



People for development

EDUCATION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2022-2027

Unlocking every child's potential

“Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people, to accompany them in the stages of their growth and to set ourselves beside them.”

Pope Francis

INTRODUCTION

AVSI is a global NGO with 50 years of experience and a long-standing commitment to quality education for all. In 2020, AVSI implemented 64 projects in the education sector, reaching over 1.3 million direct beneficiaries across 38 countries.

Since its origin, AVSI has considered education a top priority in its projects, dedicating resources to understand and address educational challenges in their context. We work side by side with project participants, building long-term solutions together.

AVSI is committed to the achievement of SDG4 to build a world where quality education is accessible to all, where schools are inclusive and teachers are prepared to welcome and educate every child. Quality education takes learners beyond memorizing content; it strives to introduce learners to the knowledge of reality as a whole, promoting the values of equality and equity and forming the character of the person. AVSI believes that the key of education and personal development is the awareness of one's own intrinsic value as a person which is not dependent on circumstances or achievements. This self-awareness does not develop in isolation but through relationships first in the family, then later in school and in the community.

Several challenges to quality education for all stand out as urgent across the globe today. First and foremost, socio-economic inequalities adversely affect access to education for vulnerable populations. Secondly, this problem is multiplied by a widespread crisis in formal schooling which often fails to prepare children with basic skills and the life skills to face challenges. Third, humanitarian emergencies, often times complex and protracted due to factors such as conflict and climate change, threaten hundreds of millions of people each year. To effectively and equitably address these pressing challenges, AVSI has developed this framework to direct its work in the education sector through 2027.

This framework clarifies a vision, goals and principles to guide AVSI's interventions and details the approaches and methods that AVSI utilizes to achieve these goals. It reiterates AVSI's firm belief in the central role education plays in the healthy development of each person and—while setting operational parameters to achieve its vision – also allows for flexibility at regional and country levels to respond to local contexts and education needs.

Every child deserves quality education from the early stages of life through thriving adulthood. Toward this end, AVSI prioritizes interventions in crisis contexts, early childhood development, and programs for out-of-school and marginalized youth. Further, gathering quality data and generating evidence plays a key role in informing innovative solutions and strengthening systems.

This framework was designed by AVSI's Education Focal Point team with contributions from the heads of education projects in the numerous countries where AVSI operates. Coordination with the AVSI's sectorial technical experts contributed in a fundamental way to this process.

CONTEXT

AVSI's operational context

AVSI currently operates in nearly 40 countries and is committed to implementing projects that promote sustainable and long-lasting development and respond to crisis situations. AVSI's main areas of intervention are Education—which AVSI views as a cornerstone of development—Child Protection, Agriculture and Food Security, Energy, Environment, Vocational Training and Employment, Economic Strengthening and Livelihoods, Nutrition, Energy and Sustainable Cities, Human Rights, Democracy and Peace, Health, Water and Sanitation.

Challenges in the educational context

Quality education is the basis of the integral development of the person. All too often children in low- and middle-income countries face dramatic challenges to accessing education services of sufficient quality. In brief, two challenges stand out: 1) Access, retention and inclusion of children and adolescents, 2) poor learning outcomes.

Accessing school services is still one of the biggest challenges in different parts of the world. Before the COVID-19 crisis, 20% of primary and secondary school-age children were still not accessing education (UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019-2030). The retention and completion rates were even worse; in low-income countries 40% of the children were still failing to complete primary education (World Bank 2019 COVID report). There is a plethora of factors that prevent access and hinder *retention*: in several rural areas, basic services and school infrastructure are still lacking, in conflict situations schools are inaccessible because still occupied by armed groups, children are taught in a language they do not understand, teachers are often absent, and require payment of fees in both private and public schools that constitute a barrier for the poorest. School fees disrupt regular attendance and exacerbate the challenge of keeping girls in school when there is pressure for early marriages or unexpected pregnancies. Over 10 million girls each year are forced into early marriages and excluded from schools. With respect to gender, less than 20% of low-income countries have achieved parity. Over 60% of girls in these countries are disadvantaged compared to boys; gender stereotypes and lack of integration of child protection systems and health services in education, increase gender inequality in education. The COVID pandemic has exacerbated these factors. Low rates of enrolment also result from disasters and emergencies, both man-made (wars and conflict) or natural with only half of refugee children accessing primary school and only around 20% of refugee adolescents being in secondary school (UNICEF strategy).

