



Speed School Program, Ethiopia & Uganda

Annual Report 2021



Contacts:

Joshua Muskin, Senior Director | Education Team Leader,
Geneva Global, Inc., USA (jmuskin@genevaglobal.com)

Samuel Wollie, Country Director, Geneva Global - Ethiopia
(swollie@genevaglobal.com)

Rebecca Ecwou, Program Director, Geneva Global – Uganda
(recwou@genevaglobal.com)



Table of Contents

Acronyms	2
Executive Summary: Ethiopia.....	3
Executive Summary: Uganda.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Ethiopia.....	5
Ethiopia’s 2020/21 School Year In Numbers.....	6
Ethiopia’s 2021/22 School Year In Numbers.....	8
Key features, achievements, and challenges of Speed School in Ethiopia, 2021	9
Looking ahead.....	16
Uganda.....	17
Uganda’s 2020 and 2021 School Years In Numbers	17
Key features, achievements, and challenges of Speed School in Uganda, 2021	18
Looking ahead.....	29
Geneva Global, headquarters	30

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Geneva Global wishes to acknowledge the invaluable roles of the many different partners whose contributions and collaboration are critical to the work we are privileged to do and the accomplishments to which we are proud to contribute. This begins with our generous, visionary clients who entrust us with resources, their confidence, and the flexibility to implement the Speed School program to achieve optimally, evolving as conditions require and opportunities appear. We also thank our many grantee civil society partners, who continue to enrich the design and implementation of Speed School by summoning their experience, expertise, relations, and profound devotion to their communities and excellence. We thank our government partners as well, benefiting from the guidance, endorsement, and critical collaboration of leaders and technical agents alike from the ministry to the district level. Lastly, we thank the facilitators, local agents, headteachers, and other “front-line” actors who are the most essential factor in turning the good ideas of Speed School into strong classroom instruction and management and dedicated parental and community support to yield solid student learning, motivation, and retention for a more promising future.

Acronyms

ALFA	Accelerated Learning for Africa
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
ANFE	Adult and nonformal education
CCT	Cluster coordinating tutor
CMC	Community management committee
CP	Collaborating partner
CTE	College of teacher education
DEO	District education office
ECoP	Education community of practice
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EMIS	Education management information system
GG-Eth	Geneva Global Ethiopia
GG-Ug	Geneva Global Uganda
IDP	Internally displaced persons
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MYRP	Multi-Year Resiliency Program
NCDC	National Curriculum Design Center
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PoPCI	Popular participation in curriculum and instruction
PSEA	Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
PTC	Primary teachers' college
REB	Regional education bureau
SHG	Self-Help Group
SIP	School improvement program
SMS	Short message service – “text messaging”
TDP	Teacher development program
WEO	Woreda (district) education office

Executive Summary: Ethiopia

The 2021 *Annual Speed School Report* covers the end of the 2020/21 school year and the start of 2021/22 for Ethiopia. The program’s business-as-usual operation by grantee civil society organizations, or “collaborating partners” (CP), was affected by both positive and negative events. Sadly, the armed conflict between the government and Tigray Region forced Geneva Global Ethiopia (GG-Eth) to suspend all activities there. It also caused GG-Eth to change the location of many classes in Amhara region, moving out of areas of high insecurity.

Positively, GG-Eth received a second year of UNICEF funding, continuing to work with internally displaced populations but in two new regions: Afar and Somali. GG-Eth also secured funding from a new source, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), to work with IDP and host communities in Oromia. This three-year project engages GG-Eth not just to deliver the classic Speed School program but also to expand its work with pre-school and to provide quality education to children in conventional classes in all primary grades. The ECW project also involves GG-Eth more substantively than customary in construction, the inclusion of children with disabilities, and the design and delivery of modules and strategies to address areas linked directly to students’ trauma, such as mental health, social cohesion, and peace. Private funding was critical to both new projects, allowing GG-Eth to meet UNICEF’s 15% cost-share requirement.

The year may be especially noteworthy for the significant progress towards the government’s adoption of the Speed School program. This was evident in a few significant ways:

1. The Ministry of Education created a dedicated Speed School Unit to which it associated a Technical Committee and a Steering Committee, both with members from the ministry’s different directorates, to guide and oversee the national scaling of Speed School classes.
2. Movement by several regions to create similar Speed School units and cross-departmental committees.
3. The funding by regions in 2021/22 of over two-thirds of all Speed School classes.
4. The implementation of Speed School classes – i.e., training and supervision of facilitators – by regions of over 80% of the classes they fund. (Previously, this commonly fell to CPs.)
5. The incorporation of Speed School measures by the Ministry of Education in its official Education Management Information System (EMIS).

The core numbers reached in 2021 appear in the following table.

Fundors	Funding amount		Speed School Classes		Speed School Students		Self-Help Groups		Conventional Class Students	
	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
Private clients ¹	\$2.5 m.	\$2.5 m.	232	225	5,800	6,150	232	205	N/A	N/A
Ethiopian government	N/A	N/A	327	631 ²	2,250	14,580	-	-	N/A	N/A
UNICEF	\$832,120	\$771,400	225	87	2,625	3,210	225	118	N/A	N/A
ECW (2021 only)	\$2,071,400		41		1,476		41		5,914	

Plans for 2022 are to continue the successful implementation of the conventional Speed School program and the two projects while advancing the agenda option, focusing particularly on the colleges of teacher education. GG-Eth will also try to keep expanding its funding and funders.

¹ - Private clients in 2021/22 actually funded a total 300 Speed School classes, but 95 of these will be counted in 2022 because they were allocated to the ECW project as a cost-share element. ECW Year 2 starts in March 2022.

² - The original commitment was 671 ALP classes. This number shrunk due to the armed conflict in the North.



Executive Summary: Uganda

The implementation of Speed School in 2021 was anything but business as usual, continuing a second consecutive year of school closures due to COVID-19. Starting the year with the hope that schools would re-open soon, Geneva Global Uganda (GG-Ug) chose to stay with the same communities, schools, facilitators, and children and families from 2020. These children had barely received three weeks of instruction before the ministry sent all children home.

Continuity would let GG-Ug to concretize its move to add four new districts and one municipality. These are Agogo, Alebtong, Kitgum, and Otuke Districts and Kitgum Municipality. Even more exciting was the chance finally to advance significantly the aim of government adoption of Speed School. This involved entrusting the program's implementation in the new areas to government structures rather than only to grantee civil society organizations, or "collaborating partners" (CP). In the "legacy" districts and municipality – Amuru, Gulu, Nwoya, and Omoro –, education authorities had committed to implement 36 (over one-third) of their classes and Self-Help Groups. The new implementation arrangement also involved enlisting local development structures – e.g., parish chiefs and agriculture agents – to train and support the Self-Help Groups.

As during 2020, GG-Ug endeavored in 2021 to keep all facilitators ready to resume classes at a moment's notice. This involved a few basic strategies:

- The distribution to all facilitators of additional materials on Speed School for self-study;
- Use of text messages (SMS) to guide facilitators in continuing to raise their understanding;
- The provision of face-to-face refresher training by CP agents, inspectors, and teacher training tutors to groups of facilitators when such gatherings were allowed; and
- The organization by GG headquarters of a virtual training, reflection, and planning session with GG-Ug and, on average, over 20 CP, district education office, and primary teacher college agents every two weeks until December 2021.

The new implementation arrangement and the virtual sessions have created a solid foundation for the technical adoption of Speed School in the North. The financial commitment still seems far away, though, managed mainly by the Ministry of Education and Sports. Over the 2020 and 2021 period, GG-Ug efforts to engage senior ministry officials in committing to and planning for government adoption and sustainability faltered. These officials were completely focused on managing the pandemic's effects on the sector, and rightly so.

During the year, the pandemic lightened enough at two times to resume instruction in the 230 Speed School classes from 2020, with 6,900 pupils. From March to May, GG-Ug brought 5,573 of these pupils into class. All facilitators completed Phase I and some advanced into Phase II. In October, authorities approved GG-Ug to conduct a home-based learning strategy. Small groups of the same pupils completed activity-based lessons on their own, supported by facilitator visits every two or three days until early December. GG-Ug used the SMS platform to guide the facilitators and parents in supporting this effort. Of this group, 5,447 took the end-of-year placement test to join conventional classes in 2022. Over 75% qualified to continue in P4.

The Self-Help Groups also struggled with the pandemic, receiving less training, focused on family subsistence, missing the motivation of their children in school, and more. Still, most managed to operate economic activities and to save, even if with lower profits and levels of savings. In addition, most groups now split into micro-groups to respect the COVID restrictions.

Looking to 2022, GG-Ug plans again to implement 230 classes, adding one new Northern district, Pader, and ten private low-fee schools in Kampala. The CPs' role will now include technical support to districts in their implementing Speed School. GG-Ug will also re-ignite aggressively its outreach to the ministry to promote the adoption for sustainability and scaling agenda.

Introduction

The present report provides an overview of Geneva Global's operation of the Speed School program in Ethiopia and Uganda during 2021. (See the box "Speed School at a Glance" for the program's key aims and components.) This period coincides with the completion of the 2020/21 and the start of the 2021/22 academic years in Ethiopia. The report covers the full 2021 academic year in Uganda. The year also coincides with major disruptions to schooling and all of society in the two countries, and globally. In Uganda, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic kept the majority of children out of the classroom for the full year, though some returned to school for just a few months, from March to May 2021, to prepare for exams. This was the second year of no schooling in the country, which first closed classrooms at the pandemic's onset, a mere three weeks into the 2020 school year. In Ethiopia, schools re-opened for the 2020/21 school year, but until December, late by many months. Students experienced shortened class times due to COVID-19 prevention measures; most notably, adopting a shift system to achieve small class sizes. More disruptive to schooling in the Northern regions, especially Tigray and Amhara, was the armed conflict that continued for most of 2021.

Facing these obstacles, Geneva Global employed a variety of alternative strategies to keep students learning. In Ethiopia, this was essentially a matter of selecting woredas that were well beyond the fighting. The country team also supported the Ministry to maintain learning standards system-wide despite the shortened instructional time by helping it to introduce certain accelerated learning strategies from Speed School into conventional primary school classrooms nationwide. In Uganda, Geneva Global and its grantee and government partners responded with alternative delivery strategies, capitalizing on ebb periods during the pandemic to return pupils to learning. At the same time, the two country programs used the period to advance more quickly with the government adoption agenda, embedding Speed School more solidly within key national and local education structures and deepening the training of key education authorities and technical agents.



Teaching during COVID-19.

Following are summaries of each country program's respective experiences and results.

