Education Digital Equity Initiative

(December 2020 - July 2021)

PROJECT IMPACT REPORT

Funded by:

UKaid
from the British people

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Implemented by:

AREAi
Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative

Country	Nigeria
Partner	Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi)
Project Title	Education Digital Equity Initiative
Project Reference Number	204963
Total no. of beneficiaries/areas assisted through this contribution from FCDO	10800 beneficiaries including 9028 students, teachers and school administrators from 24 rural primary and secondary schools in 6 rural clusters Female - 6480 Male - 4320 PWDs - 720
Grant Duration	6 months
Project Location (s)	20 communities across 6 regions in selected states (Kano, Adamawa, Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Kwara and Ekiti).
Total number of external stakeholders engaged during 6 regional workshops	637
Total Number of external stakeholders (development partners, ISPs, MNOs, government officials and CSOs) engaged during the National Focus group session	44
Total number of online downloads of materials via resource portal 📌 Number subject to further increase as the materials are still available online for download via the resource portal	2647
Reporting Period	Final Report (December 2020 – July 2021)

ABOUT AREAi

Founded in 2014 and registered in Nigeria with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 2017, Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi) is a non-governmental, for-purpose organization that works with and in under-resourced schools and marginalised communities, providing technical and infrastructural support to scale learning outcomes and drive tangible academic achievement for poor and vulnerable children as well as youth from low-income families.

Since inception, AREAi has established itself as one of Nigeria's leading educational organizations with a firm focus on working collaboratively with local stakeholders and governmental organisations to secure equal educational access and high-quality education for low-income primary and secondary students and children in hard-to-reach and rural communities.

With thematic focus areas on digital equity, literacy skills development, girls' education and youth-led innovation in education, the organization's different programs have impacted over 16,000 beneficiaries across 23 communities in about 8 states of the country.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Education Digital Equity Initiative is an information-based project that seeks to address digital exclusion by providing and widely disseminating series of evidence-based, comprehensive education materials that lays out simple steps and ideas for rural schools, remote communities, community-based initiatives and low-income families to adopt in accessing remote learning materials, online education resources options and digital learning opportunities in a post COVID19 pandemic era. The project adopted a multi-stakeholder approach, to drive digital equity through a fact-finding survey and information access strategy, and to create awareness about existing and emerging technologies capable of facilitating the sustainable expansion of basic, affordable digital learning and teaching access for the poor and excluded. The project is funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office under the Prosperity Fund's Digital Access Programme.

Geographical Focus & Beneficiary Selection

Lack of access to information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure or the internet for municipal use or e-learning purposes is relatively low within remote areas with little or zero-internet penetration. This 'digital divide' faced globally does not just signify those who have access to the internet and those who do not, the gap also encompasses a number of other discrepancies, including the quality of digital infrastructure in rural communities, the speed of connectivity in remote areas, and the training and skills required to navigate such technology. Furthermore, in the areas that are connected to the internet, male internet users outnumber their female counterparts in every region of the world. This reality informs our purposive selection of states, communities, schools covered by this project and this is further reflected in the prioritization of different marginalised groups and rural clusters with little or no internet connectivity and with a demonstrated history of digital exclusion.