Over the last couple of decades, there has been a greater awareness of how *poor learning outcomes* hinder human development even of children attending schools (World Bank COVID-19 Report). Even before COVID, although the number of children accessing school had increased, a huge learning crisis was underway and children in developing countries were often not learning. Around the world in 2017, 387 million primary school children and 230 million lower-secondary school adolescents had not achieved minimum proficiency levels in literacy and numeracy. At the pre-pandemic rates, by 2030, 825 million would have not been able to acquire the basic foundational skills (such as literacy and numeracy) and transferable skills (such as critical

thinking, problem solving and decision making) that are considered key for navigating through life and work. These challenges are particularly exacerbated by disaster and emergencies contexts, where circumstances and the lack of education services deepen education inequalities and hinder quality education levels. Example of this, is the effect of the climate crisis which has an unequal impact on children's development there were they are exposed to climate shocks—such as droughts and floods—as this affects not only access to education but the learning progress as well.

VISION

We believe that education should foster mature, self-aware individuals who are capable of acquiring and using knowledge to navigate the challenges of life, to contribute to the good of society, and to thrive as adults. We see education as the means whereby people can deepen their awareness of reality, discover the infinite value of life, unlock their potential and pursue interests.

For the child, this process of self-discovery means understanding the infinite value of his/her life, no matter how challenging, difficult, or inhumane the circumstances may be. Every child deserves this and should have the opportunity to be accompanied in a relationship that helps in this process of self-discovery.

When a child is aware of his/her value and has relationships with others that reaffirm this value through bonds of affection and belonging, the child can be ready to engage with reality, take risks, and assume responsibility for learning and growing. Ultimately, this child can become an active and productive member of society through work, and an engaged citizen in the life of the community and country. Above all, with a sound self-awareness and supportive (quality) educational environment, the child can become a young person and adult better able to face the inevitable challenges of life with openness, confidence and hope.

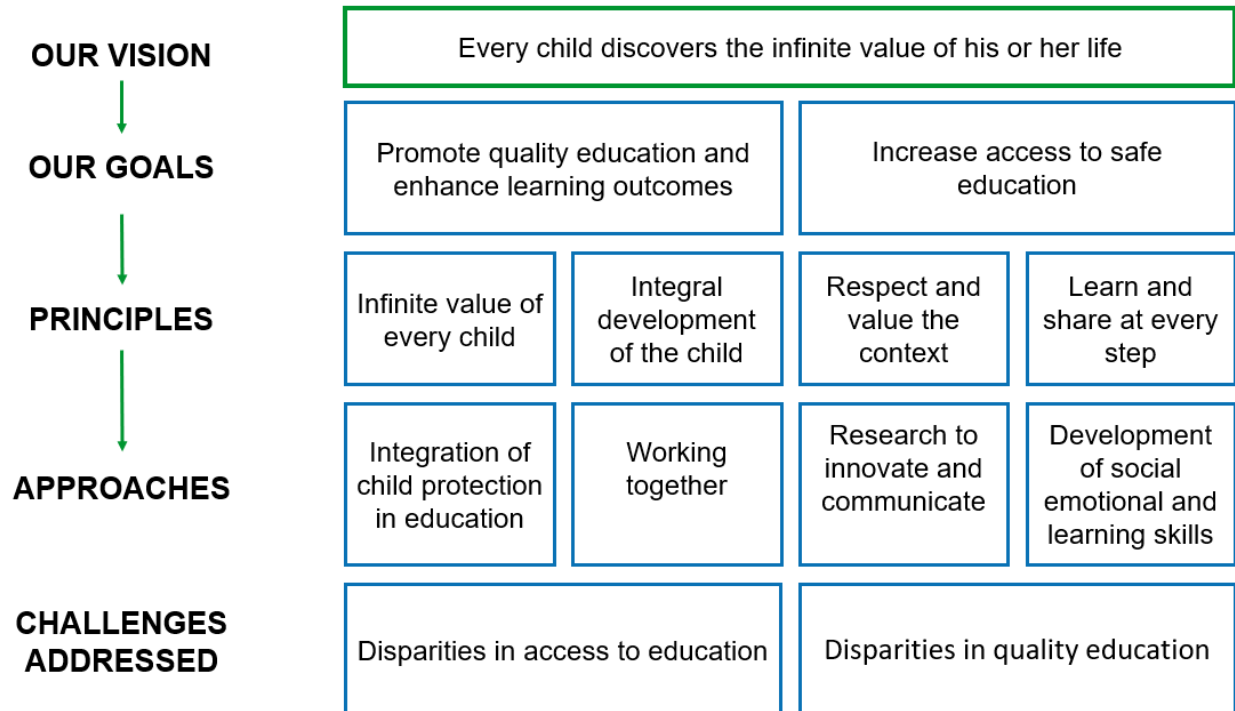
Because of the centrality of relationships to the educational process, AVSI's Education Strategic Framework puts explicit focus on the actors in the whole education system, aiming to enhance their awareness of their role which in turn increases motivation and commitment to the task of educating each child and accompanying her/him to her/his fullest potential.

