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Initiative

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

# Bridging classes to address child labour in cocoa-growing communities

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This practical guide is designed for anyone interested in setting up bridging classes in cocoa-growing communities to strengthen child protection, improve access to education, and tackle child labour. This accelerated education programme supports children who have left school or who have never attended school transition back into the formal education system.

The guide draws on ICI's experience implementing bridging classes, both in the context of support provided within Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS) and collaborative projects with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, such as the CLEF project. The best practices presented in this guide may also be applicable to other similar rural smallholder agriculture contexts.

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## Bridging classes: An overview

### What are bridging classes?

Bridging classes are a type of [accelerated education programme](#) designed to help children aged 9 to 14 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 and conclude with a standardised final assessment that determines learners' entry level into formal schooling.

### Why set up bridging classes in cocoa-growing communities?

Education is a fundamental right. Yet in many cocoa-producing areas of West Africa, not all children may have had the chance to attend school, while others may have dropped out due to household economic vulnerability, long distances to schools, and involvement in cocoa-related work. After extended periods outside the education system, reintegration becomes increasingly difficult.

Bridging classes offer a solution to this reality. They help out-of-school children reintegrate into the formal school system by providing them with essential skills in literacy and numeracy. By facilitating school reintegration, bridging classes contribute to higher school enrolment rates, reduce children's exposure to hazardous labour, and support longer-term child protection outcomes. In an [ICI pilot project](#) implemented in 2021, bridging classes were associated with a 50% reduction in child labour among participating children.

### How do bridging classes work?

Bridging classes run for a minimum of 28 weeks (7 to 8 months), with 4.5 days of classes per week (Wednesday is a half-day). Bridging classes often take place from November to June to align with the formal school calendar and facilitate integration into schools. When the end of the bridging classes does not coincide with the formal school calendar, children may experience a prolonged period of inactivity, which can hinder reintegration.

The bridging classes curriculum is developed by the national education authorities, aligned with the official primary school curriculum, and adapted to the bridging classes methodology. It condenses two levels of a primary education cycle (Preparatory, Elementary or Middle) into one school year.

Bridging classes follow child-centred teaching approaches that take into account children's age, interests, and motivations. Teaching is accelerated and targeted, with a strong focus on rapidly developing foundational skills in literacy and numeracy. Learning is differentiated: pupils are grouped according to their level, and facilitators adapt the pace and content of instruction based on continuous assessment. Teaching methods emphasise active participation, practical activities, and "learning through play" to strengthen learning, motivation and independence.

Classes are led by trained facilitators rather than certified teachers. Facilitators receive an official guide and progression plan to ensure they follow the curriculum, methodology and evaluations.

Bridging classes conclude with a standardised final assessment that determines whether and at what level children can rejoin the formal school system.

To remove barriers to participation, bridging classes programmes typically include complementary support measures such as the distribution of school kits and the provision of daily school meals through temporary

canteens. Such measures help improve attendance, concentration, and sustained engagement throughout the programme.

## How are bridging classes implemented?

Bridging classes may be implemented as a standalone education intervention or as part of a broader Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS).

In both cases, implementation requires coordination with education authorities and active participation from local communities.

### Engagement with authorities

Close coordination with national and regional education authorities is key to ensuring compliance with the formal education system and effective academic supervision of children.



In Cote d'Ivoire, where ICI has experience implementing bridging classes, the relevant authorities with whom implementing organisations should coordinate are:

- **National education authorities:** Ministry of National Education, Literacy and Technical Education (*Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Alphabétisation et de l'Enseignement Technique*) and the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (*Direction de l'Éducation Non-Formelle*).
- **Regional education authorities:** Regional Directorates of National Education and Literacy (*Directions Régionales de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Alphabétisation*) and the Inspectorate of Pre-school and Primary Education (*Inspection de l'Enseignement Préscolaire et Primaire*).