EKITI

ADAMAWA

KANO

24
SCHOOLS

20
COMMUNITIES

BAYELSA

9028
BENEFICIARIES

EBONYI

KWARA
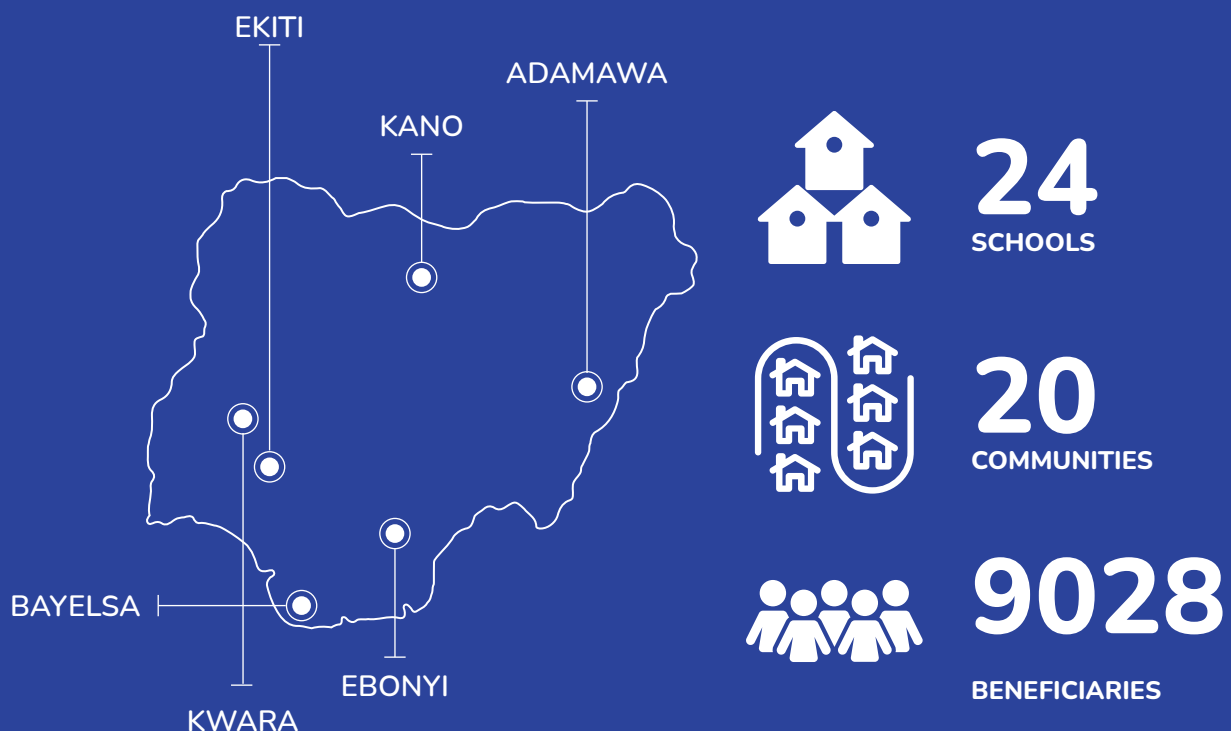
Gender and Inclusion

Gender Equity

During the course of the project, we reached a total of 9028 beneficiaries including students, teachers, and education authorities from 24 rural communities. Of this population, 5417 (60%) are female and 3611 (40%) are male. At the end of both the regional roundtables and national focus group sessions, over 10800 materials were produced and distributed. In a bid to ensure inclusive gender representation, we maintained a strict gender balance policy in assembling our project resource team as well as in selecting our beneficiaries in every rural cluster, including students, school administrators, personnel of education authorities and community stakeholders.

40%
(Male)

60%
(Female)

■ Male
■ Female
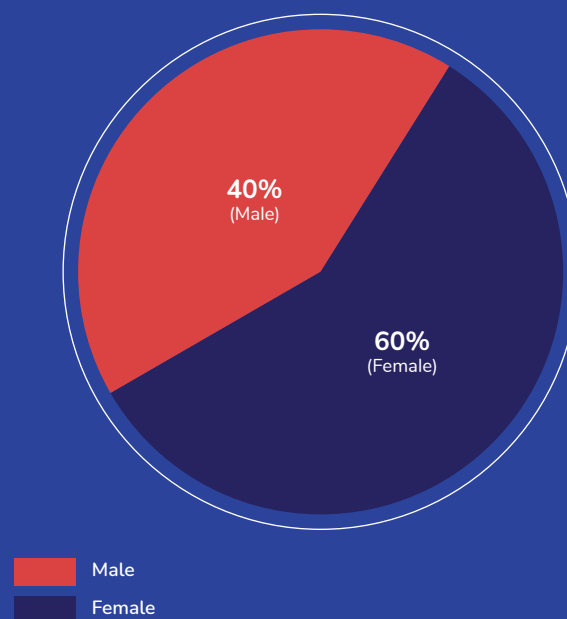
Inclusion

In several schools and communities visited and from which project beneficiaries are drawn from, 720 PWDs were supported to receive our output materials or attend both the offline and online knowledge mobilisation events including the regional workshops and the national focus group sessions.