This broad vision of education includes both formal schooling and the range of non-formal educational opportunities. Furthermore, this Education Strategic Framework is applicable to AVSI's work in all sectors of human development since the engine of all human development is the in-born desire of the human person to reach one's full potential.

Strategy Implementation

Our Principles	Our Approaches
<p>The infinite value of every child Recognizing the infinite value of each and every child is the foundation of each and every AVSI's project or intervention. Self-awareness is the fundamental building block of any growth in society and the starting and ending point of any educational intervention. There is no development if each person does not reach this level of self-awareness.</p>	<p>Integration of child protection and education The wellbeing of teachers and children is essential for an educational relationship to be established. Every human being is united; the psychosocial needs are not separated from the physical needs and for education to happen we require that teachers and children feel safe and protected, especially when at school.</p>
<p>The integral development of the child Integral Human Development is the holistic development of the human person, covering all aspects of life: social, economic, political, cultural, personal and spiritual. It promotes the dignity of the human person, equality between every person and the common good of all people in the community.</p>	<p>Development of social emotional and learning skills Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop their identities, manage their emotions and achieve their goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.</p>
<p>The respect and value of the context Best practices should be adapted with sensitivity to local contexts asking ourselves who should decide what quality education is and why in any specific context we work. If an education system adopts a definition that does not consider the diversity of cultural perspectives, there is a danger that important differences about what it means to educate could be missed. Asking children, parents, teachers, and government officials what they desire for their own children is a crucial learning point for us, and doing so promotes inclusion, but also access, retention and sustainability.</p>	<p>Working together To work in collaboration with the actors already present in the context, hand in hand with the beneficiaries and all stakeholders. To collaborate with teachers and school leaders to adapt or create training programmes to best meet the teachers' professional needs. To accompany each other, recognizing that we all share the same human experience. To build partnerships with local actors who have been working in the area and to be conscious of the culture and the people involved, not to impose models and methods but to meet people and build long term relationships.</p>
<p>Learning and sharing at every step Monitoring and evaluation systems should generate learning. At every step of the implementation process, stop and think to learn from your success but, more especially from your mistakes. Only in this way, we believe that our learning can be a source of enrichment for the whole system.</p>	<p>Research to innovate and communicate To research in the educational field and to always be prepared to face the challenges of reality and emergencies. To disseminate across countries the successes achieved and lessons learned within each country.</p>

AVSI EDUCATION- STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2022-2027



AVSI's approach envisions the joint efforts of the Education and Child Protection units as a strategy to tackle the challenges and to achieve the goals as displayed above. Being Child Protection an essential component for the success of educational interventions, the knowledge and expertise in this sector are used to complement the Education strategic approach.

The two units work in close collaboration by sharing knowledge, resources, and tools, including child protection situation-maps and assessments, and by integrating strong gender and protection components. In this line, AVSI implements targeted actions that address barriers to equity and gender equality. For these reasons, when implementing educational projects and interventions, AVSI expects partners to apply the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.

GOALS

Increase access to education

AVSI works to ensure that children have equal and fair opportunities to take full benefit of their education. Increasing access to education requires that systems strive to remove barriers that may prevent some children from participating equitably in formal and non-formal education opportunities. Too often, factors such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, perceived intellectual ability, past academic performance, special needs, language of instruction, and family income affect children's and youth's chances of accessing education.

AVSI is committed to supporting systems in removing these barriers to enable everyone to have access to educational pathways suitable for their growth.

