Strengthening Community-Led Actions on Education and Disaster Preparedness Project

**Funded by
the European Union**

Promoting Education Continuity in Emergencies Study Report

February 2023

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This document covers humanitarian aid activities implemented with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the European Union, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Acknowledgements

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Cover page picture
Source: https://www.wvi.org/disaster-management/education-emergencies

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Acronyms

ALA	Alternative Learning Approach
CALA	Continuous Assessment of Learning Activity
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CCW	Child Care Worker
CIPRSC	Cyclone Idai Preparedness and Resilience in Schools and Communities
CLC	Community Learning Centres
COVID-19	Corona Virus
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DDC	District Development Coordinator
DP	Disaster Preparedness
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DSI	District School Inspector
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EiE	Education in Emergencies
FFA	Force Field Analysis
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IGATE-T	Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition, and Education Outcomes (Transition)
JDP	Justice and Development Pathways
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance
QA	Quality Assurance
RDC	Rural District Council
SCALE-DP	Strengthening Community-Led Actions on Education and Disaster Preparedness
SDRMC	School Disaster Reduction Management Committees
SNV	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers
ToT	Training of Trainers
WHH	Welthungerhilfe
WV	World Vision

Executive summary

Introduction and Background

The primary focus of the study was to evaluate Alternative Learning Approaches (ALAs) used to address major and minor disruptions to traditional instruction in primary, secondary, and high schools to support the development of a response framework in the Zimbabwean context. The first phase of the study involved an inventory to determine which ALAs had already been implemented. This important phase was followed by an analysis of the approaches to explore their appropriateness and effectiveness, as well as the possibility of scaling up. The research was conducted from March – June, 2022 in the following Districts; Buhera, Gokwe, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho. In Buhera, Nkayi and Tsholotsho, the study evaluated ALAs by other projects in the districts for the possibilities of scaling up. Similarly, Gokwe South and Mberengwa were deliberately considered since the two districts were participating in the Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition, and Education (IGATE-T-T) project, which was supported by World Vision and other partners.[1]The IGATE-T-T project was employing some ALAs in the context of COVID-19. As the current ECHO-funded SCALE-DP project focuses on promoting continuity of education in the context of disasters, it remains critical to identify existing complementary efforts and create synergies for replication.

Research Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. This helped to improve the evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another. The mixed-method approach allowed data triangulation in order to increase the data trustworthiness. The explorative research approach used was mostly qualitative and it was influenced by the grounded theory to assess experiences and perceptions of stakeholders in the context of ALAs in emergencies. A total of 37 key informant interviews (KIIs), 19 force field analysis (FFA) sessions (192 learners), 15 FFA sessions (181 committee members), and 2 case studies (learners), constituted qualitative data. Desk review and observations were among key data collection sources. Thus, 309 girls and 278 boys participated in the study. In total, there were 375 participants and 395 respondents gathered from 19 schools, thus giving a total sample of 770. Out of the 770, there were 98 adult females and 85 male adults, totalling 183. From the 770, learners constituted 587; and 309 were girls, while 278 were boys. Of the 587 learners, 192 were participants, while 395 were respondents. The age groups of learners interviewed were 10-14, 15-18, and 19-24 years. The data collection methods employed allowed to solicit reflections, perceptions and innermost feelings from key stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the project. The respondents constituted primary and secondary learners, parents (local communities), government line ministries and implementing partners. For learners, the project engaged Grades 6 and 7; and Forms 4, 5 and 6, and they were gender balanced.

Research Key Findings

Mapping of ALAs- The interaction processes with the various stakeholders and respondents extracted a total of fourteen distinctive ALAs namely:

- Community Radio lessons
- Reading materials provided through community learning centres
- National Radio lessons
- Reading/studying alone at home
- Study group/discussions with peers
- Virtual/online lessons with 'my' teacher
- Virtual/online lessons-with another teacher/person

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[1]Care International, Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (SNV), which means "Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers", Open University, Word Bicycle Relief, Emthonjeni Women`s Forum, Udacia and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

- Extra lessons with 'my' teacher (regular teacher)-physical/face- to- face.
- Extra lessons with another teacher/person-physical
- Electronic reading materials/soft copies from 'my' teacher
- Electronic reading materials/soft copies from another teacher/person.
- National television lessons
- Workbooks
- Extra lessons from family members

The top reported or ALAs frequently used by learners during lockdowns were:

- Community Radio Lessons (49.5%),
- Reading/studying alone at home (8.1%),
- Extra lessons with another teacher/person -physical (7.8%),
- Extra lessons with my teacher (physical) (7.1%),
- Study group/discussions with peers (5.6%),
- Virtual learning material from my teacher – phone (5.6%), and
- Reading materials provided through community learning centres (5.6%).

Analysis of ALAs - Demographic data were collected, analyzed and disaggregated according to gender and age across Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho districts to ensure the voices of all learners (including boys and girls) are heard. The design targeted a 1:1 sex ratio. However, a respondent sex ratio of 1:1.17 males to females was obtained. Demographic findings indicate that there are more female respondents than males in Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa and Tsholotsho. This scenario in a way, assisted to magnify the voice of the girl child in the study. Owing to the design of the study where more sampling weight was put on primary school learners, the majority of the face-to-face respondents were in all the districts (Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho), between 10-14 years, with Gokwe South having the highest number of females in this age group. Primary school learners comprised Grades 6 and 7, while secondary school learners were from forms 4 to 6. This was deliberately done to ensure that mature learners respond to the questions. The 15-18 age group was thinly distributed in all the study areas. Finally, the number of 19-24-year olds, was insignificant only in Nkayi district. The research assistants used tablets to collect data.

Relevant policies and legislation that promote ALAs were reviewed through desk review and identified through key informant discussions. Implementation of the ALAs is in line with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) Zimbabwe COVID-19 Preparedness Strategy. The country also developed and enacted the Education Amendment Act 2020, which legalizes ALAs using technology (including and not limited to radios, tablets, smartphones). Parents had to assist learners with gadgets and data bundles. Zimbabwe developed a national ICT policy, which makes references to ICTs in education. The ICT policy also promotes equal access to ICT from a gender lens, although little has been done to support learners with the required materials and resources necessary to use ICT at household level and focus on learners with disabilities needs to be strengthened. A National Disability Policy was crafted in 2021, which promotes education inclusivity of learners with disabilities, considering their diversity (e.g., visual, hearing, intellectual and physical impairments, communication challenges, and those with albinism), with section 3.9 focusing on education. The section has 37 subsections that further make provisions for inclusive and equitable education to learners with disabilities. Additionally, Zimbabwe enacted the Civil Protection Act of 1989 to guide disaster risk management interventions and create an enabling environment to respond to disasters. The MoPSE has been consistently using circulars to make necessary adjustments to ensure education continuity is promoted even during disaster situations. Circulars are policy documents that are generated by MoPSE to schools to guide programming of activities in schools.

Community radios lessons were the most used ALA by primary and secondary learners to access education across the five districts and it was mostly used in Buhera followed by Tsholotsho, given

their cost effectiveness and reach, in comparison to ALA #2. There were cost effective in the sense that, the radios use solar energy, and they are affordable. The radios are solar powered and cost between USD12.00-15.00. Thus, the community radio lessons had minimal costs, which made them more suitable in rural areas where people have limited financial resources. Solar radios were procured by World Vision in the framework of the DG ECHO funded project. This was meant to address challenges relating to radios and power, where priority was given to communities that had the lowest number of radios per household and or insufficient radio signals for learners to benefit from the national radio lessons. There was no direct cost for the communities, except that of maintenance. Thus, the communities and schools were responsible for the maintenance of the radios. The facilitator also required a USB where all the lessons were loaded. Pre-recorded lessons developed by MoPSE in collaboration with development partners were distributed to community volunteers who provided supportive supervision to learners. The lessons were aligned to the syllabi. The approach excited several learners and triggered high attendance. The solar radios were thus distributed to community learning champions or volunteers (such as retired teachers and holders of minimum qualifications, who were capacitated to facilitate and supervise learners and support home-based learning. Teachers and community volunteers were responsible for maintaining the solar radios. The community radio lessons were in alignment with the syllabus, which has implications for improved learning. The learners also improved in listening skills; as well as social skills through interacting with peers. Again, these have implications on improved learning.

Through community radio lessons, access to education improved in the absence of teachers and the distance travelled to school was minimised. Learners` attendance was monitored through registers which were administered by facilitators. The approach does not need any network coverage or frequencies. Whilst the approach managed to use local solutions to promote education continuity through working with community volunteers or facilitators, the strategy was laden with capacity challenges as the volunteers were not trained teachers. Also, lack of motivation among facilitators was another issue as they were not remunerated for the work. In addition, there was limited supervision of community volunteers due to resource constrains; thus, limiting supervision by the schools and the MoPSE district offices.

While the approach was inclusive in terms of gender and age, challenges have been encountered in addressing the needs of learners with disabilities, especially learners with hearing impairment. Whereas this ALA can be replicated or scaled up, the importance of addressing the needs of learners with disabilities cannot be underestimated if community radio is to effectively function. Lessons learned and solutions to overcome these challenges have to be analysed and identified to ensure proper inclusion of learners with disabilities, specifically learners with hearing impairment. In terms of child protection, deliberate efforts were made as most of the volunteers are childcare workers who are custodians of child protection and safeguarding issues at community level.

Reading/Studying Alone at Home was another learning approach implemented by learners in the selected districts, facilitated mainly with the support of parents and guardians while at home. While the ALA was used across all districts, it was mainly used in Nkayi followed by Gokwe. The study indicates that 40% of female learners and 33% of male learners at primary level, were satisfied with studying at home. However, more secondary level male learners preferred to study alone at home (77.8%) compared to their female counter parts (40%) owing to the need to perform household chores. This approach also inculcates a reading culture among learners and helps them interpret issues and understand them better. Reading at home was more pronounced at secondary school level than the primary levels. The absence of adequate infrastructure like study rooms, tables and chairs and electricity among other essentials in rural settings, constrains studying at home, despite it being a generally efficient way for learners to revise their work and catch up with learning. With regards to disability inclusion, very little if any deliberate effort was made to cater for learners with visual impairment. Child rights were violated knowingly or unknowingly by parents or guardians in some cases as learners were denied time to study as they were allocated household chores to do most of the time. The fact that the ALA is largely conducted at home, schools have very limited control on its

implementation and this includes supervision, monitoring cases of child abuse and support related to learners with disabilities. This ALA also depends on the amount of support rendered by the family to the learner as resources such as books, table, chairs and assistive technology, as well as the ability to provide academic support is necessary for this ALA to succeed. This makes scaling up of this ALA difficult as there are no guidelines or frameworks to support learners from home. However, the scalability can be possible especially given the introduction of the Continuous Assessment of Learning Activity (CALA), which demands learners' commitment and this presents an opportunity for use of this ALA. The challenge with this ALA is that some learners may have difficulties studying subjects such as science and mathematics without prior explanation of the concept by the facilitator. Studying should be supported to ensure learners revise their work and gauge their readiness for examinations. For this ALA to be effective, there is need for close collaboration between schools and parents as well as the establishment of a mechanism that be used to monitor this ALA.

Studying in groups as an alternative learning approach is a common practice among learners. With the advent of COVID-19, implementing the approach became problematic as gatherings were prohibited. Study groups among primary school learners were intentionally or unintentionally conducted as they played together during the day. Secondary school learners engaged in organized group discussions. Through group discussions, learners were able to gauge how much they know and where they require support in order to improve. This ALA was implemented across all the five districts but was more pronounced in Nkayi and Mberengwa. While group discussions were less common, they are cost effective as learners engaged to exchange ideas and demonstrated their understanding of concepts without the presence of a tutor. The replication of group learning can be facilitated by training of School Development Committees (SDCs) and school heads on establishing low-cost structures and provision of supportive resources for group learning. Group learning was done across the five provinces and it has possibilities for scalability.

Extra lessons were cited as one of the popular approaches used by learners with the support of teachers and parents. Learners are usually supposed to pay a fee for every subject to the teacher in order for them to have access to extra lessons. The approach was credited for improving the performance of learners before and during COVID-19 induced lockdown. However, the study did not establish the specific measurement used to verify these qualitative findings. The research noted that extra lessons were prevalent in Gokwe South, while in other districts, extra lessons were more popular amongst secondary school learners as compared to primary learners. While extra lessons have been mentioned by teachers and learners as an effective way to improve the performance of learners, the strength has been outweighed by financial constraints as both learners and parents cited lack of financial resources as a major setback affecting learners across the selected districts. This becomes worse for learners with disabilities, who mostly come from low income families. For extra lessons to be conducted, learners usually require textbooks, notebooks and the teacher, while payment is made mostly in cash and or in kind. Extra lessons offered teachers an opportunity to generate additional income though it is a practice that is condoned by the government, thus, compromising its continuity. Extra lessons have been laden with child protection concerns as the there was no formal supervision done. One of the KII stakeholders expressed that, in some instances, some learners were reported to have been abused by teachers during extra lessons. Hence, this ALA is not recommended for scaling up.

Virtual Lessons were also conducted by teachers for learners to promote education continuity in both secondary and primary schools, especially in the context of COVID-19. The MoPSE has been supporting implementation of this ALA in partnership with the Ministry responsible for ICT (Ministry of ICT Postal & Courier Services). The approach has been credited for promoting learner's competence in ICT. Teachers have been encouraged to come up with innovative ALAs although capacity building remains minimal. This ALA has been cited as an important learning approach in contemporary settings although the uptake of the approach has been significantly low in other districts despite the high potential associated with this technology driven ALA. In terms of uptake, Mberengwa was leading while Nkayi was the least. Key challenges that confront implementation of the ALA include

limited supportive gadgets and internet, connection data as well as poor network coverage. There was poor supervision for this ALA largely attributed to financial resource constraints. Both teachers and learners use their personal gadgets and sometimes internet data without any direct subsidized support making supervision a challenge. The study established that there are no clear plans to ensure that learners with disabilities are included. With regards to child protection concerns, there is no supervision or reporting mechanism to ensure all learners are informed of potential dangers or threats. This would include bullying amongst learners during or after learning.

Reading materials provided through community learning centers were used in Mberengwa and Gokwe South, with Mberengwa experiencing high prevalence compared to Gokwe South. Material mostly used included ordinary reading cards and books. The reading materials were kept at community learning centres manned by community volunteers. Learners would come to community learning centres to read or borrow reading materials. The approach promoted literacy and reading skills among learners in primary schools. During COVID-19 induced lockdown, this ALA was mainly supervised by parents and guardians at home. The approach has a good chance for continuity since it is being supported by the MoPSE, while implemented by World Vision. However, some participants felt that little has been done on the ground to ensure learners continue using reading cards and books since the end of the project funding tenure. The aspect of inclusivity from a disability perspective was not embraced as there was no effort made to ensure that learners with visual impairment had an option to access learning. While this ALA can be replicated in any area, what is important is to ensure that community learning centers are well equipped with accessible reading materials. There is also need for physical accessibility to ensure that all learners access the community learning centres.

Workbooks were being implemented as an ALA mainly in Buhera as a pilot project. Reading material was available through print outs, which were developed and distributed by the MoPSE. For schools with no access to printing the workbooks, they were printed at district level and schools collected them from there. Workbooks were guided by syllabi when they were developed by the MoPSE. Soft copies were shared with learners directly through WhatsApp for those learners with personal gadgets. In cases where learners had no relevant gadgets, the material was shared through the gadgets of their parents or caregivers. Whilst there has not been any quantitative data on the impact of the approach on access to education, qualitative findings revealed that the approach has successfully promoted access to education among learners. However, the need to scale up the ALA to cover other schools and districts was raised. In terms of disability inclusion, there were no specific effort made to ensure that learners with visual impairment are catered for in terms of reading materials since they were not in accessible format. Workbooks can be replicated in any of the five districts and beyond.

LESSONS LEARNT AND BEST PRACTICES

The following lessons and best practices were derived from the research evidence gathered in this study:

- ALAs need to be facilitated by well-trained and competent personnel for improved delivery of lessons and learning outcomes.
- The reliance on formal education, constrains the operationalisation of other forms of ALAs. This stems from educators` belief that the best education can only be accessed through formal channels in the presence of a teacher.
- The distances travelled by learners, limited study materials and the lack of learning infrastructure limits the use of other learning alternatives available for rural learners especially group learning, studying alone at home and community radios.
- Most of the ALAs help to reduce travelling distance by learners; hence more learning times is availed. Also, abuses that usually take place between home and school are minimised as learners spend more time at home or at community centres, which are close to their homes.

- Some of the ALAs invested in renewable sources and managed power consumption; for example, the use of solar powered radios.
- Most of the ALAs integrated environmental and climate-friendly activities such as community radio, which is paperless.
- Thus, it saves the environment by reducing on trees that are usually used to produce paper.
- The presence of well informed, educated and skilled volunteers is key in enhancing the confidence of learners.
- More radios and USB are required to increase coverage of learners, reduce distance travelled and improve the facilitator to learner ratio.
- Despite the benefits offered by other ALAs, face to face learning remains the most preferred method of study: this is especially linked to the difficulty of some subjects such as Mathematics, Mass Display and Science that require a qualified facilitator.
- ALAs, which exploit existing government structures and educational such as community radio lessons have better chances for replication and can be easily scaled up because of the established institutional mechanisms.
- ALAs that are implemented in communities require close collaboration between formal government institutions like schools, communities, and families for sustainability.
- Most ALAs supported by government have supportive child protection measures such as the community radio approach which is being facilitated by Community Care Workers (CCWs) who are custodian of child protection at community level.
- Learners` frequent use of ALAs depends on convenience, consistency and reliability of supervision from competent personnel.
- Close monitoring of the implementation of ALAs increases learning outcomes among learners

Conclusions
This study was conducted in five districts and the following conclusions were drawn:

To draw lessons on disability and gender inclusion and child participation strategies in Education in Emergencies – The study established that gender inclusion and child participation strategies in education and emergencies are embraced in various ALAs. However, gaps on disability inclusion across ALAs were identified. Hence, future interventions seeking to improve education in emergencies need to be improved to minimize violation of rights of learners with disabilities. An example is the exclusion of deaf learners in the provision of education through community radios as well as ALAs using books and texts which disadvantage learners with visual impairments.

To generate and disseminate relevant and usable research information to support evidence-informed education programming during crises and large-scale disruptions to conventional learning – The intensification of the negative effects of hazards such as COVID-19 has widened the need to invest and devise ways that engender inclusive access to education. The findings reflect that a number of ALAs have been used to promote education continuity. Research evidence is crucial in any programming activities. A huge gap that has been identified in this study, is that of monitoring and evaluation, which needs to be strengthened in order to make sure that learners maximize on ALAs.

To evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of currently available alternative education approaches with the view to identifying what works, for whom, under what circumstances - Key to the success of ALAs is the mobilisation of resources, promotion of capacity building of facilitators and parents/guardians, and further consolidation of child protection systems and disability inclusion efforts for inclusive education.

Ranking of ALAs was conducted guided by the OECD criteria which measured the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and other crosscutting issues relating to the ALAs which are implemented across the five districts where the study was conducted. Basing on the study findings,

community radios is the most recommended ALA followed by, reading materials provided through community learning centres, workbooks, study groups/discussions with peers, virtual learning material, reading/studying alone at home and lastly extra lessons respectively. Finer details regarding key considerations which were made while ranking and general conclusions on the ALAs are presented below.

General Conclusion on the ALAs

Basing on the study findings, the following general conclusions were drawn on the ALAs:

- ✧ **Community radios** were ranked highest. The ALA has been widely used across the districts with low start up and implementation costs. This is an ALA that enjoys support of the existing legal frameworks. The ALA is also supported by the MoPSE while the community and families have been directly involved in its implementation making it more sustainable. Community radios are also suitable for rural areas as the ALA does not require any signal or network for connection.
- ✧ **Reading materials provided through community learning centres** was ranked the second ALA. The ALA is supported by the current legislations, suitable for rural areas as it does not require more resources while supported by community volunteers and the MoPSE. Although the approach was only implemented in two districts and a gap between the school and the community was observed, this ALA has the potential for scalability and can be supported by other organisation for continuity.
- ✧ **Workbooks** are being ranked the third ALA as it does not require much resources and materials can be accessible in different formats which include soft copies and hard copies. The ALA remains very relevant in rural settings where resources are limited. While the approach has been implemented in in one district and has no clear-cut community involvement, the approach has great potential for scalability as it has been supported by the MoPSE and the current legislation.
- ✧ **Study group/discussions with peers** was ranked the fourth and it requires limited resources which makes it suitable for schools in rural settings. The approach is legally implemented and remains sustainable as it involves the community and families while being supported by MoPSE.
- ✧ **Virtual learning** is the fifth recommended ALA. Virtual Learning remains appropriate as the approach is being supported by the law in terms of its implementation and the MoPSE. However, the approach requires much resources which makes its implementation problematic especially in rural settings.
- ✧ **Studying alone at home** was the sixth ranked ALA. While studying at home requires limited costs, implemented in the absence of the teacher supported by, the law and can be easily used in rural areas where learners have constrained resources. However, for mathematics and science subjects, which require demonstrations, learners may face challenges with studying new topics without the support of a facilitator and textbooks while supervision of the ALA presents a lot of challenges which also raises child protection concerns in cases where the family is not supportive.
- ✧ **Whilst Extra-Lessons** appeared to be commonly used, the approach remains illegal in Zimbabwe and also excludes learners from poor backgrounds which constitutes the majority of learners in rural schools.

Gaps/Challenges
- ✧ Some Volunteers who facilitate the ALAs lack capacity for the job which could be attributed to their low level of education and lack of support from teachers despite trained which has a negative bearing on education outcomes.
- ✧ Learners` frequent use of ALAs depends on convenience, consistency, and reliability of supervision from competent personnel.