Sustainability

Sustainability is of utmost importance for this project, and to ensure this, we have summarized, synthesized and documented significant reflections and findings into 3 resource materials across our various levels of engagement. These information, education and communication (IEC) materials produced as the project outputs have shown the potential to reduce the digital access gap in learning and teaching through crowdsourced information disseminated for timely usage and adoption by all stakeholders in a relatively affordable, available and accessible manner. The materials include:

1. Education Digital Equity Learning Manual : Low-Cost Offline Solutions For Digital Learning (For Students In Rural Schools) - This manual contains contextually relevant low cost offline solutions that can promote delivery of educational content or ensure remote learning access for students in low-income contexts.

2. Education Digital Equity and Access Toolkit: Guidance for Digital Education for teachers and school leaders: This toolkit profiles practical strategies that teachers and school administrators can deploy to facilitate equitable virtual teaching processes and promote digital learning in and out of classrooms and schools.

3. Education Digital Equity Policy guide- Findings and Recommendations for Education stakeholders and Policymakers: This guide, as informed by our findings, contains policy recommendations for education stakeholders and policy makers to address education digital inequity and promote technology access and usage among students and teachers particularly those in rural communities.

Project Demography (Rural Clusters And Remote Schools)

STATE/LGA	Community	Primary School	Secondary School
KWARA			
Ilorin South LGA	Danialu	Danialu Primary School, Danialu	
Ilorin South LGA	Agbabiaka		Government Day School, Agbabiaka
Ilorin East	Akerebiake		Government Day School, Karumo
Ilorin West	Alore	Aldyaudeen Pry. School, Alore, Ogidi	
EKITI			
Moba LGA	Otun	SUBEB Nur & Pry School	Moba Grammar School
Ido LGA	Ido	St. Benedict Nur & Pry School	Ekiti Parapo Community Sec. School
EBONYI			
Abakaliki LGA	Amagu Oicha	Amagu Oicha Community Pry School	
Abakaliki LGA	Nduruku		Nduruku Community Sec. School
Ezza South LGA	Umunnwagu		Premier Sec. School
Ezza South LGA	Umunnwagu	Central Primary School, Umunnwagu	
ADAMAWA			
Mayo Belwa LGA	Gengle	Gengle Primary School	Govt. Day Sec. School, Gengle
Fufure LGA	Kabilo	Kabilo Primary School	Govt. Day Sec. School, Kabilo
KANO			
Bichi LGA	Saye	Saye Central Primary School	
Bichi LGA	Badube		Badube Senior Sec. School
Bichi LGA	Saye		Govt. Senior Girls School Saye
Bichi LGA	Tsaure	Tsaure Primary School	
BAYELSA			
Yenogoa LGA	Yeneka	Community Pry. School, Yeneka	
Yenogoa LGA	Obunagha	Community Pry. School, Obunagha	
Yenogoa LGA	Gbarianowei		Gbarianowei Grammar School
Yenogoa LGA	Negudu Agbia		Ogboin Comprehensive Negudu Agbia

Project Demography (Male:Female Reach by Population)

States	Male	Female	Total
1. KWARA	556	875	1431
2. EKITI	610	911	1521
3. KANO	625	771	1336
4. ADAMAWA	556	982	1538
5. EBONYI	627	974	1601
6. BAYELSA	637	904	1541
TOTAL	3611	5417	9028

Beneficiaries outside project scope (Resourse Portal Reach)

	Output Material	Link	Downloads (as at July 18th, 2021)
1.	Access Toolkit	https://equity.areai4africa.org/toolkit	757
2.	Policy Guide	https://equity.areai4africa.org/policy	780
3.	Learning Manual	https://equity.areai4africa.org/manual	1177

Please note that the number of downloads is subject to further increase as the materials are still available online for download via the resource portal.