Ethiopia

In 2021, Geneva Global and the Speed School program experienced important and exciting growth in Ethiopia. The program expanded to two new regions – Afar and Somali – and received funding for the first time from two major international education organizations: UNICEF and Education Cannot Wait (ECW). The Ministry of Education and the participating regions took concrete steps towards the official adoption of the Speed School model, investing financially and institutionally in its long-term expansion and sustainability. This commitment saw the government's funding around half of all Speed School classes for the 2021/22 school year. It also yielded the creation of a dedicated Speed School Unit within the Ministry of Education along with movement by a few regions to create similar units. Government ownership of Speed School is consolidating further as colleges of teacher education (CTE) across the regions enlist Geneva Global to help incorporate the Speed School model and methods into their teacher training curricula and instruction. Their aim is both to produce future Speed School facilitators and to

strengthen the capacity and performance of all primary school teachers. An overview of these and other aspects of Geneva Global’s work in Ethiopia during 2021 follows, covering both the end of the 2020/21 school year and the start of 2021/22.

Speed School at a Glance

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Key Aims</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide out-of-school children aged 9 to 14 a “second chance” at a formal primary education. • Equip students with the skills, knowledge, motivation, and confidence to continue in school and on into life and livelihood with success and joy. • Empower mothers economically and socially to support their children’s future schooling and overall well-being. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Key Components</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed School Class: Groups of 30-36 students cover the official Grades 1 to 3 curriculum in 10 months. Attending full-day classes led by a trained facilitator, students learn in groups of six. Over 90% continue in primary school where most join Grade 4 and progress and thrive. • Self-Help Group: The mother of every Speed School student joins a Self-Help Group where they engage in joint income-generating activities and group savings and undertake social actions to support their children’s future schooling. • Primary School Capacity Strengthening: Train and support ministry and decentralized education structures to use Speed School methods to improve teaching and learning across all primary classes in “link” schools³ and, eventually, in all primary schools. • Gender equality and inclusion: Engage parents, teachers, officials, and students to support the school enrolment, learning, and joyous participation of girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. <p>The implementation of Speed School has rested largely with local civil society organizations, benefiting from their experience, knowledge, and networks in the areas where Speed School operates. Increasingly, responsibility for implementation is shifting to government structures, part of a deliberate adoption strategy for sustainability and scale.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Key Technical Elements</u></p> <p>Condensed curriculum: Focusing on core learning objectives allows and requires teachers to create rich, relevant lessons by drawing on the local context.</p> <p>Pedagogy: Activity-based, learner-centered methods, continuous formative assessment, small group work, and abundant low-cost/no-cost instructional materials foster academic, practical, and personal learning and growth.</p> <p>Teacher training: A holistic approach combines practice-based training workshops, dialogue-based supervision, and peer-driven education communities of practice.</p> <p>Parents’ roles: Engaging parents and other community actors in all aspects of their children’s schooling promotes access and success at home, at school, and in-between.</p>	

Ethiopia’s 2020/21 School Year in Numbers

In Ethiopia, 2021 combined “business-as-usual” with some significant new elements. As it has done since the program’s start in Ethiopia with the 2011/12 school year, GG-Eth provided grants to local civil society organizations, or “collaborating partners” (CPs), to implement Speed School. In 2020/21, a total 18 CPs received grants to operate 537 Speed School classes (called “ALFA⁴ classes”) and the same number of Self-Help Groups (SHG) in Addis Ababa City, Amhara, and Oromia where they enrolled 15,455 total children (about 45% girls) and the same number of SHG members, comprising mothers or other guardians of the Speed School students. GG-Eth operated no ALFA classes in SNNPR for the first time since the program’s inception because its funding to work there ended.

³ - Link schools are those primary schools that are “linked” to Speed School classes because they will receive the Speed School “graduates” the following year. Most Speed School classes actually operate in a link school.

⁴ - ALFA is the acronym for Accelerated Learning for Africa, the name used in Ethiopia for Speed Schools implemented with grants received from Geneva Global.

Over the same period, the same regions funded with their own resources an additional 327 Speed School classes, called “ALP⁵ classes,” to reach a total 8,625 out-of-school children (53% girls). This was 68 (26%) more ALP classes than the previous year, though implementation – i.e., the training and continuous monitoring and support of facilitators and other operational elements and data collection and reporting – remained mostly the responsibility of grantee CPs.

At the end of the 2020/21 school year, a total 20,413 Speed School students (48.2% girls), both ALFA and ALP, took the end-of-year placement test. This translates into a dropout rate of 15%, which was higher than the normal rate of just 5%. This increase is undoubtedly attributable to the COVID shutdown from the previous year and late start to the 2020/21 school year. A full 99.2% (20,248) of this group of test-takers transitioned to a conventional primary school for the 2021/22 school year, higher than the normal 95%. From this group, 46.0% (46.7% of girls) entered in Grade 4, 47.6% (47.2% of girls) in Grade 3, 6.4% (6.1% of girls) in Grade 2, and none in Grade 5. The fact that just 46% of Speed School “graduates” entered Grade 4 (usually around 75 percent) is likely attributable to the fact that schools nationwide only opened again in December (nearly three months later than customary) following the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020. While a few Speed School classes launched in October or November, the majority began in December, too. Indeed, given the late start, the fact that as many as 47% placed into Grade 4 would seem to be an impressive achievement.

New to GG-Eth in 2020/21 was the partnership with UNICEF. With funding from the Dutch Government, UNICEF reached out to Geneva Global to provide Speed School classes to children from internally displaced persons (IDP) communities who had recently returned to their homes in Oromia. Working with five grantee CPs, GG-Eth operated 225 Speed School classes and SHGs to reach 6,750 children (46% girls) and the same number of mothers (or other guardians) from IDP and host communities in five woredas (districts). A summary of the basic Speed School numbers for the 2020/21 school year, presented by funder, appears in Table 1.

Table 1: Speed School Numbers by Funder

Fundors	Funding amount		Speed School Classes		Speed School Students		Self-Help Groups		Conventional Class Students	
	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
Private clients (non-ECW classes ⁶)	\$2.5 m.	\$2.5 m.	232	225 ⁷	5,800	6,150	232	205	N/A	N/A
Ethiopian government	N/A	N/A	327	631 ⁸	2,250	14,580	-	-	N/A	N/A
UNICEF	\$832,120	\$771,400	225	87	2,625	3,210	225	118	N/A	N/A
Education Cannot Wait (2021 only)	\$2,071,400		41		1,476		41		5,914	

⁵ - ALP stands for Accelerated Learning Program, the name chosen in Ethiopia to distinguish government-funded and operated Speed School classes from those funded by grants from Geneva Global.

⁶ - Speed School classes and students under ECW project are all covered as cost-share, paid for by Geneva Global's private clients

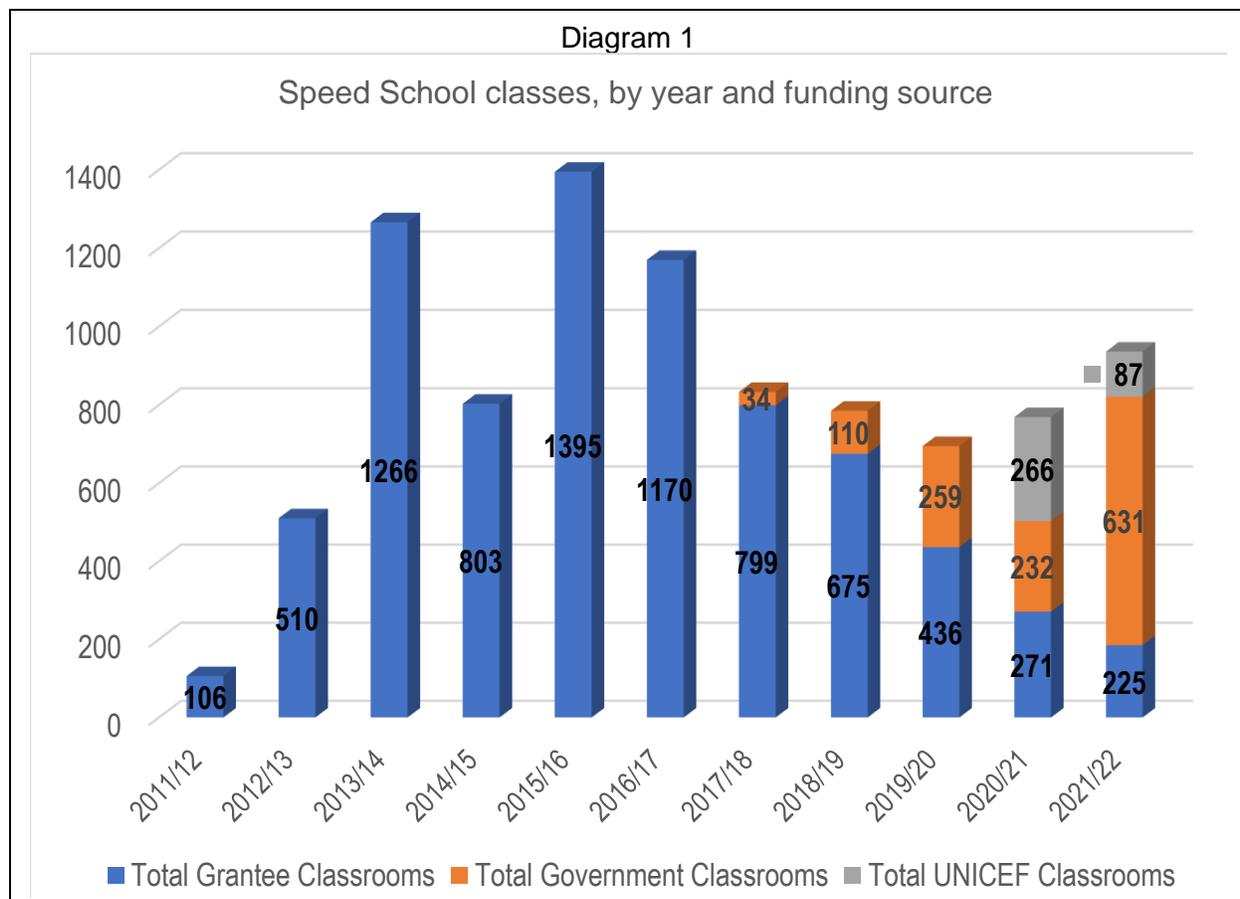
⁷ - Private clients in 2021/22 funded a total 300 Speed School classes, but 95 of these will be counted in 2022 because they were allocated to the ECW project as a cost-share element. ECW Year 2 does not start until March 2022.