Supporting educational institutions, teachers, educators and children throughout the educational journey from preschool to secondary and tertiary education, not only by paying attention to the enrollment and completion rates, but by ensuring an educational journey that is relevant to the challenges of the 21st century.

Promote quality education and enhance learning outcomes for all

Quality education is crucial for the unlocking of each child's full potential. The learning outcomes are not limited to formal knowledge acquisition, but they aim at developing in children and youth both foundational skills and social and emotional skills which are relevant to the challenges of the context. This educational journey nurtures learners to develop into productive, active and self-aware citizens. To achieve this, it is necessary that education is of quality, meaning that it happens in a safe and welcoming environment, in which teachers are attentive to children's wellbeing and protection, in which instruction is in a language that is accessible to children, and with teachers properly trained not only to deliver content but also to foster holistic growth.

INTEGRATED SYSTEMS APPROACH

Relationships are at the heart of our way of educating because it is through relationships that a child gains her/his self-awareness and engages in reality, develops the confidence to learn, explore and take risks, and makes connections in order to maximize his/her potential. For this reason, AVSI involves all the actors that can promote a child's development.

AVSI supports targeted interventions starting from the children, addressing also parents and communities, teachers, and government actors with the aim of creating a system of relationships that promote educational outcomes.

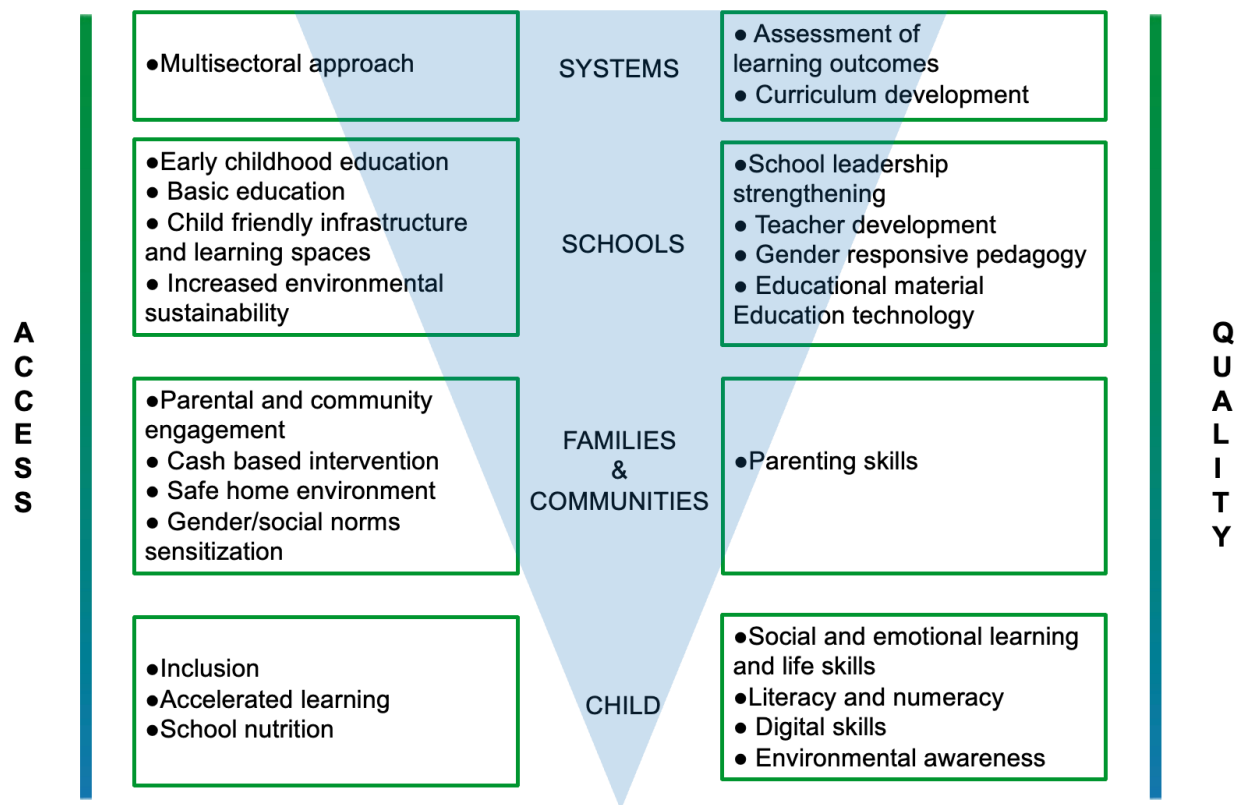
CHILD: Recognizing the infinite value of every child is our starting point. As a child gains awareness of his self, through relationships, a process of development and growth can begin. Self-awareness is the engine of all growth in society.

PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES: To accompany parents to be protagonists in their children's growth and education is crucial. Parents are the first community in which the child is welcomed and are the first responsible for the children's well-being. Each family, working hand in hand with the school, can foster the growth of the child in the community to which he/she belongs, laying the foundations for the growth of adults who are aware of and committed to facing the challenges of our time. For education to achieve its objectives, the family must be a place where the child feels safe and secure and can receive all the opportunities for growth, laying the foundations for the generation of a community that can play a key role in the educational process of its young people.

SCHOOL: Recognizing the essential role of teachers and school administrators. AVSI recognizes the key role of teachers and administrators and cares about their well-being. AVSI invests in the ongoing training of teachers and administrators so that they discover the centrality of their role in the development of each child and continue to build knowledge and skills.

SYSTEMS: At the national level, the ministry of education, curriculum development centers, teacher education departments, examination centers formulate and operationalize policies that may foster or hinder learning in class. AVSI collaborates with local and national governments to promote reforms that improve access to formal or non-formal education to every child and foster improved learning outcomes for all.

Integrated Systems Approach: Achieving Our Goals



Integrated Systems Approach: Strategies

The following paragraphs present the strategies for *increased access* to education and for *improved quality education* and enhanced learning outcomes as promoted by AVSI in the countries in which it operates. Both strategies are presented for each target group envisioned in AVSI's integrated approach as presented above.

CHILD

Strategies for increased access to safe education

- **Promoting the inclusion of vulnerable children in educational pathways.**
To support the most vulnerable, AVSI continues supporting over 25,000 families in low-income countries with a scholarship programme that helps children from early childhood to higher education complete their studies.

AVSI is also committed to support inclusive schools that value each child for the unique contribution he or she can make to all, and in which teachers accompany on a journey of



inclusion that appreciates and learns from diversity and each child's uniqueness. Promoting inclusive education and training school staff to cater for every child is the path AVSI is committed to for providing equitable opportunities. AVSI's holistic answer to special needs entails the provision of tools for learning facilitation, flexible learning pathways, specialized services, inclusive services and assistive devices such as wheelchairs, eyeglasses, classrooms equipped with ramps and referral to specialized centers.

Another barrier to children's access to school enrolment and regular attendance can be the walking distance between their house and the school. AVSI sets up transportation services in order to facilitate the safe and regular students' commute to the classroom and back.

AVSI promotes inclusive education is not just about children with disabilities but also about those who face exclusion due to gender or language or economic status, working children, children at high risk of early marriage, among others.

- **Fostering school reintegration through accelerated learning programs**

War, extreme poverty and other forms of marginalization often prevent children from entering school or force them to leave it early. The most vulnerable and marginalized—often displaced children and youth, single mothers, and children with disabilities—have the greatest difficulty accessing and/or completing their education. Accelerated learning programs are designed to help overage learners to enable them to achieve the equivalence of primary or secondary education in a reduced period of time. AVSI, in some contexts, provides remedial classes for vulnerable children in order to facilitate retention or re-entry into the formal education system.

- **Promoting distance learning or blended learning programmes**

Even in times of pandemic, AVSI has always struggled to reach the hardest-to-reach children. With non-formal education programmes, AVSI accompanies children from 3-12 years old with distance education and blended education programs by implementing low-level technological solutions, building on the internet connectivity and through the provision of internet bundles and devices to teachers and families. Special attention is always given to prevent technology from becoming a factor of exclusion.

- **Supporting nutritional programmes**

Without proper nutrition children cannot learn at their fullest potential. AVSI supports schools in the provision of healthy food and safe water through school feeding programmes. This activity is often integrated with disease prevention activities and nutritional food preparation demonstrational sessions.