- For community radios, the preloaded lessons are bunched together, making it difficult for various grade levels to access material at the same time. Also, there is no overview of each lesson, which delays volunteers in finding the relevant materials for each grade.
- There are few radios and USBs, which compromise coverage of all learners compelling some learners to travel long distances to attend lessons which negatively affects facilitator to learner ratio and exposes learners to risks
- Despite the benefits offered by other ALAs, face to face learning remains the most preferred due to the difficult of concepts that require a qualified facilitator, as well relevant resources that are required to ensure their effectiveness.
- Most ALAs that are not supported by government have no child protection and safeguarding measures, which remains a threat to learners.
- Some ALAs that were supported by government did not promote close linkages with the community, families and volunteers which remains a serious setback for continuity.
- Some ALAs like Extra Lessons exclude underprivileged learners without resources to pay for the services making the ALA exclusive and difficult to scale up and replicate.
- Supervision of ALAs that are conducted within communities, remains a challenge due to human and material resource constraints
- Extra lessons make it difficult for all learners to access them due to financial constraints, hence difficult to scale up.
- Network coverage issues coupled with lack of resources to purchase gadgets and internet data compromises the viability of virtual learning.
- Some learners find it difficult to find time to engage in ALAs because of some parents who make them spend all the time doing household chores, herding cattle, working in the fields and fetching water.
- Learners with disabilities seem not to benefit much from the ALAs due to their inaccessibility.
- Workbooks and reading materials are not enough to cover all learning areas.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been directed to the MoPSE, Scale-DP consortium and other NGOs, schools and communities.

Recommendations for MoPSE

- The MoPSE should work with the Ministry of Communications Technology, Postal and Courier Services, and other relevant partners to improve network coverage in rural areas through a multi-sectoral approach to support virtual learning.
- MoPSE should encourage its departments and schools to reduce paper-based communication and promote paperless communication.
- The MoPSE should promote blended learning that enables both physical and online learning.
- The MoPSE could consider expanding the capacity of schools to diversify learning approaches and invest more in agricultural activities, such as establishing vegetable gardens, poultry, and fishing projects. Such activities can also support and sustain ALAs.
- Teachers must be offered incentives through government initiatives that are sustainable and discourage discriminatory teaching.
- The MoPSE should consider including ALA approaches in the curriculum for teachers so that they are part of their training. This should include how to design inclusive lessons.
- More workbooks need to be printed, and the approach needs to be expanded to other areas of learning.
- The MoPSE, with support from implementing partners, needs to allocate a budget for monitoring community-based alternative learning approaches.

- ✧ The MoPSE, with support from implementing partners, should consider developing more effective virtual learning platforms.
- ✧ When assembling USBs, the MoPSE, in collaboration with its implementing partners, should consider differentiating grade levels per USB to facilitate access for community volunteers and learners.
- ✧ Each lesson must begin with a learning overview and learning outcomes.

Recommendations for   SCALE-DP consortium and other (I)NGOs

- ✧ There is need to formulate clear-cut selection criteria for volunteers to ensure that competent personnel are considered to promote learners' access to high quality education; considering protection mainstreaming. (e.g. gender, disability child rights and data protection). There is need to ensure that all ALAs promote disability inclusion so that no learner is left behind.
- ✧ The volunteer approach needs to be revisited to ensure that schools and communities jointly contribute to incentivise facilitators.
- ✧ There is need to equip community learning centres with diverse reading materials covering all learning areas for primary and secondary learners; including Braille, large print and audio learning materials for learners with visual impairment.
- ✧ There is need to conduct a training of trainers`(ToT) workshop on all ALAs, spearheaded by the MoPSE for skill transfer, with support from World Vision and partners. Once educators are trained at top level, they can easily cascade the training to grassroots levels at a minimum cost. Refresher courses can be rendered where ever needed while facilitated by trained educators within MoPSE, making it more sustainable.
- ✧ NGOs and other implementing partners should collaborate with MoPSE, Schools, ECHO and other donors to raise awareness on child rights, disabilities and safeguarding issues to prevent child pregnancies and other forms of abuse in schools which hinders learners to continue with their studies and to ensure inclusivity for learners with disabilities.
- ✧ There is need for more community radios in order to minimize travel distances for learners.
- ✧ NGOs and MoPSE should build synergies between schools and communities, families and volunteers on all ALAs implemented within communities to ensure sustainability.
- ✧ NGOs should advocate with donors to support synergies and promote more nexus and resilience programming in education.

- ✧ **Recommendations for Schools**
- ✧ Schools and communities should consider starting some income generating projects to support ALA-related costs like buying gadgets and data for teachers and learners for sustainability.
- ✧ There is need to ensure that physical infrastructure is accessible to learners with disabilities.
- ✧ Schools need to keep records for functional and malfunctioning radios and make arrangements for any necessary repairs.
- ✧ Guidance and counselling departments in schools need to be strengthened to curb school dropouts, motivated by external negative attitude towards school.
- ✧ Schools should work closely with parents/guardians and facilitators to ensure continuity of all ALAs implemented within communities and families, which have chances of replication.

1.0   Introduction

The focus of the research was to map Alternative Learning Approaches (ALAs) and their analysis by looking at best practices, challenges, conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations for each of the ALAs. The analysis included gender, disability inclusion and child protection aspects. The ultimate goal was to develop an education in emergencies response framework. The research took place in Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho districts. Buhera, Nkayi and Tsholotsho districts are covered by the DG ECHO funded SCALE DP Project, while Gokwe South and Mberengwa were included because the districts were targeted under the Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition, and Education Outcomes (IGATE-T) project. This project was funded by the Girls Education Challenge Fund through the UK Department for International Development, which was implemented by World Vision and its partners. It was important to understand implementation and experiences of ALAs under the project. In Buhera, Nkayi and Tsholotsho, the study evaluated ALAs by other projects in the districts for the possibilities of scaling up. Similarly, Gokwe South and Mberengwa were deliberately considered since the two districts were participating in the Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition, and Education (IGATE-T-T) project, which was supported by World Vision and other partners.[2]The IGATE-T-T project was employing some ALAs in the context of COVID-19. Considering that the ECHO funded SCALE-DP project is focusing on promoting education continuity in the context of disasters, it remains essential to establish existing efforts for complementarity and building synergies for replication.

1.1   Background Context

Zimbabwe is vulnerable to complex natural and human induced crises, namely droughts, floods and economic crisis that weaken the capacity of government and individuals to invest in education, disaster preparedness and other services[3]. Recent cyclones had a huge negative impact on schools culminating to the damage and destruction of school infrastructure and teaching/learning materials and furniture. The emergence of COVID-19 made the situation bleaker as disrupted livelihoods, education and even humanitarian assistance processes in an already unstable economy proved that the indirect effects and impact of COVID-19 induced restrictions on children, especially the most vulnerable. COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, have affected livelihoods and education; with children losing over half of the academic year in 2020. In 2021, schools opened in March instead of January as originally planned. The second school term was supposed to commence on the 28th of June but was then combined with the 3rd term and opened on the 30th of August 2021 due to COVID-19 induced education disruptions. The crisis wholly or partly deprived learners in primary and secondary schools in marginalized areas an opportunity to unlock their potential through education to pull themselves out of poverty and acquire the means to participate fully in their communities.[4] The lost time magnified the recognition that education is one of the fundamental human rights under international and regional human rights law and in many international documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) [Article 26], The increased frequency and magnitude of hazards and disasters covid-19 included are complex and continue to be a threat to human survival and development.

The case of Zimbabwe is much more complex as the country`s education sector was already being strained by several challenges, which have been lingering for many years well before COVID-19. These include inadequate infrastructure, internet facilities, radio and television connectivity, water and sanitation in schools, teachers' strikes due to poor remunerations, among others. On a positive note, the Zimbabwe Education Cluster on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy acknowledges the importance of education continuity in the face of emergencies. Hence, education provided in crisis and fragile contexts where humanitarian intervention is inevitable is called "education in emergencies".[5] This type of education is crucial to safeguarding the well-being, foster learning opportunities, and to nurture the overall development (social, emotional, cognitive, and physical) of children affected by disasters.[6] As

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[2]Care International, Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (SNV), which means "Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers", Open University, Word Bicycle Relief, Emthonjeni Women`s Forum, Udacia and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

[3] World Bank (2021). Climate Change Knowledge Portal for Development Partners and Policy Makers – Zimbabwe. Retrieved from https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/zimbabwe/vulnerability.

[4] Shohel, M. M. C. (2022). Education in Emergencies: Challenges of Providing Access to Education for Rohingya Refugee Children Living in Refugee Camps in Bangladesh. *Education Inquiry*, 13(1): 104-126.

[5] See Shohel (2022).

[6] Save the Children (2020). Save our Education: Protect every child's right to learn

a result, schools, parents, learners and NGOs devised context specific strategies to promote continued access to education at both primary and secondary levels. The interventions embraced disaster risk reduction measures to cushion vulnerable groups from recurrent disasters. The strategies vary and may include five priorities guiding education response to COVID-19 notably ALAs, Back to School and Opening Up Better, Safe School Feeding, Teacher Capacitation and Raising awareness for prevention and mitigation through information, education and communication (IEC) materials.

In line with the above, a consortium consisting of World Vision (WV), Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and Welthungerhilfe, is implementing a project titled "Strengthening Community-Led Actions on Education and Disaster Preparedness" (SCALE-DP). The project was informed by the pilot project named "Cyclone Idai Preparedness and Resilience in schools and communities (CIPRS)- (education in emergencies) EiE and livelihood project" funded by ADH. In terms of institutional arrangements, World Vision is the consortium lead and implementing Disaster Preparedness and Education in Emergencies in Chimanimani District in partnership with Welthungerhilfe, while CBM is implementing all activities related to quality inclusive education in programming. This two-year project (01 June 2021 - 31 May 2023), is being implemented in five districts of Chimanimani, Chipinge, Buhera, Nkayi and Tsholotsho. In order to strengthen future programming, the SCALE –DP project sought to conduct a study to examine different learning approaches adopted by schools, learners, parents and guardians in 5 districts to ensure continued access to education in emergency situations.

1.2   Purposes of the study

The primary focus of the research was to evaluate Alternative Learning Approaches (ALA) applied to address education needs during large and small-scale disruptions to conventional education within primary, secondary and high school settings to guide the development of a response framework in Zimbabwe.

1.2.1   Main objectives:

(i) To draw lessons on disability and gender inclusion and child participation strategies in Education in Emergencies.
(ii) To generate and disseminate relevant and usable research information to support evidence-informed education programming during crises and large-scale disruptions to conventional learning.
(iii) To evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of currently available alternative education approaches with the view to identifying what works, for whom, under what circumstances.

1.2.2   Research Questions

(i) What are the existing alternative learning approaches?
(ii) How appropriate and effective are the available ALAs in the targeted areas?
(iii) How are the crosscutting issues of gender, disability inclusion and child protection considered in the alternative learning approaches?
(iv) What recommendations can be proffered to ensure having more efficient, inclusive alternative learning approaches?

2.0   Theoretical Framework

The study was influenced by the grounded theory, which is a qualitative research approach that attempts to uncover the meanings of people's social actions, interactions and experiences. These explanations are called 'grounded' because they are grounded in the participants' own explanations or interpretations. Grounded theory does not assume that there is a single meaning of an event, object or concept. In grounded theory, researchers are able to interpret all data as information or materials that fit into created categories.

The grounded theory was adopted as it is not concerned with whether or not something has been done before. Instead, grounded theory researchers are interested in what participants say about their experiences, and in the process, looking for meaning. The grounded theory also allowed researchers to use inductive reasoning, ensuring that they viewed participants' perspectives rather than imposing their own ideas. This encouraged objectivity and helped prevent preconceived notions from interfering with the process of data collection and analysis. The grounded theory also enabled the researchers to constantly compare data to concepts, which refined the theory as research proceeded. Connections between cases have a better understanding of how each case fits in with others. This is because the grounded theory emphasises on the interpretation of the data, and it made it easier for researchers to examine their own preconceived ideas about the study.

As with any method, there are some drawbacks too that researchers had to consider when using the grounded theory. First, it does not promote consensus because there are always competing views about the same phenomenon. It may seem like an overly theoretical approach that produces results that are too open-ended. Grounded theory is not concerned with whether something is true/false or right/wrong. Grounded theory requires a high level of skill and critical thinking from the researcher. Hence, as researchers, there was need for a level of objectivity in the approach, asked unbiased, open-minded questions and conducted interviews without being influenced by personal views or agenda.

Of importance, is that constructivism fosters researchers' reflexivity about their own interpretations as well as those of their research participants. A constructive approach was complimented by objectivity approaches to acquire some quantitative aspects of the research.

2.1   Operational definition of key terms and concepts

Alternative Learning Approaches - Whilst there is no clear-cut definition for ALAs, for the purpose of this study, alternative learning can be defined as strategies employed by learners, teachers or parents to ensure continued access to learning during time of emergencies. The strategies can be formal or informal. Formal ALAs are approaches that are supported by the government through relevant legislation or policies while informal ALAs are approaches that are implemented without any legislation or policy guiding implementation. Whilst both formal and informal ALAs were explored, the researchers recommend ALAs that can be easily replicated, are inclusive and respect other diverse needs of learners among other essential variables.

Child Participation - Child participation is when children under the age of 18 contribute to decisions and act on issues that affect their lives. This is best done through empowering children and nurturing positive relationships between children, adults, and communities based on mutual respect and partnership at familial, local, national, and international levels.[7] For the purposes of this study, child participation strategies are defined as levels of engagement of learners in an inclusive manner, considering their rights and unique needs for maximum participation in ALAs implemented in the context of emergencies.

2.2   Research Approach

This study adopted the mixed-method approach to collecting all the data necessary to address all concepts covered by the study. Qualitative approaches largely informed the data gathering processes complimented by quantitative methods to effectively respond to the needs of World Vision and its partners. Qualitative approaches, which are explanatory and exploratory allowed the interaction of research participants in a natural set-up. The processes engaged stakeholders in the relevant Government line ministries, implementing agencies, vulnerable groups and offered them an opportunity to express themselves through qualitative and quantitative means. This allowed the Consultant to review relevant documents and gathered data on the children's views on the feasibility of the alternative learning approaches.

Key informants and other key stakeholders were also engaged to generate insights that fed into the development of a framework to strengthen means of enhancing access and inclusive quality education to children affected by disasters. Of importance, was the participatory nature of the approach which ensured that voices of vulnerable groups such as children are heard. Quantitative approaches were applied to

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[7] https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WV_Guidelines_on_Child_Participation.pdf

document target group demographics, ALAs and target population reached to better understand the community and schools' preparedness and responsiveness to emergencies. This laid the foundation for the creation of a database of the approaches and provided in-depth knowledge of how they are implemented as well as the target population.

Figure 1 illustrates that this study was in two phases`, with phase one focusing on mapping the Alternative Learning Approaches that are well known and used by the community including those introduced by organizations such as World Vision and other organisations in the education sector using document reviews, interviews with stakeholders, participant observation and key informant interviews. During this phase, the Consultant identified cases for documentation on the successes and good practices of the programme. Phase two focused on the feasibility of the identified learning alternatives to ascertain their appropriateness in these contexts (Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi & Tsholotsho).
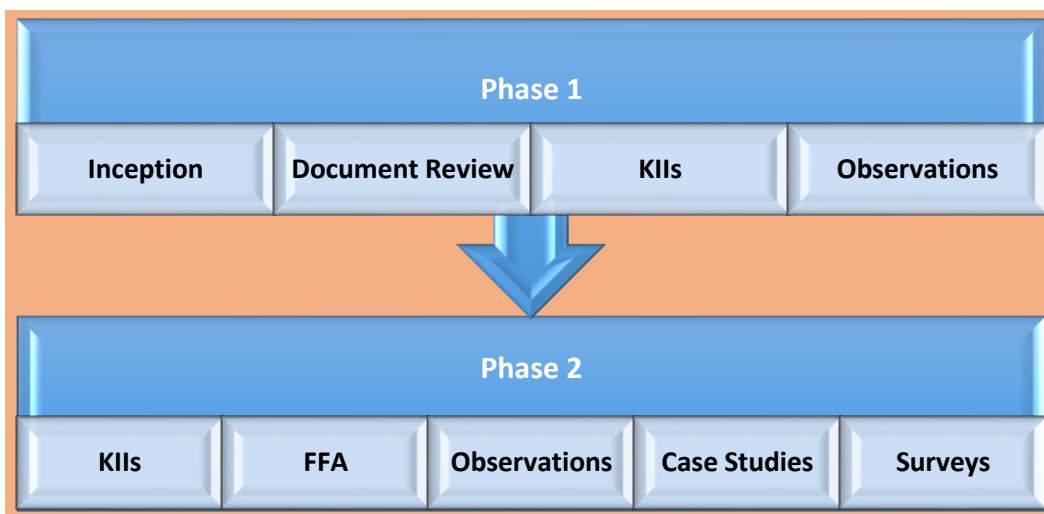
Figure 1: Phases involved in the research
Source: Research Team

2.3   Inception planning meeting

The Consultant held a virtual inception planning meeting with World Vision (WV) to agree on the layout of the inception report and allocated sections among the team. Some useful documents were provided by WV, and these include the project proposal used to mobilise resources for the SCALE-DP project. Quarterly and annual reports and relevant literature such as the IGATE-T report were shared with the Consultant to generate insights on the research. The Consultant studied all the documents provided as part of the desk review process. Complementing the desk review was literature on local, regional and global frameworks on the implementation of disaster preparedness, education in emergencies and access to inclusive education in safe environments in hazard prone settings. The review focused on different learning approaches and their applicability in different settings to promote access to inclusive education and ways of enhancing disaster preparedness in communities and schools. This inception report detailed the activities carried out, the study methodology, and the timelines as well as data collection tools used.

2.4   Sample size and sampling techniques

Sample Design: Due to the nature of the assignment goal and objectives, the consultancy implemented a hybrid of the probabilistic and non-probabilistic approaches so as to enhance representativeness, inclusion and logistical feasibility in determining sample reach. The team thrived for a 50/50 male and female representation, while at the same time embraced other inclusivity aspects such as age, disabilityand other conditions as per the terms of references (ToRs). World Vision was kept abreast on all the developments and suggestions to maintain the sample size and ensure appropriate stakeholders are engaged. The following is the description of the sampling designs adopted by the project to account for the qualitative and quantitative components of the study:

Sampling Approach: The consultancy team used the stratified sampling technique for quantitative data and purposive sampling technique for qualitative data. A total of 37 key informant interviews (KIIs), 19 force field analysis (FFA) sessions (192 learners), 15 FFA sessions (181 committee members), and 2 case

studies (learners), constituted qualitative data. Desk review and observations were among key data collection sources. Thus, 309 girls and 278 boys participated in the study. In total, there were 375 participants and 395 respondents gathered from 19 schools, thus giving a total sample of 770. Out of the 770, there were 98 adult females and 85 male adults, totalling 183. From the 770, learners constituted 587; and 309 were girls, while 278 were boys. Of the 587 learners, 192 were participants, while 395 were respondents. The age groups of learners interviewed were 10-14, 15-18, and 19-24 years. Further information is illustrated in tables 1 and 2. The data collection methods employed allowed to solicit reflections, perceptions and innermost feelings from key stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the project.

At school level, a gender balance in responses was considered in targeting participants for the study. Schools were divided into primary and secondary school strata given their differences in age, preference of ALAs in their different settings as well as their unique needs (for example at primary level one facilitator can teach all the subjects whereas secondary learners require different facilitators for different subjects). Stratified random sampling assisted the team to accurately target from various strata as the process considered the population as not homogenous. In this case, the study targeted primary and secondary school levels whose circumstance are not the same.

Purposive sampling was used to target key informants to gather relevant qualitative data. The process involved deliberately selecting cases against preferred characteristics as defined World Vision and partners. Purposive sampling allowed the research team to strategically select information-rich cases for the study to illuminate the inquiry question being investigated. Key informants included WV and CBM personnel, Provincial Educational Directors (PED), District Schools Inspectors (DSI), social workers.
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Table 1: Sample Size for Qualitative Data

District	KIIs M	KIIs F	FFA Learners M	FFA Learners F	FFA Committees M	FFA Committees F	Case Studies (teachers) M	Case Studies (teachers) F
Buhera	4	2	21	20	13	12	0	0
Gokwe South	4	2	19	20	17	16	0	1
Mberengwa	2	3	21	20	18	16	0	0
Nkayi	4	4	20	21	10	30	0	1
Tsholotsho	3	3	15	15	5	7	0	0
Provincial	2		0	0	0	0	0	0
National	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	22	15	96	96	63	81	0	2
Grand Total								375

2.5   Sample Size for Survey Method

Table 2 disaggregates respondents who took part in the survey according to gender across all the five districts. This was necessary to ensure all learners' voices are captured to inform the study. The study targeted both male and female learners in all the five districts as indicated in the table above. Female learners were represented more than male learners in Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho. This resonates well with the government policy on promoting the contribution of the girl child and allowed the study to map alternative approaches usage and discern their relevance to varied settings. By design more weight was given to primary school learners which when translated to age groups we have 10-14 years, followed by the 15-18 years, and 19-24 years. This is consistent with expected age ranges for the learner education levels. At the primary school level, only learners in grades 5-7 were sampled as these are expected to have better conceptualization of the survey questions and to articulate issues clearly.

Table 2: Demographic Data and Sample Size

A7. Sex of Respondent * Age of student Cross tabulation						
A4. District			**Age of student**			**Total**
			10-14	**15-18**	**19-24**	
Buhera	A7. Sex of Respondent	Male	31	7		38
		Female	36	5		41
	Total		67	12		79
Gokwe South	A7. Sex of Respondent	Male	33	2		35
		Female	45	2		47
	Total		78	4		82
Mberengwa	A7. Sex of Respondent	Male	31	7		38
		Female	32	7		39
	Total		63	14		77
Nkayi	A7. Sex of Respondent	Male	36	4	1	41
		Female	35	7	0	42
	Total		71	11	1	83
Tsholotsho	A7. Sex of Respondent	Male	22	8		30
		Female	32	12		44
	Total		54	20		74
Grand Total	**395**					

Sampling of FFA participants: Within sampled enumeration areas (EAs), the FFA was conducted using an FFA guide (see annexure 6). Participants were purposively sampled to provide guidance on inclusive education and education in emergencies situations by ensuring that respondents knowledgeable on the subject matter are engaged to inform the study. The sampling process considered the gender, disability and age of the participants. Four members of the disaster management committee, four SDC members, and one child-care worker were part of the FFA. Another FFA constituting learners, considered the gender balance and those learners with disabilities.