### Community involvement

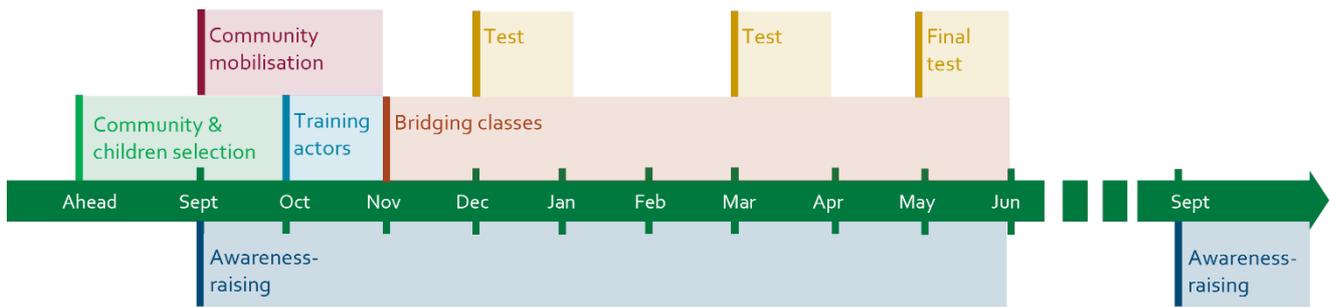
Community participation is also key to the effective implementation of bridging classes. A local management committee should be set up to support the implementing organisation in community mobilisation, children identification, preparation of learning spaces, and ongoing oversight of the programme. This local engagement strengthens ownership and sustainability.

### Implementation phases

The bridging classes programme is implemented in three complementary phases:

- **Preparatory phase:** Identification of target communities and eligible children; engagement with education authorities; community mobilisation and awareness-raising; recruitment and training of facilitators; and establishment or equipping of learning spaces.
- **Teaching and learning phase:** Initial assessment of children's academic level; distribution of school kits; canteen management; ongoing supervision; and regular monitoring of learners' progress.
- **Integration phase:** Final assessment of children's academic level and determination of placement level in coordination with education authorities; support to address administrative or material barriers to reintegration; and post-integration follow-up to monitor participation in formal schools.

## Implementation Guide: Bridging classes to address child labour in cocoa-growing communities



This guide documents the experience and expertise of ICI in implementing bridging classes in Côte d'Ivoire, to standardise and harmonise practices across all initiatives.

## PHASE 1

# Preparation and community mobilisation

### 1. Deciding which communities to target

The first step in implementing bridging classes is to identify target communities where they will be set up. The implementing organisation conducts an initial selection based on prioritisation criteria and available data. This preliminary selection must subsequently be validated with the relevant education authorities and community representatives to ensure institutional support and local ownership before implementation begins.

The following criteria can be used to prioritise communities:

- **Education needs** – There is a high number of out-of-school children aged 9 to 14 in the community. This includes children who have never enrolled in school or have dropped out. When assessing education needs, it is important to consider that national education policies often restrict entry into lower primary grades once children exceed a certain age. Particular attention should therefore be paid to the number of children who are approaching or have reached this age limit and may be at risk of exclusion from formal schooling.
- **Proximity to formal schools** – There are potential formal schools within 3 km of the community to facilitate children's transition into the formal education system after the bridging classes programme.



#### What happens if there isn't a formal school close to the community?

Bridging classes are ideally set up near existing formal schools to help students reintegrate into the education system. However, they can also be set up in communities without a school nearby.

In those cases, bridging classes can play a role in creating a recognised community school that is officially registered on the school map. In such situations, the implementing organisation should work with community members and local educational authorities to advocate for the establishment of a community education centre.

- **Child labour** – When implemented as part of Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS), community selection should also consider the prevalence of child labour in the community and the number of children at risk of child labour.



#### Where can the information about communities be found?

Information about communities may be obtained from:

- National and local education authorities
- Administrative records
- CLMRS databases (where applicable) – Data can therefore be obtained without prior visits to the communities. However, it should be validated during community awareness-raising activities to ensure accuracy and community ownership.

These criteria allow implementers to draw a list of potential communities, which then need to be verified and validated by the relevant authorities.

## 2. Validating potential communities with authorities

Once a preliminary list of target communities has been identified, it should be formally shared with the relevant education authorities for validation.

Education authorities may then inform the relevant educational advisers and local inspectorates, enabling early coordination and alignment. This step ensures that all actors likely to contribute to the smooth running of the programme are involved from the outset.