Project Outcomes And Key Achievements

(during the reporting period)

- Mapping, identification and selection of beneficiary rural clusters and schools completed for 24 schools across 20 communities

- Community immersion visits and needs assessment conducted and completed in 6 rural clusters

- Development of survey protocols (questionnaires and other instruments) completed

- Onboarding of Project Resource persons completed.

- Community outreach and engagement completed in 12 rural clusters across the 6 regions of the nation

- High-level stakeholders' consultations were completed with over 150 school leaders and local education administrators across rural clusters in all the regions.

- School-based Digital inequity surveys were completed in 24 schools, involving over 216 student respondents.

- Completed analysis of thematic, statistical and empirical findings from across all surveys and interviews.

- Successfully hosted a toolkit development retreat to consolidate secondary and primary findings on digital equity.

- Software update and development of Project resource portal **(https://equity.areai4africa.org/)**

- Successful research, drafting, editing of 3 output materials for widespread usage and adoption

- Printing of 10,800 copies of 3 different output materials for distribution

- Update of project resource portal with completed output materials for downloads **(https://equity.areai4africa.org/)**

- 4 regional digital education equity workshops conducted and completed physically across 4 states

- 2 regional digital education equity workshops conducted online via Zoom

- Launch and distribution of 10,800 paper-based output materials for all 6 states

- Over 2647 downloads of output materials on resource portal (figures as at 12th of July, 2021)

- Program's final monitoring and evaluation audit carried out

- Final National Digital Equity Stakeholder's Focus group session conducted to cascade impact laterally

Summary Of Key Activities

1. National Digital Inequity Community survey

Our National National Digital Inequity Community survey kicked off with the development of digital inequity survey protocols (questionnaires and other instruments) including a questionnaire for students, school administrators in the 24 (12primary and 12 secondary schools), and the educational authorities at the state level. This helped establish a baseline for our in-person interviews. We completed the survey protocols in one week, and these included how the survey responses would be collected, managed, analyzed, and reported.

a.   Stakeholders Consultation and Engagement

The survey began with the identification of key state government representatives in the 6 implementing project states.   With their support, the AREAi partnerships team then successfully established contact with the relevant school administrators and education authorities of all project implementation states to secure the needful approvals for school-based and community-level engagements in each of the states. The implementation team facilitated a series of community entry and immersion visits to all selected states as part of the relationship building and stakeholders management efforts within the communities where the project is being implemented. The visits and meetings conducted enabled the team to clarify expectations and communicate intended activities.

b.   Community Outreach and School-based surveys

Upon completion, the project team which included research associates, quality assurance specialists, digital learning resource specialists with the support of the community outreach facilitators travelled across the country to conduct and complete personalized, one-to-one school-based surveys involving in-depth interviews with students, teachers and school administrators in the 24 (12primary and 12 secondary schools) selected beneficiary schools and communities. As part of our fact-finding continuous engagements for mapping, accessing and establishing digital access gaps for learning and teaching, we completed extensive outreaches at the community levels across all 20 rural clusters, engaging with parents, heads of community groups, traditional rulers as well as members of community associations.

Summary Of Key Activities

1. National Digital Inequity Community survey

### b.	Community Outreach and School-based surveys

The consultation and engagement activities with teacher and school administrators of 24 schools (12 primary and 12 secondary schools) in 6 rural clusters in each of the 6 geopolitical zones was completed with high level outreach meetings with local education authorities in each region and in all 6 selected states (Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Adamawa, Kano, Kwara and Ekiti states) within project scope. After completion of the community and school surveys and interviews, we initiated and successfully completed the analysis of thematic, statistical and empirical findings from the inequity survey conducted involving in-depth interviews with students, teachers and school administrators in the 24 (12 primary and 12 secondary schools) selected beneficiary schools and communities.

Development of Project output materials

As part of the project plan and activities we successfully hosted a 5 days toolkit development retreat to consolidate our primary and secondary findings, both from online research and inferences from field engagement. At the end, we completed the initial and final drafts of 4 different output materials as follows:

- Education Digital Equity Initiative Fact Sheet
- Education Digital Equity Learning Manual: Low-Cost Offline Solutions For Digital Learning (For Students In Rural Schools).
- Education Digital Equity Access Toolkit: Guidance on Digital Education for teachers and school leaders)
- Education Digital Equity Policy guide- Findings and Recommendations for Education stakeholders and Policymakers.

