



CATCH UP PROGRAMME

In low and middle-income countries, over two-thirds of children live in learning poverty. Conflict and climate-related crises disrupt the education of millions. Without support, many children continue in learning poverty, struggle to return to school, and do not receive the support they need to catch up on their learning, deepening inequalities in the education system.

Catch Up Programme Design

The Catch-Up Programme (CUP) is a community-based initiative designed to help children recover foundational literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills (SEL) in safe, play-based learning environments. CUP mobilizes community facilitators, schools, and protection systems to provide targeted support to children at the highest risk of educational exclusion. While CUP is not a full-scale Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) as defined by the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) of the INEE, CUP plays a distinctive role within the education ecosystem, complementing both AEPs and remedial formal schooling. Core elements are:

- Diagnostic and formative assessments, adapted from Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and Pratham’s ASER tool, determine learning levels.
- Community-based clubs deliver interactive and inclusive learning sessions using carefully sequenced and structured session plans.
- Curriculum aligned with UNESCO’s Global Proficiency Framework for literacy and numeracy adapted to local language and context embedding Social Emotional Learning.
- Building partnerships with schools and pathways to continued learning



AEWG Principle	CUP's Approach	Rationale
AEP is flexible and for over-age learners	CUP targets learners aged 6-11 in need of short-term learning recovery.	Focuses on early intervention, preventing long-term exclusion.
Curriculum, materials, and pedagogy are accelerated and AE-suitable	CUP provides structured, competency-based foundational literacy, numeracy and SEL learning.	Aligns with foundational learning but does not cover multi-grade acceleration.
AE learning environment is inclusive, safe, and learning-ready	CUP creates safe, child-friendly learning spaces in community settings.	Strong alignment with AEWG focus on inclusion & protection.
Teachers are recruited, supervised, and remunerated	CUP relies on trained community facilitators or teachers depending on context.	Localized, cost-effective approach suited for rapid deployment.
Teachers participate in continuous professional development	CUP provides facilitator training, peer support and coaching including teachers depending on context.	Ensures quality without requiring long-term teacher certification.
Goals, monitoring, and funding align with education priorities	CUP tracks learning progress but is not formally integrated into national policies.	Focuses on rapid impact while working toward long-term systemic integration.
AE centers are effectively managed	CUP uses community-led learning centers.	Ensures local ownership and sustainability.
Community is engaged and accountable	CUP mobilizes community support and facilitators for learning.	Strong alignment with AEWG's focus on community-driven education.
AEP results in formal certification for learners	CUP tracks learning progress but does not issue certificates. It aims to integrate children into school or AEPs.	Not intended as a formal certification program, but to build foundational skills and bridge to schooling.
AEP is aligned with national education policies and structures	CUP aligns with national approaches and curriculum, filling a gap in AEP or remediation for vulnerable learners.	Allows for rapid response and flexibility, while working toward government integration.

IN partnership with the Open University Center for the Study of Global Development, a mixed-methods study examined the adaptation and scaling of the Catch-Up Programme (CUP) across three contexts, reaching children affected by conflict, poverty, climate crisis, and migration. Key findings are:



- **Reach & Inclusion:** CUP successfully engages most vulnerable target children in each setting, though children with disabilities remain harder to reach. Demand exceeds capacity, highlighting strong community interest and need.
- **Learning Gains:** Over 70% of participants show measurable literacy and numeracy progress in 16-20 weeks, though literacy gains lag behind numeracy, especially for boys.
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** The focus and approach to SEL fosters both literacy and numeracy progress and psychosocial well-being, especially for children affected by migration, conflict, and household vulnerability.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Collaboration among educators, communities, and policymakers is a major factor in CUP's success. Communities play a meaningful role in bridging gaps and providing effective learning opportunities within local education systems and are particularly well-placed in reaching the most vulnerable.
- **Adaptability & Implementation:** CUP's flexible design enables adaptation at national and local levels while maintaining core principles.

Challenges & Considerations

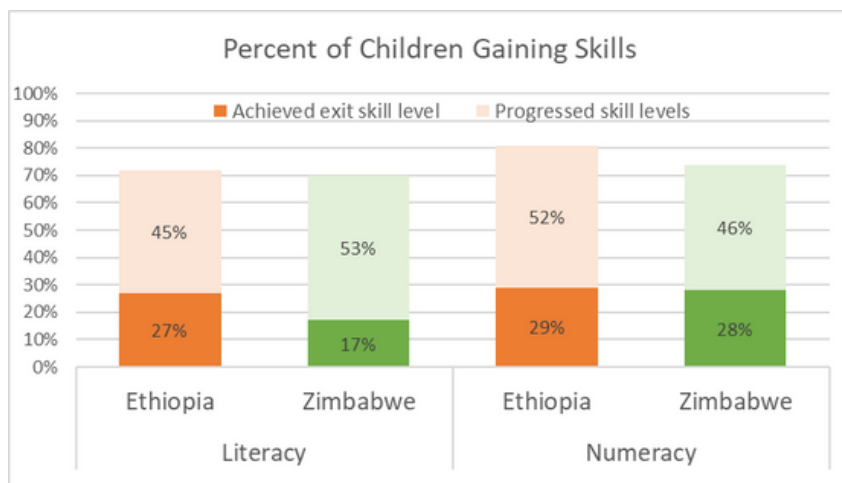
- **Sufficiency & Progression:** Further research is needed to determine if CUP learning time and gains are sufficient for successful re-entry and retention into formal education.
- **Children Not Yet Learning:** Around 30% of learners show no improvement, requiring further understanding, targeted intervention and enhanced referral mechanisms.
- **System Integration and Sustainability:** While CUP provides immediate solutions to learning loss, long-term impact depends on strategic investment and government engagement to embed CUP methodologies into formal education

Program Profiles

In **Ethiopia**, CUP operates in conflict-affected regions, providing education continuity for displaced and out-of-school children. Despite security disruptions, community facilitators maintain CUP sessions, ensuring safe learning spaces. Children progressed their literacy and numeracy skills and gained confidence to start or re-enter school and developed relationships and skills that helped them deal with trauma. *"When I feel worried, I talk to my best friend in the CUP, and she helps me feel better" "My (CUP) teacher helps me feel calm"*

In **Zimbabwe**, thousands of children are reached through an at scale, collaboration between schools and communities. CUP helps children stay in school and catch up before falling too far behind. 70% of children improved in literacy, and 17% progressed to independent reading. Children made even better progress in numeracy. Children enjoy the play based approach and the chance to focus on the skills they are struggling with - *"In CUP we get to play and learn together. I have more time to learn and I can understand"* A key challenge is retaining community facilitators, but community involvement is a strength.

In **Chile**, CUP is a pilot initiative supporting migrant children's transition into the formal education system. Sessions prioritize SEL and culturally responsive learning to build vulnerable children's confidence and sense of belonging while addressing literacy and numeracy skills. Over 400 migrant children received targeted support through CUP, enhancing their ability to integrate into local schools.



For more information visit:
<https://www.wvi.org/our-work/education>