⁸ - The original government commitment was to implement 671 ALP classes. This number shrunk due to the armed conflict in the North of the country, reducing especially the number of ALP classes in Amhara region.

Ethiopia's 2021/22 School Year in Numbers

The 2021/22 Speed School year brought the addition of three new regions – Afar, Sidama⁹, and Somali – and one significant new funder, Education Cannot Wait (managed by UNICEF). The year also saw a much greater investment by the Ethiopian Government in the Speed School model, both financial and institutional, as well as a growing number of other organizations' taking up the Speed School model. The business-as-usual granting to CPs to implement the Speed School program resulted in the operation of a total 312 ALFA classes and SHGs across Amhara, Oromia, Addis Ababa, and the three new regions. These aimed to bring 9,360 out-of-school children (47.5% girls) into formal education for the first time. The government's conflict with Tigray in the North prevented GG-Eth from operating classes there for another year.

Perhaps the most visible evidence of the government's adoption of the Speed School program was the surge in the number of ALP classes. Respectively, Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, and SNNPR funded 8, 28, 365, 230, and 0 (631 total) to bring 20,130 out-of-school children (49% girls) into formal education. This nearly doubles the number (94% increase) from 2020/21 and represents now a full 67% of all Speed School classes linked to GG-Eth's efforts in the country. (See Table 1 to see that allocation of classes and groups by funder for the year.) Even more noteworthy is the fact that the regions are now also implementing 90.6% of these classes. This means they are no longer merely funding ALP classes for GG-Eth's grantee CPs to implement. The regions are now using their own agents or, in some instances paying CP agents, to train, monitor, and support the ALP teachers. Implementation of the other 64 ALP



⁹ - Sidama was not really new to GG-Eth as it had simply been carved out of SNNPR, where Geneva Global launched Speed School in 2011/12.

classes remain entirely with grantee CPs. See Diagram 1 for the number of ALFA and ALP classes by year, starting from 2011/12, and to appreciate the shift towards government adoption.

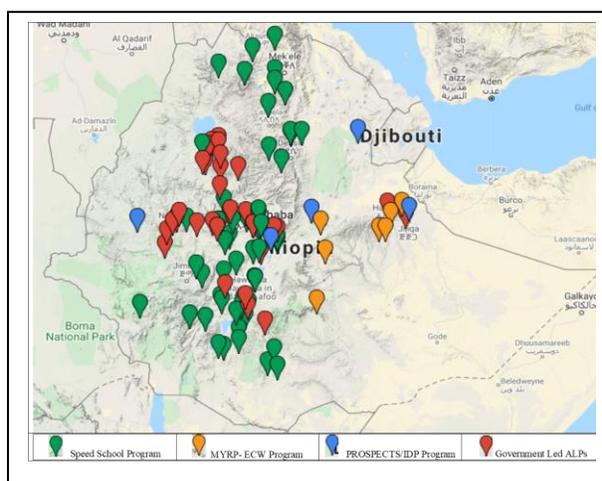
Out of the total 943 Speed School classes (ALP and ALFA) in 2021/22, UNICEF funding permitted GG-Eth to operate 87 Speed School classes, reaching a total 2,610 out-of-school children (49% girls). GG-Eth signed a second one-year project agreement with UNICEF, called PROSPECTS, to implement Speed School with new IDP and host communities in Afar and Somali regions. Both regions were new to Speed School, but both had been exploring actively with GG-Eth the opportunity to introduce the model since at least 2019. With funding from its private clients, GG-Eth supported an additional 20 Speed School classes in the two regions.

Following a competitive bidding process, UNICEF, with funding from Education Cannot Wait (ECW), awarded Geneva Global a three-year project valued at around US\$ 9 million. Awarded directly to Geneva Global Ethiopia, GG headquarters continued to provide instrumental technical and administrative support in its design and operation. The project's aim is to provide both accelerated (Speed School) and conventional primary and pre-primary education to IDP and host community children in five woredas of Oromia. In Year One of this Multi-Year Resiliency Program (MYRP), which launched in January 2021, GG-Eth and its Consortium Partners – [Oromia Development Association](#), [Imagine One Day](#), [Development Expertise Center](#), and [Whiz Kids Workshop](#) – operated 41 Speed School classes, all of which were funded by GG-Eth's private clients and served as cost-share. These reached 1,476 out-of-school children (49% girls). The ECW funding allowed GG-Eth to support the operation of 130 Grades 1 to 6 classes across 13 primary schools, enrolling 6,870 children (48% girls), and of 26 pre-school classes and groups, readying 1,818 young children (44% girls) for eventual enrollment and future success in Grade 1. Under ECW-MYRP, GG-Eth and the consortium members constructed 73 semi-permanent classrooms and 13 sex-segregated latrines and provided water to all 13 school sites.

Key features, achievements, and challenges of Speed School in Ethiopia, 2021

As indicated above, GG-Eth's education programming in 2021 saw many new elements along with the strengthening of existing efforts. All represent noteworthy evolution in the scope and impact of the Speed School in Ethiopia and of GG-Eth's work more broadly, evident in the following major ways:

- Bringing Speed School to internally displaced persons (IDP) populations;
- Receiving funding from prominent international education organizations;
- Continuing to operate and refine the SHG component;
- Supporting the delivery of quality education in conventional primary classes;
- Advancing the official institutional adoption of Speed School; and
- Continuing to strengthen core Speed School model, methods, and materials.



Bringing Speed School to IDP populations. While this was not the first time GG-Eth had operated Speed School classes for IDP children¹⁰, the UNICEF and ECW projects did involve two strategic

¹⁰ - In 2018, GG-Eth supported two Speed School classes for Somali IDPs in communities near to Bishoftu, Oromia.

elements with which GG-Eth had only limited experience. First was the need to construct new school infrastructure – classrooms, latrines, and waterpoints – or to undertake major renovations of existing structures. This was necessary because of the massive destruction or deterioration that occurred during and following the conflict that caused the original displacement. Previously, GG-Eth had only supported more modest improvements to classrooms for Speed School occupancy. While management and oversight of the actual work fell to the grantee collaborating partners, this component represented a significant “stretch” for GG-Eth. Among the lessons-learned was that temporary learning shelters to serve as classrooms is inappropriate. The plastic sheeting quickly succumbs to high winds. Replacing these with semi-permanent structures solved the problem at the same time that it required a significant budget restructuring.



Speed School pupils photographed in front of a classroom structure renovated under the UNICEF funded IDP program.

The other new element was the incorporation of training and other activities to address the psychological trauma and other effects suffered by many IDP students and their families and communities. Required under the UNICEF grant, these include classroom-, school-, and community-based interventions linked to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), social cohesion and resilience, gender equality (not new), and the inclusion of children with disabilities (also not new). This has placed GG-Eth on a steep but valuable learning curve, one the country team continues to scale enthusiastically. Related interventions involve

the identification and, as necessary, creation of related materials – guides, lesson plans, readers, technical notes, etc. –, teacher training, the organization of co-curricular activities, and community sensitization and mobilization for action. GG-Eth continues to enlist technical expertise from its grantee, collaborating partners, education authorities, faculties and colleges of teacher education, UNICEF, and other outside experts to support these efforts.

Receiving funding from prominent international education organizations. The two grants from UNICEF – first for the IDP project in 2020 and then for ECW/MYRP and PROSPECTS in 2021 – signify a major change in several ways. For one, these clients have considerable international stature and influence that could bring valuable increased visibility to Speed School and Geneva Global. Next, they control vast resources that could permit Geneva Global to continue to grow Speed School in Ethiopia as well as, potentially, in Uganda and even elsewhere. It is notable that GG-Eth won ECW/MYRP through an open bid process.

From an operational perspective, working with UNICEF also brings certain challenges. One, these projects entail much greater scrutiny at all phases. Whether during the original project design and budgeting, throughout implementation, or when closing the project, UNICEF requires meticulous detail and reporting and monitors often and closely. GG-Eth quickly adjusted both our internal and external management and reporting practices, inspired and aided by UNICEF to accommodate this new level of rigor. Both GG-Eth and Geneva Global headquarters (GG-HQ) adapted quickly to accommodate this new level of intense involvement and oversight. Two, UNICEF permits GG-HQ to charge only a very modest fee, covering just a small portion of the actual technical and operational support that the HQ team provides to the country team.

Without its private clients’ more generous allocation of resources to GG-HQ to provide this support to GG-Eth, it would likely not have been possible for GG-Eth to implement PROSPECTS and ECW/MYRP. This outcome is even more true because of the 15% cost-share requirement to be

a UNICEF grantee. In addition to counting GG-HQ’s technical and operational support to the two projects as cost-share, GG-Eth uses a portion of the private clients’ funds to add to the number of Speed School classes in the different IDP and host communities. In turn, the private clients benefit by allowing GG-Eth basically to educate an additional four or so children for every one out-of-school child whose schooling they fund directly.

Continuing to operate and refine the Self-Help Group component. The COVID-19 impacts on the school year and on society in general also created some disruption with the creation and operation of SHGs. To start, they formed later than normal, and the delivery of training was late and less intense. Similarly, the groups benefited from a relatively less amount of support. Still, it is early to tell what the long-lasting effects, if any, on the groups’ success will be, even for the 2020-21 cohort. Technical support continued to come primarily from local development structures, including prominently the woreda level Women, Children, and Youth Office, the Finance and Economy Office, and the Cooperative Offices. This is a significant change from the original SHG support model. For the first several years of Speed School, the grantee collaborating partners provided both financial and technical support to the groups. Increasingly over the past few years, the CPs’ involvement is limited mainly to promoting the SHGs in fulfilling their education responsibilities through the community management committee (CMC¹¹) and to mobilizing the government development structures to delivery their support.

Looking at the 2020/21 data alone (2021/22 numbers are not yet compiled), GG-Eth supported the operation of 537 total SHGs by 12,144 mothers or other guardians. SHGs are not yet part of the ALP Speed School package, though this is a situation that GG-Eth is striving to change. Over the same period, the mothers engaged in income-generation activities concentrated around five major areas. Two were COVID-19 related and the others of which were agricultural, as shown in Table 2. This resulted in total group savings of 858,510 Ethiopian Birr (about US \$17,000), or 119 Birr (about US \$2.35) per mother; not a huge sum, but this is savings on top of costs to operate the activity and

<u>IGAs, 2020-21</u>	<u># of SHGs</u>	<u>%</u>
Facemask production	99	18.4%
Detergent Production	102	19.0%
Livestock	163	30.4%
Poultry	36	6.7%
Milk Production	93	17.3%
Other	44	8.2%
Total	537	

expenses the revenues allowed mothers to cover at home. In addition to their economic activities, mothers also engaged in raising COVID-19 prevention awareness during their regular meetings, supervising their children’s respect of COVID-19 protocols, and promoting their children’s Speed School participation despite the various challenges. This was especially true during the period in early 2020 when schools closed, and GG-Eth and its grantee partners kept learning happening by organizing micro-classes. Lastly, the SHGs seemed to have an even greater impact in the IDP communities, helping mothers there to re-ignite a sense of community. One indication of this was the mothers’ choosing themselves to meet more frequently than prescribed.