Summary Of Key Activities

1. National Digital Inequity Community survey

Development of Project resource portal (https://equity.areai4africa.org)

A one-page resource portal was designed, developed and launched to improve the visibility of the project activities as well as outcomes. Documentary pictures and videos from the first phase of the project are continually uploaded and updated on the portal. We also uploaded the 4 output materials on the portal to ensure accessibility by and usage for other target audiences outside of the primary project scope. The 3 output materials have been cumulatively downloaded more than 3000 times. The portal is accessible via **https://equity.areai4africa.org/**

Summary Of Key Activities

2. Regional Roundtable Workshops

The Regional Digital Education Equity Workshops are a series of informative sessions that hosted students, teachers, local education authorities, community stakeholders and school administrators across each of the 6 rural clusters.

These events facilitated the exchange of nuances and new insights on the possibilities for affordable remote learning and offline strategies and resources to support rural communities and remote schools in addressing the challenges ascribed to education digital equity. This project activity represented the toolkit launch and dissemination phase of the Education Digital Equity Initiative, and also served as a medium to gather insights on our project implementation and completion strengths and weaknesses to enhance future collaborations for scale-up and for a more holistic approach to digital access and inclusion for educational purposes.

We hosted four physical regional roundtable events, in 4 states including Kwara, Kano, Adamawa and Ebonyi states, and the Ekiti and Bayelsa editions were hosted online with over 70 participants from each state.

In all, we hosted over 637 stakeholders across all states, the roundtable workshops had representatives from the host state governments and supporting stakeholders that facilitated the implementation of the programme and beneficiary groups which included school leaders, teachers and students as well as key education stakeholders.

Summary Of Key Activities

2. Regional Roundtable Workshops

The events also featured presentations of various findings from the extensive surveys and interviews conducted across 24 schools and 20 communities during the initial phase of the project. Each of the events also witnessed the launch of the different output materials for students, teachers, school leaders and education administrators.

At the end of the event, over 10,000 copies of output materials including the Learning Manual for Students, Access Toolkit for Teachers and School Leaders and Policy Guide for Education Administrators were distributed to the event attendees as well as to the beneficiary states.

Summary Of Key Activities

3. National Focus Group Session

The National Digital Equity Focus Group Session was hosted on the 7th of July 2021 at Chida International Hotel Abuja. It served as a close-out event as well as an opportunity to convene a well-represented digital economy sector including telecom regulators, internet service providers, mobile network operators and also education policy administrators and civil society organisations. It was also an avenue to drive conversations on the need for meaningful digital connectivity for improved learning access in Nigeria and draw commitments from different stakeholders on different strategies needed to ensure digital inclusion and remote learning across rural schools and remote communities.

Over 44 key dignitaries were present including the Executive Secretary, NERDC ably represented by, Dr A.M. Asebiomo; Director ICT, Federal Ministry of Education, Mallam Isa Abubakar; Director, Technical Standards and Network Integrity, Engr. Bako Wakil; Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant, UNICEF, Babagana Yahaya Aminu; Deputy Director, MacArthur Foundation, Oladayo Olaide among others.

As part of the event, key findings and output materials from the project were shared with all the representatives of project states and stakeholders. In attendance at the event were the FCDO team, state representatives, selected beneficiaries, project team members as well as the AREAi Team. Through its various proceedings, the National Digital Equity Focus Group Session focused on the roles of various actors driving meaningful digital connectivity and increased technology usage for improved learning access specifically on vulnerable groups.

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Summary Of Key Activities

3. National Focus Group Session

The event also presented an opportunity for different civil society and non-governmental actors to showcase and highlight what has worked for enabling remote learning for the disadvantaged and also co-create ideas that are workable for the future of digital learning access at school and community levels.

A Panel Session with key stakeholders in the digital inclusion, education and economy ecosystem deliberated on the theme: " Digital Education for the unreached: Issues and Opportunities" expressing different commitments to making digital education accessible by all and for all regardless of socioeconomic status.