Meetings should be organised with:

- **Educational authorities and school principals**, to present the project, discuss identified needs, and clarify practical aspects of implementation
- **Administrative and political authorities**, to share information about the project and encourage institutional ownership and support

These activities ensure that the selected communities and relevant authorities are informed, mobilised, and aligned, thereby creating an environment conducive to the successful implementation of bridging classes.

## 3. Defining eligibility criteria for children

Once the communities have been selected and validated, the next step is to clearly define which children are eligible to attend bridging classes. Defining eligibility criteria in advance is essential to ensure that the programme reaches children most in need and that the selection process is fair, transparent, and consistent. Clear criteria help manage expectations within the community, guide discussions during awareness-raising sessions, and provide an objective basis for pre-registration and final enrolment decisions.

The following eligibility criteria are recommended:

- **Class size** – Each bridging class accommodates a maximum of 30 children to ensure appropriate supervision and the effective implementation of differentiated child-centred teaching approaches.
- **Age** – Bridging classes are intended for children aged 9 to 14. However, where space or budget constraints limit enrolment, priority should be given to younger children within this age range. Children who are 14 years old at the start of the bridging classes will typically be 15 by the end of the bridging classes cycle. Experience shows that maintaining older children in formal schooling can be more challenging. Some adolescents may face increased pressure to engage in income-generating activities, may feel stigmatised when placed in lower grades, or may struggle with motivation if their academic performance does not allow them to integrate at a level corresponding to their age. While older children can still benefit from bridging classes in terms of literacy, numeracy, and protection outcomes, the programme's primary objective of reintegration is more likely to be achieved with younger learners. Prioritising younger children, therefore, maximises the programme's intended impact. In addition, when bridging classes are implemented as a support activity within a CLMRS, early identification and enrolment help reduce children's exposure to and harm from child labour.
- **Child labour** – When implemented as part of Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS), children in or at risk of child labour should be prioritised.
- **Other situations of vulnerability** – Prioritising children in situations of vulnerability is essential to ensure that bridging classes target those most at risk of exclusion from the education system. This includes children affected by disability, displacement, orphanhood, early marriage, or the absence of a birth certificate. Particular attention should be paid to out-of-school girls, as they often face multiple social and economic barriers, including domestic responsibilities, early marriage, and social norms that limit their access to education. Their inclusion contributes to reducing gender disparities and strengthening protection outcomes.

These criteria should be communicated clearly to community members before the pre-registration process begins.

## 4. Mobilising the community

The effective implementation of bridging classes depends on strong community mobilisation and local ownership. Such ownership is essential to ensure that the programme is properly established, managed, and sustained over time.

Before activities begin, the implementing organisation should conduct field visits to the selected communities to:

- Confirm and validate the community selection
- Inform community members about the objectives and functioning of bridging classes (including eligibility criteria, details about facilitators, schedule, duration, and expected reintegration outcomes)
- Mobilise community members and initiate the establishment of a Community Management Committee and a canteen team
- Initiate the pre-registration process for eligible children

The community visit is also an opportunity to raise awareness among community members and caregivers about relevant topics, including:

- Right to education of all children
- Worst forms of child labour
- Role of education in children's protection and development
- Relevant national compulsory schooling policies
- Importance of literacy and girls' education

### 4.1 Establishing a Management Committee

As part of the mobilisation process, a community management committee should be established to support the organisation and oversight of bridging classes. The committee helps ensure the smooth running of the programme and is responsible for:

- Identifying and preparing the learning space
- Mobilising the community where no suitable structure for the classes exists, supporting the construction and overseeing the process
- Ensuring the maintenance and cleanliness of the learning space
- Registering children and monitoring their attendance, contacting caregivers when needed
- Supporting awareness-raising efforts and engaging caregivers of out-of-school children to encourage their participation

The committee should be made up of community member representatives, including:

- A representative of the village chief
- A representative of the School Management Committee
- The school headteacher
- Representatives of the local education authorities
- Two representatives of parents of children in bridging classes

### 4.2 Initiating pre-registration of children

During awareness sessions, caregivers can pre-register their children, creating a preliminary list of potential beneficiaries.

Pre-registration is conducted using a standard identification form completed either by members of the implementing team or by designated community focal points (e.g. members of the Bridging Classes Management Committee, school management, village chief, etc.).

The form should collect the following information:

- Child's full name
- Age or date of birth
- Gender
- Parent or guardian information
- Previous schooling status
- Place of residence



The consent of parents or guardians for the collection and processing of personal data is mandatory.