Supporting the delivery of quality education in conventional primary classes. GG-Eth first supported the Ministry of Education to strengthen the quality of all primary schooling in January 2019. Having recently learned about Speed School, the Director of the ministry’s School Improvement Program (SIP) Directorate asked GG-Eth to train its agents in the core methods to

¹¹ - The community management committee organizes parents to support the classes in which their children are enrolled at school.

pilot in 1,402 primary schools nationwide. The pilot initiative brought modest improvements to teaching and learning, but the SIP Director let the effort end, drawn to other urgencies, even though his appreciation for and interest in the model remained keen. His attention re-kindled sharply with the return to school in 2020 following the long COVID-19 system closure. He, along with other senior officials at the ministry, perceived Speed School's accelerated program as vitally relevant to Ethiopia's re-opening of its classrooms. Accelerated learning was precisely what the system needed because of the greatly diminished number of instructional hours students would receive in 2020/21. This situation resulted from two factors. First was the late start to the school year, occurring in December instead of September, as customary. Second, most schools brought students in only for a half-day, forced by the COVID-19 "social distancing" restrictions to enact a shift system to keep class sizes smaller.

Why Education for Children with Disabilities Matters: A Case Study from Ethiopia



Abel (far left) and his Speed School peers working together on a group assignment.

Thirteen-year-old Abel Ahmed is a member of a Speed School class in Oromia, Ethiopia. He is from a low-income family and is visually impaired. In the past, his disability made learning a struggle. He was clearly bright and eager to learn, but his family lacked the resources and awareness to confront the practical challenges and discrimination that children with disabilities in Ethiopia routinely confront. Abel recalled wanting to engage and talk with other students but, due to his disability, he explained, "I resisted contacting and playing with other children due to my fear of discrimination. The cultural problem also created a challenge for me to actively interact with social services. My family assumed that most people had no awareness on disability issues, believing they would exclude me and were not interested to let me interact with others."

Abel's mother, Liya, added, "we did not have enough information on disability issues, and we were not ready to give Abel the chance to interact and play with other children in the surrounding areas. In general, he has suffered a lot over his thirteen years. He faced much discrimination and received no medical services. Basically, he was losing his life without educational opportunities."

Since joining his Speed School class, Abel has learned how to spell in Afaan Oromo and English, can recite his numbers, and perform basic addition and subtraction with smaller numbers while using his fingers or counting stones. Another subject he is learning in school is elementary environmental science, which has helped him to develop agricultural skills. He has also benefited from some of the simple aids that enhance his ability and confidence to engage in his studies and in life. These include a tape recorder, a walking stick, braille slates, and a stylus.

As a Speed School student, Abel has begun learning and playing with his classmates and continues to attend school despite his disabilities, something that his mother is very happy about. "I could not believe this. It was amazing to see his engagement in the class and learning with other children. Now I am very happy because the time was very challenging for us, everything was not good for our child Abel."

Because of the Speed School facilitator's commitment and dedication to supporting his education, both inside and outside of the classroom, Abel is working towards full literacy in the future. His ultimate goal is to become a lawyer and help others. Both Abel and his family are exceedingly satisfied with the program and the support that they have been given, and they extend that gratitude to the Speed School program.

Facing a condensed school year, the SIP Director enlisted Geneva Global to contribute to the government's return to school in at least three direct ways, beginning at the end of 2020. One, GG-Eth participated as a member of the ministry's return-to-school advisory committee. Two, GG-Eth helped the ministry train trainers in the core Speed School methods to be able, in turn, to train and support teachers nationwide in condensing the official curriculum in a way that allows them to cover fully the core learning objectives at an accelerated rate. Three, GG-Eth technical staff worked with the ministry's audio-visual team to produce digital training modules that trainers, cluster supervisors, teachers, and others could use for training and professional development purposes. This included joining with EDA, a grantee CP, and the Media and Communications Team from the Ministry of Education to produce a five-minute video lesson to guide and encourage students to maintain COVID protocols in the classroom. The video was ultimately broadcast via the ministry's TV program nationwide for three consecutive months.

Efforts to use the Speed School model and methods to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in conventional primary classes took two other forms as well. Under ECW/MYRP, GG-Eth took on for the first time direct responsibility to support conventional instruction across *all six* primary grades. This has given GG-Eth an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate the strong relevance of the core Speed School's instructional methods even for learning at the upper primary levels and for teaching that is not accelerated. It has also drawn attention to the program's holistic approach to teachers training, and in particular to the vital importance of continuing, dialogue-based supervision and of peer-led problem-solving and professional development. Lastly, working with the conventional classes continues to generate lessons to guide GG-Eth and its partners in tweaking the Speed School methods to deliver the curriculum for Grades 4, 5, and 6.

Towards the same aim and motivated largely by the ALP agenda, GG-Eth undertook in 2021 to expand and solidify its efforts to engage Ethiopia's colleges of teacher education (CTE) as lead institutions in the pre- and in-service training of Speed School facilitators. This ambition is now shared by the ministry's Teacher Development Program (TDP) Directorate and a growing number of regional education bureaus (REBs) and CTE's. The interest in incorporating the Speed School model and methods into the official CTE curriculum is not just to train Speed School facilitators. Many REB and CTE leaders state explicitly that they are also inspired to introduce the core methods to all their teacher-trainees and to current primary school teachers.

Advancing the official institutional adoption of Speed School. The incorporation of Speed School methods into the training of new teachers is just one indicator of GG-Eth's progress in advancing the official institutional adoption of the Speed School model and methods. Further evidence appears in the following ways:

- The Speed School program is incorporated explicitly into the Government of Ethiopia's official *2030 Education Roadmap* and the latest five-year plan, *The Education Sector Development Program VI*.
- In June 2021, the Ministry of Education launched a dedicated Speed School Unit within the Adult and Nonformal Education (ANFE) Directorate, the aim of which is to establish policies, standards, programs, and strategies for accelerated education and to promote and support Speed School in all regions. The Unit is supported by both a technical and a steering committee comprising representation from the ministry's other directorates.
- Several REBs have also committed to establishing similar Speed School Units as they take measures to integrate the Speed School model formally into the standard primary school system and structures and into their routine annual planning, budgeting, and operation.
- A total three REBs have now translated the *Speed Toolkit* into the local language – Amharic, Afaan Oromo, and Sidama Afu – and developed accompanying guides for use

in training and supporting the creation, operation, and monitoring and support of Speed School classes. Somali and Afar regions are presently translating the document.

- Four REBs¹² and the City of Addis Ababa are not just funding 631 ALP classes during the 2021/22 school year, representing a full 67% of the total Speed School classes, they are implementing nearly 90% of these.
- The Ministry of Education has officially incorporated a set of measures of Speed School classes into the national Education Management Information System (EMIS) for the collection and reporting of standard school data.

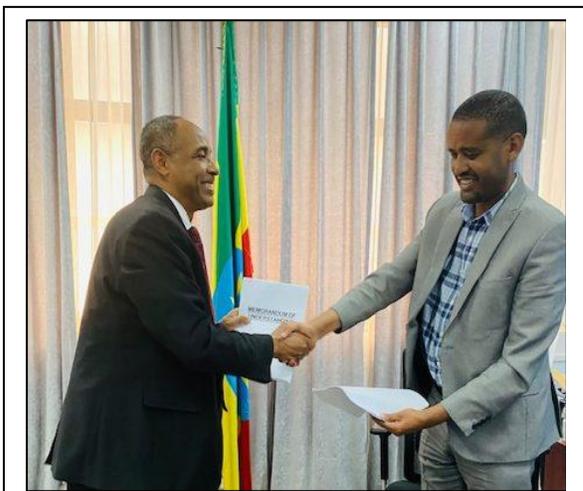
While these are critical steps in the direction of government adoption, the process is ongoing. One action that GG-Eth will prioritize moving forward is the creation of more materials to support the training, support, and use of specific pedagogic and classroom management methods. More importantly, though, is to continue to work with the many federal and regional education structures to concretize fully their institutional capacity and commitment to the steps listed above.

One problem is simply the fact that the responsible structures and staff are still relatively new to the model and need to grow more familiar with it. Another is that the leadership of these structures, both administrators and technicians, frequently change, so Speed School is, at most times, completely new to many even if it is well-entrenched at the local level. For example, the head of Amhara's REB has affirmed that Speed School must be fully built into the region's education programming moving forward. Yet, putting this commitment into practice now will be severely handicapped for the simple reason that the heads of most of the region's 146 woreda education offices are new as of the end of 2021.

GG-Eth will continue to work with senior authorities to cement the incorporation of Speed School into the official system and structures.

Eventually, we aspire to Speed School's being so integral to the formal system that it would be as unlikely and unacceptable not to have Speed School in a community with many OOSC as it would be not to have Grade 1. The country team will also continue to train and accompany key structures – e.g., the CTEs and regional Speed School Units – in strengthening their knowledge, capacity, and commitment to spread Speed School classes across the country and ensure their consistently high quality.

Continuing to strengthen the core Speed School model, methods, and materials. Another critical factor in advancing the government's full institutional adoption of Speed School is strengthening the quality of the model's different technical and operational elements. During 2021, GG-Eth continued to add new technical documents and other materials for use by trainers, supervisors, and teachers. These included sample lessons, training modules, technical notes, digital content, and case studies, among other items. It also involved work with government structures to incorporate Speed School into their procedures, strategies, and materials; for example, the



GG-Eth Country Director, Samuel Wollie, with State Minister Getahun Garadew.

¹² - The Tigray REB was one of the first, with Oromia, to fund its own Speed School (ALP) classes, in 2017/18. With the recent armed conflict, GG-Eth suspended its cooperation with the region. The REB there may still operate its own Speed School classes, but the lack of communication prevents the team from knowing this.

creation of Speed School manuals. The team similarly brought innovation to the delivery of training and the provision of technical support.

Much of the inspiration for innovation in 2021 came from the 2020 COVID-19 school closure, to which GG-Eth and its CPs responded by organizing micro-classes, bringing students together two or three days a week for two or three hours a session to keep learning happening. The guidance, support, and materials that GG-Eth and the CPs provided the facilitators, cluster supervisors, headteachers, and other key agents became new ways to get the greatest learning when classes resumed the next year. One notable innovation was the use of SMS (text messaging) to guide and motivate the facilitators and to provide them with new content and teaching tips. Another was the use of SMS to coach and encourage parents in ways they could best support their children's learning from home.