Financial Performance & Value For Money Analysis

In line with our organisation's VFM strategy, the expenditure and individual project spending are as budgeted and contained in the Activity-Based Budget. Not only did we observe value for money as stipulated in the (VFM) policy but we also ensured expenses of budget items are consistent as was designed. Key project expenditures including the development and printing of output materials, hiring project personnel and obtaining facilities for toolkit retreat and regional equity workshops, all followed strict compliance with our VFM policy for maximum cost savings and quality outputs. Spending on the development of survey protocols (questionnaires and other instruments completed) as well as our community outreach and engagement, including school-based surveys were within the allotted budget costs. In addition, the quality of the design and content of all research protocols (surveys, questionnaires and other instruments) were maintained to meet the global standards.

For more on the financial performance, please see separately the detailed financial report for the project.

Key Risks And Mitigation Measures

a. Unsuccessful Community Immersion Visits and poor Rural Cluster Mapping

To mitigate the risks of not selecting the right beneficiary communities or engaging with enough community stakeholders, teachers, parents and students to engage in the digital equity survey, we consulted the Nigerian National Broadband plan 2020 - 2025 and obtained insightful contributions on digital access and internet connectivity of states from the National Communication Commission. The final selection of schools and communities was then done in consultation with the State Universal Basic Education Boards in each state.

b. Ineffective COVID19 prevention protocols for the project implementation personnel

To mitigate this risk, all members of the project implementation team and the project resource persons were intimated on the need to always follow strict social distancing measures and safety precautions including but not limited to the use of nose masks and sanitisers.

c. Inability to obtain engagement approvals from local education authorities and school administrators during to the December/January festive period

To mitigate the risk of not getting approvals to conduct in-person interviews, we engaged youth leaders who provided on the ground support to ensure the contact was made and approvals sought from the appropriate quarters for ease of project implementation.

d. Inadequate respondents' population

To avoid not having enough community stakeholders, teachers, parents and students to engage in the digital equity surveys, we ensured that the sample size of the survey was carefully considered and agreed upon. We also worked with local education authorities including ministries of education and sought needed approvals to ensure the project objectives were adequately communicated to drive reception and enable the project to reach and engage its intended audience.

e. Language Barriers

Engagement at community levels is often affected by language barriers, which can affect the outputs/outcomes of project implementation. We addressed this by engaging our community outreach facilitators who serve as our translators and fore speakers while engaging with community stakeholders.

f. Website Hacking and Data Compromise

We expressed a data breach on the developed resource portal. Due to malware attacks, the portal was down for 3 to 4 days and was finally retrieved and then protected with some cybersecurity measures.

Key Risks And Mitigation Measures

g. Insecurity and unsafe travels due to incessant kidnappings and other security concerns within and around Ekiti and Bayelsa States

2 of the 6 regional workshops could not be held physically as team members could not travel down to these locations due to kidnappings and killings. Therefore, the anticipated proceedings including the workshop deliberations and output materials distribution could not happen physically. So as a mitigation measure, both editions were held online via Zoom to ensure this project activity is completely implemented.

Monitoring And Visibility

a. Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Tracking

Data collection, data management, data analysis, and reporting were at the forefront of the various project activities and as such, adequate protocols were developed for the surveys and interviews to serve as the major tools of tracking engagements. For example, during the implementation team inception meeting and through the development of the digital equity survey protocols, all project team members and project resource persons were informed and trained on how to use the AREAi standard project reporting templates that would be used to capture adequate information for project monitoring. All project team members were trained on how to document findings to maintain essential reporting standards. The protocols developed for the surveys and interviews were also shared with Community Outreach facilitators and Research Associates and this covers essential reporting components, including data collection, data management, data analysis, and reporting.

