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## UNICEF EDUCATION

### Case Study

## CAMEROON

### Learning where it is difficult to learn: Radio programmes help keep children learning in Cameroon

June 2023

Since 2016, attacks on schools and abductions of teachers and students by non-state armed groups have led to the closure of many schools in the Northwest and Southwest of Cameroon. Currently, with 3,502 schools out of 6,515 schools closed in both regions due to insecurity, only 54% of students have access to formal education. To address this, UNICEF has been supporting 60 rural communities in eleven divisions where schools are closed to implement a non-formal Radio Education Programme (REP). The REP is easily accessible in rural areas that have poor internet and cellular connectivity and is providing learning continuity while reducing the risk of attacks in communities who will not be targeted as they do not have formal schools.

A prototype of the REP was developed in 2016 and the programme began in 2021 with the development of a set of 72 literacy and numeracy scripts for children aged 6 to 10 years as well as a set of 72 literacy and numeracy scripts for children aged 11 to 17 years. To support children under 5 years, materials were developed for parents and caregivers focusing on early learning and development, and child protection. The content was recorded on USB/memory keys and transmitted through transistor radios at a time agreed with the parents. The 60 communities were also provided with 1,740 transistor solar radios, as well as USBs/memory cards with all lessons and key protection messages. Teachers in the community and some parents were trained to facilitate the transmitted lessons by organizing participating children into groups no larger than 25 and guiding them through the radio lessons. Teachers and parents were also trained in providing trauma-impacted children with mental health and psychosocial support.

## RESULTS

- 54,894 out-of-school children (31,875 girls) were reached by the Radio Education Programme.
- Of the children who completed the Radio Education Programme, all 104 children who sat the Common Entrance examination in 2022, passed and are now attending secondary schools. One of the students was the top candidate in the 2021/2022 First School exam in the Northwest region.
- The capacities of 718 teachers and 272 parents were developed to provide mental health and psychosocial support and facilitate emotional well-being and care for children experiencing mental and emotional stress due to traumatic events.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- When children demonstrate learning progress, communities and parents are encouraged to send their children to the learning spaces. Community leaders' and parents' testimonies highlighted their increased support for the programme as a result of children's learning and in particular, their success in the Common Entrance Examinations.
- The creation of a bridge between formal and non-formal education creates further support for the Radio in Education Programme: The programme package needs to allow for an easy transition of children to formal schools when they reopen in their communities, which further encourages parents' and children's ongoing support for the programme.
- Capacity building for parents and community members strengthens support for the programme. From the outset, parents expressed their interest in participating in the programme leading to the development of a training package in the local language on childcare and development and protection messages for parents and community members.
- Teachers' and parents' capacity building in psycho-social support enables support to trauma-impacted children. As a result of the training parents and teachers developed the skills needed to provide psycho-social support to trauma impacted children. This supports children's learning.

## NEXT STEPS

- The training package will be adapted to include lessons by grade level using the national curriculum to further facilitate the transition from non-formal to formal education. The lessons developed will be recorded on flash drives, memory cards, and other platforms, and will be distributed to the 60 communities.
- The programme will be expanded into more communities not currently covered. The programme will be further analyzed to identify the possibilities of using transistor radios to reach more out-of-school children.
- The programme will be used as a tool for further capacity building of teachers, with the development of training sessions focused on teaching methodology, child protection, conflict, and disaster risk reduction.
- UNICEF is in discussion with the Government of Cameroon on integrating the programme into support to formal schools and teacher training.

**Cost effectiveness:** With the financial contribution of the US government and ECHO, UNICEF invested US\$895,352 (533,774,900FCFA) for the NWSW radio education programme since 2021, benefitting 54,894 out-of-school children (31,875 girls), at a unit cost per child of US\$16.

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