Speed School pupils and facilitator join in micro-classes during Ethiopia's COVID-19 school shutdowns.

Importantly, strengthening Speed School's elements has also included building flexibility into the model to accommodate the diverse conditions and requirements found in different regions, woredas, and even, sometimes, schools. Some of the variety in the core model with which GG-Eth continued to experiment with its CP and government partners in 2021 include the following:

- The option of just four-hour-long Speed School classes, responding to the resistance of many certified teachers to facilitate Speed School lessons for the standard full 7.5-hour day because they only teach a half-day in their conventional classrooms. (With this option, students can usually only cover two grade levels, usually the Grades 1 and 2 curricula but sometimes Grades 2 and 3.)
- The option of a split Speed School day, allowing children in lowland, desertic areas to return home during the hottest time of the day.
- The provision of a noontime meal, perhaps linking this to the Self-Help Group.
- The creation of Speed School programs for the upper primary grades to serve overaged out-of-school children who have acquired sufficient literacy and numeracy skills.
- The design and incorporation of a dedicated entrepreneurship and work orientation curriculum to ready older out-of-school children who wish to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills but prefer to enter the workforce upon completing Speed School or after just a few years of further primary education.
- The design and incorporation of dedicated teacher training, instructional modules, and co-curricular programs to address personal and social development topics such as mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), social and emotional learning (SEL), prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), gender equality, inclusion for children with disabilities, social cohesion and resilience, and peacebuilding.
- The production of audio-visual training materials on the many core Speed School methods and strategies to facilitate the model's rapid and broad diffusion.

At this point, a main goal of GG-Eth is to equip, motivate, and accompany the official education structures and personnel across the system to identify the ways that Speed School can and needs to be strengthened and to undertake this task themselves.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead to 2022, GG-Eth plans to focus on the following priorities and activities:

- Successfully complete the 2021/22 Speed School year with the grantee CPs in Addis Ababa, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, and Somali, reaching out-of-school children from traditional, IDP, and host communities; i.e., ALFA classes.
- Train, guide, and support regional, zonal, and district (woreda) education authorities and agents in Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, and SNNPR to complete the successful implementation of government-funded Speed School classes in 2021/22; i.e., ALP classes.
- Continue to implement effectively the two UNICEF-managed projects – PROSPECTS and ECW/MYRP – to educate children from IDP and host communities.
- Work with CPs and government education authorities to launch ALFA and ALP classes successfully for the 2022/23 school year in Addis Ababa, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, SNNPR, Somali, and, hopefully, Tigray and perhaps other regions to educate out-of-school children from traditional, IDP, host, and other conflict-affected communities.
- Continue to implant the Speed School program fully and indelibly into the government's formal primary school system and structures at the national, regional, zonal, and district levels with training, policy, planning, and technical support, documentation, and other efforts.
- Continue to accompany CTEs nationwide to incorporate the Speed School model and methods into their official pre-service and in-service teacher training programs to prepare teachers for both Speed School and conventional classrooms.
- Work with ministry, region, higher education, and grantee partners to co-create new versions of the core Speed School model to address the particular characteristics and needs of a set of new beneficiary populations, including (i) the development of a home-based independent learning (homework) strategy for children in lowlands (and maybe conventional classes) that cannot remain in class a full seven-hour day, (ii) the design and piloting of a Speed School program for Grades 4 to 6, and (iii) collaboration with existing programs that focus on youth employability to enhance their work by including Speed School dimensions focused on functional literacy and numeracy along with entrepreneurial and life skills development.
- Identify and, as necessary, create strategies, modules, and materials to incorporate more explicitly into Speed School instruction and work with Self-Help Groups on the cultivation of learning and personal development in the areas of entrepreneurship and workforce orientation, social and emotional skills, MHPSS, PSEA, gender equality, inclusion, and social cohesion, resilience, and peacebuilding.



A typical Speed School classroom

Uganda

Unable to operate the Speed School program in Uganda in 2020, with schools' nationwide closing just a few weeks into the new academic year due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Geneva Global's plan for 2021 was to remain with the same districts, schools, facilitators, and students from the previous year. This postponed from 2020 the anticipation of adding four new districts – Agago, Alebtong, Kitgum, and Otuke – and Kitgum Municipality to the program's four “legacy” districts – Amuru, Gulu, Nwoya, and Omoro – and Gulu City that began with the start of Speed School in Uganda in 2016 (see the map, below). It also put on pause the exciting challenge of transitioning from the implementation of Speed School entirely by grantee civil society partners to direct implementation also by government partners school inspectors and teacher trainers (CCTs).



Speed School facilitator with students in home-based learning during COVID-19 school lockdowns in Uganda.

Sadly, schools in Uganda remained effectively closed for all of 2021 as well. At the very start of the shutdown in March 2020, the ministry attempted to keep all children learning by combining the distribution of texts and other learning materials with television, radio, and web-based instruction. Unfortunately, these were not realistic options for Speed School pupils for a few reasons. One, they had not yet even mastered the “ABC’s” or “1-2-3’s”, so following lessons on their own or only accompanied by often illiterate parents was a non-starter. Two, the government’s radio education program was simply too slow to cover the program’s accelerated pace. Three, too few pupils would have access to the family radio at the time that lessons aired.

Still, Geneva Global Uganda (GG-Ug) continued in 2021 the aggressive steps it had begun in 2020 to be ready to resume classes the moment government re-opened its primary schools. Key to this was GG-Ug’s continuing to pay facilitators their salaries. Schools finally opened in March of 2021, but only for students in the grades scheduled for national examinations and only briefly. GG-Ug leapt on the loosening of restrictions, procuring permission from the relevant education, administrative, and health authorities finally to bring the pupils who had begun Speed School over a year before back to the classroom. This lasted just ten weeks before COVID cases surged and forced schools to close again.

Still, the brief opening was enough for Speed School pupils to gain sufficient literacy and numeracy skills to be able to participate later in a second round of instruction, this time home-based, running from early October to mid-December. One key step that made these moments of instruction possible was the continuous training of both facilitators and education agents from GG-Ug’s government and grantee civil society partners. Another was the sustained coordination, reflection, and planning with the same partners. A third was the establishment and operation of a structured SMS (text messaging) platform and strategy for communicating with facilitators and parents. All these strategies are described more fully below.

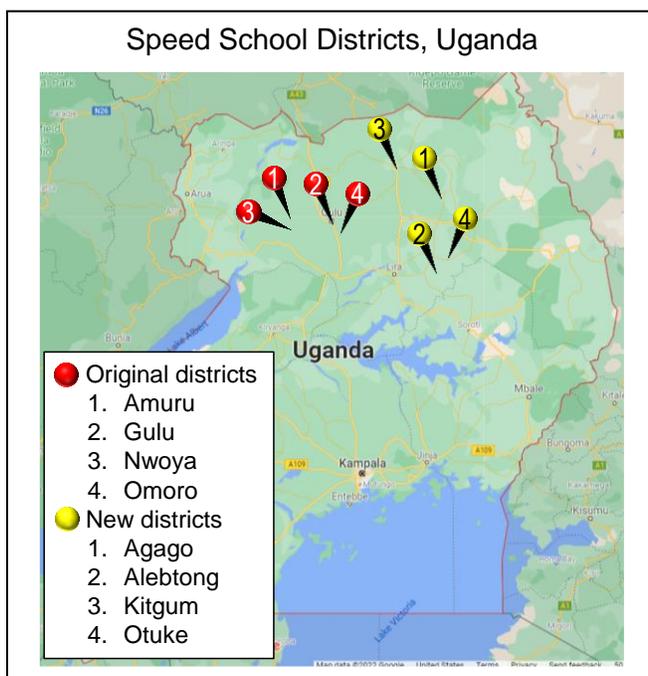
Uganda’s 2020 and 2021 School Years in Numbers

As explained above, Speed School in 2021 served the same pupils who started originally in February 2020. The hope at the start of the year was to allow them to complete the full Speed School course. To do this, the program worked with the same facilitators in the same locations and in collaboration with the same partners and agents. At the time of enrollment, a total 6,900 students (of whom 52% were girls) learned in 230 Speed School classes with instruction provided

by 250 facilitators (60% women), including reserve instructors, in 98 total primary schools. As expected, there were also 230 Self-Help Groups that, despite all the COVID-19 disruption, managed to maintain the participation of 6,708 mothers. Program implementation fell to nine agents (just one woman) from the three grantee civil society partners in the original districts¹³.

Notably, 140 (61%) of the classes were located in the new districts. This expansion was not merely a matter of growing geographically. Perhaps more importantly, it was a new step in establishing a foundation for the program’s long-term sustainability. As mentioned, rather than enlisting local civil society organizations to implement the Speed School classes, GG-Ug agreed with the new DEOs to do this on their own, assigning inspectors and center coordinating tutors (CCTs) to train, supervise, and support the facilitators. Similarly, the new arrangement aimed to involve local government development agents to train and support the SHGs. In the legacy districts, the DEOs agreed to implement 36 Speed School classes with their own agents¹⁴. In all instances, GG-Ug continued to cover all the operating expenses for the classrooms, facilitator salaries, materials, training, and supervision. Obviously, COVID-19 interfered with this new initiative, which GG-Ug understood would require additional oversight and support. This is largely why GG-Ug added three new Program Officer positions in 2020.

District-led implementation and support came from 10 primary school inspectors attached to the 10 district or municipality education offices, and eight CCTs deployed by the region’s three core primary teacher colleges (PTCs), located in Gulu, Kitgum, and Loro. (The graph in Diagram 2 plots the program’s evolution since its inception in 2016, showing also the percentage of classes implemented by government.) After all the COVID-19 disruptions, 5,573 pupils (52% girls) from the 2020 Speed School cohort (80.8%) returned to learning. Of this group, a full 5,447 (97.7% of the returned pupils) took the standard end-of-year placement test. While the number of pupils who returned to class may be less than hoped for, it is still a testament to the perseverance, dedication, and ambition of the facilitators, the program staff, the parents, and especially the children. Indeed, the numbers achieved are worthy of celebration given the extraordinary challenges created by the pandemic. Based on the results, 84% of the test-takers qualified for entry into Primary 4 (the fourth year of primary school) and the rest (16%) qualified for Primary 3.