Sampling of key informants: At national and sub-national levels, purposive sampling was used to select key informants. These included inter alia, World Vision staff, government line ministries and departments' staff, and staff from related NGOs and CSOs. The consultancy team in consultation with the client included the provincial key informants as indicated in the Table 3.

Table 3: Key Informants

District	Key informants at school/ ward level	Key informants at district levels	Key informant at provincial level	Key informant at national level
Buhera	School head	DCP Chair, DSI (DDR) World Vision, CBM, District Child Welfare Officer	Provincial Education Director	Officer Responsible for DRR within the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
Gokwe South	School head	DCP Chair, DSI (DDR) World Vision, CBM, District Child Welfare Officer	Provincial Education Director	Learner welfare Services, School Psychological Services and Special Needs Education Department.
Mberengwa	School head	DCP Chair, DSI (DDR) World Vision, CBM, District Child Welfare Officer		Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare (Officer responsible for Child Welfare)
Nkayi	School head	DCP Chair, DSI (DDR) World Vision, CBM, District Child Welfare Officer	Provincial Education Director	World Vision.
Tsholotsho	School head	DCP Chair, DSI (DDR) World Vision, CBM, District Child Welfare Officer		CMB. Welthungerhilfe.

				Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing (Department of Civil Protection).

2.6   Data Collection Tools and Data Collection

A multi-lingual team was deployed for data collection in the five districts. The team of 4 research assistants was working closely with the team of 4 experts who had an overall supervision responsibility across all the districts. In Matabeleland Province, the data collection team was led by Dr Thabo Ndlovu who is fluent in Ndebele and also based in the province, while in Midlands the team was led by Mr Davison Mugiya whereas in Manicaland, the team was led by Professor Tsitsi Chataika, while Miss Lilian Siziba was responsible for real-time data management during data collection. Key experts were responsible for conducting KIIs at both national and district levels while rendering overall supervision to all enumerators. Experienced local enumerators familiar with local dialects and culture facilitated FFAs, KIIs and Surveys at community level. The KOBO toolkit (an online-offline digital platform), aided data collection processes and assisted the team to respond to COVID-19 protocols by minimising paper movement. Links were sent to key informants who had the capacity to utilise this platform, to participate in a self-administered survey, while others were engaged through face-to-face interviews. Group discussions and individual face-to-face interviews were recorded to allow the Consultant to revisit in case some information was missing and to capture participants verbatim. Permission was sought from participants before recording the group sessions. The real time nature of Kobo made it more preferred for quantitative data as it is faster and data does not need to be transcribed from paper to computers before it can be analysed. KOBO minimises enumeration errors since data validation occurs in real time as it is being collected. This mean that, data was collected simultaneously from **six main yet different sources**, emerging from primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data as detailed below:

Desk Review: The review of literature relating to SCALE-DP project interventions and government policy frameworks was conducted. The review of literature focused on the SCALE-DP project proposals, implementation reports, Department of Civil Protection Unit reports, coordination meetings minutes and other such as the IGATE-T-T Endline Evaluation report. Of importance was secondary data, especially school attendance registers during disaster times which helped the team to map areas most affected by area specific hazards. Through the review of literature, the Consultant got sense of the context, what the project has achieved, stakeholders involved in the project as well as existing gaps in enhancing ALAs.

Key informant interviews (KIIs):   KIIs were administered to get collective views of stakeholders and project beneficiaries. KIIs were conducted with (WV, WHH and CBM SCALE-DP project staff, education stakeholders (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education), Department of Civil Protection at subnational levels, Civil Protection Unit, Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare, Education Cluster members, other NGOs and CBOs. In addition, the Consultant engaged the Provincial Education Directors (Manicaland, Midlands and Matabeleland North) during the course of the study. The consultant developed interview guides to cater for the diversity of stakeholders to capture data based on one's scope of involvement and influence in ALAs.

Force Field Analysis (FFA) sessions: In order to get insights from participants, 19 FFA sessions were conducted with 174 learners and 15 sessions with combined committees made up of School Disaster Management Committees (SDMCs), School Development Committees (SDC) and a Feedback Review and Response committee which was represented by a Child Care Worker (CCW). The committees represented the voice of parents since most of the committee members have children learning in the selected schools. In total, 64 parents participated in the FFAs. FFAs for learners consisted of boys, girls, and where available, learners with disabilities were included. This approach applied to both primary and secondary learners' settings. Table 2 provides the sample size of participants.

The FFA was a very useful tool for evaluating proposed changes. It looked at the forces driving the change and the forces resisting the change and considered the relative strengths of participants. The output of this analysis is a visual indication of the ease of implementing the change. It also shows specific forces that could be strengthened or reduced to make the implementation of change easier. Once the driving and restraining forces related to a change were identified, the facilitator and the participants assigned scores

to the various forces, and summed these scores to generate an aggregate score for the driving and restraining forces through consensus. Figure 1 illustrates the FFA.
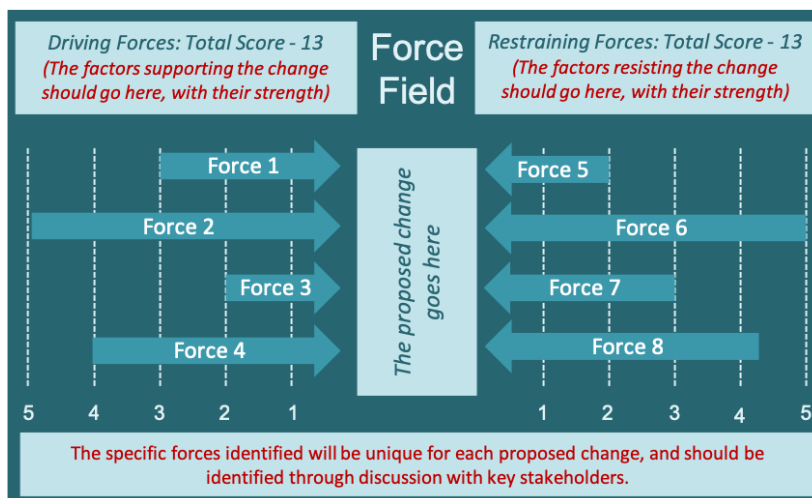
Figure 2: Force Field Analysis Diagram
Source: *The World of Work Project (2020) - https://worldofwork.io/2019/03/force-field-analysis/*

The approach has been instrumental in studies relating to education in the context of disasters. FFA is a powerful tool for building an understanding of the forces that drive and resist a proposed change (SkyMarkCoorporation, 2017). This systematic data analysing tool is used in complex problem situations. The problem is framed in terms of factors or pressures that support the status quo (restraining forces) and those pressures that support change in the desired direction (driving forces) (Thamas, 1985). The generic steps of the FFA followed were:

- Step 1: Assess the current situation.
- Step 2: Define the objective.
- Step 3: Identify the driving forces.
- Step 4: Identify the restraining forces.
- Step 5: Evaluate the forces.
- Step 6: Create an action plan.[8]

If the driving forces are stronger than the resisting forces, the change should be fairly easy to implement. If the forces are balanced, or the resisting forces are stronger, the change will be hard to implement. FFA also helps those seeking to introduce changes to do so successfully, and the analysis it produces, helps change agents see the various levers they have to help them implement the change. Based on the analysis, communities looked at either strengthening the driving forces or reduced the restraining forces.

Target groups unearthed perceptions on learners' access to inclusive education, in the context of disasters. Through this process, discussions on the impact of disasters on education, driving and restraining forces on access to inclusive education and preparedness of schools and communities in emergencies were examined. Varied groups were constituted and the process was informed by:

- Gender balance
- persons with disabilities
- primary and secondary learners, but separately
- School Disaster Management Committees (SDMCs) combined with School Development Committees (SDC) and a Child Care Worker (CCW) who are part of the Feedback Review and Response committee.

Case Studies/Most Significant Change (MSC) Stories: The consultancy team identified case studies from different alternative education approaches implemented by different players to denote the impact of the project on learners. Case studies were identified from KIIs engagements and during the FFA.

Selection of case study participants was done by identifying participants with interesting experiences in implementing relevant ALAs. As such, identified participants were selected for further exploration that showed evidence of the impact resulting from the ALAs. Three selected stories of learners were captured using KOBO Collect audios and videos, with consent from participants.

Observations: Direct observation of the situation in the field is irreplaceable. Visits to school infrastructure to witness the learning conditions (e.g., community learning centres) and where possible ALAs (e.g., community radios) was a priority to ensure the inquiry is evidence based. The team of consultants did primary and secondary lessons to explore among other things non-verbal communication between teachers and learners and other key stakeholders. The consultancy team observed fieldwork and buildings under rehabilitation. During fieldwork, pictures were captured and uploaded on KOBO to support study findings.

Questionnaire survey: The consultancy team conducted through local enumerators an administered survey or questionnaires, whereby 395 learners at primary and secondary schools participated. The sample size is presented in **Table 3: Key Informants**, which presents data by gender and district. Data collected through questionnaires were triangulated with findings from the FFAs with learners. The surveys were designed in KOBO Collect platform and data collection done using android-based smartphones. Quantitative approaches focused on demographic information, learning approaches adopted in the area, formal and informal part of the approach, the reach of the learning approach and profiled those benefiting from the project. This helped the consultancy team to map ALAs promoted by World Vision and those practiced in the area and not promoted by the SCALE-DP project.

2.7 Data processing, analysis and management

Upon completion of data collection, the Consultant analysed the data and drew findings, conclusions and recommendations. Data from most key informants, group discussions, meetings and observations were analysed using content analysis, matrices and summaries. This entailed content familiarisation through in-depth reading of transcribed key informant and focus group discussion notes leading to the development of thematic codes to group similar ideas. Data was coded to identify major inductive themes after which common issues and variations in identified themes were noted. Quantitative data from project beneficiaries and stakeholders was imported from csv formats from KOBO to SPSS for statistical analysis. The analysis covered descriptive statistics, cross tabulations and Likert ranking scale analysis. Associations and relationships were explored for inferential purposes.

2.7.1 Evaluation Framework

As the project was interested in establishing the feasibility of ALAs leading to a designing of an evaluation framework, the OECD standard evaluation criteria were employed. The study was in line with the OECD-DAC criteria for evaluation of humanitarian programmes particularly focusing on variables, which World Vision is interested in. Therefore, the OECD criteria guided this study to establish the feasibility of existing alternative learning approaches with a specific focus on appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Other parameters such as crosscutting issues were incorporated to ensure there is integration of gender, disability sensitivity, child protection and safeguarding. Gender is specifically important as girls with disabilities are more marginalised when it comes to access to education. The assessment was conducted in the context of promoting access and continuity of education and meaningful learning during small and large-scale disruptions guided by the OECD-DAC Evaluation matrix in Table 4:

Table 4: Evaluation Framework

Criterion	Definition	Study Questions	Data Sources
Appropriateness/ Relevance	The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiary's country, policies, and priorities	What are the existing Policies and legislations supporting Alternative Learning Approaches?	Desk Review KIIs

Effectiveness	A measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives	What were the benefits of the ALA? Has the ALA been frequently used by Learners? How has the ALA influenced learning during lockdowns in targeted areas?	Desk Review FFA KIIs Survey Observations Case study stories
Efficiency	Efficiency measures the outputs both qualitative and quantitative in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted.	Which materials and human resources needed for the ALA? What kind of arrangements exists for the supervision of the ALA?	Desk Review FFA KIIs Survey
Sustainability	Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.	What are existing institutional arrangements to support implementation of the ALA? Have the communities been involved in the implementation of the ALA? Has there been any kind of capacity building activities for implementation of the ALA?	Desk Review FFA KIIs Survey
Mainstreaming/ Crosscutting			
Gender Mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming considers the interests, aspirations and concerns of men and women, boys and girls in all intervening policies, program and project.	Has there been any deliberate effort to cater for boys and girls during implementation of the ALA?	Desk Review FFA KIIs Survey
Child protection and safeguarding	Child Protection and safeguarding mainstreaming measures and structures intended to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children.	Has the ALA considered child protection and safeguarding concerns?	
Disability Mainstreaming	Disability mainstreaming establishes if there are deliberate efforts for making the needs, concerns and experiences of persons with disability an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in the political, economic and societal spheres to ensure that	Are there any deliberate efforts made to ensure there is inclusion of learners with disabilities in the ALAs?	

	persons with disability benefit equally.		

2.8   Ethical considerations

The team committed to follow and to adhere to the World Vision Procedure for Ethical Standards for Research, Evaluation and Data collection and Analysis. Researching with children implies additional training activities and adequate experience; in case the field-researchers are endowed with such a background, a specific module of the induction training will be dedicated to ethical principles, child protection policies and practical techniques for consulting with children. Based on the relevant literature and best practice, the team has identified key ethical principles for involving children in the study, which include the following:

Voluntary and informed participation: Children and their parents /care givers and all other participants were informed fully about: 1) the aims of the study, 2) what the findings of the study will be used for, and 3) why they are invited to participate in the study. It should be their decision upon receiving as full information as possible whether or not to participate in the study. They will also be informed how they can get familiarised with the final report.

Confidentiality: Children, Parents/Care givers and other participants were informed that their names will be anonymised in the report and their responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. Hence, the report nor any other document will not have any names in order to promote anonymity. If direct quotes are used, pseudonyms will be used instead of real names. If the interview and focus group is recorded, firstly, it will be explained why recording is important and secondly, they were assured that the recording will remain with the interviewer for the purpose of data analysis and will not be handed to anyone else. Participants were informed that they have the option on not being recorded. The research team signed a confidentiality agreement of non-disclosure of relevant personal information.

Consent: If children, parents, care givers, school head or other participants decide after receiving full information to take part in the survey, permission of caregivers for children under 18 years old and permission of children above 18 years old will be asked (in writing). Consequently, they were asked to sign a consent form. Nonetheless, they will be ensured that they can refuse to participate in the research at any point.

Questions and language: Interview questions were formulated with the use of simple words and in local languages so that they are easily understood by children. Any questions, which can potentially be judgmental and insensitive to the child's issue and local culture, were avoided. The wording of questions was sensitive to establish a positive and trusted relation with the interviewers and not evoke any traumatic memories, pain, and grief.

Interview environment and setting: Setting of interviews was made to be child-friendly. There were a number of practical techniques, such as a room layout, seating arrangements, which were considered to make the environment conducive to interviewing children, to avoid the "question and answer" format and to make it more interactive and informal. The setting for interview was chosen by the child with the school.

Abiding to World Vision Code of Conduct: The team fully understood the WV`s Code of Conduct relating to programming. To this end, all team members and data collectors signed protocols (Code of Conduct and Security Protocol), and adhered to them.

Researchers' conduct: The team made sure that every member of the research team including enumerators, were made aware of their expected conduct. For instance, researchers were not allowed to discriminate or to touch or make any suggestive sexual advances on children, women the youth and persons with disabilities. These vulnerable groups were made aware of all unacceptable behaviour traits by the researchers. They were also informed about how to report such behaviour to the Team leader.

Disability, gender and vulnerability sensitivity in research: All team members were trained on how to engage delicate and vulnerable population of the research to eliminate any form of harm.

Adhering to culturally acceptable traits: The team adhered to dress code and language that is culturally and religiously acceptable.

Transparency in research: Understanding that research is 'two-way, the consultancy team informed the participants on the essence & importance of the study and their role.

2.9   Recruitment and Training of Research Assistants

Recruitment of enumerators/research assistants was done through JDP`s data base of enumerators and to ensure that high quality data is collected, a bilingual team was selected which consisted of enumerators who are fluent in both Ndebele and Shona languages and also familiar with local cultures across the three provinces (Matabeleland, Midlands and Manicaland) and five sampled districts (Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho).   The team of five enumerators comprised of qualitative and quantitative enumerators. Two were female and three were male. The qualitative team was responsible for conducting FFAs with parents and learners and KIIs with principals and school officials. The quantitative team was responsible for administering the questionnaires with learners. Training of enumerators was conducted at Word Vision's national office in Harare under the guidance of the consultant team and with support from World Vision. The training was held on March 13, 2022, and covered the background of the study, objectives, methodology, timeline, ethical and safety issues, among others. Role plays were conducted to test if the questions were well understood and necessary changes were made. Enumerators were contracted and signed the safety guidelines before leaving for fieldwork.

2.10   Study Challenges

The collection of data from target institutions and other stakeholders did not experience significant obstacles to compromise the study findings. There were key informants in some district where the timing was not convenient for interviews as the majority of the stakeholders were attending preparatory meetings for the 2022 national census. Taking this into account, and to mitigate possible delays, arrangements with these stakeholders were made for interviews to be conducted online. Even during online interviews, consent and permission was sought prior to interviewing key informants just as within person/face to face interviews.

Data collection also coincided with national by-election preparations and as a result, some senior government officials like school heads and officers at district level were not available. In order not to compromise on the study, the targeted key informants identified representatives equally knowledgeable about the EiE interventions for meaningful engagements with data collectors. For example, in cases where the school head was not there, interviews were done with project focal persons (teachers) and in cases where the DDC was not there, his/her deputy participated in the discussions.

To counter double participation, the researcher explained extensively to all participants and respondents the benefits of not having the same informants. To promote political buy-in from community government officials, local structures and government institutions were engaged from the onset and involved through cutesy calls to enhance acceptance when conducting activities related to the study.

Some hard-to-reach target locations had to be reconsidered due to poor road conditions coupled with time constraints. While alternative means of reaching the participants were considered in close consultation with WV and partners, given the selection criteria used and the resemblance/homogenous target population, the change in number of sites had little to no negative influence on the findings as they had similar characteristics with the original sites.

3.0   STUDY FINDINGS

3.1   Hazard Mapping

The mapping of hazards provides critical information which aids the understanding of risks to allow the development of context specific interventions. This process is very essential in laying a foundation for the understanding of how schools, learners, parents, government and partners responded to the crisis such as COVID-19 to ensure access to education continued. The mapping of hazards unravelled communities exposed to more than one hazard and how these affect the delivery and access to education. The study profiled the five districts to understand the hazards experienced and the impacts they have and the strategies employed by different communities to ensure access to education continued uninterrupted. The results in Table 5 show that COVID-19 was among the worst experienced hazards in all five districts, disproportionately affecting both men and women. In addition, drought was recorded as the second worst hazard, with Buhera being the most affected. In the district, female respondents experienced the worst drought shocks owing to limited decision-making space and lack of mobility compared to males.

Table 5: Top most hazards in the five districts in the past 24 months

% within A7. Sex of Respondent								
		B2. Which TOP MOST hazard/disaster that has most affected lives of children of your age group in the past 24 months?						
A4. District		Heavy rains / Hail / Floods	Strong winds / Storms	Drought	COVID-19	None	Other: Please specify	N
Buhera	Male	2.6	2.6	34.2	55.3	5.3		38
	Female	2.4		56.1	39.0	2.4		41
	Overall	2.5	1.3	45.6	46.8	3.8		79
Gokwe	Male	5.7		11.4	80.0	2.9		35
	Female	14.9	2.1	14.9	66.0	2.1		47
	Overall	11.0	1.2	13.4	72.0	2.4		82
Mberengwa	Male			13.2	86.8			38
	Female	2.6		5.1	89.7	2.6		39
	Overall	1.3		9.1	88.3	1.3		77
Nkayi	Male	12.2	2.4	4.9	73.2	7.3		41
	Female	4.8	7.1	11.9	73.8	2.4		42
	Overall	8.4	4.8	8.4	73.5	4.8		83
Tsholotsho	Male	20.0	3.3		66.7	10.0		30
	Female	6.8		6.8	75.0	9.1	2.3	44
	Overall	12.2	1.4	4.1	71.6	9.5	1.4	74

Table 5 shows the most prevalent hazards in the target areas (Buhera, Gokwe, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho). The majority of the respondents indicate that COVID-19 is the hazard with the greatest effect in their lives followed by drought. Drought effects were most felt by respondents in Buhera, followed by Gokwe and Nkayi respectively. Floods and hail storms effects are felt in Tsholotsho and less in Gokwe and Nkayi. Thus, the table presents diverse hazard affecting areas targeted by SCALE-DP project hence, interventions should be composite and context specific to meet the needs of the vulnerable population.

3.2   Mapping of Alternative Approaches

This section focuses on the prevalence of different ALAs that were identified in Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho districts. Furthermore, the proportion of users of each ALA are described for each of the five districts. Table 6 shows the mapping of ALAs.

Table 6: Mapping of Alternative Learning Approaches

District	School Level	% Reading/studying alone at home	% Study group/discussions with peers	% Extra lessons with my teacher-physical	% Extra lessons with another teacher/person –physical	% Virtual learning material from my teacher-phone	% Virtual learning material- other providers	% Community Radio lessons	% National Radio lessons	% Other specify	% Materials from IGATE-T	N=number of respondents
Buhera	Pry	5.5	5.5	1.8				96.4				55
	Sec	16.7		11.1		5.6		61.1		16.7		18
Gokwe South	Pry	11.3	5	20		13.8	1.25	22.5	3.75	8.75	9	80
Mberengwa	Pry	5.4	12.5	5.4	1.8	3.6	1.8	58.9	5.4	7.1	28.6	56
	Sec	33.3		6.7	20	20	6.7		13.3	20		15
Nkayi	Pry	7.1	8.9	7.1				58.9	5.4			56
	Sec	14.3	14.3	19.0	19.0			14.3	9.5			21
Tsholotsho	Pry		7.9	13.2	5.3	5.3		71.1	10.5			38
	Sec	12.5	4.2	8.3				100	12.5	4.2		24

The results from the quantitative processes indicate that community radio lessons were common amongst learners in Tsholotsho Primary (71%) and secondary schools (100%), Buhera Primary schools (96%), Mberengwa and Nkayi primary schools registering 59% usage. The respondents further indicated that community radio lessons were not the only way learning was advanced as studying at home (Mberengwa, 33%), extra lessons with their teachers (Gokwe South, 20% & Nkayi, 19%), extra lessons with another person (Mberengwa, 20% & Nkayi, 19%) and receiving virtual learning materials (Mberengwa, 20%) were alternatives available with Mberengwa secondary school learners being the greatest users. No learner indicated use of virtual learning material from teacher-phone in Nkayi district and this can be attributed to poor network reception in the district. Most schools in the district do not have access to internet or mobile network. The study highlighted that in Buhera, learners at primary and secondary school level accessed education largely through community radio lessons and less through studying at home, extra lessons with their teachers and an insignificant number at primary level relied on study groups and virtual platforms.