The form may be left temporarily within the community during awareness-raising activities to allow caregivers to register their children gradually. It is then collected during follow-up visits.

Once collected, the forms are submitted to the implementing organisation for verification against the defined eligibility criteria (age, enrolment status, vulnerability, etc.).

A validation mission is subsequently organised with the Bridging Classes Management Committee and a representative of the local education authorities to confirm the list of beneficiaries and finalise the official enrolment list.

Final enrolment is carried out under the supervision of the Bridging Classes Management Committee and under the authority of the relevant education services. Enrolment in bridging classes is free of charge for all children.

The confirmation of enrolment and communication of the final list to caregivers takes place before the official launch of classes (see Phase 2, Section 1).

### 4.3 Setting up a team for canteen management

To ensure that all children have equitable access to the programme and are able to participate fully throughout its duration, bridging classes should include a temporary canteen that provides a free lunch on every teaching day. School feeding helps remove economic barriers to attendance, supports children's nutrition and concentration, and contributes to improved retention and regular participation.

A canteen management team should be identified during the community mobilisation phase.

Each canteen should be managed by:

- Two canteen staff responsible for meal preparation
- One stock manager responsible for managing food supplies and equipment

Canteen team members should reside in the community and be available for the full duration of the teaching period (28 weeks) to ensure continuity of service.

Although these roles are voluntary, it is recommended to provide monthly incentive allowances to recognise their contribution and support their sustained engagement. The amount may vary depending on available project resources, but should reflect the responsibilities carried by the team.



## 5. Identifying and recruiting facilitators

Facilitators should ideally be recruited from within host communities to strengthen collaboration with households and promote local ownership of the programme. However, to ensure teaching quality, priority should be given to candidates with prior teaching experience and knowledge of the accelerated learning methodology, even if they are not from the host community. Communities should be informed of this possibility during awareness-raising sessions to encourage understanding and acceptance.

### Eligibility criteria and background

These criteria can be used to identify facilitators:

- Be between 18 and 65 years of age
- Have completed at least the lower-cycle of secondary education
- Be of good character

To strengthen safeguarding and child protection measures, it is recommended that candidates undergo:

- A medical examination to confirm physical fitness
- A criminal record check, where feasible

While these documents may not constitute formal eligibility criteria in all contexts, they contribute to safe and responsible recruitment.

### Selection process

A pre-selection test should be organised in collaboration with local education authorities to identify qualified candidates. The implementing organisation should participate in preparing and supervising the test. The written test assesses competencies in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Candidates who meet the required standards are then invited to attend an interview conducted by a committee composed of representatives of the local education authorities and the implementing organisation.



The recruitment of facilitators is strictly free of charge. It must not give rise to any abuse or exploitation of any kind. This rule guarantees a recruitment process that is transparent, fair and respectful of candidates.



### Conditions and compensation

To ensure the effective delivery of bridging classes and teaching quality, facilitators must be adequately supported throughout their assignment. This includes:

- **Financial support** – Facilitators should receive a monthly allowance or incentives (in Côte d'Ivoire, typically between 75,000 and 150,000 CFA francs). Travel and related costs for participation in training activities, including transport, per diem, and accommodation where applicable, should be covered by the implementing organisation.
- **Technical and administrative support** – Facilitators should receive ongoing technical and administrative support from the relevant education authorities, including supervision, mentoring, and monitoring of their activities.

- **Relocation support (where applicable)** – When facilitators are recruited from outside the host community, the community should provide accommodation where necessary. In such cases, a one-time relocation allowance at the start of the assignment is recommended to support installation and encourage commitment.

To strengthen motivation and retention, facilitators may also be offered prospects for continued engagement beyond the initial teaching period, such as involvement in remediation activities within a CLMRS framework or other educational initiatives.

## 6. Training actors involved in implementation

Effective implementation of bridging classes requires structured training and continuous support for all actors involved. Training ensures a common understanding of the programme's objectives, methodology, and operational procedures.

### 6.1 Training facilitators

Following recruitment, facilitators must complete structured training before starting their assignment. As bridging classes rely on an accelerated and child-centred methodology, thorough preparation and ongoing support are essential. The training process, therefore, includes initial training, refresher sessions, and continuous pedagogical and administrative supervision.