Key features, achievements, and challenges of Speed School in Uganda, 2021

Despite the disruption to Speed School classes and the Self-Help Groups (SHG) by the pandemic, GG-Ug joined with its grantee and government partners to achieve meaningful results for both components. At the start of the shutdown, the main concern was to remain ready to return pupils

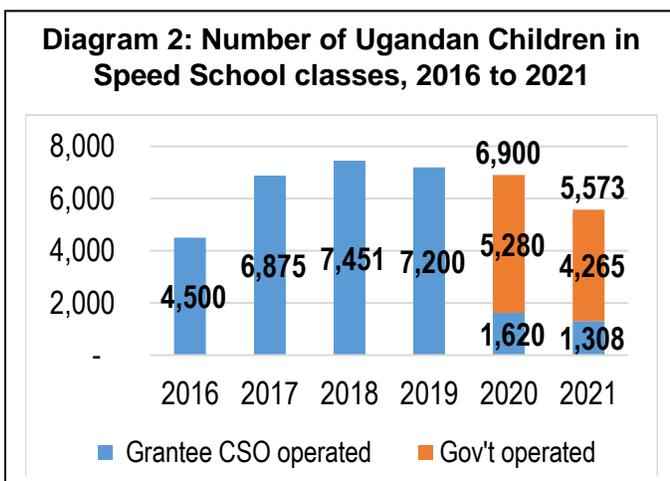
¹³ - The three remaining grantee collaborating partners starting in 2020 were Acholi Education Initiative (AEI), Camboni Samaritans of Gulu (CSG), and Hope and Peace for Humanity (HPH).

¹⁴ - Omoro and Amuru each implemented six of their own Speed School classes and Nwoya and Gulu City each implemented 12.

to learning as soon as classes re-opened. The expectation was that this would be a matter of just a few months, and, but certainly not a whole year let alone two. Regardless, GG-Ug decided it would only resume instruction in a district with the full and official approval of the relevant district education office (DEO) and COVID-19 task force. The Speed School COVID-19 response comprised the following strategies, which featured at different moments and evolved over the two years, reacting to the ebb and flow in the severity of the government’s pandemic restrictions¹⁵:

- Continuous employment and training of the Speed School facilitators from 2020, eventually lowering their salaries to just 75% starting in August of 2021;
- Use of an SMS platform for training, coordinating, and generally communicating with facilitators and parents;
- On-going training, reflection, and strategic planning with grantee and government partners;
- Temporary operation of Speed School classes;
- Short-term implementation of a home-based independent learning program; and
- Ongoing training, support, and encouragement of Self-Help Groups.

Continuous employment and training of Speed School facilitators. In this “stand-by” mode, the program chose to keep all 250 facilitators on the payroll. Furthermore, the GG-Ug team and partners communicated with the facilitators regularly both to provide updates and, increasingly, to deliver additional training and direction. The provision of continuous training was especially important for the new facilitators, which was all the facilitators in the added districts and municipality. With the eight-day initial training in February 2020 as their only exposure to Speed School, the fact that they could not begin to concretize what they had learned in the classroom with students, mainly learning by doing, nor benefit from supervision visits and support left them highly vulnerable to losing what they had gained in the training.



The ongoing training and contact took a few different forms, all of which varied over time, dictated by the status of the pandemic and the government’s COVID-19 restrictions. Easiest was the distribution to all facilitators of additional technical documents with which they could study further the core Speed School concepts and practices. These included technical notes, sample lesson plans, case studies, and other materials. At moments during the closure when COVID-19 restrictions lightened, the implementing agents – grantee supervisors and coordinators, DEO inspectors, and CCTs – brought groups of facilitators together for a few hours or a day for training. Sometimes this was just an opportunity to review different aspects of the Speed School model and method in person. At other times, it was more strategic, readying the facilitators to engage again directly with their pupils, as described below, and, later, following up to reflect together on how instruction was proceeding.

¹⁵ - At the height of the restrictions, there was a severe curfew, public transportation was suspended, and it was not even possible for private persons to travel from one district to another.

Use of an SMS platform for training, coordination, and general communications with facilitators and parents. The third continuous training and contact modality was new to the program. This was the use of an open-source SMS (text messaging) platform and software to communicate regularly with all teachers. Supported by [FrontlineSMS](#) (a private company that has since closed) in the initial construction of a customized SMS architecture, GG-Ug and its partners used SMS in a few ways. One, the program texted prompts, questions for reflection, and activities to guide facilitators in their study of the technical materials they had received to strengthen their competence and confidence with the Speed School model and methods. Two, the facilitators received messages with instructions and requests related to the program, general news about



Speed School facilitators engaging in an outdoor training exercise amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

ministry decisions and other relevant matters, reminders about COVID-19 protection measures and restrictions, and other information. Lastly, the SMS platform allowed GG-Ug to gather information from the facilitators, using its survey tool to inquire about facilitators' status, their pupils, the COVID-19 conditions in their locales, their ongoing professional development activities and progress, and their teaching and pupils' learning during those moments when instruction was possible. From July 2020 through December 2021, GG-Ug adhered to a schedule of 15 SMS to facilitators per week, mixing the different types of messages and formulating the content in consultation with the agents from the grantee and government partners. (See an article from the FrontlineSMS website on GG-Ug's SMS experience [here](#).)

GG-Ug also used the customized SMS platform to communicate at least twice weekly with parents. The messages kept parents up to date on the status of the school closure, reminded them about COVID-19 protection strategies and the government restrictions, and apprised them of GG-Ug's plans concerning their children's education. During the periods when instruction was happening, text messages included instructions and suggestions for ways parents could supervise and support their children's learning. Lastly, the program used SMS to inform, encourage, and guide mothers in order to sustain their activities and group savings within the Self-Help Groups. Recognizing that not all parents are literate and that many do not even own cellphones, GG-Ug enlisted the facilitators, link school headteachers, and partner agents to match such parents to those who could receive and understand the messages. These same actors provided to GG-Ug the names and phone numbers of all willing and able parents.

Ongoing training, reflection, and strategic planning with grantee and government partners. GG-Ug's readiness goal also translated into frequent, mostly virtual (primarily via WhatsApp and Zoom), interaction with the grantee civil society organization and government agents who were responsible for Speed School in the respective districts. Again, this was especially important for the agents from the five new districts and municipality. Similar to the facilitators whom they were responsible to train, oversee, and support, the agents from these new districts had received only an initial orientation to the core model and methods and were at great risk of losing both their understanding of and enthusiasm for the program. Efforts to prevent such loss also involved a combination of virtual and direct communication. When opportunities arose, GG-Ug convened with grantee and government partners in person, mostly at the district level but occasionally as a

larger group. These meetings served to plan together the return to instruction during 2021 and the full return to Speed School classes in 2022. Coming together, GG-Ug and partner agents also formulated messages for the SMS strategy, prepared materials for the facilitator's ongoing

Self-Help Groups Use Soap-Making to Aid Sanitization Concerns and Increase Income

In an effort to curb the pandemic's negative effects on families and communities, Geneva Global Uganda turned its attention to the Self-Help Groups. Self Help Groups exist for every Speed School class, created to promote the economic and social empowerment of the students' mothers so that they can support their children's future schooling and the overall well-being of their families. Core to the strategy is engaging the mothers in income-generating activities (IGA). Unfortunately, the drastic economic downturn spurred by the pandemic eliminated many common IGAs with which groups have found success. One SHG member confessed, "During lockdown there was nothing to do. Our children could not go to school, we could not work. We were just waiting and watching our money go."



GG-Ug Community Engagement Manager, Carol Adokorach, purchasing a bottle of liquid soap from a Self-Help Group in Gulu.

GG-Ug identified liquid soap-making as a promising, viable option. With hygiene a cornerstone of the public COVID-19 response, everyone needed readily available, affordable soap. This was even more evident when schools re-opened briefly in March of 2021. All students were required to report with liquid soap, hand sanitizer, and face masks, clear evidence that the market for liquid soap would continue to expand. So, in September 2021, GG-UG contracted the Double Women's Club of Gulu, Uganda to conduct a first training in liquid soap-making for members from five SHGs from Gulu City.

Following the training, SHGs quickly drew up an action plan. Their first step was to share what they had learned with remaining group members and to identify markets for their product in and around their communities. They tested the market by selling liquid soap they had produced during the training.

The groups quickly arranged follow-on training for all members. Having confirmed there was a market, they quickly mobilized the money needed to purchase the raw materials they would need for further training, with each member's contributing 4,000 Ugandan Shillings UGX, or about \$1.10. Now fully trained, they set about producing their own liquid soap to sell.

Greatly excited and proud of their achievement, they soon invited the trainers from The Double Women's Club Uganda and GG-UG to observe and critique their production set-ups and hear about their success during one of their weekly group savings meetings. GG-UG's Program Manager for Community Engagement, Caroline Adokorach, and the lead trainer were "amazed" by the two groups' accomplishment in terms of both their production and their sales.

After only a few months, the groups reported production of 40 liters of liquid soap each during their second round of training and 140 liters in total since launching the business. They were expecting profits of around 120,000 UGX (about \$33). All five SHGs have now developed several strategies to turn their new-found skills into even more profitable ventures. This has allowed them both to increase their production and to expand their markets.

The liquid soap-making initiative has demonstrated the dynamism, motivation, and readiness to organize that the Self-Help Group initiative unleashes among the mothers of Speed School students. Having mobilized around the deep commitment to giving their children a second chance at formal education and received initial training from GG-Ug and its partners, the mothers remain primed to capitalize on this and future opportunities.

professional development and created lesson packets for the home-based learning initiative (see below). Lastly, the meetings let GG-Ug and its partners collaborate in consultation with local administrative and health authorities and other stakeholders to secure authority to return to learning twice during the school closure and to negotiate the districts' long-term commitment to the Speed School program.

The virtual contact with these partner agents actually emerged from a somewhat desperate desire to bring on board the three new GG-Ug program officers who started just as the shutdown began. Unable to conduct a face-to-face technical on-boarding of these new team members, Geneva Global headquarters designed and delivered a series of Speed School training webinars to ensure that they received a thorough understanding of the Speed School model and methods, concerned equally by the pedagogic concepts and strategies and the approach to training and support. GG-Ug proposed that the webinars might at the same time be valuable for the grantee and government partner agents, expecting that they would have free time with the suspension of classes and be interested to participate as well. In fact, the response was enormously enthusiastic. Launching in May 2020, a group of around 20 to 25 coordinators, supervisors, inspectors, and CCTs consistently joined the GG-Ug team for 26 weekly (with a few breaks) webinars developed and facilitated by Dr. Joshua Muskin, Senior Director and Education Team Leader at Geneva Global headquarters. Running into January 2021, each webinar lasted two to two-and-a-half hours and aspired to be highly activity-based, modeling the instruction expected of Speed School facilitators. Topics covered all aspects of the core model.