Community radio lessons and extra lessons with their own teachers are learning approaches that are used by learners in Gokwe South to access education though at a small scale. Other ALAs such as reading alone at home, study groups with peers and virtual learning have been adopted by very few primary school learners in Gokwe South due to limitations in movement and grouping as well as the limited access to supportive gadgets (cell phones and laptops), poor network reception and the high cost of data. Issues of poor infrastructure, lack of technological infrastructure, high cost of internet, low speed of internet, the financial crisis of the family, and mental pressure for the learners have been observed as common issues of particularly in low income countries[9]. In Mberengwa, Community radio lessons are prevalent mode of accessing education among primary school learners and less used are study groups, studying at home alone, extra lessons and virtual platforms. At secondary level, studying alone at home was more pronounced with a sizeable number relying on extra lessons and virtual platforms to access education from their teachers.

Community radio lessons are prevalent in Nkayi district for primary education learners while reading at home, studying with peers, extra lessons with teachers are rarely applied as ALAs. Secondary school learners moderately used extra lessons with their teachers, and extra lessons with other persons to access education during the covid-19 induced lockdowns. Studying at home, use of study groups and community radio lessons are available alternatives though rarely used. In Tsholotsho, community radio stations are highly used by secondary and primary level school learners as alternative approaches. To

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[9] Ramij, M. G., & Sultana, A. (2020). *Preparedness of Online Classes in Developing Countries amid COVID-19 Outbreak: A Perspective from Bangladesh* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3638718). Social Science Research Network. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3638718.

improve access to education, reading at home, studying with peers, extra lessons with teachers, and virtual platforms are scarcely used by primary and secondary education learners.

3.3   Analysis of Alternative Learning Approaches

The COVID-19 situation characterised by movement and gathering restrictions triggered learners with the support of parents and or guardians to explore other means to access education. The section presents an analysis of learning approaches used across Buhera. Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho. The use of different learning approaches across the five districts were exercised as a coping strategy to ensure learners continued accessing education during distress periods. The analysis focused on use of the approach by gender, frequency, institutional support mechanisms, disability inclusion and the observation of child protection issues against each learning approach. Encouraging is the distribution of diverse learning approaches in all the five districts and this presents varied opportunities to reach out to learners. The analysis presents qualitative and quantitative findings:

3.3.1   Policies and legislations related to Alternative Learning Approaches

The government of Zimbabwe has been making frantic efforts to create an enabling environment for the implementation of Alternative Learning Approaches. In 2020, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) in collaboration with the Education Cluster has developed the Zimbabwe COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy as part of its preparedness and response strategy. The strategy specifically focuses on promoting ALAs in the context of disasters[10].

It is pertinent to note that most ALAs are closely linked to the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and as such creation of a conducive environment for the use of ICT remains fundamental if sound ALAs are to prevail in schools. This view is consistent with findings of Reimer (2020)[11] stating that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enhance teaching and learning depends on schools' policies and practices that focus on how to use digital devices effectively in the classroom. This reflects the need for government, schools and SDCs to create a conducive environment for the adoption of context specific ALAs. Interestingly, the government of Zimbabwe has a Ministry responsible for ICT (Ministry of Communication Technology, Postal & Courier Services) with the mandate to promote the adoption of ICT. Similarly, the enactment of the Education Amendment Act 2020 is one of the key developments which legalised the use of ICT in schools.[12] Before this, the use of mobile phones by learners in schools for example was prohibited. Thus, the amendment specifically approved the use of technology which made implementation of technology related innovative ALAs like radios. The country has a national ICT policy which includes references to ICTs in education and gender inclusion in the ICT sector.[13] The leadership of Zimbabwean government and civil society organisations have demonstrated an enthusiasm and positive attitude in promoting ICTs for development and education[14.] With regards to disability inclusion, in 2021, Zimbabwe enacted a National Disability Policy, which encourages reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in educational institutions, including access to assistive technology, teaching and learning methods, information and materials. This development is a positive signal that shows the government's commitment to inclusive education.

In alignment with its mandate to promote learner`s access to inclusive education in safe environments, the MoPSE, recently, gazetted the Secretary's Circular Number 4 of 2022, which overrode Circular Minute Number 13 of 2021, which had directed schools to have an arrangement in which learners were to alternate attendance to school as a way of decongesting the schools in line with the Standard Operation Procedures for the Education Sector. As a result, Secretary's Circular Number 4 of 2022 has with immediate effect, cancelled alternating learning. Thus, the Circular comes into effect stating that all learners shall attend school daily as from the 3rd of May 2022 and COVID-19 regulations must be adhered

[10] Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2020: Zimbabwe COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Strategy.

[11] Reimer, K. (2020). Creating Opportunities for Positive Connections with Elementary Students. *International Journal for Infonomics* (IJI), 13(1), 1954-1961.

[12] Zimbabwe, Education Amendment Act 2019.

[13] Zimbabwe National Policy for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) 2016.

[14] Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: Zimbabwe Country Report, 2007

to. The Department's decision also encourages maximum attendance for learners to catch up on their studies and make up for time lost due to COVID-19 interruptions.

Most key informants at national and district levels were aware of the Civil Protection Act of 1989 and that it is the guiding legislation on disaster preparedness. However, they were not sure how to engage in education issues and what role to play in promoting access to education in disaster situations. While the Civil Protection Act is currently being revised to meet the expectations of the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework, there is a need to advocate for the inclusion of disaster risk management in education policy and to make disaster risk management more explicit in the context of education.

School feeding interventions were overwhelmingly cited as effective in improving attendance and access to education at the primary and secondary levels, particularly in drought-prone areas. One of the key informants at the national level said the following, "*Some assume that all students who come to school are adequately fed at home. Those who come to school hungry are not motivated to make the long journey to school, and if they do come to school, the teachers' efforts to teach them are in vain*" (KI, Buhera, 10/03/2022). While this policy is used primarily in drought years, most disasters contribute to food insecurity in one way or another; therefore, these issues must be addressed in order for students to benefit from school.

3.4   Community radio lessons

Community radios lessons were the most used ALA by primary and secondary learners to access education across the five districts. Solar radios were procured by World Vision to address challenges relating to poor radio signal and lack of power. The intervention prioritized communities with the lowest number of radios per household and or learners who had no access to the national radio lessons. The radios were solar powered and costing between USD12.00-15.00. Thus, driving forces favouring this ALA meant that the radio lessons had minimal costs, which made them more suitable in rural areas where people have limited financial resources. The facilitator also required a USB where all the lessons were loaded. Pre-recorded lessons developed by MoPSE in collaboration with development partners were distributed to community volunteers who provided supportive supervision to learners. The lessons were aligned to the syllabi. The approach excited several learners, which triggered high attendance of learners. The solar radios were thus distributed to community learning champions or volunteers (such as retired teachers and holders of minimum qualifications, who would be capacitated to facilitate and supervise learners and support home-based learning. Teachers and community volunteers were responsible for maintaining the solar radios. Through community radio lessons, access to education was improved in the absence of teachers. Also, the remote schooling has significantly reduced the issue of travelling to school every day over large distances. Radio lessons are beneficial since no stable network connection is needed. This approach benefitted the employment of using local solutions to promote education continuity through working with community volunteers or facilitators, the strategy was laden with capacity challenges as some volunteers were not trained teachers. Restraining the use of this ALA was the lack of motivation among facilitators as they were not remunerated. In addition, there was limited supervision of community volunteers due to resource constrains; thus, limiting supervision by the schools and the MoPSE district offices. Attendance for radio lessons was kept in check through the use of registers administered by community volunteers.

While the approach was inclusive in terms of gender, lack of disability friendly infrastructure and limited skill to deal with all forms of disability made it impossible to address the needs of learners with disabilities, especially learners with hearing impairment. In terms of child protection, deliberate efforts were made as most of the volunteers are childcare workers who are custodians of child protection and safeguarding issues at community level.

3.4.1   Benefits of community radios lessons

Community radio lessons learning approach was used in Buhera, Gokwe South, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho districts to improve access to education. In terms of uptake, the approach was mostly used in Buhera followed by Tsholotsho while Gokwe was the least. The approach entailed identification and training of volunteers to act as facilitators in the administration of the learning approach. Efforts were made to locate the radios at a central point to lessen the distance traveled by learners. The use of community radio lessons was reported to have brought relief to primary and secondary school learners across all the five districts. The approach offers the same benefits to boys and girls at both primary and secondary levels. In concurrence, one of the learners in Mberengwa *said "it was not easy to access education during lockdowns as many parents could not afford an extra cost as they struggled to provide basic food*

requirements for the family. Through community radio lessons we were not left behind". Community radios were the mostly used approach by primary and secondary learners to access education and the following were identified as benefits that accrue from the use of this approach:

Through community radio lessons, access to education improved as the distance travelled to school was minimised following the restriction in movement as a result of COVID-19 induced lockdowns.

- Learners indicated that listening skills of both primary and secondary school improved as they are challenged to be attentive during learning sessions.
- Radios allow repeat sessions and this enhances understanding of concepts, something that is a challenge in face to face lessons and others means.
- The diversity of presenters improves concentration and understanding of concepts.
- Attending community radio lessons offers an opportunity to socialise post lessons.
- The presence of a facilitator presents an opportunity to explain issues.
- Using locals as volunteers transfer critical facilitation skills necessary for other development initiatives in the community.
- The establishment of community learning centres to facilitate radio lessons aid in decongesting learning environments.
- Education continued in the absence of qualified teachers, while reaching out to a wider audience.

3.4.2   Disadvantages of Community Radios

The limited number of community radios constrained the use of the ALA as the learner to radio ratio increased and this affected delivery of lessons. Subjects such as mathematics and sciences are not easily taught using community radio lessons as they require demonstrations. Currently, the preloaded lessons with the school syllabi are bunched together, making it difficult for various grade levels to access material at the same time.   There is no display and lessons don't start with overview of which lesson it is which makes it difficult for volunteers to find the right lessons. There are few radios and USBs which compromise coverage of all learners compelling some learners to travel long distances to attend lessons which negatively affects facilitator to learner ratio and exposes learners to risks

3.4.3   Frequent use of Community Radios

The results indicate that most primary and secondary school learners in all the five districts accessed education through community radio lessons across. However, more primary school learners relied on community radio lessons especially in Tsholotsho (93%), Buhera (74%), Mberengwa (73%) and Nkayi (64%) since the start of theCovid-19 induced lockdowns. While it was a common approach, among secondary school learners, it was used less than in primary schools. The high frequency in the use of the community radio lessons is likely attributed to it being an easy-to-use method, which generated interest among learners, especially those at primary levels. Primary school learners were excited about the experience of using radios to transmit school lessons and the fact that in the majority of the examined districts, the radio signal is poor, galvanized the interest to listen to this technology. The euphoria of coming together of primary level pupils contributes significantly to the high usage of this ALA. Commenting on the reception of community radios by learners one of the key informant stakeholders mentioned that *"radios is an exciting technology in marginalized communities and that on its own brings a high level of excitement among learners".* The above statistics and remarks give an impression that learners had particular interest to participate in community radio lessons which partly explains why the attendance outcome has been very positive. Table 7 presents the frequency of use of learning approaches in the targeted districts.

3.4.4   Mechanisms for Continuity and replication of the approach

*Material and Human Resources –*The number of community radios needs to be increased to improve the pupil-radio ratio in order not to affect audibility. Reducing the pupil-radio ratio will help to reduce the distance travelled and improve engagements with volunteers. In some cases, the pupil-radio ratio is close to 1: 50. For secondary school learners, qualified volunteers are a necessity to sustain the discussion should there be need for clarity. Secondary school learning is unique because of the number of subjects, meaning each subject may need a knowledgeable facilitator. One of the key informants mentioned that *"due to low level of education some facilitators avoid higher grades, and this has a negative bearing on learnership".*

Table 6: Frequency of use of the learning approaches

C1a. IF yes, what ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD did you use? * C2. For how long have you used this alternative learning method? Cross tabulation								
A4. District			C2. % of learners that have used this alternative learning method?					
			% Ever since	Since the advent of lock downs (continuous)	Since the advent of lockdowns breaking when schools reopen	Intermittently	N
Buhera	Pry	Community Radio lessons		73.6	26.4		53
	Sec	Community Radio lessons		54.5	45.5		11
Gokwe South	Pry	Community Radio lessons	11.1	50.0	38.9		18
Mberengwa	Pry	Community Radio lessons	6.1	72.7	18.2	3.0	33
Nkayi	Pry	Community Radio lessons	15.2	63.6	21.2		33
	Sec	Community Radio lessons		100.0			3
Tsholotsho	Pry	Community Radio lessons		92.6	7.4		27
	Sec	Community Radio lessons	12.5	58.3	29.2		24

The successful implementation of community radio lessons hinges on the availability of the radios, pre-loaded lessons on a USB or memory card, as well as trained and skilled facilitators to provide guidance to learners. Learners at primary and secondary school levels do not incur expenses to access education through community radios. Respondents rarely acknowledged the cost of buying the radios, maintenance and incentives to motivate volunteers. The in-depth discussions indicate that secondary school learners require contact with facilitators; hence, locals need to identify informed facilitators to preside over plenary sessions. The community radios require a learning centre that is convenient and inclusive for male and female primary and secondary school learners. It was established that teachers should be consulted on preloaded materials to ensure synchronisation with the syllabus. This will assist in making sure that what is taught through community radio lessons, compliments school schemes.

3.4.5 Supervision

The management of community radio lessons is essential for the benefit of learners. Community volunteers are relevant in supporting and supervision of the approach. However, efforts should be made to capacitate them and include qualified teachers in community radio lessons to ensure lessons feed into school's schedule on the syllabus.

Capacity Building/Workshops - Building the capacity of communities to manage the ALA is vital. Local volunteers and parents should be capacitated for ease of administration and to exploit technological gadgets such as smart phones and other radios and television sets that have facilities to be preloaded with learning materials. The capacity of sustaining the intervention should be promoted, especially improving revenue streams to motivate volunteers, establish improved learning facilities and embrace both formal and informal ways of accessing education. One of the provincial key informants commented: *"We need to move away from a culture of enforcing formal ways of accessing education and realize that a child can learn from anywhere as long the environment is conducive"*. This emphasizes the importance of improving the infrastructure at home, within the community and at school to support access to education.

The number of subjects learnt through community radio lessons at primary and secondary schools as indicated in Table 8 presents an opportunity to replicate the approach in other areas. However, care should be taken especially at secondary level as subjects such as mathematics and science require the presence of a qualified facilitator.

Table 7: Number of subjects learnt through community radio radios

C1a. IF yes, what **ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD** did you use? * **C5g. How many subjects are you learning through this method?** Crosstabulation															
within C1a. IF yes, what ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD did you use?															
			C5g. % number of subjects studied by learners using this ALA												
A4. District			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	N
Buhera	Pry	Community Radio lessons	3.8	28.8	17.3	15.4	13.5	19.2		1.9					52
Gokwe South	Pry	Community Radio lessons		16.7		33.3	38.9	5.6		5.6					18
Mberengwa	Pry	Community Radio lessons		12.1	33.3	33.3	12.1	9.1							33
Nkayi	Pry	Community Radio lessons	15.2	45.5	15.2	6.1	6.1		12.1						33
	Sec	Community Radio lessons	33.3	33.3	33.3										3
Tsholotsho	Pry	Community Radio lessons	3.8	15.4	38.5	15.4	15.4	3.8		3.8		3.8			26
	Sec	Community Radio lessons	12.5	20.8	12.5	16.7	12.5	8.3	4.2	12.5					24

Institutional Arrangements - The successful planning and implementation of community radio lessons requires the participation of all stakeholders. These include the MoPSE, Department of Social Welfare, School Development Committees, Ministry of Local Government and NGOs (to offer support in terms of resources and skills), organizations of persons with disabilities and child right movements. Traditional institutions are relevant in this regard to influence the allocation of space to establish satellite structures to support the use of community radio lessons. The dynamism of the stakeholders will help address the provision of education in an inclusive manner. Through the SDCs, replication of community radio lessons is possible to support primary and secondary school learning following indications that schools outside the SCALE-DP project are motivated to fundraise and procure gadgets on their own. However, at secondary school levels, the context should be considered first before scaling up the intervention given the diversity of subjects some of which (mathematics, science related) may pose challenges with this method as exposure to practice is necessary to enhance understanding. Not only is the issue of subjects the only consideration, the dynamism of teenagers makes it crucial examine the settings before scaling up.

Community involvement - Community involvement in the implementation of community radio lessons is essential in making sure that favorable conditions for learning for both boys and girls, and those with physical mobility or visual impaired disabilities are established. It also assists in changing practices that discriminate boys and girls, and those with disabilities and promote inclusive access to education. In Tsholotsho, fewer boys attended the lessons as the majority were said to be herding cattle and pre-occupied with other household chores as directed by parents or guardians. It is through community engagement that such behaviours can be avoided. The minimisation of the distances travelled to community centres to access education makes it possible for parents and guardian to allow the girl child to attend as the areas were considered safe and closer to monitor their movement. The use of locals as volunteers encourages parents and guardians as it helps absorb and preoccupy young people in all the five districts.

Gender Inclusion - The majority of learners were satisfied with community radios as a learning approach. Female respondents indicated their satisfaction more than their male counterparts. It was not possible to identify and analyse the reasons for this in the framework of this study but would serve well as a future area of research. In-depth discussions with key informants confirmed community radios was gender inclusive owing to the consensus in selecting the convenient venue and time to minimise on the distances travelled to community centres. However, there were cases recorded where restraining forces in some areas saw fewer boys attending community radio sessions as they were herding cattle and doing other household chores. In emphasising the value of inclusivity, one of the school heads said "*inclusivity contributes to good behaviour as it creates the possibility to reduce cases of domestic violence when the learners grow up because they are both used to live and share with people of the opposite sex*" (KI, Buhera, 28/03/2022). Table 9 illustrates how satisfied learners were with community radios in terms of promoting gender inclusion.

Table 8: Gender satisfaction with community radios

A7. Sex of Respondent * C7. Overall: How satisfied are you with the facility? Crosstabulation							
C1a. IF yes, what ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD did you use?			C7. Overall: % number of learners satisfied with the ALA				N
			Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
Community Radio lessons	Pry	Male		18.7	26.7	54.7	75
		Female		7.9	37.1	55.1	89
				12.8	32.3	54.9	164
	Sec	Male		26.7	33.3	40.0	15
		Female	4.3	17.4	52.2	26.1	23

Disability Inclusion - While the majority has viewed the community radio lessons as inclusive, concerns were raised on its inclination to exclude learners with hearing impairment and other forms of impairments. The issue of inclusion is compounded by the limited skills to deal with disability issues in schools. Relevant institutions need to be engaged to proffer solutions such as those with hearing impairments can be aided by the use of boards and chalk. The capacity building of facilitators and members of the community is necessary to widen the scope to deal with children with disabilities and improve access to inclusive education.

Child Protection – Community radio lessons have not been associated with any outstanding child protection concerns while at the learning centres as the ALA was facilitated by volunteers most of whom are Community Care Workers (CCWs) who are custodians of child protection matters at community level. To improve child protection, safeguarding sessions need to be included in the training of volunteers. Child protection concerns would only arise in cases where learners had to travel for longer distances due to scarcity of community radios as travelling long distances would expose learners to multiple risks.

3.5 Reading/studying alone at home

Reading at home is a practice that is common among learners to help them catch up with their school work or to revise what they would have learnt at school. It is largely exercised at home when learners have breaks in between household chores or in the evening. Studying alone is not exclusively done at home, it is possible at school whenever learners are free or have been given space to do within the school learning hours. However, during the COVID-19 induced lockdowns, or any another hazards such as destroyed bridges where it becomes impossible to meet face to face, the learning approach confined studying alone within home settings. The practice is more flexible as learners can shift their study hours around other commitments. It is monitored and enforced by parents or guardians. The study established that ALA percentage usage in various districts, with not much significance. For instance, Buhera, Gokwe, Mberengwa, Nkayi and Tsholotsho had a percentage usage of 7.5 (79), 9.8 (82), 8.8 (77), 10.3 (83) and 3.9% (77) respectively. The number in brackets represent the sample size.

3.5.1 Benefits of the reading/studying at home

Most of the respondents indicated that parents and/or guardians encouraged reading at home alone helps learners keep track with what was covered at school. The learning approach also inculcated a reading culture among learners and helped them interpret issues and understand them better. Reading at home was reported to be more prominent at secondary school level rather than the primary levels. The reason for this disparity is that secondary school level, especially the examination classes, wanted to capitalize on time and prepare for the examinations. At primary level, the practice was beneficial to examination classes, especially grade sevens as they resumed their school work despite the threat of Covid-19. In-depth discussions with focal teachers suggest that learners who created time to study at home never struggled to catch up with schoolwork. In corroboration, one of the focal teachers in Buhera commented: "*Few learners were able to read alone at home. Those that managed to study on their own, were generally faster in catching up with school while those that rarely studied struggled*" (29/03/2022).