All engagements were adequately documented through pictorial and videographical evidence. Consent was obtained for all engagement with students, teachers, parents, school administrators and education authorities and this is documented with appropriate consent release forms (both for minors and mature respondents) which were either signed or stamped. Media release forms for the use of images and videos were also duly filled, completed and collected for authorization. Community Outreach facilitators and research associates also provide weekly updates from each of the rural clusters as part of the continuous overall project oversight that is provided. The project team was tasked with tracking implementation plans of project activities against the stated deadline in addition to submitting progress reports weekly. This helped to make adjustments as needed. In Summary, the project was monitored and evaluated using the following techniques:

1. Information from Individuals
    • In-depth or Key Information Interviews
    • Surveys (Open-ended/ closed-ended questionnaire, face-to-face, calls, emails)

2. Information from Organizations/Partners
    • Focus group interviews or discussions (FGDs)
    • Roundtable meet-ups
    • Surveys (Calls, emails, visits)

3. Observation
    • Project Team Observation
    • Photography/videos

Monitoring And Visibility

b.   Project Impact Assessment Indicators

Activity	Indicator	Outcomes
Regional Town Hall Meetings with traditional heads and community leaders in each of the 6 rural clusters to gathered local perspectives from stakeholders	Number of traditional heads and community Leaders interviewed	12 Traditional heads and community leaders from 6 communities were interviewed
School Consultations with students in the 24 sampled schools within project scope	The total number of students consulted % Of participants consulted	120 students from 24 schools consulted (60 from primary school and 60 from Secondary school) 60% girls and 40% boys
Visits to and meetings with administrators of 24 schools, 12 primary and 12 secondary schools in 6 rural clusters in each of the 6 geopolitical zones .	The total number of school administrators visited and engaged	24 school administrators (12 from Primary schools and 12 from secondary schools) were visited and engaged
Outreach meetings with local education authorities in each region and in selected states within project scope	The total number of local education authorities consulted	12 local education authorities (State Commissioners of Education, Permanent Secretaries, head of SUBEB, local Government Education secretary etc.) across project states w ere consulted
Engagement of Digital Education Equity Experts (Research associates, quality assurance specialists, online learning resource specialists, rural internet connectivity experts)`	Research manuscript	Findings from the survey were analyzed and s ynthesized by Education Digital Equity Experts

Monitoring And Visibility

b.   Project Impact Assessment Indicators

Activity	Indicator	Outcomes
Toolkit development Retreat	Consolidated Survey findings	Tool kit development retreat organized to consolidate secondary information and primary findings
Professional Editing and Proof-reading	Comprehensive Toolkits content	Proofread copies of toolkits contents delivered
Resource portal design and development	Accessible resource portal Total number of online downloads of materials via resource portal	2647 online downloads of output materials via resource portal (www.equity.areai4africa.org)
Production and distribution of paper-based toolkit	Output material produced	3 outputs materials were produced (the Education Digital Equity initiative POLICY GUIDE- Recommendations for Education Stakeholders and policy makers, the LEARNING MANUAL- low cost and offline solutions for digital learning, and the ACCESS TOOLKIT- guidance on digital education strategies for teachers and school leaders
	Total number of output materials produced and distributed	10800 copies of output materials were produced and distributed
Regional Digital Education Equity Workshops	Number of regional Digital Education Equity Workshops held.	6 Regional Digital Education Equity organized in 6 states
	Total Number of external stakeholders engaged during regional workshops	637 External stakeholders engaged during regional workshops
National Digital Equity Workshop	Total number of External Stakeholders engaged during the National focus group discussion	44 external stakeholders engaged during the national focus group session.

Essential Information and Assets from the Project

1.   Pictures

- Images from the Regional Roundtable Sessions: **https://bit.ly/RegionalWorkshops**
- Images from National Focus Group Sessions: **https://bit.ly/NationalFocusGroup**
- Images from the Outreaches/Surveys: **https://bit.ly/DigitalEquitySurvey**

2.   Output Materials

- Digital Learning Manual: **http://equity.areai4africa.org/manual**
- Digital Access Toolkit: **http://equity.areai4africa.org/toolkit**
- Digital Policy Guide: **http://equity.areai4africa.org/policy**

3.   Resource Portal with Video documentaries

- **www.equity.areai4africa.org**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Project Sponsor

Project Partners & Collaborators

NOTICE