Most of the tools used during workshops are also used by the team to communicate both internally and externally, creating a community of practice around digital tools supporting 21st century teaching.

Social media also proved to be a powerful way for SAP, CET and Irish Aid to shed light on the women they work so hard to empower year after year, and the impact the WEP has on them. To ensure optimal coverage, all WEP news items are relayed through both the CamdenEdu & ACW Twitter, Facebook & Instagram handles. They shed precious light on African teacher profiles, stories and best practices with regards to SDGs 3, 4, 5 and 17 actively supported by ACW and the WEP.

The first local chapter was held in Zimbabwe in 2021 with its own research being conducted in parallel. It forms part of our WEP 2019-2021 impact study.

11. Conclusions (250 words)
Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice". What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

Three years after inception, the ACW WEP program continues to provide an accessible online context for female educators to continue in their professional development during a period of significant changes and uncertainty, due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The program design, utilising one day events, full workshop series, or shorter in-country implementations, combined with facilitation sessions and spot light research initiatives enabled educators and program managed to address CPD needs.

Research further reveals that:
- The program content provided an opportunity for educators to review their practice against SDG: 3, (Good Health and Well-Being); 4 (Quality Education); SDG: 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG: 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) as well as develop capacity in Design Thinking skills.
- Dual language program delivery (in English and French), also continued to promote inclusion - enabling educators from different countries and educational contexts to share social, cultural, professional, and personal journeys with peers in a safe and supported online environment.
- The program is proving to be a scalable CPD enabling every WEP event and workshop cycle to be designed for both in-country and continental delivery moving forward.

12. Further reading
Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the "best practice" for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

Available on request:
- 2020 WEP historical analysis
- 2021 WEP report – complete (including local chapter events)
- 2022 WEP report - ongoing (including local chapter events and comparison data)
- 2022 WEP COVID-19 Impact Conference Paper
- 2022 WEP COVID-19 Impact Journal Paper - in preparation