3.5.2 Disadvantages of reading/studying at home

While reading alone at home offers benefits to learners, there are subjects that are difficult to study alone as learners require an explanation to understand concepts. Reading alone at home is less expensive and may be constrained by the scarcity of reading materials in most rural settings. The number of household chores largely disrupt studying at home and more concentration is realised during late hours when others are asleep. However, lack of source of lighting for night reading coupled with lack of adequate furniture and reading materials also limits the amount of time spent studying. Studying at home is also limited as there might not be anyone available and capable of assisting the learners with school work when they have questions to ask.

3.5.3 Frequent use of the approach

The results suggest that studying alone at home is common among secondary school learners. The respondents acknowledged that studying alone at home has been used ever since they enrolled at school with Buhera (100%), Nkayi (67%) and Tsholotsho (67%) recording the highest frequency in using this approach. However, during the lockdown period, there was shift, with secondary school learners Buhera (100%) the most users, primary school learners in Nkayi (75%), Mberengwa (71%) and Buhera (67%) primary school learners adopting studying alone to continue with their studies. This is very interesting as COVID-19 triggered a culture of reading among primary school learners and possibly explaining why

a sizeable number of secondary school learners dropped. The popularity of this ALA could have been triggered by the introduction of the CALA at primary and secondary school levels by government. CALA demands that pupils be exposed to theory and practice, and development that makes studying at home inescapable. The absence of adequate infrastructure in rural settings constrains studying at home despite it being an efficient way for learners to revise their work and catch up with school. One of the key informants in Tsholotsho said "*it is a challenge for rural learners to study at home especially during the day due to household chores and at night, lighting power constrains their efforts to study. Primary learners do study at home though for a short time as they spend most of their time playing different games which they interchange with studies*". This implies the need to keep rural learners at school if they are to focus on their studies by constructing study centres where they can focus on their schoolwork with minimum interruptions. Table 10 presents the frequent use of the ALA.

Table 10: Frequent use of Reading/studying alone at home

A4. District	Ever since	% Frequency of use of the alternative learning method				
			Since the advent of lock downs (continuous)	Since the advent of lockdowns breaking when schools reopen	Intermittently	N
Buhera	Primary School	Reading/studying alone at home	33.3	66.7		3
	Secondary/High School	Reading/studying alone at home	100.0			3
Gokwe South	Primary School	Reading/studying alone at home	33.3	44.4	22.2	9
Mberengwa	Primary School	Reading/studying alone at home	33.3	66.7		3
	Secondary/High School	Reading/studying alone at home		80.0	20.0	5
Nkayi Tsholotsho	Primary School	Reading/studying alone at home		75.0	25.0	4
	Secondary/High School	Reading/studying alone at home	66.7	33.3		3
	Secondary/High School	Reading/studying alone at home	66.7	33.3		3

3.5.4 Materials and Human Resources

The results indicate that studying at home does not result in learners incurring expenses. However, in-depth discussions indicate that the majority of learners require reading materials such as text books, which parents/guardians are finding it difficult to provide due to poverty, especially during lockdown periods where most informal trading was non-operational. In addition, materials such as chairs, desks and lighting equipment constrain studying home as well as parents and guardians who are incapacitated to offer academic support when questions are posed to them. The situation is worse for learners with disabilities, who are usually marginalized due to lack of accessible reading materials and relevant assistive technology.

3.5.5 Supervision

The supervision of learners studying at home is largely done by parents and guardians. However, learners design their own study programme whose success hinges on household chores. The supervision by parents/guardians only goes as far as seeing that the learner has a book before him/her. The challenge lies in parents/guardians supporting learners to study when they do not feel motivated or when they need an explanation in order to fully engage concepts. Capacitating parents on the management of learners at home is crucial in order not to subject them to abusive ways such as shouting at them and using a whip as this threatens the overall wellbeing of the child and the ability to study. During COVID-19 and lockdown, it was found that globally, cases of domestic abuse and violence against children have increased. Parents who do not have the capacity to teach, and have not learnt how to manage their own emotions can unintendedly put children in harmful environments that has a negative impact on their psycho-social and emotional well-being; causing trauma. Hence, this works against scaling up this ALA as its supervision presents challenges.

3.5.6 Mechanisms for Continuity and replication of the approach

Capacity Building/Workshops - Capacitating parents and guardians on dealing with minors and teenagers lays a strong foundation for studying at home and strengthens their ability to respond to learners needs amicably. One of the Education Officers said "*parents play a key role in supporting and improving access to education. However, some do not take kindly failure by the learner they are supervising to grasp concept hence they rebuke the child thereby inducing fear*" (16/03/2022). Such sentiments reflect the need to capacitate parents on child protection issues to deal with such situations in order to create a lasting supportive relationship for improved learning. In addition to capacitating parents/guardians, awareness raising on learners not to rely on face-to face but to study alone is necessary for improved results. Pparents/caregivers need to be sensitized that education is a child's right and on the importance of education so that they provide enough learning time and space for children instead of overloading them with chores. Key to this ALA is that it is difficult to scale it up as indicated in the earlier sections.

Institutional Arrangements - Several institutions need to come on board to educate parents/guardians on dealing with primary and secondary school level learners. The Ministry of Primary and secondary, Social Welfare, Child Line to share on child abuse dynamics and the School Development Committee. While studying at home has been going on for some time, not much has been done to converge these institutions to ensure homework materials especially primary level are well articulated by parents/guardians.

Institutions need to note that studying at home allows learners to study an average of five subjects. The number of subjects studied at home reflects the need to improve conditions to allow pupils especially at secondary level to study more. Subjects such as mathematics and science need a teacher to explain concepts before pupils can attempt to study alone. This ALA is very effective as learners deepen their understanding and measure how much they do not know as well as what they need to consult their teachers. The challenge with the method is that it is not sustainable without learners engaging other critical education institutions to provide more clarity on emerging concepts. The fact that the school syllabus is covered over a lengthy period depending on the level indicates the significance of a facilitator.

This ALA might also be difficult for learners with disabilities to study alone in areas they require support through assistive technology, including those with communication challenges, who require additional support. That is, braille services for those with visual impairment and sign language services for those with hearing impairment. Most parents and/or guardians do not possess these skills, which makes it difficult to support their children. As a result, reading alone can just be left to parents and the learner as it is not suitable for any organization to scale it up to other districts. This ALA might be difficult to replicate or scale up as it is difficult to evaluate as the schools have no mechanisms put in place to monitor this method. It is also difficult to replicate since there are no guidelines to follow to ensure maximum benefit. However, the scalability can be possible especially given the introduction of the CALA, which demands learner commitment. The challenge with this ALA is that some learners may have difficulties studying subjects such as science and mathematics without prior explanation of the concept by the facilitator. Studying should be supported to ensure learners revise their work and gauge their readiness for examinations. Hence, the need for close collaboration between schools and the home, and establishing a mechanism that be used to monitor this ALA. Hence, the need to support in the provision of conducive environments (books, table, chair, lighting, facilitator) at schools, home and other learning

centres becomes crucial. Otherwise, any organization interested in pursuing reading alone at home as an ALA, might want to consider interventions including child protection and safeguarding mechanisms, support with resources like assistive technology for learners with disabilities, reading materials and capacity building for parents to supervise learners studying alone at home.

Table 9: Number of subjects learnt through studying at home

C1a. IF yes, what ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD did you use? * C5g. How many subjects are you learning through this method? Crosstabulation															N
			% Number of subjects learnt through studying at home												
A4. District			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Buhera	Pry	Reading/studying alone at home				33.3	33.3	33.3							3
	Sec	Reading/studying alone at home				33.3	33.3				33.3				3
Gokwe South	Pry	Reading/studying alone at home		11.1	11.1	44.4	11.1	22.2							9
Mberengwa	Pry	Reading/studying alone at home					66.7	33.3							3
	Sec	Reading/studying alone at home			40.0	20.0	20.0				20.0				5
Nkayi	Pry	Reading/studying alone at home	25.0		25.0	25.0			25.0						4
	Sec	Reading/studying alone at home				33.3	33.3							33.3	3
Tsholotsho	Sec	Reading/studying alone at home				33.3	33.3			33.3					3

Community involvement - Parents and or guardians are key players in improving conditions that enhance studying at home by learners. Hence, the need to capacitate them so that they effectively support their children when studying at home. Also, community centers need to be capacitated with both material and human resources so that they effectively support learners. In the community, learners spend most of their time studying and doing other household chores. The most important aspect is allowing learners time to attend to their schoolwork with minimum interruptions. Basic infrastructure such as a table and a chair, adequate light and reading materials are necessary to replicate this practice. In addition, access to online reading materials is critical in strengthening studying at home. This method works well if the contact time between learners and teachers monitored and enhanced to allow for consultations on matters parents and guardians cannot explain. Community involvement is necessary to collectively allow learners more time to attend to their studies.

Gender Inclusion - The majority of primary level male (33.3%) and female learners (40%) were satisfied with studying at home. However, more secondary level male learners (77.8%) preferred to study alone at home compared to their female counter parts (40%). Studying at home is possible irrespective of gender. However, depending on the season, household tasks may shift and overload certain gender and ultimately deprives them of reading time. The reliance on seasonal activities such as dryland cropping, horticulture and livestock farming creates pressure and makes delegation of some responsibilities to learners by parents inevitable. This might explain why more male learners at secondary level prefer studying at home compared to female learners. Parents or guardians need to be alert and not over allocate tasks to make the approach more inclusive and provide conducive environment for both male and female learners. An example is the herding of cattle in Tsholotsho, which demands that the boy child spends more time in the fields compared to the girl child. One of the informants in Mberengwa said "*In rural areas, learners rarely get time to rest and let alone to study. Their performance at school is reflected by the distance they walk, task they perform after school and the less time they spend on books*" (23/03/22).

Aspects of gender inclusion when studying at home were taken into consideration. This ALA is suitable for both male and female learners as long as parents and guardians are conscientize to be equitable in distributing workload to both boys and girls so that both have study times. Table 12 provides the analysis of this aspect.

Table 10: Overall satisfaction with the learning approach

A7. Sex of Respondent * C7. Overall: Satisfaction with learning approach							
			% Satisfaction with learning approach based on gender				N
			Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
Reading/studying alone at home	Pry	Male		44.4	33.3	22.2	9
		Female	10.0	50.0	40.0		10
			5.3	47.4	36.8	10.5	19
	Sec	Male	11.1	11.1	77.8		9
		Female	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0	5
			14.3	14.3	64.3	7.1	14

Disability Inclusion - Disability inclusion is a concept that needs more attention for parents and guardians to embrace the needs of learners with disabilities. Concern was raised that disability friendly facilities such as toilets and learning aids are not common in rural settings including the learning materials for such groups, hence compromising access to education of learners with disabilities. Parents knowledge and skills should be improved through training in case learners face difficulties to grasps concepts due to disability.

Child Protection - Child protection issues are rarely prioritized at this level. The observance of child protection issues when educating a child is necessary as this improves the learning environment at home. Awareness programmes should be prioritized to build the capacity to promote access to education without infringing on their rights. Parents and caregivers should be capacitated on child protection matters to avoid abusing learners through this ALA and seriously harm children knowingly and inadvertently within their household. The parent to child relationship may be used to disadvantage the child especially where knowledge on child rights in minimal.

3.6   Study group/discussions with peers

Studying in groups is a common practice. This is where students meet regularly as a group outside of class time and commit to share knowledge and help each other excel in their studies. Learners normally coordinate themselves at times based on geographic location, gender, friendship subject under discussion. Parents and caregivers rarely influence the grouping, with teachers' influence relevant during formal learning hours. Group discussions are driven by the desire to exchange ideas, self-interest and the need to prepare for examinations. However, during the total COVID-19 induced lockdown, groupings were prohibited; hence, those that managed to come together to study were doing so secretly. The approach was mainly used in Nkayi, followed by Mberengwa, while Tsholotsho was the least in terms of uptake. Study groups among primary school learners are intentionally or unintentionally conducted as they play together during the day while secondary school learners engage in organized group discussions. One of the learners in Nkayi concurred that "*group learning is exciting and encourages everyone to participate. Even with my poor English, I can contribute in my local language and there is room to make mistakes*" (22/03/2022).

3.6.1   Benefits of study groups

The group discussions proffered the following benefits to both primary and secondary school learners:

*   It creates a platform to share ideas with others.
*   Discussing with peers improve understanding as learners engage in English and local languages. This also improved the participation of those with a poor English command. Learners were able to move ahead with the syllabus and sharpened preparation for the public examination.
*   Discussions with peers create a conducive environment, and it is more accommodating to errors.
*   Through group discussions, learners were able to gauge how much they know and how much they do not know. Hence, they were able to evaluate their readiness to sit for public examinations compared to those who did not engage in group discussions.
*   Peer discussions presented a platform to share different information, including past examinations papers, thus making them more prepared for public examinations.

3.6.2   Disadvantages of study groups

While learners may share more ideas in the absence of an informed facilitator, incorrect views may be embraced by learners. Also, if group sessions are not well controlled, conflicts may arise and learners spend more time arguing at the expense of studying. Physical accessibility may be a challenge to learners with disabilities if the environment where the study group is taking place has physical barriers such as uneven terrain, inaccessible room and toilet. Due to the informal nature of study groups, chances are that learners with disabilities are likely to be excluded. For instance, those with hearing impairment where sign language interpretation services are not available. Hence, this affect learning, resulting in compromised learning outcomes. This ALA is also not deemed to be an official ALA in cases of pandemics like COVID as it brings health risks.

3.6.3   Frequent use of the group discussion approach

Study groups are not a common alternative learning approach for both primary and secondary school learners in rural settings. This is evidenced by the results in Table. 14, which reflect that ever since enrolling at school, group studying has been used to a lesser extent with Buhera (33%) and Nkayi (33%) acknowledging its application. The long distances of close to 800m between households, lack of venues to accommodate groups and lack of infrastructure such as chairs and desks in most of these districts limits learners from converging to study and share experiences. Also, physical and communication accessibility issues with regards to learners with disabilities was a huge challenge. For instance, learners with physical impairments and those with visual impairment struggle when there is no physical accessibility. Also, learners with hearing impairment face challenges when there are no sign language interpretation services. The rural activities such as fetching water and firewood as well as herding livestock characterize the prevailing livelihoods, which make it impossible for parents and guardians to spare learners' time to study in groups. The COVID-19 situation worsened the plight of rural learners as gathering was prohibited. Table 13 Illustrates the frequency of which the group discussion approach was used by learners.

Table 13: Frequent use of the alternative learning method

% within C1a. IF yes, what Alternative Learning Method did you use?							
				% Frequency of use of the alternative learning method?			
A4. District			Ever since	Since the advent of lockdowns (continuous)	Since the advent of lockdowns breaking when schools reopen	Intermittently	N
Buhera	Primary	Study group/discussions with peers	33.3	33.3	33.3		3
Gokwe South	Primary	Study group/discussions with peers	25.0	25.0	50.0		4
Mberengwa	Primary School	Study group/discussions with peers	14.3	71.4	14.3		7
Nkayi	Primary School	Study group/discussions with peers		40.0		60.0	5
Tsholotsho	Secondary/High School	Study group/discussions with peers	33.3	33.3		33.3	3
	Secondary/High School	Study group/discussions with peers		100.0			1

3.6.4 Materials and Human Resources

The materials required to support this ALA include learning centres that are safe with chairs and desks to create a conducive learning environment for learners to study and engage with peers for clarity of concepts. The learning centres could be located within areas they live in or at school depending on which one is close to minimize on the distance travelled to attend group discussions. The meeting frequency of group members is determined by the convenience of the proposed times to members. Furthermore, the learning centres should be manned by mature, well-informed and trained volunteers in safeguarding and child education and developmental needs to guide learners accordingly. The method is implementable at minimal cost as indicated in Table 14.

Table 11: Materials and Human Resources for Study Groups

C1a. IF yes, what ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD did you use? * C4. Did you incur any costs to access this alternative learning method? Crosstabulation					
within C1a. IF yes, what ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHOD did you use?					
A4. District			C4. % Number of learners incurred any costs to access this alternative learning method?		N
			Yes %	No %	
Buhera	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers		100.0	3
Gokwe South	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers		100.0	4
Mberengwa	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers		100.0	7
Nkayi	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers		100.0	5
		Study group/discussions with peers		100.0	3
Tsholotsho	Sec	Study group/discussions with peers		100.0	1

Group discussions were rarely used during lockdown periods as parents were not comfortable that children group during Covid-19 restrictions.

3.6.5   Supervision

The implementation of this group discussions is crucial in order to guide learners when need arises. The challenge with supervision lies in the fact that the majority of group discussions are organized outside the formal learning environments, making it difficult for facilitators to supervise and provide guidance. Learners organize themselves and they should be provided with the basics on organizing and running such initiatives as such gathering can harbor improper associations resulting from peer pressure within the group and lead to diversion from the core business of studying.

3.6.6   Mechanisms for continuity and replication

Group discussions with peers need to be sustained in order to entrench a reading culture on rural learners. However, most rural areas have limited infrastructure to provide basic shelter to support small grouping for effective learning. The construction of more learning centers will help improve the environment or can be explored to provide guidance on subjects of expertise. In the absence of learning centres, learners can gather in smaller groups and rotate meetings in each other's home. This initiative works where learners within the vicinity relate well and share something in common to sustain group sessions. Otherwise, this ALA is difficult to scale up as schools and communities have minimal intervention.

Material and human resources - While study groups are practiced to a lesser extent, they are cost effective as learners engage to exchange ideas and demonstrate their understanding of concepts without the presence of a tutor. The group platform allows learners to engage freely and at times, explanations are rendered in local languages for the best of many. Basic infrastructure such as chairs and tables, is something the majority of rural households do not possess, yet these improves study conditions.

Institutional Arrangements - The success of this ALA requires different players to effectively mobilize resources and conscientize parents and guardians on the value of group learning. Institutions such as the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (school heads and teachers), SDCs, church organizations and local volunteers are critical in encouraging learning in rural settings. Churches could be engaged to provide the necessary infrastructure in the absence of well-furnished local centers. The replication of group learning can be facilitated by training of SDCs and school heads on establishing low-cost structures and provision of supportive resources for group learning.

Community involvement - The involvement of parents, guardians and the entire community is essential to support group learning as it requires convenient space in terms of furniture and location within a reasonable distance. Acknowledging group learning will allow parents and guardians to excuse learners from certain household chores to allow them time to engage with others on school subjects. The replicability of the learning approach is possible given its use to learn different subjects. While it is rarely used, this is largely due to sparse distribution of households making it difficult for learners to convene as indicated in the Table 15.

Table 12: Study Group Discussions Across Districts

A4. District			% Number of subjects learnt through group studying												Total
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Buhera	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers			33.3		33.3	33.3							3
Gokwe South	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers				25.0	50.0	25.0							4
Mberengwa	Sec	Study group/discussions with peers		57.1	14.3		28.6								7
Nkayi	Pry	Study group/discussions with peers		20.0	40.0	20.0		20.0							5
		Study group/discussions with peers	33.3	33.3	33.3										3
Tsholotsho		Study group/discussions with peers		100.0											1

Gender Inclusion - Gender inclusion was another aspect that was examined under the group discussion and the findings are presented in Table 16.

Table 13: Gender Inclusion in Group Discussions

A7. Sex of Respondent * C7. Overall: Satisfaction with learning approach			% Satisfaction with learning approach based on gender				N
			Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
Study group/discussions with peers Studying through groups with peers satisfies the learners	Pry	Male			62.5	37.5	8
		Female			72.7	27.3	11
					68.4	31.6	19
	Sec	Male			50.0	50.0	2
		Female			100.0		2

Studying through groups with peers satisfies the male and female learners attending primary level education. The preference for study groups increases for male secondary level learners from satisfied to very satisfied while female learners are satisfied. The finding reflects that male learners prefer studying as individuals compared to female learners who prefer discussions to enhance their understanding. Thus, promoting group discussions among females may improve their attendance and possibly decrease the rate of school dropouts.

Disability Inclusion - Most schools in the five districts do not have learning centres that are disability inclusive, hence much needs to be done to enlighten schools on different forms of impairments. One of the key informants at national level said "*disability is not homogenous, others require hearing devices, while others need special reading materials. More could be done to improve on inclusivity*" (11/03/2022). This explains that impairments may not be visible to the naked eye and it calls for special expertise to discern and respond appropriately. Disability inclusion in group studies may be a challenge given that it is largely driven and managed by learners without facilitators influencing deliberations.

The issue of parents hiding and keeping away children with disabilities from school was noted and it makes it a challenge for groups to be inclusive. Inclusion can be strengthened by parents and guardians not denying either boys or girls from attending group learning. What is critical to consider in enhancing inclusion is providing conditions that do not discriminate boys or girls.

Child Protection - Denying learners space to study by overloading them with household chores constitute child abuse. Aggravating the abuse of learners is the distance travelled to access education, which ultimately suffocates their efforts to study. Long distances were said to expose the girl child to many vices as young adult's way laid along the way as compared to when the study group is close; hence, most parents and guardians deny the girl child group sessions, which are beneficial especially for examinations classes.

3.7   Extra lessons
Extra lessons are generally referred to as private additional school lessons offered to a learner or groups of learners by a teacher for an additional fee. Sometimes the fee is charged by a particular school`s administration system but not as part of the official government recognized tuition. The arrangement for extra lessons to take place is usually done between the parents or guardians or the learner and a teacher at the learner`s school or any other teacher outside the learners` school. The extra lessons are conducted at makeshift schools usually at the teachers' private place of residence or in case of one-on-one lessons, at the learners' house. They can be conducted indoors or outdoors.

3.7.1   Benefits of extra lessons
Extra lessons have been credited for improving the performance of learners before and during COVID-19 induced lockdown. The approach becomes more beneficial to learners as teachers tend to be more competitive and motivated because of the extra income for the teacher associated with the extra lessons. One of the KII participants in Gokwe South mentioned that *"despite being informal, teachers demonstrate their competency to teach during extra lessons more than what they do in conventional formal lessons to lure more learners"*. Consequently, the quality of education imparted to learners during extra lessons tends to improve, which is to the benefit of the learners. Generally, it has been observed that learners with access to extra lessons perform better than those who do not have access. These have been of benefit to learners to help them to catch-up in areas in which they are lagging in preparation for examinations. Similarly, commenting on the performance of teachers during extra lessons, one of the learners who participated in survey was quoted as saying; *"they provide extra information that is not given in ordinary class lessons so I have improved greatly"*.

