



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.) *

SPEED SCHOOLS: A 9-month Accelerated Education Program for Out of School Children in the Sahel region

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso

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) *

Plan International/Strømme Foundation

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

Out-of-school children, Accelerated Education Program, Learning, remedial & catch-up classes, Conflict-affected children, Gender equality

6. What makes it a best practice? *

What makes it a best practice? The Speed School model approach can be identified as a “best practice” because it has been successfully experimented in different countries with similar context. It has involved community active participation who were providing infrastructures and local teachers after rigorous screen and intensive training to enable access to education for over hundred thousand students in speed schools even in remote areas affected by conflict. This approach also has been approved and supported by the Ministries of Education of the three countries especially by facilitating the reintegration process of OOSC in the education system. Guidelines and resources for the implementation of Speed schools exist and could be contextualized. Innovations and lessons learned throughout the life of PASS+ have informed the design of new projects developed by implementing partners.

- Speed schools allowed OOSC enrollment into primary schools through a transitioning program
- The project focused on strengthening psychosocial learning for children's resilience
- Gender and inclusion were embedded in the intervention
- The collaboration with the community and the government
- To ensure educational continuity in a sensitive security context, the Primary School Access through Speed Schools (PASS+) project implemented by Plan International, and the Strømme Foundation prepared educational booklets that were shared with students during COVID 19. The project recognized that such an approach could be launched quickly and might be better suited to the learning needs of their beneficiaries than traditional remote learning approaches, such as radios. Innovations and lessons learned throughout the life of PASS+ have informed the design of new projects developed by implementing partners. These takeaways were shared with the Ministries of Education within the context of the transfer of competencies between the joint Permanent Secretariat and Ministries of Education of each country, respectively. This represented an important opportunity to contribute to the consolidation of the Speed School model at the national level. Several partners across the three countries were invited to help the review of the learning curriculum and updating of standards and practices. Based on the impressive results achieved with the PASS+ project, Plan International has initiated several projects using the same approach. The project achieved great results with these good practices:
- 4,348 Speed Schools opened
- 115,138 (49% girls) OOSC (90%) of Speed School learners have taken the primary school placement exam
- 79% of these same learners have transferred into primary school
- 86,274 children benefitted from remedial classes
- 68,607 school kits distributed
- 38% of SSMC members were female
- 42% of animators (Speed schools teachers) were female

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? *

According to the latest UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data, it is estimated that 59 million primary school-aged children are out of school worldwide; half of whom are girls who face deep-rooted gender barriers to education. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for around 32 million primary school-aged out-of-school children (OOSC), with Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger having some of the largest numbers of OOSC (over 3,7 million) in the world and in sub-Saharan Africa, relative to their populations. In addition, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger share a multitude of similar and complex challenges to their educational systems: inadequate education financing and consequent shortages in educational inputs, high levels of poverty, drought, conflict, displacement, and gender and cultural barriers. Progress in reaching the Agenda 2030 SDG 4, in ensuring equal access to quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities, has been slow. In response to the urgency of the situation for OOSC, the Governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have made commitments over the past two decades to significantly increase educational access, quality, and equity through various strategies and programs; however, despite these efforts by the states and development partners, the situation of OOSC remains concerning. Reaching the remaining OOSC requires additional focus and large-scale innovative, flexible, and strategically targeted interventions to address the unique barriers these OOSC face.

To ensure these OOSC rights to education are fulfilled, a second chance was given to these children through the Primary School Access through Speed Schools (PASS+) project. This will be an opportunity to resume their Education using a 9-month Accelerated Education program which is a condensed program of the first 3 years of primary education. The Primary School Access through Speed Schools (PASS+) project aimed to increase access to inclusive and gender-responsive formal and non-formal primary education for OOSC ages 6-14 in 15 regions of Burkina Faso (5), Mali (6), and Niger (4).

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? *

With a budget of 43 M USD, the Primary School Access through Speed Schools (PASS+) project was implemented between July 2016 and September 2021. The project aimed at increasing access to inclusive and gender-responsive formal and non-formal primary education for out-of-school children ages 6-14 in 15 regions of Burkina Faso (5), Mali (6), and Niger (4). The project was implemented by Plan International and the Strømme Foundation, with support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as implementers, in partnership with Educate A Child, a global program of the Education Above All Foundation.

The model was originally developed by the Strømme Foundation and was adapted and scaled up with Plan International to meet the needs of Out of School Children, given the worsening conflict and crisis in the Sahel region.

This approach begins with the identification of out-of-school children after a community mobilization with the strong involvement of community-based organizations and community leaders. Community members and project staff work together with the support of decentralized education technical services and based on criteria to select non-formal education teachers (also called Animators). They are selected to participate in intensive training to be able to teach in the Speed Schools.

Children participate in 2 months of learning in the relevant local language, which is the Preparation phase for learning in the national education language (French). The children then switch and continue their learning in French for a period of 7 months to develop further in French including basic grammar, Math, life skills (i.e., communication, critical thinking, self-awareness building skills, and coping with stress), Sports and Arts to align with the national curriculum.

At the end of the program, a placement test is organized by the MoE officials to determine the grades of transfer in primary school. Remedial courses are also organized to provide extra pedagogical assistance to vulnerable children in Grades 3 and 4 in each primary school that accepts children transferred from Speed Schools using their class teachers.