Strategies for improved quality education and enhanced learning outcomes

- **Enhancing SEL and life skills development**

AVSI is committed to the integral development of every child. Thus, AVSI promotes the development of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills and life skills in formal and non-formal programmes of education. AVSI equip teachers with the competencies to enhance these skills within the classrooms, through teaching methodologies that foster the growth of these skills while deepening subject knowledge. This approach helps teachers to develop formative assessment strategies to support the learning of each child.

Children and youth are also equipped with life skills through extracurricular activities and workshops that help them in the process of discovering the self and relating better with peers.

- **Improving literacy and numeracy skills**

Literacy and numeracy are the fundamental skills needed to navigate through school and life and to access more work opportunities. AVSI will continue developing strategies to equip teachers with skills on how to teach literacy and numeracy using local languages or multilingual approaches, as it might be needed in crisis contexts.

- **Enhancing digital skills**

AVSI promotes the teaching of digital skills to promote the use of digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. The acquisition of digital skills enhances the children's academic skills and youth's work readiness.

- **Enhancing environmental awareness**

AVSI is committed to promoting behavioral change by introducing students to the awareness of the impact that human action has on environment, of efficient use of resources, and increase their awareness on how to identify practical ways to reduce environmental impacts.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Strategies for increased access to safe education

- **Engaging parents and community in the educational journey of every child**

AVSI operates by applying the "doing with" approach that aims to build a community and localization approach to strengthen and support the realities already present and operating in the local context, supporting the growth of local partners and providing resources to communities, starting from the recognition that we all share the same human experience.

In line with AVSI's integrated approach, before having children joining the schooling system, it is often necessary to first address some of their basic needs in order to promote

a safe learning environment. AVSI acts on this by guaranteeing children and their families' provision of shelter, basic assistance, food security, WASH, civil documentation services.

Moreover, AVSI helps parents to be the protagonists of their child's educational journey by holding parental trainings and by promoting awareness raising activities at community level, leading parents to discover their educational role. AVSI is also involved in sensitization activities (radio, community meetings and workshops) regarding the benefits and importance of pre-primary schooling for all children, including those with special needs are carried forward at community level.

AVSI engages in the promotion and enhancement of constructive dialogue between families and communities and the school's teaching staff in order to facilitate the involvement of parents throughout their children's academic and personal development and provides parents and teaching staff with holistic training sessions which are comprehensive of all the dimensions necessary to the child's wellbeing, growth and personal development (health, nutrition, positive discipline).

- **Implementing cash-based education interventions**

After detailed assessments and analysis of risks, AVSI shall use its expertise in cash-based intervention (e.g., conditional cash transfer, vouchers for schools) to promote access or re-insertion to education in crisis or emergency contexts, after a detailed assessment of the situation is conducted.

- **Promoting safe home environments to enhance child protection**

AVSI supports parents and communities in the provision of learning environments that can be safe, stimulating, and friendly to children. This aims at fostering responsive care in families and strengthen the link with the formal or non-formal education systems. Families suffer from many types of disruptions, either related to relationship, socio and economic status or addictions. In such contexts, it is common to find parental role acted by one caregiver (mostly the mother), resulting in fatigue and high level of stress, negatively affecting the home environment.

AVSI involves the heads of the household in counselling groups with the aim to accompany the families by offering child protection training to preserve the psychosocial well-being and development of each child. In situations in which children are at risk of neglect, AVSI offers multidimensional assistance to families including incoming generating activity support. This activity becomes instrumental for the households to start a small business that offers a regular income to meet immediate needs.

Lastly, AVSI looks for synergies with projects that can involve households' improvement processes, for example by working with energy projects that bring lighting inside homes to make them a more suitable environment for learning and studying.



- **Promoting gender responsive communities and equitable social norms**
Community sensitizations on gender norms and social principles shall be promoted to fight stereotypes and gender-based violence, promoting respect for every child and contributing to the transformation of gender norms in education systems.

Strategies for improved quality education and enhanced learning outcomes

- **Enhancing parenting skills**
AVSI shall continue working with families by accompanying them in the discovery of their educational role hand in hand with experienced staff assisting them in the discovery of their educational role.