Quantitative findings indicate that Gokwe South was leading in terms of extra lessons as 20% of the learners confirmed that they are attending extra lessons with their teachers against 20% of learners who attended extra lessons with other teachers. In Mberengwa, most secondary learners who attended extra lessons indicated that they were being taught by other teachers (20%). In Nkayi, learners confirmed attending extra lessons with their teachers (19%), while others conducted extra lessons with other teachers (19%). Tsholotsho has been the least in terms of the use of extra lessons, where only 8.3 % of secondary learners confirmed attending extra lessons. An analysis of the trend above concurs with qualitative findings, which suggest that in Gokwe South, extra lessons are prevalent. In other districts, extra lessons seem to be more popular in secondary school learners as compared to primary learners, except for Gokwe South.

3.7.2   Disadvantages of Extra lessons
The fact that extra lessons were conducted informally remained a serious challenge as the school authorities were not involved as these were conducted secretly with the teacher, the learners and the parent. Thus, the school did not have the ability to monitor and supervise both teachers and learners participating in extra lessons. As a result, learners remain prone to abuse by some teachers. Extra lessons appear to be discriminative as learners from disadvantaged families could not participate due to lack of resources to pay for extra lessons.

Whilst extra lessons have been credited as an effective way to improve the performance of learners, the strength has been outweighed by financial constraints as both learners and parents cited financial constraints as a major setback affecting learners across all selected districts. Similarly, findings from FFA singled financial constraints as a serious challenge that negatively affects learners and parents. This is thought to be fueled by economic hardships in rural areas. Some parents opt to pay for their children`s extra lessons in kind as money remains extremely scarce. While this method has been effective, it is however important to highlight that MoPSE has condemned it as an alternative method. However, with parents and learners, it seems to be leading as teachers seem to pay more attention to extra lessons than formal teaching as indicated earlier and illustrated in Table 17.

Table 14: Learners who used extra lessons

District	School level	Extra lessons with my teacher, -physical - %	Extra lessons with another teacher/person –physical - %
Buhera	Primary	1.8	
	Secondary	11.1	
Gokwe South	Primary	20.0	20.0
Mberengwa	Primary	5.4	1.8
	Secondary	6.7	20.0
Nkayi	Primary	7.1	
	Secondary	19.0	19.0
Tsholotsho	Primary	13.2	5.3
	Secondary	8.3	

The case study below affirms the above findings and both parents and learners believe that extra lessons produce best results.

Case Study on Extra Lessons – Nkayi District
Learners and parents alike believe that for best results at school, a learner must be subjected to an intensive Extra Lessons Programme. A Learner who attends extra lessons is considered highly at school because it is the domain of children who come from financially well off to do families. During the last lockdown, every parent and every learner yeaned for extra lessons to cover the lost time but due to social economic challenges particularly in rural areas that was not possible. According to a focal teacher at in one secondary school in Nkayi District, most parents within their cluster cannot afford extra lessons because they can be quite expensive depending on who is offering the lessons. Although the government has warned against Extra Lessons due to non-standardisation of the approach in terms of execution and costing modalities, the parents for form 4 parents at this school, have approached teachers to offer them a fee for Extra Lessons to compliment SCALE-DP project because they are seeing great potential with the two approaches put together.

3.7.3   Frequent use of the approach

The frequency use of extra-lessons could not be established through KIIs as the approach is conducted informally. One of the KIIs participants was quoted as saying *"extra lessons have been carried out nicodemusly (privately) and as such, stating frequency of their use remains a challenge"*. However, it might be that learners had limited options, especially during COVID-19 induced lockdowns. For learners in examination classes, the frequency generally increased. Findings from the quantitative data portray that most primary school learners' access extra lessons with another teacher everyday week (69.9%) against 57.7% that conduct extra lessons with their teacher every day a week. Most secondary learners (100%), conduct extra lessons one day in a week. Table 18 illustrates the frequent use of the ALA.

Table 15: Frequent use of the ALA

A1. School level		How frequent do you use the ALA					
		Every day of the week%	Every week day%	During weekends %	2-3 days in a week%	1 day in a week%	Intermittently%
Pry	Extra lessons with my teacher, -physical	7.7	57.7	7.7	23.1	15.4	
	Extra lessons with another teacher/person –physical	13	69.6	8.7	30.4	8.7	
Sec	Extra lessons with my teacher, -physical					100	
	Extra lessons with another teacher/person –physical		33.3		44.4	22.2	11.1

3.7.3   Materials and Human Resources

For extra-lessons, learners need textbooks, notebooks and the teacher. In terms of payment, this was done in cash and in kind. Findings from KIIs suggest that learners who paid in kind usually make payments through agricultural crops and small livestock. Finding from questionnaires suggest that learners were attending extra lessons with their formal teacher or another teacher whom according to KII findings, could be unqualified for the job. A significant number of learners indicated that they incurred higher costs for extra lessons with private teachers, compared to costs they incurred with their class teachers. Commenting on the issue of payment, findings from the KIIs suggest that most teachers are being paid in secret. One of the KIIs participants reported that *"most teachers are being paid and if you ask the learners, they will not disclose and, in some instances, learners will only disclose the truth after interrogation from officials from the district"*. An Analysis of the above suggest that learners are paying for extra lessons and may not easily disclose since this is illegal.

3.7.4   Supervision

The approach has been cited as laden with supervision constraints, mainly attributed to the informal nature of the approach. Extra lessons are usually carried-out in private schools, teachers' homes and other informal venues without direct supervision from either the school head or the district inspectors. In some instances, there would not be any defined timetable to be followed as everything is mostly in formalized and in some cases, the teachers are not even trained for the job. This further creates a risk of learners not being taught in a correct and proper way in terms of pedagogy and input provided. Thus, in most cases, not even the parents will be available for supervision.

3.7.5   Mechanisms for Continuity and replication of the approach

The main challenge is that extra lessons have created and perpetuated social inequalities. While extra lessons have been hailed high, as a strategy that is meant to equalize opportunity for those who are motivated and have high potential to contribute to society, it is however distressing how these extra lessons can be a social mechanism that reproduces and reinforces inequality[15]. This is because extra lessons are paid for, and those who cannot pay, the traditionally disadvantaged (including persons with disabilities who are double marginalized), cannot attend; hence, they lag behind. Those capable of paying continue to access this elusive form of education that might remain the preserve of a few, even if it means asking for further clarification on issues fail to understand during formal working hours. Extra lessons are likely to foster corruption. Situations in which teachers provide extra lessons for learners for whom they are already responsible for in the public system can lead to corruption, particularly when teachers deliberately teach less in their regular classes in order to promote the market for extra lessons Thus, scaling up extra lessons because difficult as it segregates learners from disadvantaged families. Also, this approach is not supported by MoPSE due to the factors listed above.

3.7.6   Institutional Arrangements

As it stands, there are no clear-cut mechanisms intended to ensure that there is continuity in terms of implementation of extra lessons as an approach. The approach has not been legalized, making it difficult to establish its prospects for continuity. Formalizing extra lessons remains problematic again as one of the KII participants commented: *"The term extra lessons simply implies that there is an extra cost to be involved in addition to school fees already paid by parents and for me, I does not see any prospects for official continuity of the approach"*. Another key informant participant was concerned that *"extra lessons are discriminatory given that we have other learners who are vulnerable and currently assisted with payment of fees school safety nets like BEAM. Therefore, payment of extra lessons means that such learners who cannot afford will be left behind"*. It is against this background that extra lessons cannot be recommended for scaling up.

Community involvement - Parents together with learners indicated that they make informal arrangements, which involve the teacher, the learner and the parents at family level. There are no other existing arrangements beyond family level supporting the approach. This is mainly attributed to the fact that the ALA is implemented informally. Hence, direct involvement of government officials and other duty bearers becomes problematic.

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[15] Bray, M. and Lykins, C. (2012). Shadow education: Private supplementary tutoring and its implications for policy makers in asia. Cerc monograph series in comparative and international education and development no. 9. Asian Development Bank: Mandaluyong.

Gender Inclusion- In relation to gender inclusion, both girls and boys had access to extra lessons, implying that there was no gender discrimination. However, extra lessons were most pronounced in Gokwe South where most boy learners (22.9%) accessed both extra lessons with their teacher and another teacher against 17.0% girl learners, followed by Nkayi and Buhera with the least which recorded 2.2% of male learners who accessed extra lessons against 4.9% of girl learners. However, the challenge is on the issue of the ALA only being accessible to those with resources to pay for extra lessons. In particular, learners with disabilities might struggle due to the direct link between disability and poverty.

Disability Inclusion – On this ALA, not much was said about disability inclusion as learners indicated that individual parents liaise with the teacher. However, some education officials indicated that, it depends on the severity of the impairment since most teachers are not capable of teaching such learners. As a result, extra lessons are determined by the capacity of the teacher in question and the willingness of the parents to pay for their children.

Child Protection - Extra-lessons have been associated with serious child protection concerns. One of the key informant informants in Gokwe South expressed that *"teachers who are expected to teach learners during extra-lessons ended up abusing them"*. This could be partly attributed to lack of supervision as the arrangements were made both informally and lessons are conducted at an informal venue, and sometimes outside school hours. While parents prefer this approach, the challenges it brings along, can put learners at risk; hence, the need for the Public Service Commission to consider teachers' salaries so that they are not tempted to conduct extra lessons. It is also recommended that during community lessons which are mostly conducted by CCWs learners need to be also taught about their rights and reporting mechanisms in case their rights are violated at community level.

3.8   Virtual learning
Virtual is another name for online learning or distance learning. In this case learning in a virtual environment is conducted rather than a physical classroom and this means learners can access education without physical barriers including in their homes. Virtual Learning in this context transpires with the aid of technology where learners use gadgets like computers, smart phones through teams, zoom, skype, WhatsApp among other online platforms and applications using internet and data bundles or airtime. Virtual learning supports interactive and real-time learning and feedback if best virtual learning approaches are employed with optimum resources. The challenges arise where there are not adequate resources and materials to support the ALA. In rural areas where the study was carried out, WhatsApp messages were the most popular platform used by learners to communicate with teachers and get learning instructions. Learners also access reading materials through word and pdf documents through WhatsApp. The ALA was mainly employed in Mberengwa, followed by Gokwe, while the approach was least employed in Buhera.

3.8.1   Benefits of the approach
Virtual learning has been an important ALA implemented it the rural districts is WhatsApp messages with very limited if any audios and videos. The mostly pronounced benefit of the approach is that it promotes education continuation, even when schools are closed or during COVID-19 lockdowns. The approach has also been credited for improving learner`s competency in Information and Communication and Technology (ICT). One of the KII participants in Gokwe South mentioned that *"Virtual learning has been promoted by the MoPSE and we are actually encouraging teachers to explore more virtual learning approaches as they improve the competency of learners in ICT, which is also in line with the Education Amendment Act 2020"*. Also, virtual learning renders some flexibility, giving learners more time to study at home. One of the learners who participated in the survey commented: *"I liked it because I would have more time to study and also in terms of assessment, my parents would help me, it helped me improve in many subjects"*.

3.8.2   Disadvantages of Virtual Learning
Despite its potential, virtual learning was laden with obstacles. Most rural schools have limited internet connection, limited gadgets required like laptops, smartphones among other essentials. Due to limited access to the said, virtual learning is currently limited to mainly WhatsApp platform using messages and other methods which may not need strong network connection. Apart from that, more viable virtual platforms like teams, google meets, skype among other more effective platforms which can allow learners and teachers to interact more and in real time cannot be implemented. Whilst the government has legalized the use of virtual learning, more support is required to ensure that learners and teachers have more access to gadgets which support virtual learning, internet connectivity and capacity building on innovative virtual learning technologies. Whilst the Ministry responsible for ICT has been supporting with

WIFI connection in schools and laptops the support has not reached all learning areas. The Akelo library project which supported learners with online books required subscription fee making it inaccessible with other learners. Currently, there are very few service providers which were identified during the mapping exercise of the study and more exploration needs to be conducted undertaken on available virtual learning facilities.

Findings from the survey with learners indicate that virtual learning was implemented mostly in Mberengwa and by secondary learners (20%), followed by Gokwe South (13.8%), while Nkayi had the least recording (0%). Looking at both qualitative and quantitative findings, despite the eager by the MoPSE to support virtual learning, mainly because of perceived benefits, the uptake of the approach has been minimal, thus compromising the full realization of the associated potential benefits. Table 19 illustrates how learners utilized virtual learning.

Table 16: Learner Utilizing Virtual Learning

	School level	Virtual learning material from my teacher-phone (%)	Virtual learning material- other providers (%)?
Buhera	Primary		
	Secondary	5.6	
Gokwe South	Primary	13.8	1.3
Mberengwa	Primary	3.6	1.8
	Secondary	20.0	6.7
Nkayi	Primary		
	Secondary		
Tsholotsho	Primary	5.3	
	Secondary		

The case study below provides some insights into online learning in Gokwe South during COVID-19 induced lockdown.

Case Study on Online Learning – Gokwe South District

About 40kms from Gokwe South town is a primary school. The school head gave an account of how the learning approaches were affected by the lockdown. Like other schools in the cluster, they received radios, textbooks and learning cards but little did the school knew that COVID-19 symptoms in the area would take a sudden increase affecting about 6 out of every 10 people. A directive was given to further undo all gatherings. This directive affected all community-based activities and learners had to be confined to their homes because despite the intention to attend their usual assembly points. The challenge was that of the unavailability of PPEs at the village-based learning centres. Community leaders were not prepared to have potential COVID-19 spreading points in their areas through the Community Based Resource Centres. Online learning became the most immediate mitigatory measure for effective learning at the time. Teachers improvised by embracing use of all the provided IGATE-T learning approaches to generate user friendly lessons and assignments for their learners. According to the school head, an estimated 30%of the parents and guardians had smart phones hence sharing of lessons and assignments among learners worked very well. The school is 5 km away from a major business centre and so the issue of network was not a challenge in the vicinity. The impact and advantages of online learning was the widespread reach, assured safety of learners and group approach. However, some of the challenges encountered included lack of internet data and having to walk to nearby learners for those without smart phones. Learners and teachers alike applauded online learning as a smart, intelligent and safe approach of learning which is also in sync with the government's policy of encouraging learning through ICTs. The culture of online has been adopted at the school, and it shall remain one of the key learning approaches.

Whilst the case study has indicated some positive gains, in terms of inclusiveness, much needs to be done as learners with visual impairment have not been included in most Virtual Learning platforms. Whilst the 30% was a qualitative estimation, which might not be accurate, the indication is that the number remains

low although most learners have been sharing gadgets such as smart phones, to ensure that learning continues.

3.8.3   Frequency use of the approach
The frequency of the use of virtual learning could not be established through qualitative discussions with participants as they are several variables determining the use of the approach. These variables include among other things, status of the learner and the teacher, availability of the gadget which can accommodate the application, availability of data or WIFI both on the side of the learner and the teacher. Considering that the study focused on rural communities, the frequency of using the approach is likely to reduce as rural areas have limited access to electricity or solar power. Also, challenges include lack of gadgets that support WhatsApp technology, as well constrained with connection due to network challenges, coupled with financial woes limiting their access to both connection data and the gadgets.

Quantitative results indicate that 5.3% of the primary school learners used virtual learning material from their teacher against 0.7 % which used virtual learning material from other service providers while 5.1% of secondary school learners used virtual learning material from their teacher and 1.3% used virtual learning materials from other service providers. Both primary and secondary learners have used both virtual learning approach from teacher-phone and virtual learning material from other service providers. In terms of frequency use of the ALA, both primary (46.7%) and secondary (37.5%) learners who used virtual learning every day are accessing it through learning material from their teachers followed by primary learners (50%) who use virtual learning material from other providers against 26.7% who access virtual learning material from their teacher every weekday. Similarly, at secondary level (100%), there was use of virtual learning material from other service providers against (12.5%) accessing virtual learning material from teacher. An analysis of survey results above reveals that most learners are using virtual learning approaches every day of the week (seven days per week including weekends) and every weekday (five days a week excluding weekends).

3.8.4   Frequent of Virtual Learning in schools

Table 20 provides the analysis of the frequency use of the virtual learning in schools.

Table 17: Frequency Use of Virtual Learning in Schools

School Level		Every day of the week (Seven	Every week day (Five days per week	During weekends %	2-3 days in a week%	1 day in a week%	Intermittently%
Pry	Virtual learning material from my teacher-phone	46.7	26.7	6.7	13.3		6.7
	Virtual learning material-other providers	0	50	25	25		
Sec							
	Virtual learning material from my teacher-phone	37.5	12.5		12.5	12.5	25
	Virtual learning material-other providers		100				

3.8.4   Materials and Human Resources
For successful implementation of virtual learning, both the teacher and learner need to have a gadget which connects to WhatsApp, have internet connection, data and network coverage, which support WhatsApp application. In terms of human resources required, mainly the teacher is required to ensure learning is undertaken virtually. In terms of connection, there is need for data, which may require some monitory contribution usually from both the teacher and the parents in case the school does not have WIFI.

3.8.5   Supervision
As the approach is relatively new, very little if any has been done to ensure that there is clear-cut supervision for virtual learning approaches. Since both teachers and learners are using their personal

connection data and gadgets, supervision becomes a serious challenge. One of the Key Informant Interview stakeholders indicated that *"Supervision of virtual learning remains a serious challenge where the teacher is not connected to school WIFI, he/she will be using personal data for connection while both learners and teachers are using their personal gadgets making supervision very difficult unlike when the school purchases both data and supplied a gadget for the work".* A closer analysis of the above, calls for concerted efforts from the school to provide teachers with support relating to essential resources to enforce supervision.

3.8.6   Mechanisms for Continuity and replication of the approach

Capacity Building/Workshops- In terms of capacity building, there is no specific trainings, which were rendered to capacitate teachers on virtual learning spearhead by the MoPSE. However, commenting on the availability of any capacity building availed on ICT or virtual learning one of District School Inspectors pointed out that *"there are other private players who have been supporting with ICT like the Akelo which targeted schools which subscribe to Akelo Libraries. A one-day workshop was rendered at Provincial Level which was facilitated by Akelo staff".* However, there is limited capacity building as the Akelo training did not cover all districts where the project was conducted. There might also be a need to conduct training on the use of various platforms such as WhatsApp and/or other future platform in order to ensure the protection of personal data of children in the smartphones.

*Institutional Arrangements-*Virtual learning as an ALA rides on the MoPSE, which creates an environment in which all education related initiatives focusing on primary and secondary learning are undertaken. To ensure that virtual learning is implemented smoothly, the MoPSE works jointly with the Ministry of Communication Technology, Postal & Courier Services through the multi sectorial approach. The ministry in question is responsible for ICT with the mandate to spearhead initiatives geared towards promotion of ICT including virtual learning. Similarly, one of the KII stakeholders confirmed that "*the Ministry of ICT pledged to install WIFI in schools and in Gokwe South for example, 2 primary schools and 2 secondary schools have been supported with 30 laptops and free WIFI connection for one year.*" The collaborations with strategic ministries through a multi-sectorial approach, reflects sustainability of virtual learning as ALA and indicate positive signals for replicability of the approach. Similar collaboration between MoPSE, Schools and other Private Companies within the technology development sector is commendable for replication and scalability of the approach to promote continuity of the ALA. Other key factors to be considered for scalability of the approach are to ensure that learners and teachers have more access to gadgets, which support virtual learning, internet connectivity and capacity building on innovative virtual learning technologies in order to promote continuity of the ALA.

Community involvement - In terms of community involvement, virtual approaches were mostly implemented with the participation of the community, and, at family level. Families are responsible for deciding through parents and guardians to purchase data for learners. Teachers also encourage parents to support learners with the required data and gadget to ensure education continues which remains a constraint for parents. One of the Key Informant stakeholders indicated that *"there is a lot of sharing of gadgets and information going on in communities".* This implies that access to virtual learning is not solely determined by individuals or families, but the community has also an integral role to play to support virtual learning through solidarity and sharing of resources that enable access to virtual learning material. This element also supports both sustainability and replication of the approach. However, due to the informal nature of the support obtained from the community, monitoring mechanisms to ensure that children whose families cannot afford data to get support from community members remains a challenge. This also creates room for exclusion of other children.

Gender Inclusion - Virtual learning approaches have been accessed by both girls and boys although distribution has been uneven across districts as learners are coming from families with different social and economic status which determines learners who can afford gadget and internet data required for connectivity more than the learners' gender. Leaners from poor families are least likely to afford the required gadgets and internet data for connections who constitute the majority in rural areas. In Buhera, not even a single boy learner had indicated access to virtual learning material against 2.4% girl learners. In Gokwe South, (8.6%) boy learners had access to virtual learning approaches against 17.0% girl learners who used virtual learning material from teacher-phone and 2.1% girl learners who used virtual learning material from other providers. In Mberengwa, 5.3% of boys used virtual material from other providers against 5.1% girl learners who used virtual learning material from teacher-phone. In Nkayi, only boy learners had access to virtual learning material from teacher. In Tsholotsho, only 3.3 % of boy learners had access to virtual learning materials from the teacher against 2.3% girl learners who accessed virtual learning material from the teacher and 4.5% who accessed virtual learning material from other service providers. The above skewed a proper gender analysis and yet low access to virtual learning material could be attributed to social and economic status of learners. Generally, learners in rural areas have limited access to connection data and gadgets which are suitable for virtual learning due to a combination of factors including poor network and connection coverage and resource constraints. Table 21 shows virtual learning material from various stakeholders.