All training components should be delivered by resource persons designated by the national education authorities.

#### Initial training

Initial training should have a minimum duration of 21 days:

- 7 days dedicated to subject-specific content
- 14 days dedicated to the accelerated and child-centred pedagogical approach validated by the national education authorities

While the training should be delivered by the national education authorities, the implementing organisation should cover all related costs, including logistics, materials, travel, and per diem.



#### Safeguarding and child protection training

Facilitators should receive specific training on child safeguarding and protection. This training must be aligned with the safeguarding and child protection policy of the organisation implementing the bridging classes programme.

The training aims to:

- Raise awareness of children's rights and potential risks to their safety and well-being
- Enable facilitators to identify and prevent all forms of abuse, exploitation, and neglect
- Equip facilitators to implement practical measures to safeguard children within the learning environment
- Ensure compliance with national legislation and organisational safeguarding standards

This training contributes to the creation of a safe and protective learning environment where children can participate and learn with dignity and respect.

### Refresher training

Continuous training is essential to ensure that facilitators effectively apply the accelerated and child-centred methodology throughout the programme.

Refresher training is organised approximately two months after the start of classes. Lasting four to five days, it addresses gaps identified during pedagogical supervision and monitoring visits conducted by local education authorities.

Depending on the facilitators' level of mastery, this training may be delivered by national trainers or representatives of local education authorities.

To consolidate skills, at least one pedagogical supervision visit by national trainers is recommended.

### Teaching kit

Facilitators should receive a teaching kit defined by the national education authorities. The kit includes materials necessary for lesson planning, delivery, and monitoring of learning outcomes. It supports harmonised implementation of the differentiated, child-centred approach and ensures consistency between programme objectives and classroom practice.

## 6.2 Training canteen staff

Specific training should be organised by the implementing organisation in collaboration with national education authorities for canteen volunteers.

Training covers practical and technical aspects necessary for effective canteen management, including:

- Canteen staff: hygiene practices, nutrition principles, and adaptation of menus to local dietary habits
- Stock managers: use of stock management tools, rationing recipients, distribution of quantities according to headcount

## 6.3 Training other stakeholders

To ensure effective coordination and a shared understanding of the bridging classes approach, other key stakeholders should participate in tailored training or orientation sessions.

These may include:

- Representatives of local education authorities
- School headteachers
- Members of the bridging classes management committee

These sessions aim to strengthen stakeholders' understanding of how bridging classes operate and their respective responsibilities within the system. They also include a presentation of how learners' academic performance is assessed throughout the bridging classes cycle. This enables local education authorities to understand performance benchmarks and effectively support learners' reintegration into formal schooling.

This training typically takes place in late September or early October. Its duration may vary depending on participants' prior experience (e.g., up to 14 days for full training, or a shorter 6-day session for experienced personnel).

## 7. Identifying or constructing the learning space

Providing a suitable and safe learning environment is essential to ensure the effective functioning of bridging classes. The process of identifying the learning space is done in collaboration with the bridging classes management committee.

Classes may be held in **existing community spaces**, such as school buildings, community shelters, or other appropriate communal spaces that meet basic safety and child protection standards. The implementing organisation should assess whether an existing structure can accommodate the bridging class, in collaboration with the management committee.

Where no adequate facility is available, a **temporary classroom** should be constructed with active community participation. This local involvement not only promotes community ownership of the project but also ensures that the infrastructure meets the children's needs and the required safety standards. In such cases, the implementing organisation should support the construction by providing construction materials. The construction itself can be carried out by caregivers and the School Management Committee. Quality standards must be met to ensure the durability and safety of the structure.

 When bridging classes are established near a formal school that already has high enrolment, infrastructure planning should take future integration needs into account.

In such cases, it is recommended to:

- Construct the temporary shelter using durable materials so that it can later be integrated into the host school's infrastructure and contribute to increasing its long-term capacity; or
- Build an additional permanent classroom within or adjacent to the host school to accommodate both bridging class learners and future enrolment increases.

This forward-looking approach helps ease the transition of learners into the formal system while simultaneously strengthening the receiving school's infrastructure and reducing overcrowding.

