



Private Partnership Engagement: AENN Collaborates with State-Owned Media Houses to Support Home Learning through Interactive Radio Instructions



Background

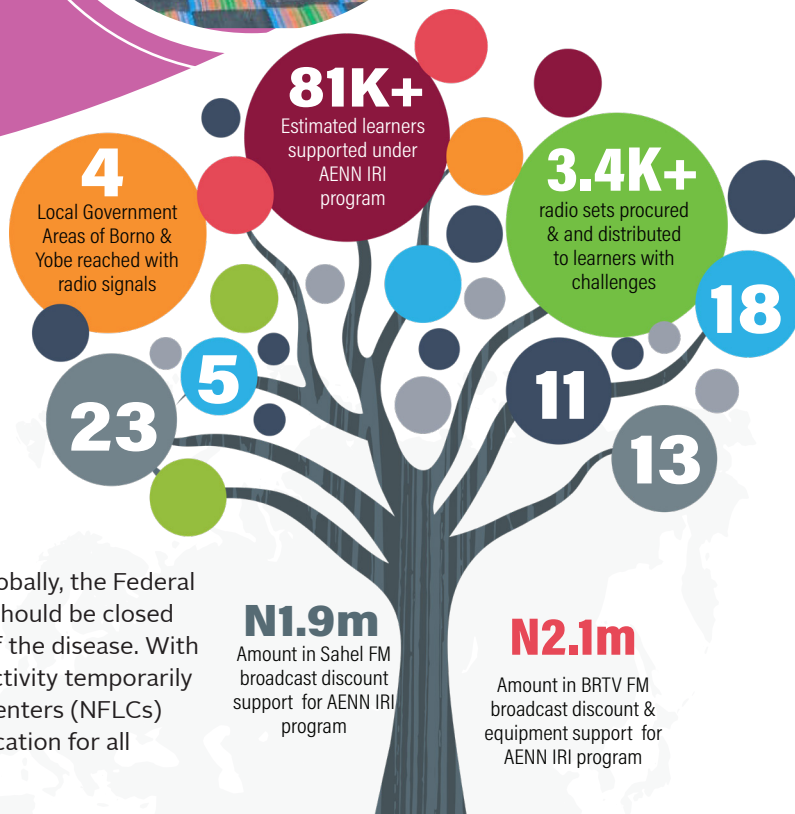
In the light of the prevailing situation and impact of COVID - 19 globally, the Federal Government of Nigeria instructed that all schools in the country should be closed and large gatherings should be suspended to curtail the spread of the disease. With the support of USAID and key government partners, the AENN Activity temporarily suspended all learning activities in the 900 non-formal learning centers (NFLCs) and initiated a COVID-19 Response Plan to provide access to education for all learners throughout the lockdown.



DISTANCE LEARNING

In May 2020, the Activity rolled out a multi-platform distance learning system to sustain continuity of learning for as many beneficiaries as possible, regardless of their access to technology or caregiver education level, crucial in a context where adult literacy rates are below 20% and many household lack access to electricity and electronic devices. The distance learning platform includes:

- Interactive radio instruction (IRI) lessons
- An "Infoline" with guided audio activities
- SMS text messages to caregivers
- Phone calls from each learner's teacher to provide coaching and monitoring
- Paper-based home learning kits for communities without access to radio signals.



INTERACTIVE RADIO INSTRUCTION

AENN determined radio to be the most effective modality on a large scale at low cost, considering the availability and cost of radio time, as well as prevalence of low-cost cell phones that are capable of picking up radio signals. For learners in households without access to a device, AENN procured and distributed 3,410 radio sets with batteries to 682 NFLCs in Borno and Yobe States. The learning facilitators at each center collaborated with community organizations to form and facilitate COVID-safe listening clubs.

The IRI lessons were adapted from AENN's Accelerated Education Program curriculum and tailored for the needs of out-of-school children and youth during the pandemic, including health and psychosocial support. All lessons integrated interactive activities, songs, Social-Emotional Learning brain games, and mindfulness exercises that encouraged learners to respond aloud and engage in learning, as well as interact (safely) with other learners. Lessons also included activities on health and COVID-19 mitigation.

The program included basic literacy and numeracy in both Hausa and Kanuri, as well as post literacy lessons on English. All of the lessons were recorded by local educators and enhanced with tones, songs, and transition music for edutainment. In addition to scripted lessons, a live phone-in and review program was broadcasted weekly to encourage interaction and elicit instant feedback from the program participants.



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The AENN Activity collaborated with the Borno and Yobe SAMEs (State Agency for Mass Education) to support the IRI program. In Borno, the Executive Secretary of Borno SAME, Dr. Mustapha Ali Mustapha wrote a formal letter and requested the General Manager of the state-owned Borno Radio and Television Corporation (BRTV) to create broadcast schedules for AENN's IRI program to reach learners at peak time when learners will be available to listen and learn. A schedule was jointly developed and shared with radio stations. Starting in June 2020, AENN commenced live transmission of the IRI program in Borno and Yobe States, with 4 hours of instruction per week.



IMPACTS

With over 100 lessons produced and aired, the AENN IRI program has delivered positive results by providing access to education to over 70,000 children and youth in households with AENN learners (about 58% girls and 42% boys) participated. This figure includes only learners connected to AENN, but since the lessons were public broadcasts in regions with millions of out-of-school children, the Activity estimates that the number of learners, caregivers, and educators reached by the program is considerably higher.



PARTNERSHIPS WITH MEDIA HOUSES

As result of the partnership between AENN and state-owned media houses, with the support of government partners, AENN secured discounted airtime to ensure cost sustainability of the IRI program. In Borno, BRTV provided a 30% discount on airtime and in Yobe, Sahel FM provided 20% discount, resulting in a savings of over 3.26 million Naira, or 8,500 USD.

In response to the significant public demand for the radio lessons, BRTV management purchased upgraded radio transmitters at no cost to the project to ensure that AENN's IRI program reaches the audiences located as far as Gubio LGA of Borno state and communities bordering Nigeria and Cameroon. Sahel FM provided weekly reruns of the English lessons at no charge. The General Manager of BRTV commended the high quality of the broadcast program and has suggested that the station arrange a belt to discuss educational issues in Borno state and facilitate coordination among stakeholders like the community coalitions (CCs), community leaders, Learning Facilitators (LFs), and government institutions like SUBEB and SAME. Besides these financial considerations by these media stations, access to their facilities was provided to AENN staff who carried out weekly recordings in their studios before broadcast. This access offered an opportunity for staff to build capacity in audio production and technology-based instruction.

As the first and only IRI program designed for out-of-school learners in Borno and Yobe states in response to COVID-19, AENN's lessons were also leveraged by other organizations, including IRC's NENTAD program, which organized listening groups and distributed MP3 recordings to more than 11,000 additional learners. In some communities, local leaders took the initiative of recording and distributing the lessons independently, using the AENN program as a resource to support community-led education.



IRI broadcast schedules

Borno:

Every Tuesdays, Wednesdays,
Thursdays & Fridays 10:00 am to
11: 00 am

Yobe:

Every Tuesdays, Wednesdays,
Thursdays & Fridays 11:00 am to
12: 00 am