Enthusiasm for the webinars was also evident when the participants' requested to continue to meet virtually with GG-Ug and headquarters throughout 2021. Rather than maintain the webinar series, GG-Ug proposed a bi-weekly meeting that was less about training than about joint reflection, experimentation, and planning. Dubbed a "virtual ECoP" (education community of practice), these attracted the same level of fidelity as the webinars. Indeed, many participants ended up reminding GG-Ug to schedule sessions when they had not received the Zoom link at the customary time. Of note as well was the fact that virtual ECoP discussions would often result in "homework," concrete actions or products that the participants willingly took on and on which they would report and receive feedback at the next session. The virtual ECoPs continued with just a few breaks until December 2021, when the Ministry's announcement that classes would finally resume in January 2022 required the government and grantee partners and GG-Ug all to give their full attention to readying for the new school year.

The fact of having operated both virtually and directly as a community of practice around Speed School topics for over a year and a half seems to have had enduring and profound impacts on the districts' and grantees' ability and commitment to operate Speed School moving forward. Interest to help teachers of conventional primary classes learn and employ Speed School methods also now seems higher. This is especially true as all children nationwide are behind in their learning and need to accelerate, something the Ministry of Education and Sports has addressed by planning to cover two grade levels in one year at the primary level for all classes over the next three years. GG-Ug and its partners will be paying close attention in 2022 to see how all this work translates into improved implementation and outcomes in Speed School classes and how it can support the government with its own accelerated education program.

Operation of Speed School classes. In March of 2021, the Ministry of Education and Sports finally re-opened schools, but only for the grades at the end of which students take "high-stakes" national examinations: P4 and P7 at the primary level. GG-Ug and the participating Speed School districts seized this opportunity to bring Speed School pupils back to the classroom as well, hoping to get approval since the small class sizes would allow instruction to happen while respecting the social distancing requirement. Together with the DEOs, GG-Ug requested authorization from the administrative and education leadership of the respective districts to restart the Speed School

classes. Eventually, all the districts accepted, convinced by GG-Ug's assurances that every class would adhere strictly to official COVID-19 restrictions – masks, spacing, handwashing, cleaning, and monitoring of pupils' and facilitators' health and the health of their household members. They were also motivated to agree because of their appreciation for the Speed School program's success. Lastly, their approval likely derived from GG-Ug's volunteer contributions to the district's own COVID-19 prevention efforts, purchasing masks, hand sanitizer, and liquid soap and providing these to the districts to distribute to their education, health, and other personnel who were continuing to operate throughout the pandemic. GG-Ug also printed study materials for the link schools and supported DEOs with laptops to enable their virtual interactions with GG-Ug and to support their work more broadly

GG-UG finally brought all Speed School pupils back into class beginning around the first week of March, a move that evoked great enthusiasm and relief from students, facilitators, and parents alike. Unfortunately, a new surge in COVID-19 cases forced all classes, both government and Speed School, to close again in June, so children and facilitators returned home after just about ten weeks of learning. Still, most facilitators and pupils were able to complete the Phase I curriculum, and in some cases, classes even started to cover lessons from Phase II.



The progress achieved during this period was aided greatly by use of the SMS platform. GG-Ug and the grantee and government partners used the platform to communicate guidance, content, sample lessons, practical information, and encouragement to facilitators to help them pick back up where they had left off over a year before. In addition, it gave facilitators a way to request and receive timely input and support from the program to resolve their specific issues. Many even created and joined their own WhatsApp groups to share their challenges and solutions. The group of grantee supervisors and coordinators and government inspectors and CCTs from the virtual ECoP sessions also created a

WhatsApp group to consult, coordinate, and share with each other for mutual support and success. At the same time, the program sent text messages to parents to communicate the details of their children's return to class and to remind them of the COVID-19 restrictions and of ways they can help their children to succeed in their studies.

Implementation of a home-based independent learning program. GG-Ug, the grantee partners, and the DEOs perceived a new loosening of the pandemic's vicious grip on the country again in September, though not so loose that schools re-opened. During a virtual ECoP session at the time, GG-Ug raised the idea of implementing a home-based independent learning strategy. The pupils had acquired sufficient basic literacy and numeracy skills during their brief classroom time from March to May to be able to follow lessons on their own, or at least with help. Able to join in small groups at fellow pupils' homes or some other location in the community, it would be possible to support each other's learning with the supervision and support of a parent or other family member. The facilitator could also circulate among the different groups' locations to support the pupils in completing independent learning tasks. So, this is what GG-Ug supported the grantee and government partners to do, facilitating home-based independent learning from mid-October to early December 2021.

Specifically, the strategy involved four major strategic elements:

First, the DEOs secured authorization from the local administrative authorities to implement the home-based learning strategy, again affirming that the small groups and facilitators would strictly adhere to the COVID-19 protocols. Once approved, the DEOs used the SMS platform to alert the facilitators, pupils, and parents that learning would resume starting September, mobilizing them to participate.

Next, the virtual ECoP group of GG-Ug, grantee, and government partners formed small design teams to prepare lesson packets with learning tasks for Speed School pupils to complete together in small groups at home. Each packet covered one module from the official *Accelerated Education Program* curriculum (picking up from the start of Phase II) and comprised learning tasks intended for two weeks of independent group learning. GG-HQ prepared the first packet to serve as a model, demonstrating a few essential pedagogic principles for all lesson packet teams to emulate. The content of the lesson packets aimed to: (i) feature activity-based learning; (ii) guide pupils in peer teaching, learning, and assessment; (iii) include assessment strategies for facilitators to use; (iv) integrate different academic subjects in the same tasks; (v) weave music, arts, and physical activity into academic learning tasks; (vi) design tasks to feature personal competencies, such as inquiry and analysis, teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity; and (vii) use language and provide instructions that pupils can understand easily.



Third, the grantee and district education agents distributed a new lesson packet approximately every two weeks to facilitators who, in turn, distributed the packets to the pupils and their parents. At both moments, the distribution included a thorough explanation of the learning tasks in the lesson packet for pupils to conduct and parents to follow.

Lastly, the pupils, in their groups, met daily for two to four hours to complete the learning tasks, in most instances convening at a group member’s home. Most were supervised or supported by a parent or other designated person. The facilitator circulated among the groups, visiting each every two or three days to ensure that they were completing the tasks and learning successfully. Specifically, they checked the group’s progress with the lesson packets, assessing their learning, providing feedback and remedial instruction, and making sure that the group (and the parent or other tutor) understands the directions for the remaining tasks.

At the end of the home-based independent study period, GG-Ug and the grantee and government partners conducted the regular end-of-year placement exam with all 5,447 pupils who remained with the Speed School program. Even though no groups had even begun the Phase III curriculum,

	P1 or P2	P3	P4
Girls	0	673 (23.6%)	2,174 (76.4%)
Boys	0	600 (23.1%)	2000 (76.9%)
Total	0	1,273 (23.4%)	4,174 (76.6%)

the test remained effectively the same as from previous years. GG-Ug agreed with the DEOs that the district and primary school leaders would decide how to interpret the results to assign the

pupils to the appropriate grade level. The placement decisions appear in Table 3, showing that the usual 75% qualified for P4¹⁶.

Training and support of Self-Help Groups. The move to government implementation of the Speed School program in the new districts also brought changes to the operation of the SHG model. Rather than relying on the grantee civil society partners and salaried community-based facilitators to train, supervise, support, and monitor the groups, GG-Ug agreed with local government development agents to take on this task. Whereas the school inspectors in the new districts had the responsibility to form SHGs, in practice, it was GG-Ug's program officers and the Speed School facilitators, mostly communicating with parents through their children, who established and conducted the initial SHG orientation, presenting its basic objectives and functions. The inspectors did assume their function of guiding and supporting the mothers to support their children's classroom and learning. However, they lack the technical training, experience, mandate, and time to train and support the groups in the areas of income-generation activities, group savings, and social development. So, for the first time, GG-Ug mobilized, oriented, and trained local government agents, notably parish chiefs connected to each locale, to train and support the groups in these aspects. As this was the first year to deploy this approach, GG-Ug's program officers supported the parish chiefs in these efforts.

As with the Speed School classes, the SHGs in 2021 were the same ones formed for the 2020 school year. Also similarly, the component suffered greatly from the COVID-19 restrictions. On the one hand, GG-Ug and its partners were blocked from providing training and support in the amounts and with the timeliness that are customary. In fact, there was no training at all of SHGs in 2020, and the first training of trainers only occurred in May 2021. It was not until September 2021 that a brief window between COVID-19 lockdowns permitted GG-Ug and its partners to conduct SHG member training sessions.

During this training, GG-Ug and its partners chose to train just three members from each group, respecting the COVID-19 restriction on large group gatherings. This added another layer of "cascade" to the training and risked diluting or transforming the learning even further. The impacts of this risked further exacerbation by the less frequent direct supervision and support of the groups by GG-Ug and partner agents due to the COVID limitations on movement. Indeed, the contact that did occur was mostly by phone. At certain times over the two years, these limits were especially severe, preventing all travel between and even within districts except for essential reasons. The program managed to maintain communication and provide occasional training and support by taking advantage of the few windows of opportunity when the travel and gathering restrictions eased. GG-Ug also used the FrontlineSMS platform to communicate with the SHG members, both to boost and encourage their income-generation and savings activities and to mobilize them to support their children's learning.



Learning about the body parts in a Speed School class. Today's lesson: the leg.

On the other hand, the mothers faced extraordinary challenges at home that interfered with their income-generation and savings activities. Many faced elevated economic hardship from a

¹⁶ - The Ministry of Education and Sports had decided to promote all P3 entrants in 2020 to P4 in 2022, despite their having had virtually no schooling in between, so the placement of 76.6% of Speed School pupils in P4 does not necessarily mean that they had completed the Phase III curriculum successfully.

combination of slowed down economic activity and the scarcity and higher costs of basic household items, including food. This sent several families off to their fields, which were often far from their homes, to attend to their subsistence food needs as their sources of income dwindled alongside their savings. The fear of catching COVID-19 and, for some, the fact of catching the virus or of knowing victims and even losing family members also distracted attention from SHG activities. One response was to create micro-groups within each SHG, both to limit exposure and to permit more consistent contact despite the absent members.



The Speed School classroom has learning materials covering all surfaces, even the ceiling.

