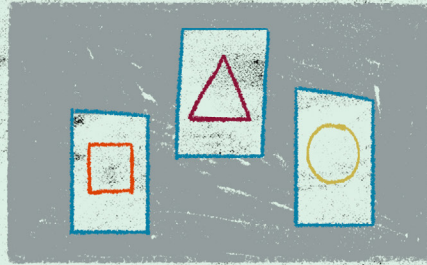




International
COCOA
Initiative



Learning into action:

Bridging classes in cocoa-growing communities

This brief summarises practical action to implement bridging classes in cocoa-growing communities. It draws on a pilot project implemented in cocoa-growing communities in Côte d'Ivoire.

What are bridging classes?

Bridging classes are an [accelerated education programme](#) designed to help children who never attended or dropped out of school reintegrate into the formal education system. These classes are flexible, age-appropriate programmes that offer a compressed curriculum delivered in an accelerated time frame (typically 7 to 8 months). They are often run by trained facilitators rather than certified teachers who use adapted teaching methods depending on the children's needs. By providing children with a certified equivalent level of education, bridging classes allow them to get back into the formal schooling system.

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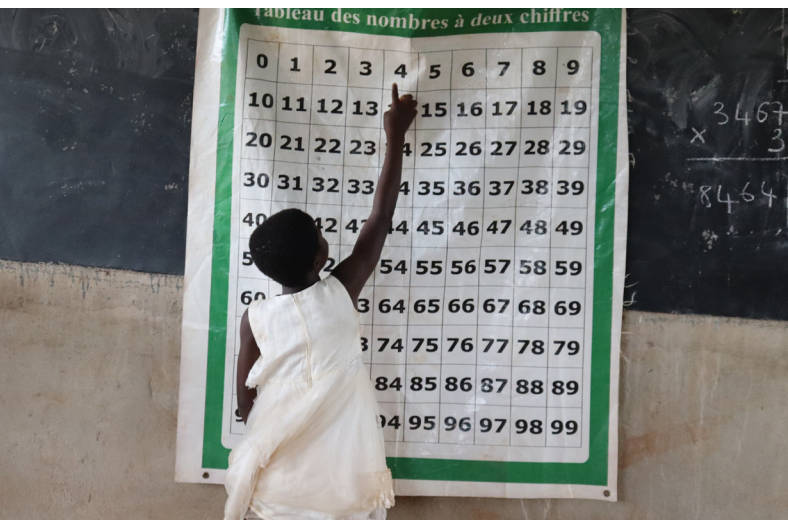
I'm happy to be back in the classroom. I want to be able to read and learn lots of things.

STUDENT IN A BRIDGING
CLASS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Why invest in bridging classes?

Support children's right to quality education

Children who attend bridging classes acquire essential skills in literacy and numeracy that allow them to rejoin the formal education system successfully. This contributes towards children's healthy development, improves their overall well-being, and can open opportunities in the future. By reintegrating children into the formal education system, bridging classes also contribute to lower drop-out rates in the community.



Ensure a protective school environment

Bridging classes enable children to join the school system at the appropriate level for their age, avoiding overcrowding in schools and protection risks related to mixing young children with much older ones in the same class.

Reduce child labour in the short and long run

Attending bridging classes helps children reintegrate into the formal school system, reducing the likelihood that they engage in harmful work and giving them access to more opportunities in the future. Bridging classes have been shown to reduce child labour by half in an [ICI pilot project](#) implemented in 2021. Education also helps break the cycle of child labour in the long term since more educated parents are less likely to engage their children in child labour.



Increase local employment opportunities

Selecting facilitators from the local community to run the bridging classes helps create local employment opportunities.

What works to implement bridging classes?



Ensure an accessible and safe space

The facility where bridging classes take place impacts attendance and learning outcomes. The space should be safe, well-equipped, and large enough to host all the students. It should also be close to where children live and to a school, to ensure children can easily access the school once bridging classes are over. If such a place does not exist, building a classroom may be the best option. This could be as simple as a temporary structure made up of a grass roof supported by poles (known as an “appatam” in Côte d’Ivoire).



Identify and train local facilitators

Supportive, qualified staff are essential to create a safe learning environment for children. Training should include child-centred pedagogical methodologies, positive discipline, and child safeguarding, among other topics. Providing appropriate wages to facilitators is important to motivate them and prevent high turnover rates.



Time it right

Running bridging classes from November to June ensures the classes target out-of-school children who haven’t been able to join the formal school system. Upon completion, children are ready to join their peers in the formal school system in September.



Offer meals

Offer meals to enable children to stay in class for the full day instead of going home at lunchtime, which increases the risk of them missing afternoon classes. This also helps them concentrate better on their lessons without being hungry.



Provide school kits

Provide school kits to ensure children have everything they need to participate.



Target children most at risk

National education policies frequently prevent children from enrolling in the early years of primary school once they have reached a certain age, meaning that they may need to attend bridging classes before enrolling in the appropriate grade for their age group. Targeting bridging classes to children above that age ensures support reaches those most at risk of dropping out of the formal system definitively.



Raise awareness

Raise awareness about bridging classes and the benefits of education for children’s well-being and development to encourage hesitant parents. These sessions are also an opportunity to raise awareness about child labour. This is especially important in communities where systems to address child labour have not yet been established and families may not be aware of these issues.



Did you know?

Teaching methods play a key role in the quality of education and can contribute to improved learning outcomes. Using child-centred pedagogical approaches, such as the [Teaching at the Right Level](#) approach, for teaching bridging classes has been shown to help children achieve better learning outcomes.

Practical measures to effectively re-integrate children into the formal school system

Once a child transitions to formal schooling after attending bridging classes, it can be challenging to keep them in school in the long term.

- ✔ **Conduct follow-up visits and raise awareness** among families about the importance of education for children's well-being, development and future opportunities. This is key as the main reason for children dropping out of school is parents' attitudes towards education.
- ✔ **Help families with school-related costs**, such as uniforms or school kits, to remove financial barriers to school attendance.
- ✔ **Ensure proximity to school.** When selecting communities to set up bridging classes, it is important to make sure there is a school nearby so that children can easily access and reintegrate into the school after completing the bridging classes. If schools are distant, there is a higher chance of the child dropping out.
- ✔ **Encourage schoolteachers to support students** who have rejoined the school system to facilitate their integration, which can be tough. This is especially important for children who are much older than their peers, and who may face bullying.
- ✔ **Provide school meals** to encourage children's continued attendance.

Want to learn more?

Learning report: [The effect of bridging classes on child labour](#)

Video: [Bridging classes explained](#)



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