### Standards, quality and safety of infrastructure and equipment

- **Quality of materials and equipment:** All construction materials (wood, sheet metal, bricks) and furniture (tables, benches, desks, blackboards) must be sturdy, durable and suitable for school use.
- **Child safety:** Classroom shelters must be constructed with attention to structural stability, the absence of physical hazards and sufficient space for children.
- **Chemicals and pesticides:** The use of chemicals, insecticides or pesticides near or inside classroom shelters is strictly regulated to protect the health of children and staff. Non-chemical methods are recommended for maintaining the premises.

## 8. Equipping the learning space

Once the learning space has been identified or constructed, it must be equipped to enable effective teaching and learning. Essential items include:

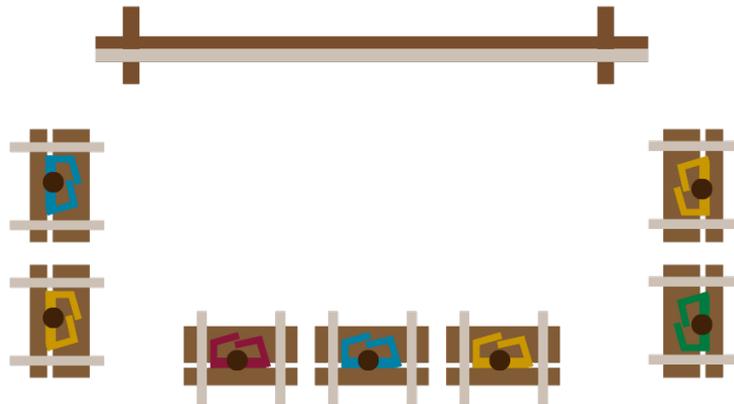
- Tables and benches for children
- Facilitator's desk
- Blackboard

 All equipment provided should be of sufficient quality and durability to withstand regular use over time. At the end of the project, furniture and teaching materials are transferred to the host school, thereby contributing to the strengthening of its long-term capacity.

### Classroom layout

Given that bridging classes typically enrol a limited number of learners (up to 30 per class), facilitators are encouraged to use active and differentiated teaching methods. The classroom layout should therefore promote interaction and participation.

A U-shaped arrangement of desks facing the blackboard is recommended to facilitate dialogue between learners and the facilitator.



*U-shaped layout in a bridging class*

## PHASE 2

# Teaching and learning

The teaching and learning phase begins with the official launch of bridging classes and continues through the delivery of instruction, assessment of learning, and ongoing supervision. Throughout this phase, activities are implemented under the guidance of national and local education authorities to ensure quality, recognition, and alignment with official standards.

### 1. Confirming enrolment and reinforcing engagement

Before the official launch of bridging classes, a final session should be organised with caregivers. This session can be organised either by the management committee alone or in collaboration with the field staff of the implementing organisation.

While initial awareness-raising takes place during the mobilisation phase (Phase 1), this meeting serves a different purpose. It is intended to:

- Announce the final list of selected learners
- Confirm the official start date of classes
- Clarify expectations regarding attendance and participation

This step helps ensure that caregivers are fully informed and prepared for the start of classes.

Regular communication with caregivers should continue throughout the bridging classes cycle. Ongoing exchanges help prevent repeated absences, reduce the risk of dropout, and strengthen caregivers' involvement in their children's schooling.

### 2. Distributing school kits

On the first day of the bridging classes, a session should be organised to distribute school kits and to raise awareness among children and parents about the importance of education.

School kit should contain textbooks, a bag and all the materials necessary for their learning. The contents of the kit are defined by the national education authorities, considering the educational needs of the children.



When distributing school kits, facilitators should reinforce key messages about the importance of education, the prevention of child labour, and child protection. To support this effort, each school kit may be accompanied by a letter addressed to caregivers. The letter can describe the contents of the kit, clarify caregivers' role in supporting their child's education, and highlight the importance of schooling for children's intellectual, social, and personal development. This written communication reinforces the messages delivered during meetings and serves as an additional tool to strengthen family engagement.

> [Download an accompanying letter for school kit deliveries](#)

### 3. Assessing education levels and grouping students

Before regular instruction begins, an initial assessment should be conducted to determine each learner's academic level. This assessment is essential to ensure differentiated teaching and appropriate grouping of children.