Regardless, the majority of mothers persisted, and the SHGs manage to achieve valuable gains, albeit more modest than normal. The average savings per group dropped from 3,000,000 Ugandan Shillings (about US \$860) in previous years to 1,855,000 (about US \$530). Besides having less money to save, the fact that their children were not in class combined with the irregular meetings demotivated many mothers from making their regular savings contributions. The level of income-generation activities also lowered. Groups engaged mostly in livestock rearing, including chickens, goats, cows, and, in more peri-urban areas, fast-breeding pigs. Other popular activities included the cultivation

and/or marketing of food products such as soya beans, tomatoes, small fish, vegetables, rice, flour, and cooking oil. Some also undertook production and service activities, such as brickmaking. Inspired by a similar initiative in Ethiopia, GG-Ug contracted with a small Gulu-based, women-operated company, Double Women's Club Uganda, to train mothers in five groups to produce liquid hand soap, aiming to meet the heightened demand due to the pandemic. In addition to retail sale of the product, some found institutional clients, including local schools. Other groups sold facemasks and yet others found a new market for citrus fruits, which many considered to have immunity boosting qualities.

The groups' support of Speed School classroom and home learning also took many dimensions, including illustratively:

- Mobilizing to widen feeder/access roads to promote the safety of their children as they walked to and from school;
- Providing packed lunches for their children, including cooked or prepared foods such as maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, and *simsim* (sesame) paste;
- During the period of home-based learning, providing conducive study locations and supporting their children in understanding and using the self-study materials while also ensuring their adherence to the COVID-19 protection protocols;
- Participating as experts for PoPCI lessons, giving learners exposure to such areas as carpentry, pottery, tailoring, farming, and retail commerce;
- Monitoring Speed School classes when the facilitator had to be absent; and

- Organizing several meetings to discuss social issues that can affect children’s school attendance and learning, such as gender-based violence (GBV), mental health and psychosocial support (especially in the time of COVID), and effective parenting.

Speed School expansion and government adoption efforts. As mentioned, the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with GG-Ug’s move into five new locations and a new implementation approach designed to advance progress towards government adoption and sustainability. GG-Ug signed a memorandum of understanding with each new jurisdiction’s authority to codify this new arrangement. Practically, this meant that the district and municipality education authorities accepted responsibility to:

- enlist link schools to host Speed School classes and mobilize parents to enroll their out-of-school primary-aged children, aiming for equal numbers of boys and girls and encouraging the enrollment of children with disabilities;
- assign inspectors and CCTs to oversee, guide, and support implementation of the Speed School classes;
- partner with other development structures and agents to train and support the SHGs;
- assign teachers to serve as Speed School facilitators;
- deliver three training workshops a year to equip the facilitators to deliver the Accelerated Education Program curriculum using the core Speed School model and methods; and
- ensure the regular supervision and support of Speed School classes and facilitators.

GG-Ug supported the government partners in much the same way it has the grantee civil society partners since 2016 to ensure successful implementation of the overall program. In this regard, the MOUs commit GG-Ug to:

- train designated inspectors and CCTs in the full Speed School model, methods, and materials, including both the pedagogic and the holistic training dimensions, and support them in their training and continuous supervision and support of the Speed School facilitators and classes;
- train the assigned development agents in the SHG program and support them in their training and ongoing support of the SHG members;
- accompany the districts in all aspects of the creation and launch of Speed School classes, including the recruitment of teachers and the organization of the SHGs;
- pay for all Speed School operation costs, including additional furniture, teaching and learning supplies, basic repairs to classrooms, and teachers’ salaries; and



Speed School pupils engaging in PoPSI, learning to make pottery from a local expert.

- provide technical and logistical support to the inspectors, CCTs, and development agents, including additional training, the organization of ECoP reflection and planning sessions, a motorcycle for each district, gas and food allowances, and ICT equipment.

The upended nature of the 2021 school year hobbled both the district partners and GG-Ug in their adherence to these commitments. All happened, but with little continuity. This especially affected the DEO and PTC partners in the new districts, who were unable to solidify their understanding of the core Speed School principles and practices because they could not yet engage in learning by doing. This deeper level of comprehension should happen in 2022 and happen faster because of the training and reflection they were able to sustain through the virtual training workshops and ECoP sessions.

Government adoption efforts. As explained above, the formula for expansion described here represents a central pillar of GG-Ug’s effort to promote the government adoption of the Speed School program in Uganda. Indeed, this goal undergirded virtually all strategic decisions and actions taken in 2021, just as it did in Ethiopia. The core elements of this effort at the district level were (and remain) similar to those that Geneva Global deploys in Ethiopia:

- the assignment of the full responsibility for the successful establishment and operation of Speed School classes and SHGs to government structures;
- the training and support of key staff from these structures who are tasked to fulfill these responsibilities in practice;
- the provision of abundant technical documentation on the model and materials to serve as a permanent reference to trainers, inspectors, supervisors, and other key actors; and
- support to incorporate the Speed School program into institutional policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and budgeting processes.

It is at the national level that Geneva Global’s approach to adoption in Uganda diverges most from that in Ethiopia. Basically, it has been slower, for a variety of reasons that are not explored here. GG-Ug has been in discussion with the Ministry of Education and Sports about the goal of government adoption for the sustained and scaled operation of Speed School for several years. While official interest in this remains high at the topmost levels of the ministry and formal affirmation has been consistent, only modest signs of progress have appeared. Early in 2021, the ministry’s Director of Basic Education instructed GG-Ug to prepare an official memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the government to sign. The document, which lays out the two parties’ respective roles in securing the program’s sustained and scaled operation in Uganda, still sits on his desk, likely set aside as the ministry struggled to plan its recovery from the COVID-19 shutdown. Also in 2021, GG-Ug experienced a small but highly symbolic “win” when the government’s National Curriculum Design Center (NCDC) shared that it is now promoting the use of Art, Music, and Physical Education as instructional methods, not as stand-alone classes. Before, NCDC leaders had criticized Speed School for this very practice. Lastly, highly favorable media coverage of Speed School at the end of the year – see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) – included a strong endorsement by the new State Minister of Education. Hopefully, this will open the door to finalizing the MOU in 2022 and



The GG-Ug team.

plotting together a clear path to full government adoption over the upcoming years.

Growth of the GG-Ug team. The move to government implementation of Speed School classes required a greater level of support from GG-Ug. Rather than six experienced grantee civil society organization partners to implement all classes and SHGs, the GG-Ug team was now responsible to train, support, and nurture government partners from eight DEOs, two municipal education offices, and three core PTCs spread across a much greater geographic area. Furthermore, elevating the adoption agenda demanded more substantive engagement in the areas of advocacy, planning, and strategy at both the district and ministry levels. This included further the initiation of discussions with the Kampala Capital City Authority to explore the piloting of Speed School classes in the capital. This would both be a first step in moving Speed School out of the North and provide a chance for greater visibility of the model to central education authorities and other key national decision-makers and international education partners.

To meet the expanded demands of the Speed School program, GG-Ug added a new role to the technical team, Program Officer, for which it recruited three persons. It also moved from financial administration by an external part-time contractor to a full-time staff member to fulfill this function. (These hires actually occurred in 2020.) As of 2021, the GG-Ug team comprises a Program Director, Deputy Director, Finance and Operations Manager, Program Manager – Community Engagement, three Program Officers, and logistics and transportation staff. These changes were accompanied by cutting the number of grantee implementing partners down to just three, corresponding to the new emphasis on government-led implementation.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead to 2022, GG-Ug plans to focus on the following priorities and actions:

- Conduct a normal Speed School year, operating 230 Speed School classes and SHGs in the same communities and schools from 2021 plus two other locations: Pader District, in the North, and Kampala, working with a group of low-fee private school operators;
- Sign an official memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Education and Sports and complete a strategic three-year (or more) plan for embedding the Speed School model and methods within the formal education system and structures;
- Complete similar memoranda of understanding with the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) and KCCA to lay out partnership strategies with them that also contribute to the goal of government adoption for program sustainability and scale.
- Complete a longitudinal study of Speed School, tracking a sample of students from the initial Uganda cohort (from 2016) to compare their education and life situations in 2022 to those of a group of students from control schools;
- Expand the role of the program's three remaining grantee civil society partners from that of just implementing Speed School to that of accompanying the new districts in their implementation of Speed School classes;
- Hire a new, part-time, monitoring and evaluation coordinator in order to strengthen GG-Ug's collection, analysis, and use of data;
- Agree and plan with the Kampala Capital City Authority to build on the experience with the private school providers in 2022 to implement Speed School classes and SHGs in government primary schools in 2023; and
- Join with the Ministry of Education and Sports to identify and start to cultivate new sources of funding for Speed School in future years.

Geneva Global, headquarters

Looking beyond the two country programs, Geneva Global took steps in 2021 to broaden overall external exposure to the Speed School program. This involved most significantly the launch of a set of web pages dedicated to the company's work in education on the Geneva Global web site. [Here](#), Speed School features prominently, outlining its broad programmatic elements, presenting the two country programs, and offering a sample of technical documents. The site also shares Geneva Global's overall capacity and work in education.

Other steps to expand the program's visibility included blogs posted both on the Geneva Global site and that of HundrEd.org (found [here](#)), strategic conversations with NGOs from other countries about their potential implementation of a version of Speed School, talks with a variety of other funders about possible cooperation, and participation in an international education conference. Speed School also featured in at least two independent publications, one a review of accelerated learning produced by USAID (found [here](#), actually published in November 2020) and the other an article in a scholarly on-line journal (see [here](#), also first published in November 2020). Other highlights from GG headquarters from 2021 include:

- the organization with [Education International](#) of a virtual salon titled, "The Return to School Under Lingering Pandemic Conditions and Beyond," that brought together prominent scholars, philanthropy leaders, and education leaders to focus on the central role of teachers in guiding the recovery of education systems and schools from COVID; and
- the appointment of Joshua Muskin, Senior Director and Education Team Leader at Geneva Global, to the Judging Academy of [the World's Best Schools Prizes](#) initiative.

Looking forward to 2022, Geneva Global expects to continue progress towards the institutional adoption of Speed School in Ethiopia and Uganda while giving tens of thousands of overaged out-of-school children the chance to enter formal education and excel there. This will include the expansion of Speed School to new regions and districts in the two countries while exploring opportunities in new ones. We will solidify our online presence and pursue new channels for exposing more global education stakeholders to the model, its methods, and its impacts (especially germane since virtually the whole globe needs accelerated education to recover from COVID) and for bringing new resources and partners to support this effort. And we will continue to pursue overall excellence to benefit children and their families, to motivate and enable our grantee and government partners even further, and to bring ever greater pride and satisfaction to our clients.

Geneva Global continues to be profoundly grateful to its funding partners for their support and confidence. Hopefully, this annual report will be a strong source of pride to them and their staffs.