Table 18: Virtual Learning Materials from Various Stakeholders

	Sex	Virtual learning material from my teacher-phone (%)	Virtual learning material-other providers%
Buhera	M	0.0	0.0
	F	2.4	0.0
Gokwe South	M	8.6	0.0
	F	17.0	2.1
Mberengwa	M	0.0	5.3
	F	5.1	0.0
Nkayi	M	9.8	0.0
	F	0.0	0.0
Tsholotsho	M	3.3	0.0
	F	2.3	4.5

*Disability Inclusion -*In terms of disability inclusion, no specific deliberate effort was made to ensure that learners with disabilities are included. For example, one KII Participants confirmed that *"virtual learning was done through WhatsApp messages and no audios and videos were being used and this was partly due to poor network connection in rural schools".* In this case, learners with visual impairment were being discriminated against as they cannot see messages since software that is required to empower them is expensive and parents cannot afford it. There is need for MoPSE to liaise with the ICT ministry so that more accessible mobile phones are distributed.

Child Protection - In relation to child protection concerns, supervision is difficult since there is no clear-cut supervisions mechanism to see activities going on through the virtual space (WhatsApp) as learners can excess lessons anywhere. There is a risk that some learners could be abused through cyber bullying by other learners using WhatsApp learning technology. One of the KII participants conceded that currently there are no adequate reliable virtual learning approaches and emphasised the need to encourage teachers to continue exploring better virtual learning approaches and coming up with innovate ways of supervising the ALA

3.9   Reading Materials Provided through Community Learning Centres

The framework of the IGATE-T project, Word Vision provided learners with reading materials in form of reading cards and books. The reading materials were kept at community learning centres that were manned by community volunteers. Learners can come to community learning centres to read or borrow reading materials. Parents and guardians are also supporting learning through reading material from IGATE-T while at home. The ALA was used in Mberengwa and Gokwe.

3.9.1   Benefits of the reading material provided through community learning centres

Reading material provision through community learning centres as a learning approach were applauded in the framework of the IGATE-T project for significantly improving numeracy in mathematics and literacy in English language among learners. The approach was recommended for implementation in rural areas where learners come from households with limited resources, as the approach did not have any direct costs involved among others benefits. One of the KIIs stakeholders in Mberengwa indicated that *"reading materials are the best approach in rural areas and unlike virtual learning which requires connectivity and data so far reading materials is the best approach suitable for learners in remote areas".* It was also observed that reading material gave learners an opportunity to concentrate alone and getting assessments and feedback from teachers which improved learning. One of the learners selected from the quantitative survey commented that *"I managed to improve in my grades in all the subjects I received material for because I had enough time to practice and get feedback after writing assessments"* Whilst some learners reflected that they are getting enough time to study while at home, this could not be easily generalized as learners with more supportive parents seem to have more time to study while others seem to be denied enough time due to household chores. Findings from the FFAs confirm the same results rating reading material among the top performing approaches. Findings from quantitative survey portray that reading material from IGATE-T were mostly adopted in Mberengwa (28.6%) against (8.8%) learners who confirmed to have used it in Gokwe South. Generally, the uptake of reading material from IGATE-T as an ALA has been relatively low based on feedback from learner who participated in the survey as compared to reflections from key informants. This could be attributed to the fact that the IGATE-T project which promoted the approach had been closed and therefore learners did not have vivid memories about the project as there were no synergies among the school, community volunteers and the family to ensure implementation of the activities continues.

3.9.2   Disadvantages of reading material provided through community learning centres

Whilst the approach seems to have yielded more benefits, it remained dependent on the support which learners get from parents to be afforded enough time to study since it was mainly employed at home. While some learners reported that they were getting enough time to study while at home, others lamented that there were not getting enough time to study at home as they were overwhelmed with household chores. The ALAs lacked close collaboration between the school and the community, families and volunteers facilitating the ALA at grassroots level. Against this background, the approach could not continue well after the end of the funding period of the IGATE-T framework which supported the ALA. Another restraining factor is that community facilitators who also supported implementation of the ALA did not have the required expertise to assist learners which may be attributed to their low level of education despite that they were trained. It should be also noted that, the approach did not make deliberate efforts to cater for learners with visual impairment as it depended solely on reading materials. There was compromised collaboration among the school, the community volunteers, parents and learners while at home which was a major setback for continuity of the ALA. Table 22 illustrates the percentage of learners who used reading materials from IGATE-T as an ALA.

Table 19: Share of Learners who Used Reading Materials from IGATE-T as an ALA (in %)

District	School level	Materials from IGATE-T

Gokwe South	Primary	8.8
	Primary	28.6
Mberengwa	Secondary	

3.9.3 Frequent use of the approach

In terms of frequent use of reading material from IGATE-T as an ALA, the approach was used by primary learners and the majority of learners used the ALA 2 to 3 days a week (69.6%) followed by only (17.4%) who used the ALA every day while (13) used the ALA every week. This shows that most learners had interrupted the use of the ALA which could be attributed to other domestic chores. There may be a close link between frequent use on an ALA and tight supervision. Since the ALA was mostly supervised by facilitators most of whom were said to be incompetent attributed to their low level of education despite that they were trained. This could have a bearing on the frequent use of the ALA.

3.9.4 Frequent use of the ALA

Table 23 illustrates the frequent use of reading material.

Table 20: Frequent Use of the ALA

A1. School level		How frequent do you use the ALA					
		Every day of the week (Seven days a week) %	Every week day (Five days per week excluding weekends %	During weekends	2-3 days in a week%	1 day in a week%	Intermitten tly%
Pry	Reading materials from IGATE-T	17.4	13		69.6		

The table shows that the majority of learners used reading material from IGATE-T 2-3 days a week (69.6%). Implying that it was one of the most used ALA.

3.9.5 Materials and Human Resources

The reading material learning approach implemented through IGATE-T was basically using reading cards and books. Human resources required to implement the approach included community facilitators, teachers (mainly selected focal persons), head teachers, District Schools Inspectors and IGATE-T personnel. The community facilitators were responsible for facilitating learning at community level, with support from focal persons who were responsible for supervision of the activities on behalf of the school head. District Schools Inspectors were making some monitoring visits jointly with IGATE-T team to supervise implementation of the ALA. However, incompetence of some facilitators remains a major setback for the ALA where some of the facilitators lacked the capacity to do the job.

3.9.6 Supervision

Supervision of the reading materials was mainly conducted by focal persons and school heads who were making some continuous visits in communities. IGATE-T team and District Schools Inspectors were also making some supervision visits to check progress. However due to COVID-19 induced lockdown coupled with resource constraints, supervision was not consistently done. As such, parents ended up supervising the work of the learners at home. This was also challenging as learners were responsible for conducting other household chores, which also disrupted learning. Thus, generally, supervision remained erratic during COVID-19.

3.9.6 Mechanisms for Continuity and replication of the approach

Material and Human Resources - In order to support continuity of reading materials as an approach, there is need to have more cards and books to cover all areas, which were not previously covered during the IGATE-T project. In terms of human resources, modifications need to be made especially regarding the volunteers' approach to replace them with some qualified personnel. The focal teachers and head teachers are strategic positions, but supervision needs to be tightened for best results. One of the key informants commented: *"The reading materials approach is a very good approach, but it needs to be revisited on the selection criteria for community facilitators as most of them are not competent enough for the job".* Hence, the need for choosing competent facilitators and capacity development becomes crucial.

3.9.7   Institutional Arrangements

Existing permanent structures were directly involved in the implementation of reading materials approach to guarantee its sustainability. Direct involvement of the MoPSE, District School Inspectors, school heads, and focal teachers, was a deliberate effort to ensure that after the end of the funding period, the project will continue. Apart from the involvement of the community, there was also a deliberate measure to come up with permanent solutions to promote learning through local structures. It should be noted that some of the facilitators were also part of the community child protection workers, which further promoted sustained coordination of learning. However, on the ground it appears, the said institutions including the District Inspectors do not have a clear-cut picture regarding the continuity plan for the ALA. Asked to comment on the sustainability plan for the ALA, one of the District Schools Inspector was quoted as saying *" a meeting was held to formulate a committee responsible for facilitation of the learning approaches introduced through IGATE-T and the meeting involved all leadership including local leaders and unfortunately nothing has been done to date".* Commenting on the Sustainability Issues, another KII participant indicated that *"Supervision mechanisms were at school and district levels by MoPSE, but these alternative learning initiatives were done at family and community levels, and there was not much synergy between the whole school with the family, community or volunteer activities on the ground."*

The involvement of permanent relevant structures sometimes does not translate to continuity without close collaboration between government structures and communities, families and volunteers where the ALAs are implemented on the ground, although the same can have a positive bearing on replication. Generally, the uptake of reading material from IGATE-T as an ALA has been relatively low based on feedback from learners who participated in the survey as compared to reflections from key informants. This could be attributed to the fact that the IGATE-T project, which promoted the approach had been closed and therefore learners did not have vivid memories about the project as there were no synergies among the school, community volunteers and the family to ensure implementation of the activities continues. Whilst the approach has potential for scalability, this potential needs to be strengthened through building close synergies among schools, community, community facilitators and the parents for monitoring and supervision of the approach.

Community involvement - The community was at the center of the implementation of the reading materials approach. The community was involved in the selection of community facilitators. The approach has been cited as one of the approaches with a community focus as learning unfolds within the community while learning facilitation was spearheaded by community members, who are familiar with the local languages and culture. Commenting on the learning environment, one of the learner survey participants was quoted as saying *"I understood better since I was studying with my peers, the environment was very flexible and friendly, so I was motivated to learn".* An analysis of the above suggest that reading material from IGATE-T created a conducive environment for learning within a community which motivated learners.

*Gender Inclusion -*In relation to gender inclusion, both boys and girls were involved in reading material learning approach. The reading material from IGATE-T were only accessed by learners in Gokwe South and Mberengwa. While boys and female learners had access to reading materials from IGATE-T while mostly at home, they were equally disrupted which had negative outcomes on learning. In Gokwe South more female (10.6%) accessed reading materials as compared to boys (5.7%). This was different from Mberengwa where more boys accessed reading materials (23.7%) against girls (17.9%). Table 24 shows the gender aggregation for learners that accessed reading material from IGATE-T.

Table 21: Gender Aggregation for Learners that Accessed Reading Material from IGATE-T

	Sex	Reading materials from IGATE-T (%)?
Gokwe South	M	5.7
	F	10.6
Mberengwa	M	23.7
	F	17.9

Disability Inclusion - There were no specific efforts made to ensure there is inclusion of learners with visual impairment. This implies that learners with visual impairment were excluded when it comes to the reading materials approach. Hence, the need to ensure proper inclusion and mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues like disability in future programming.

Child Protection - There was no specific child protection concern that arose through implementation of the reading materials approach. Interestingly, some of the community facilitators were part of the Child Care Works (CCWs). This means that learners were unlikely to be prone to abuse as CCWs would be knowledgeable on such cases and reporting of cases of abuse within learning centers was most likely.

3.10   Workbook

Workbooks were introduced by MoPSE as a pilot project mainly in Buhera to promote education continuity in the context of COVID-19 induced learning disruptions. Workbooks were produced through inputs from teachers following the syllabus and books which were printed through the MoPSE with support from Better Schools Programme in Zimbabwe (BSPZ) which printed more workbooks. The workbooks were accessible in printouts and soft copies which were mainly shared through WhatsApp. Learners were reading the books mostly with the support of parents and guardians while at home and with the support of teachers while at school.

3.10.1 Benefits of workbooks

To cover up the gaps brought about by radio lessons, MoPSE introduced the workbooks, which were in different format of the familiar workbooks. The workbook learning approach was said to be accessible through various ways, which include printouts and as soft copies. This means that those that cannot access printed workbooks can still use soft copies shared through WhatsApp. Assuming that smartphones and data are available, the approach has been commended as a cheaper option and therefore easy to implement in rural schools. One of the KII participants in Buhera was quoted saying *"to cover up the challenges associated with national radios lessons, we introduced the workbooks which came in different formats"*. These challenges included lack of radios, power cuts and unreliable radio frequencies, thus making it difficult for learners to access national radio lessons. Also, the radio lessons were not accessible to learners with hearing impairment.

The flexible formats through which the workbooks can be accessed, made the approach more accommodative and attractive to both learners and teachers. Despite being on a pilot phase, the approach has gained popularity in Manicaland Province. It was established that the workbook follows the syllabus. If a learner could not come to school because of any reason such as a disaster, they could easily follow up using the workbook. The input given at school are reflected in the workbook and the learner can be supported by a parent. However, in cases where parents or caregivers are not supportive learning can be disrupted. The workbooks were designed using the lesson-by-lesson approach, not topic by topic, making it more detailed and user friendly. One district key informant stated: "*If resources permit, the workbook is the way to go. The Ministry will not be bothered buying textbooks. The workbooks work past COVID-19*". Schools without printing facilities were requested to go to BSPZ to print workbooks. The main challenge was that the MoPSE did not produce the workbooks for all learning areas because of resources as it was a pilot.

3.10.2 Disadvantages of workbooks

The fact that the approach relies much on external service providers for printing poses a challenge for accessibility of material. Furthermore, like other ALAs that are conducted under the supervision of parents, learners with parents who are not supportive are likely to leg behind, which makes the approach prone to exclusiveness. In some instances, some parents and care givers are expected to support learners with internet data to access soft copies which remains a serious challenge as some households do not

have the purchasing power leading to exclusion of other learners. Apart from that, learners with visual impairment are excluded within this ALA which remains a worrisome gap. Since the approach is currently at a pilot phase and only covering one district, other learning areas are excluded which remains a setback.

3.10.3 Frequent use of the approach

Findings from qualitative interviews suggest that the approach is being frequently used by learners. However, the workbook was not accessed through the quantitative survey as the approach only came to light during an interview with one district officer.

3.10.4 Materials and Human Resources
In terms of material required to implement workbooks, the approach requires the workbooks, printing facility or a gadget, which supports WhatsApp application. Thus, printing costs will need to be incurred – an expense which has been met by the MoPSE as well as intranet data for connection in case of learners who access soft copies through WhatsApp. Ideally the approach can be implemented with the support of teachers at school or parents and guardians at home.

3.10.5 Supervision
Supervision of the approach is done by the school, which is also responsible for distribution of workbooks to learners at grassroots level. While studying at home, parents and guardians will be responsible for supervising the work of learners using the approach. This remains a challenge, especially in cases where parents lack good parenting and supervision skills which may expose learners to abuse. District School Inspectors have the responsibility to supervise schools to check if the approach is implemented as planned. However, lack of resources to travel to various schools was a hindrance such that District Schools Inspectors ended up not going to many schools.

3.10.6 Mechanisms for Continuity and replication of the approach

Capacity Building/Workshops - Workbooks were designed by qualified teachers and they were following the syllabus. Hence, the existing workshops conducted by the MoPSE are relevant to the use of workbooks. The books are designed in such a way that they are easy to follow both at home and at school, with not much face-to-face contact required. However, an option for feedback from learners need to be considered to promote interaction between learners and the teachers in cases where learners need further assistance from the teacher.

Institutional Arrangements - The MoPSE spearheaded implementation of the workbooks as a pilot phase in Buhera District. At district level, the District School Inspectors were mainly responsible for distribution of the workbooks to schools where school heads with the support of teachers ensure that learners access the books. BSPZ was also a key player in the workbooks learning approach as it supported with the printing of workbooks to be distributed to schools. Direct involvement of the MoPSE into the workbook learning approach remains a key sustainability measure giving assurance for continuity of the approach and replication of the approach. As indicated earlier, it becomes important to cover all learning areas when it comes to the production of workbooks. If supported with the necessary resources, this approach has benefits, and is hence scalable.

Community involvement - With regards to community involvement, the workbook was also used by learners while at their homes where parents were supporting learners to study within the community and at family level. Within the family, parents would also support learners with purchasing of intranet data for WhatsApp connection to access workbooks in soft copy. However, considering that some households do not have the capacity to purchase data, this remains a challenge and risks that some learners are left behind.

Gender Inclusion - In relation to gender inclusion aspects, the approach targets both girls and boy learners, an aspect that is ideal for scaling up.

Disability Inclusion - Considering that, the workbook was not accessible in braille, learners with visual impairment were not included which remains a challenge, an aspect that should be considered when scaling up this approach.

Child Protection - The approach allows learners to access lessons in their homes without moving to other areas to access education. Whilst this can be a positive development for learners staying with supportive parents and caregivers, the approach presents some challenges in cases where learners are not staying in child-friendly home environments, as learners are likely to be abused.

Another issue is related to feeding programmes provided for in schools. Once schools are closed, this becomes an issue because parents will now have to provide meals to the learners and might not always have the income or farm proceeds to do so. Hence, this becomes a child protection issues, which has adverse effects on learners' participation in every ALA.

4.0   Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

The following lessons and best practices were derived from the research evidence gathered in this study:

- ALAs need to be facilitated by well-trained and competent personnel for improved delivery of lessons and learning outcomes.
- The reliance on formal education, constrains the operationalisation of other forms of ALAs. This stems from educators` belief that the best education can only be accessed through formal channels in the presence of a teacher.
- The distances travelled by learners, limited study materials and the lack of learning infrastructure limits the use of other learning alternatives available for rural learners especially group learning, studying alone at home and community radios.
- Most of the ALAs help to reduce travelling distance by learners; hence more learning times is availed. Also, abuses that usually take place between home and school are minimised as learners spend more time at home or at community centres, which are close to their homes.
- Some of the ALAs invested in renewable sources and managed power consumption; for example, the use of solar powered radios.
- Most of the ALAs integrated environmental and climate-friendly activities such as community radio, which is paperless.
- Thus, it saves the environment by reducing on trees that are usually used to produce paper.
- The presence of well informed, educated and skilled volunteers is key in enhancing the confidence of learners.
- More radios and USB are required to increase coverage of learners, reduce distance travelled and improve the facilitator to learner ratio.
- Despite the benefits offered by other ALAs, face to face learning remains the most preferred method of study: this is especially linked to the difficulty of some subjects such as Mathematics, Mass Display and Science that require a qualified facilitator.
- ALAs, which exploit existing government structures and educational such as community radio lessons have better chances for replication because of the established institutional mechanisms.
- ALAs that are implemented in communities require close collaboration between formal government institutions like schools, communities, and families for sustainability.
- Most ALAs supported by government have supportive child protection measures such as the community radio approach which is being facilitated by Community Care Workers (CCWs) who are custodian of child protection at community level.
- Learners` frequent use of ALAs depends on convenience, consistency and reliability of supervision from competent personnel.
- Close monitoring of the implementation of ALAs increases learning outcomes among learners

4.1   Conclusions
This study was conducted in five districts and the following conclusions were drawn:

To draw lessons on disability and gender inclusion and child participation strategies in Education in Emergencies – The study established that gender inclusion and child participation strategies in education and emergencies are embraced in various ALAs. However, gaps on disability inclusion across ALAs were identified. Hence, future interventions seeking to improve education in emergencies need to be improved to minimize violation of rights of learners with disabilities. An example is the exclusion of

deaf learners in the provision of education through community radios as well as ALAs using books and texts which disadvantage learners with visual impairments.

To generate and disseminate relevant and usable research information to support evidence-informed education programming during crises and large-scale disruptions to conventional learning – The intensification of the negative effects of hazards such as COVID-19 has widened the need to invest and devise ways that engender inclusive access to education. The findings reflect that a number of ALAs have been used to promote education continuity. Research evidence is crucial in any programming activities. A huge gap that has been identified in this study, is that of monitoring and evaluation, which needs to be strengthened in order to make sure that learners maximize on ALAs.

To evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of currently available alternative education approaches with the view to identifying what works, for whom, under what circumstances - Key to the success of ALAs is the mobilisation of resources, promotion of capacity building of facilitators and parents/guardians, and further consolidation of child protection systems and disability inclusion efforts for inclusive education.

Ranking of ALAs was conducted guided by the OECD criteria which measured the appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and other crosscutting issues relating to the ALAs which are implemented across the five districts where the study was conducted. Basing on the study findings, community radios is the most recommended ALA followed by, reading materials provided through community learning centres, workbooks, study groups/discussions with peers, virtual learning material, reading/studying alone at home and lastly extra lessons respectively. Finer details regarding key considerations which were made while ranking and general conclusions on the ALAs are presented below.

General Conclusion on the ALAs

Basing on the study findings, the following general conclusions were drawn on the ALAs:

- ✧ **Community radios** were ranked highest. The ALA has been widely used across the districts with low start up and implementation costs. This is an ALA that enjoys support of the existing legal frameworks. The ALA is also supported by the MoPSE while the community and families have been directly involved in its implementation making it more sustainable. Community radios are also suitable for rural areas as the ALA does not require any signal or network for connection.

- ✧ **Reading materials provided through community learning centres** was ranked the second ALA. The ALA is supported by the current legislations, suitable for rural areas as it does not require more resources while supported by community volunteers and the MoPSE. Although the approach was only implemented in two districts and a gap between the school and the community was observed, this ALA has the potential for scalability and can be supported by other organisation for continuity.

- ✧ **Workbooks** are being ranked the third ALA as it does not require much resources and materials can be accessible in different formats which include soft copies and hard copies. The ALA remains very relevant in rural settings where resources are limited. While the approach has been implemented in in one district and has no clear-cut community involvement, the approach has great potential for scalability as it has been supported by the MoPSE and the current legislation.

- ✧ **Study group/discussions with peers** was ranked the fourth and it requires limited resources which makes it suitable for schools in rural settings. The approach is legally implemented and remains sustainable as it involves the community and families while being supported by MoPSE.

- ✧ **Virtual learning** is the fifth recommended ALA. Virtual Learning remains appropriate as the approach is being supported by the law in terms of its implementation and the MoPSE. However, the approach requires much resources which makes its implementation problematic especially in rural settings.

- ✧ **Studying alone at home** was the sixth ranked ALA. While studying at home requires limited costs, implemented in the absence of the teacher supported by, the law and can be easily used in rural areas where learners have constrained resources. However, for mathematics and science subjects, which require demonstrations, learners may face challenges with studying new topics without the support of a facilitator and textbooks while supervision of the ALA presents a lot of challenges which also raises child protection concerns in cases where the family is not supportive.