SCHOOL

Strategies for increased access to safe education

- **Early childhood education (ECE)**
The early stage of every child's life is foundational for the formation of the child. AVSI commits to support early childhood education services as an effective and safe strategy to create an enabling environment for children. Community-based ECE is also fostered as a mean to promote community engagement, ownership and sustainability. Competent teachers and caregivers are key to effective ECE.
- **Supporting transition from primary to secondary**
AVSI is committed to supporting activities that facilitate the transition from lower to upper levels of education to reduce dropout. The support activities consist of retention support courses, remedial classes, sensitization work with teachers, parents and social workers in the handing over process and in accompanying children who are going through the transition.
- **Supporting communities in building safe learning spaces**
The physical environment in which learning takes place has a great impact on educational outcomes, which is why AVSI has been collaborating with local communities to build and renovate school facilities or temporary learning spaces. AVSI has contributed to adapting learning facilities to promote inclusive access for every child. In crisis contexts, AVSI also teaches the communities how to build Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) using locally supplied construction materials and with the direct involvement of parents and local authorities.



- **Supporting schools towards increased environmental sustainability**
Where possible, AVSI supports schools to increase their environmental sustainability (i.e., installation of solar panel, composting and biogas production, waste management and recycling, energy saving cooking systems, etc.).

Strategies for improved quality education and enhanced learning outcomes

- **Strengthening school leadership**
AVSI works with school leaders and administrators by providing training workshops and offering mentorship to create supportive and nurturing environments for teachers and children. For any transformation to be sustainable in schools there is need to have a committed, resilient leadership.
- **Promoting continuous teacher development**
Teachers are the factor with the greatest impact on the improvement of learning outcomes and personal growth of children. For this reason, AVSI is committed to the continuing professional development of teachers. AVSI offers various training modules which are adapted to the needs of the teachers in each specific context. The modules range from teacher wellbeing, to inclusive pedagogy, from planning for teaching to assessment and they include elements of enhancements of social and emotional skills, psychosocial support and child protection. Moreover, AVSI promotes the accompaniment of each teacher with coaching sessions and supports the establishment of school-based teacher learning circles for the continues support of the teachers in their daily work.
- **Positive discipline and gender responsive pedagogy**
AVSI engages teachers to reduce gender bias in schools by promoting inclusive pedagogy that pays attention to the specific learning needs of each child. This strategy aims at raising awareness of gender issues in education, and integrating gender considerations into teaching practice, including child-centered teaching methods, classroom management, lesson planning, positive discipline, and assessment. Positive discipline focuses on guiding and correcting children by helping them reflect on their behavior more than punishing them for what might be considered unacceptable by teachers.
- **Providing learning materials**
Mostly in crisis contexts, AVSI provides teaching and learning materials that enhance and facilitate children participation. AVSI supports schools so that they can distribute teaching and learning materials and provide assistance to children and families.
- **Promoting the use of education technology**
When possible, AVSI shall provide and incentivize the use appropriate education technology to facilitate learning and improve performance. New technologies are incorporated at many levels such as lesson design, content development, use of devices, and management of assessment and learning resources. Education Technology is

applicable to all disciplines of the educational curriculum, so it is necessary that teachers are properly trained to integrate technology into education in a positive way.

SYSTEMS

Strategies for increased access to safe education

- **Supporting government**

AVSI engages in advocacy actions by collaborating with local stakeholders. Interventions are aimed at supporting various types of interventions including the revision of ministerial curricula in order to shift from knowledge-based to competency-based curricula. In addition, AVSI aims to strengthen communication and coordination between the offices of national and regional Ministries of Education to establish a common approach to educational activities by supporting Ministries of Education in bridging activities by providing accelerated learning programs to school staff and to create awareness on gender equality issues.

Strategies for improved quality education and enhanced learning outcomes

- **Promoting assessment of relevant learning outcomes**

AVSI is committed to supporting local education systems in reforming national assessment and examinations. The aim is to shift the focus of end-of-cycle examinations from the reproduction of factual knowledge to the assessment of a wider variety of skills and competencies. Measuring what really matters in learning is key to driving reform and transforming teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices.

- **Curriculum development**

AVSI commits to work closely with the national curriculum development centres to advocate for an inclusive curriculum that promotes the use of languages relevant to children and that support the enhancement of the SEL skills.

- **Teacher education**

AVSI, in some countries (e.g., Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Uganda...) works closely with the ministry of education to promote a reform of the teacher education curricula. The revision of these curricula and the re-tooling of the teacher education tutors shall promote the formation of highly competent teachers who are well equipped for nurturing the SEL skills.