In many contexts, this assessment is based on the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) methodology, which measures foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.



The **ASER test** is a simple assessment tool that measures children's basic reading and maths skills. It provides information on the actual level of each child, whether they are unschooled or out of school, and identifies learning gaps. In the context of the bridging classes, the ASER test is used to group children by level in order to tailor educational activities to their specific needs and facilitate their gradual reintegration into formal schooling.

Based on the results, children are grouped into levels for reading, writing, and arithmetic. For example:

- **Level 1:** Limited or no recognition of letters and numbers
- **Level 2:** Ability to read simple words or short texts and recognise two-digit numbers
- **Level 3:** Ability to read a short story with comprehension and perform basic arithmetic operations

Each level follows a methodology adapted to learners' skills and learning pace.

The initial assessment ensures that instruction is tailored from the outset and increases the likelihood of meaningful progress throughout the bridging classes cycle.

### 4. Managing the school canteen

The school canteen should operate every teaching day throughout the cycle. The implementing organisation is responsible for ensuring the regular supply and proper functioning of the canteen. This includes:

- Providing non-perishable food items and kitchen equipment at regular intervals (typically every two months)
- Providing a monthly allowance to canteen staff to purchase fresh food items (e.g., protein sources) and adapt menus to local dietary practices
- Supplying basic food and hygiene kits to support the preparation of safe and balanced meals

Field officers should verify that canteen staff adjust the quantities prepared to the actual number of enrolled learners to ensure that each child receives a sufficient and nutritious meal.

### 5. Overseeing the classes

Effective implementation of bridging classes requires structured and continuous supervision to ensure teaching quality, adherence to the approved methodology, and smooth programme delivery. Oversight is organised across three complementary levels involving school leadership, education authorities, and the implementing organisation.

- **School-level** – The school headteacher provides regular oversight by meeting with the facilitator at least twice per week. This includes reviewing teaching materials and providing direct pedagogical support where needed.

- **Local education authorities** – Representatives of the local education authorities conduct at least one supervisory visit per month. During these visits, they observe teaching sessions and provide technical guidance.
- **Implementing organisation supervision** – The supervisor from the implementing organisation coordinates programme implementation, conducts monitoring visits, and liaises with facilitators, education authorities, and community actors to ensure compliance with programme requirements and resolve operational challenges.

## 6. Assessing and monitoring learning progress

Monitoring children's learning progress throughout the teaching cycle is essential to ensure that bridging classes effectively prepare children for integration or reintegration into the formal education system.

Following the initial diagnostic assessment conducted at the start of the cycle, learning progress is monitored through a structured system of continuous and periodic assessments defined by the national education authorities.

Two complementary types of assessment are used during the teaching cycle:

- **Traditional assessments** help measure children's performance across all subjects. Three interim assessments are typically organised during the 7–8 month cycle (approximately every two months). These allow facilitators to monitor pupils' progress and adjust teaching strategies if necessary.
- **A mid-cycle ASER** assessment may be conducted to measure progress in reading and mathematics. This assessment provides a clear snapshot of learners' reading and mathematics levels and supports further instructional adjustments where necessary.

All assessments are organised by facilitators under the supervision of school leadership, local education authorities, and representatives of the implementing organisation to ensure rigour, consistency, and alignment with official standards.

## PHASE 3

# Integration into formal schools

### 1. Confirming students' readiness for integration

The confirmation of learners' readiness for integration into the formal school system is based on a structured review of assessment results collected throughout the bridging classes cycle. This includes continuous traditional assessments and a third ASER test conducted at the end of the bridging classes cycle, and, where applicable, the official integration test required by the national education authorities.

Each learner's placement is determined by analysing their overall performance across interim assessments and final tests, and correlating these results with their age using an integration scale defined by the national education authorities. This ensures that children are placed in the most appropriate grade within the formal school system.

A placement committee should be established to validate integration decisions. The committee should be composed of:

- The headteacher of the receiving school
- A representative of the implementing organisation
- Representatives of the relevant education authorities

This committee ensures that integration decisions are fair, transparent, and aligned with established criteria, taking into account the learner's academic level, age, and the receiving school's capacity.

Particular attention should be given to older learners. When integrated at a later age, some children may face adaptation challenges and a higher risk of dropout. Where possible, placement and support strategies should take into account their age and profile to facilitate a smooth transition. For instance, an apprenticeship programme might be more relevant for older children.