- ✧ **Whilst Extra-Lessons** appeared to be commonly used, the approach remains illegal in Zimbabwe and also excludes learners from poor backgrounds which constitutes the majority of learners in rural schools.

4.2   Gaps/Challenges

- Some Volunteers who facilitate the ALAs lack capacity for the job which could be attributed to their low level of education and lack of support from teachers despite trained which has a negative bearing on education outcomes.
- Learners` frequent use of ALAs depends on convenience, consistency, and reliability of supervision from competent personnel.
- For community radios, the preloaded lessons are bunched together, making it difficult for various grade levels to access material at the same time. Also, there is no overview of each lesson, which delays volunteers in finding the relevant materials for each grade.
- There are few radios and USBs, which compromise coverage of all learners compelling some learners to travel long distances to attend lessons which negatively affects facilitator to learner ratio and exposes learners to risks
- Despite the benefits offered by other ALAs, face to face learning remains the most preferred due to the difficult of concepts that require a qualified facilitator, as well relevant resources that are required to ensure their effectiveness.
- Most ALAs that are not supported by government have no child protection and safeguarding measures, which remains a threat to learners.
- Some ALAs that were supported by government did not promote close linkages with the community, families and volunteers which remains a serious setback for continuity.
- Some ALAs like Extra Lessons exclude underprivileged learners without resources to pay for the services making the ALA exclusive and difficult to scale up and replicate.
- Supervision of ALAs that are conducted within communities, remains a challenge due to human and material resource constraints
- Extra lessons make it difficult for all learners to access them due to financial constraints, hence difficult to scale up.
- Network coverage issues coupled with lack of resources to purchase gadgets and internet data compromises the viability of virtual learning.
- Some learners find it difficult to find time to engage in ALAs because of some parents who make them spend all the time doing household chores, herding cattle, working in the fields and fetching water.
- Learners with disabilities seem not to benefit much from the ALAs due to their inaccessibility.
- Workbooks and reading materials are not enough to cover all learning areas.

4.3   Recommendations

The following recommendations have been directed to the MoPSE, SCALE DP consortium and other NGOs, Schools and communities.

4.3.1   Recommendations for MoPSE

- The MoPSE should work with the Ministry of Communications Technology, Postal and Courier Services, and other relevant partners to improve network coverage in rural areas through a multi-sectoral approach to support virtual learning.
- MoPSE should encourage its departments and schools to reduce paper-based communication and promote paperless communication.
- The MoPSE should promote blended learning that enables both physical and online learning.

- The MoPSE could consider expanding the capacity of schools to diversify learning approaches and invest more in agricultural activities, such as establishing vegetable gardens, poultry, and fishing projects. Such activities can also support and sustain ALAs.
- Teachers must be offered incentives through government initiatives that are sustainable and discourage discriminatory teaching.
- The MoPSE should consider including ALA approaches in the curriculum for teachers so that they are part of their training. This should include how to design inclusive lessons.
- More workbooks need to be printed, and the approach needs to be expanded to other areas of learning.
- The MoPSE, with support from implementing partners, needs to allocate a budget for monitoring community-based alternative learning approaches.
- The MoPSE, with support from implementing partners, should consider developing more effective virtual learning platforms.
- When assembling USBs, the MoPSE, in collaboration with its implementing partners, should consider differentiating grade levels per USB to facilitate access for community volunteers and learners.
- Each lesson must begin with a learning overview and learning outcomes.

4.3.2 Recommendations for SCALE DP consortium and other (I)NGOs

- There is need to formulate clear-cut selection criteria for volunteers to ensure that competent personnel are considered to promote learners' access to high quality education; considering protection mainstreaming. (e.g. gender, disability child rights and data protection). There is need to ensure that all ALAs promote disability inclusion so that no learner is left behind.
- The volunteer approach needs to be revisited to ensure that schools and communities jointly contribute to incentivise facilitators.
- There is need to equip community learning centres with diverse reading materials covering all learning areas for primary and secondary learners; including Braille, large print and audio learning materials for learners with visual impairment.
- There is need to conduct a training of trainers`(ToT) workshop on all ALAs spearhead by the MoPSE for skill transfer with support from World Vision and partners. Once educators are trained at top level, they can easily cascade the training to grassroots levels at a minimum cost. Refresher courses can be rendered where ever needed while facilitated by trained educators within MoPSE making it more sustainable.
- NGOs and other implementing partners should collaborate with MoPSE, Schools, ECHO and other donors to raise awareness on child rights, disabilities and safeguarding issues to prevent child pregnancies and other forms of abuse in schools which hinders learners to continue with their studies and to ensure inclusivity for learners with disabilities.
- If the use of radio lessons was determined to be the most appropriate ALA to implement, sufficient radios should be provided to minimize travel distances for learners.
- NGOs and MoPSE should build synergies between schools and communities, families and volunteers on all ALAs implemented within communities to ensure sustainability.
- NGOs should advocate with donors to support synergies and promote more nexus and resilience programming in education

4.3.3 Recommendations for Schools

- Schools and Communities should consider starting some income generating projects to support ALA related costs like buying gadgets and data for teachers and learners for sustainability.
- There is need to ensure that physical infrastructure is accessible to learners with disabilities.
- Schools need to keep records for functional and malfunctioning radios and make arrangements for any necessary repairs.

- Guidance and counselling departments in schools need to be strengthened to curb school dropouts, motivated by external negative attitude towards school.
- Schools should work closely with parents/guardians and facilitators to ensure continuity of all ALAs implemented within communities and families which has chances of replication.

5.0   EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

The end result of this study required the development of a response framework to address education needs during large and small-scale disruptions to conventional education. The framework was informed by the results of the study, focusing more on the strengths, gaps and hazards experienced by each of the five districts. The purpose of the framework is to be prepared for future disasters and ensuring proper ALAs are used successfully being led by the recommendations provided in this study. Its strength lies in the fact that it is informed by the grounded theory, where participants' contributions were used to build the framework; thus, it is evidence-based. The response framework can be used by any one intending to provide education in emergencies. Table 25 details the contents of the response framework. When using it, there is need to employ it informed with the situational analysis while focusing on:
- Baseline mapping - Hazard/disaster risk mapping; e.g. cyclone induced floods, droughts, health outbreaks [e.g. COVID-19];
- Learner demography - grade level, nature of impairmentt, gender;
- Local capacities - teachers and community capacities;
- Resources - Infrastructure and level of accessibility; e.g learning centres, ICT, assistive technology, power (electricity) coverage, Internet connectivity, learning materials, learning centres, learning materials (books);
- Monitoring and evaluation - effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness, sustainability impact, and crosscutting issues;
- ALAs - types of ALAs and their necessary conditions to improve learning outcomes, and cross-cutting issues;

The response framework focuses on the expected results, followed by key stakeholders and lastly, the activities. The framework is easy to follow and can be applied with ease. This is a guideline, and users are at liberty to adapt it as long as this yields more positive results. Below is Table 25, which provides education in emergencies response framework that was informed by the research evidence. The challenge of using this framework is that if users of this framework have no background in education in emergencies, they might struggle to come up with a practical implementation plan derived from the response framework. Hence, it is essential to have trained personnel undertaking this task. Otherwise, it is advisable to start with a capacity development initiative to create a shared understanding of the framework.

FIGURE 3: EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This Response Framework (RF) aims endeavours to support education decision making to develop and implement effective education responses to various emergencies. The RF highlights different scenarios in which children face difficulties in accessing education and means to address these hindrances. The report proposes that education systems should activate alternate learning modalities for the continuation of education during emergency situations. It offers a framework of alternative learning approaches (ALAs) to be activated based on a rapid assessment of education needs and emergency responses. The Response Framework identifies the most salient ALAs that can be activated when a) schools are fully operating, yet children are falling behind and are in need to catch up, b) schools are partially operating and affected Schools are partially closed (short period 1-2weeks), and c) schools are not in operation and affected learners have no access to schools, and consequently self-learning is done completely remote with limited/restricted movement. It also defines required resources, appropriate activities and emergency situations in which this RF is applicable to be activated.

RATIONALE OF THE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

As disasters continue to wreak havoc on the education system globally, it is essential to attend to the educational needs of children during the crisis. This framework is intended to support education systems in setting up alternative learning approaches (ALAs) that are adaptive, coherent, and effective to a crisis that will significantly disrupt traditional instruction in education systems. The response framework (RF) is based on an Education in Emergency (EIE) study to identify the most salient ALAs and analysis of the approaches to explore their appropriateness and effectiveness, scalability, flexibility, and adaptability concepts. The purpose of the response framework is for community members to be prepared for future disasters and ensuring proper ALAs are used successfully being led by the recommendations provided by the study.

Additionally, this framework will be presented to districts' working group for the revision of the climate action plaining shared in advance of future emergencies. Its strength lies in the fact that it is informed by the grounded theory, where participants' contributions were used to build the framework; thus, it is evidence-based.

TYPES OF EMERGENCIES (RESPONSE) THIS FRAMEWORK COULD BE APPLICABLE TO

The framework is applicable to rapid onset emergencies such as:
 Cyclones,
Flooding
Strong winds
Landslides
Electrical fires
Wild fires
Human-Wildlife Conflict
Pandemics such as Cholera, typhoid, COVID 19, Measles.

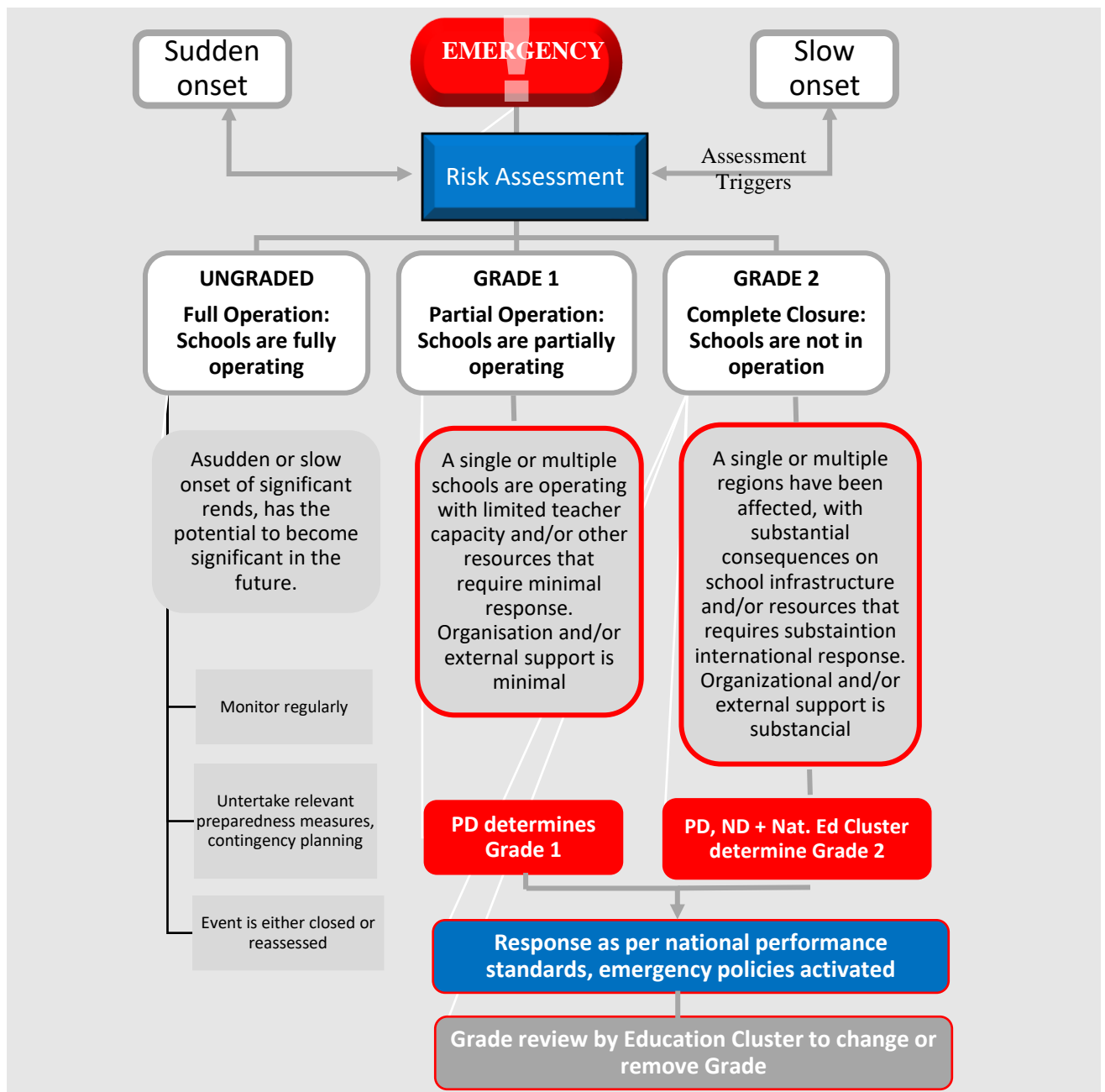**TRIGGERS/OR SIGNS TO RESPOND WOULD ALSO BE HELPFUL TO EXPLAIN THE FLOWCHART BELOW**

TYPE OF EMERGENCY	TRIGGER
Cyclones	Cyclone speed moving at or above 70km/hr
Flooding	Surface runoff more than 30cm
Strong winds	Wind speed moving at or more than 50km/hr
Land slides	The amount of rainfall recorded which exceeds 100mm within 24hrs
Veld fires	Frequency of veldfires that is the number of incidences experienced that is minimum of two within 24 hours
Human-Wildlife Conflict	Incidences of Wild Animals intruding into human residences and schools that is a minimum of two within 24 hrs
Pandemics	Prevalence and Frequency that is number of learners affected and also occurrence of cases a minimum of 2 cases within 24 hours

EMERGENCY / HUMANITARIAN EDUCATION RESPONSE CLUSTER REQUIREMENTS

The education cluster ensures that responses to emergencies are predictable, accountable and have clear leadership with the overarching goal to ensure access to safe, equitable and quality education. The education cluster will ensure strong partnership at community level through the education coalitions. The requirements include:

1. A systematic plan for strengthening coordination structures between the school and community.
2. Education in emergencies capacity and gaps map at schools and community level to mobilise an effective education response
3. Education in Emergencies needs assessments reports
4. Contingency plans and preparedness actions that respond to specific Education in Emergencies risk scenarios that schools and communities face

EIE-ALA RESPONSE FRAMEWORK (RF) FLOWCHART

Sudden onset

EMERGENCY

Slow onset

Risk Assessment

Assessment Triggers

UNGRADED

Full Operation: Schools are fully operating

GRADE 1

Partial Operation: Schools are partially operating

GRADE 2

Complete Closure: Schools are not in operation

Asudden or slow onset of significant rends, has the potential to become significant in the future.

A single or multiple schools are operating with limited teacher capacity and/or other resources that require minimal response. Organisation and/or external support is minimal

A single or multiple regions have been affected, with substantial consequences on school infrastructure and/or resources that requires substaintion international response. Organizational and/or external support is substancial

Monitor regularly

Untertake relevant preparedness measures, contingency planning

Event is either closed or reassessed

PD determines Grade 1

PD, ND + Nat. Ed Cluster determine Grade 2

Response as per national performance standards, emergency policies activated

Grade review by Education Cluster to change or remove Grade

PD – Program Director
ND – National Director

SCENARIO	ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE CONSIDERED AND TIMELINES	RESOURCES NEEDED
Full Operation: Schools are fully operating, yet children are falling behind and in need to catch up *Affected learners face challenges following the schools learning milestones*	Children with learning challenges within schools: those who are attending school but not reaching their age appropriate mile stone (1 month) 1. **Engagement with community learning centres / volunteers** e.g. Child Care Workers, Village Health workers to work with Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) facilitators to minimise child rights violations and conscientization of learners and caregivers on emergency. **(2 month)** 2. **Remote learning preparedness – Virtual and Community Radio Lessons (3 months)** • Promote digital inclusion compromising access to education for learners with disabilities – e.g. sign language interpretation, software that changes braille into print/audio; • Provision of supportive gadgets, internet, subsidized data and strong network coverage. • Involvement of the school to ensure alignment of radio lessons to the school syllabus and scheme of work (Link between the Community education volunteers and teachers at the school) 3. **Study groups strengthened and/or established. (1 month)** • Capacitate SDCs and school heads to establish low-cost structures for the provision of supportive resources for group learning. • Training SDCs and school heads on child protection and safeguarding Children out of school (a) children working / school drop outs, (b) girls and (c) children with hearing, visual, hearing and physical disabilities (3 month) • Distribution of braille learning material to learners with visual impairment • Distribution of pre-recorded video lessons for learners with hearing impairment. • Identification of alternative safe and accessible to all learning spaces	**Reading materials provided through community learning centres** • Relevant reading materials (Needs-based materials – braille material, pre-recorded visual learning material) • **National workbooks to be printed and distributed** • **Braille learning material, Pre-recorded video lessons for learners hearing impairment.**
Partial Operation: Schools are partially operating.	All children with and without learning challenges to reach age appropriate key learning mile stones. (6 weeks) 1. **Mobilization of community learning centres / volunteers (6 weeks)** e.g. Child Care Workers, Village Health workers to work with Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) facilitators to minimise child rights violations and conscientization of learners and caregivers on emergency	**Reading materials provided through community learning centres** • Relevant reading materials (Needs-based materials – braille material, pre-recorded visual learning material) • National workbooks to be printed and distributed

Affected Schools are partially closed (short period 1-2weeks)	• Training and preparedness measures of CALA facilitators on child protection and safeguarding procedures **2. Remote leaning response -Virtual (6 weeks)** • Promote digital inclusion compromising access to education for learners with disabilities – e.g. Sign language interpretation, software that changes braille into print/audio; • Provision of supportive gadgets, internet, subsidized data and strong network coverage. • Training SDCs and school heads on child protection and safeguarding **Remote learning response - Community Radio Lessons (6 weeks)** • Distribution of radios and preloaded universal serial bus (USB) disks to the most prone areas/likely to be affected areas 72 hours before the emergency situation (This include radios already stockpiled in schools). • Refresher training to Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) volunteers • Awareness to caregivers to minimise violation of Child rights 'internationally' or 'unintentionally'– e.g. making children do home chores during study periods; lack of source of power). • Regular monitoring of learners' attendance and the evaluation progress of radio lessons by schools and communities, should be strengthened in order to enhance learning outcomes and sustainability. • Involvement of the school to ensure alignment of radio lessons to the school syllabus and scheme of work (Link between the Community education volunteers and teachers at the school **3. Reading or studying alone at home (6 weeks)** • Effective and functional communication system linking the CALA and the teachers. • Awareness to caregivers to minimise violation of Child rights 'internationally' or 'unintentionally'– e.g. making children do home chores during study periods; lack of source of power). • Provision of Workbooks informed by the syllabus for the new curriculum, with reasonable accommodation for learners with disabilities.	• Braille learning material, Pre-recorded video lessons for learners hearing impairment. • School-in-a-box contains (basic school supplies, such as exercise books, pencils, erasers and scissors, wooden teaching clock, wooden cubes for counting, a wind-op/solar radio and a set of three laminated posters (alphabet, multiplication and number tables) (adopted from: UNICEF) **Community radio lessons** • More radios and pre-loaded USB's are required to minimise distances travelled by learners, as well as improve on volunteer-learner ratio. • When loading universal serial bus (USB disks) lessons to be packaged per grade rather than bunching all grades, in order to increase efficiency for community volunteers and learners. • Competent Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) are pivotal, hence required. • Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) volunteers should be capacitated to improve facilitation skills. • Records of functionality and learners' attendance must be shared and kept a school. • Stationery for the facilitator and the learners

| Complete Closure: Schools are not in operation

Affected learners have no access to schools), and self-learning is done completely remote, and movement restricted (i.e. Covid-19)	**All children with and without learning challenges to reach age appropriate key learning mile stones. (3 months)** 1. **Activation of preparedness measures of community learning centres / volunteers (3 months)** e.g. Child Care Workers, Village Health workers to work with Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) facilitators to minimise child rights violations and conscientization of learners and caregivers on emergency • Activation, refresher and mobilisation of CALA facilitators on child protection and safeguarding • Embracing Inclusivity from a disability perspective, enhancing access to learning materials by learners with disabilities. • Involvement of the school to ensure alignment of radio lessons to the school syllabus and scheme of work. 2. **Remote leaning response -Virtual (3 months)** • Promote digital inclusion compromising access to education for learners with disabilities – e.g. sign language interpretation, software that changes braille into print/audio; • Provision of supportive gadgets, internet, subsidized data and strong network coverage. • Activating SDCs and school heads on child protection and safeguarding 3. **Remote learning response - - Radios and pre-recorded lessons (3months)** • Distribution of radios and preloaded universal serial bus (USB) disks to the most prone areas/likely to be affected areas 72 hours before the emergency situation. • Refresher training to Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) volunteers • Awareness to caregivers to minimise violation of Child rights 'internationally' or 'unintentionally'– e.g. making children do home chores during study periods; lack of source of power). • Regular monitoring of learners' attendance and the evaluation progress of radio lessons by schools and communities, should be strengthened in order to enhance learning outcomes and sustainability. • Involvement of the school to ensure alignment of radio lessons to the school syllabus and scheme of work. **Radio lesson using national and local /community radio stations (3months)** • **Engagement of radio stations on time slots for the lessons** • **Community awareness on lessons time table**	**Reading materials provided through community by post / delivery in the event that movement is restricted** • Relevant reading materials (Needs-based materials – braille material, pre-recorded visual learning material) • National workbooks to be printed and distributed • Braille learning material, Pre-recorded video lessons for learners hearing impairment. **Community radio lessons** • More radios and USB's are required to minimise distances travelled by learners, as well as improve on volunteer-learner ratio. • Competent Community Alternative Learning Approach (CALA) volunteers • are pivotal, hence required. • Records of functionality and learners' attendance must be shared and kept a school. • Stationery for the facilitator and the learners posted according to national rules and regulations • Effective and functional communication system linking the CALA and the teachers.