Animators, supervisors, or coordinators, receive additional training on skills useful in a conflict or crisis context, such as psychosocial support for children or stress management for teachers to build resilience and maintain educational continuity. A protocol for the opening and closing the project's Speed Schools was developed to formalize the decision-making process in case of threats or risks. This careful approach ensured the continuity of the intervention throughout the school year without putting beneficiaries and staff at risk.

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? *

Overall, 4,348 Speed Schools were open during the lifetime of the project. At the end of the program 115,138 (49% girls), OOSC were enrolled. 90% of Speed School learners have taken the primary school placement exam and 79% of them have transferred into primary schools. To support their integration into formal schools' remedial classes were organized reaching 86,274 children, including other primary school students who are underperforming in school. Learning kits were also distributed to children.

The PASS+ project has enabled the enrolment of marginalized OOSC such as girls and those with disabilities: awareness campaigns were implemented to promote the enrolment of OOSC. The project fostered inclusive and gender-sensitive learning environments through the training of Speed Schools staff and primary school teachers on gender and inclusion issues. Infrastructures, such as latrines, took into consideration gender aspects. As a result, partners report an increase in student enrolment, particularly of girls, both in the Speed Schools centers and primary schools. The final evaluation of the project showed that the average satisfaction level of students in Speed and primary schools was 82%, up from 80% at the project's start. The average level of knowledge of leaders and community members about the importance of education for girls and boys increased significantly, from 46% to 56%.

This community-based model has been institutionalized and integrated into the strategies of the Ministries of Education of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, to accelerate the enrolment of OOSC. Initially, the model was overseen by the Speed School Permanent Secretariat, a body set up jointly by the three Ministries of Education in collaboration with Strømme Foundation. As of 2019, all countries have established special units/departments within the Ministries to develop guidelines, revise the curriculum and regulate the model.

The PASS+ project has also contributed to changing social norms in the communities, particularly on issues such as early marriage, gender relations, and decision-making. In a survey conducted in three countries cases of early marriage have decreased substantially as a result of the extensive awareness raising on the importance of girls' schooling and on early marriage as a key barrier to education

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? *

Community Participation & Sensitization

When parents and communities do not see value in education, they lose interest in children's education. This results in high non-enrollment and drop-out rates. To address this, radio campaigns and community sensitization were conducted to promote the benefits of education.

Speed School Management Committees play an important role in the day-to-day management and in advocating for the transfer and tracking of SS learners into primary school.

During project lifetime, actors and participating communities have come to recognize the impact and value of the program and as a result, initiated the creation of additional schools.

Engagement and collaboration with Ministries of Education.

The project was implemented with strong collaboration with Ministries of Education through their decentralized services including the entities in charge of Speed Schools. They were supporting training, monitoring of Speed Schools, supervision of student's placement tests, and meetings at the district and national levels. PASS+ advocated with the MoE to allow learners in SS to have access to school canteens which helped retain learners in SS centers.

COVID-19 Adaptation: To ensure educational continuity during COVID-19 outbreak, the project developed educational booklets which could be completed by learners on their own. Following the reopening of learning infrastructures, learners were able to complete the Speed School program. This booklet can be leveraged in future crises.

Challenges

- Primary schools may have limited capacity to receive learners from Speed Schools.
- The lack of formal certification at end of the Speed School program and the lack of a national Speed school register create challenges in the transfer of learners into primary schools other than the ones they are assigned to. This specifically affects refugees or IDPs.
- OOSC often lack birth certificates which are important for enrolment in primary schools.
- Children with disabilities enrolled in Speed Schools were not adequately supported.

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)? *

The Speed School model approach can be identified as a “best practice” because it has successfully experimented in different countries with similar contexts. It has involved community active participation to enable access to education for over a hundred thousand learners even in remote areas and affected by conflicts. This approach has been approved and supported by the Ministries of Education of the three countries that have facilitated the reintegration process of OOSC in the education system. Guidelines and resources for the implementation of Speed schools exist and could be contextualized.

Innovations and lessons learned throughout the life of PASS+ have informed the design of new projects developed by implementing partners. These takeaways were shared with the Ministries of Education within the context of the transfer of competencies between the joint Permanent Secretariat and Ministries of Education of each country, respectively. This represented an important opportunity to contribute to the consolidation of the Speed School model at the national level. Several partners across the three countries were invited to help review the learning curriculum and updating of standards and practices. Based on the results achieved with the PASS+ project, Plan International has initiated several projects using the same approach. For future programmatic experiences, it would be essential to give priority to community mobilization; for sustainability, ensure institutional engagement from the Ministries of Education to support the quality of the program and children retention in the education system; consider the most marginalized groups such as girls and children with disabilities.

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. *

Plan International, Fondation Strømme (2021) : Project final evaluation

Plan International, Fondation Strømme (2021) : Tracer survey

Reimagining Girls’ Education Solutions to Keep Girls Learning in Emergencies, p. 21

<https://www.unicef.org/media/94201/file/Reimagining%20Girls%20Education%20Solutions%20to%20Keep%20Girls%20Learning%20in%20Emergencies%20.pdf>