### 2. Addressing administrative and material barriers

Following confirmation of placement, effective integration into formal schools takes place at the beginning of the new academic year. To ensure a smooth transition, administrative and material barriers that may prevent enrolment must be addressed proactively.

This stage also requires renewed engagement with parents and caregivers. Although awareness-raising has taken place throughout the bridging classes cycle, a dedicated session should be organised before the start of the school year to reinforce the importance of formal enrolment, clarify next steps, and ensure that families complete all required procedures.

#### 2.1 Providing school kits

To facilitate enrolment, reduce the financial burden on households and encourage participation, a new school kit may be provided to children transitioning into formal schools.

School integration kits may include:

- Required school textbooks

- A school bag
- A school uniform (where required)
- An information letter to caregivers outlining the contents of the kit and reinforcing their role in supporting their child's continued schooling

## 2.2 Facilitating access to birth certificates

Birth certificates are often required for official enrolment and participation in national examinations. Children without proper documentation may face barriers to certification and progression within the formal education system.

The implementing organisation should therefore identify children lacking birth certificates and support access to such documentation to ensure they can enrol in formal school and reduce the risk of future exclusion from the system once they have to sit in national examinations at the end of education cycles.

## 3. Preparing and strengthening schools

Before integrating children from bridging classes into schools, the implementing organisation should assess the capacity of receiving schools to ensure that integration can take place under appropriate conditions.

Where gaps are identified, targeted support may be provided in coordination with education authorities.

Possible measures include:

- Construction or rehabilitation of classrooms to accommodate additional learners
- Provision of desks, benches, and essential school furniture
- Construction or renovation of latrines and other sanitary facilities
- Support for the establishment or strengthening of school canteens

These measures help to facilitate the integration of children and strengthen the overall capacity of formal schools.

## 4. Following up after integration

Post-integration follow-up is essential to ensure that children remain enrolled, attend regularly, and successfully adapt to the formal school environment.

Follow-up visits should be planned during the first months of the new school year to verify enrolment and attendance of former bridging class learners.

In cases of repeated absences or risk of dropout, targeted awareness-raising sessions with caregivers should be organised to address underlying barriers and reinforce the importance of continued schooling.

In addition, periodic refresher awareness-raising sessions may be conducted with groups of caregivers to sustain commitment and prevent relapse into child labour or school withdrawal.

## Key recommendations

### Aligned timetable

- Start Bridging classes no later than November so that the end of the cycle coincides with the closure of formal schools and to limit interruptions in the learning process.

### Mobilisation and educational quality

- Involve all key education stakeholders (local education authorities, school administrators, teachers, parent committees) to ensure quality teaching and successful integration.
- Provide a catch-up programme during or immediately after rainy periods, with flexible schedules and intensive or targeted sessions to compensate for absences.

### Protection and support for learners

- Provide free daily meals, a key factor in student retention and attendance.
- Continuously raise parents' awareness of the risks associated with child labour and the importance of schooling, before, during and after integration into the formal system.

### Tailored pathways for older learners

- Offer opportunities for vocational training or guidance towards vocational training when age permits, as a complement or alternative to formal schooling.

### Conditions for success and monitoring

- Plan ahead for rainy seasons and formal school closures.
- Ensure structured local coordination, with regular meetings involving educational and community stakeholders.
- Ensure the involvement of all local national education stakeholders in order to effectively support the functioning of the Bridging classes.
- Organise post-integration monitoring, including tutoring, home visits and targeted awareness-raising, to prevent dropouts.
- Introduce incentives (meals, School kits, adapted timetables) to stabilise children's attendance and motivation.

By applying these measures consistently and continuously, Bridging classes significantly reduce school dropout rates and secure children's transition to the formal system, including for older children, thus ensuring more inclusive and sustainable schooling.

### Additional resources

- From learning to action: [Bridging classes \(or Accelerated Education program\) in cocoa-growing communities](#)
- Study: report [Summary: The effect of bridging classes \(or Accelerated Education program\) on child labour | ICI Cocoa Initiative](#)
- Excel document on canteen rations
- Accompanying letter for school kits



### Tableau des nombres à deux chiffres

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
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80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99

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