

USAID Education in Conflict and Crisis Network (ECCN)

Julie Cram Consultation

Steering Group¹ and Online Inputs

What are the high-level education outcomes that are most important for children and youth living in crisis-affected contexts?

Key Messages

- **Education outcomes must factor in the well-being, social emotional learning, psychosocial support, and mental health of learners and teachers.**
- **Learning environments are functional, high quality, accessible and safe.**
- **Education institutions and services need to be more equitable, resilient² and promote the resilience of learners and school communities.**

Detailed Inputs

- These contexts demand a **holistic** approach, rather than just an education approach. USAID therefore needs to consider more than literacy and numeracy outcomes: it needs to understand social and emotional issues, toxic stress, hunger, family literacy, medical care, and other factors that impact what goes on in school and the learning process.
- **Equity** issues are central:
 - We must be clear about what we mean by “equity” and how do we measure it?
 - We need indicators for equity, attendance, safety, completion, access and retention.
- Consider what a USG-wide strategy would look like in a conflict country and design it so that it facilitates USAID assistance there.
- In order to achieve **self-reliance**, we need to think about how to equip local institutions to deliver services, rather than Western NGOs implementing the work indefinitely. This will require a paradigm shift. (ECCN’s Task Team on Local Institutional Capacity Development can contribute ideas.)
- Activities should be designed in accordance with five main outcome areas identified below:
 - **Policy integration**, whereby education policies/curricula are peacebuilding focused and education is utilized as a strategic entry point for peacebuilding.
 - **Developing institutional capacities** to deliver equitable, conflict-sensitive education services.
 - Building the capacity of individuals and communities to **mitigate conflict** and promote **peace**.

¹ In person inputs from the ECCN Steering Group meeting session with Julie Cram on April 25, 2018, in Washington, DC.

² Resilience encompasses inputs on flexibility, adaptation, conflict sensitivity, social cohesion and peacebuilding, violence prevention, self-reliance, and the capacity to respond to impacts and address underlying causes of crisis and conflict.

- Increasing access to **conflict-sensitive** education and services.
- Generating evidence and knowledge on education and **peacebuilding**.
- Each of the outcome areas will contribute to **transforming relationships** at multiple levels: vertically, horizontally, and individually. The best example is the Mali EESA project with all the activities related to the grants for School Improvement Plans. Vertically, by strengthening sector governance and related **institutional capacity** to enhance state-society relations and **respond to the effects of violent conflict and its underlying causes and dynamics**. Horizontally, by using the delivery of social services and protection measures as an entry point for engaging diverse **communities** in dialogue and cooperation, and strengthening their capacities to respond to the effects of violent conflict and its underlying causes and dynamics. **Individually**, by supporting the girls, boys, women and men who are affected by violent conflict to deal constructively with its impacts, and to address the causes of conflict as active citizens within their communities.
- Employability, entrepreneurship.
- Many organizations rightly suggest that psychosocial support and child protection are important inputs for children living in crisis-affected areas. However, the best way to guarantee that children are protected and supported is in the context of **high-quality, functional schools** that create academic outcomes for students. Functioning schools create protective environments for students, and offer a structured respite from a world that may seem otherwise in disarray to children. Even more important, high quality schools allow children to learn crucial literacy and numeracy skills that will open doors to future educational and vocational opportunities later in life. For these reasons, we believe that the most important outcomes for children living in crisis-affected contexts are the same as for children living in any context: literacy and numeracy gains, provided by a school that gives them the opportunity to learn and grow.
- Ensuring that children and youth affected by crisis receive and complete a full cycle of **quality basic education** or its equivalent that will open up flexible pathways to other levels (secondary, technical-vocational, and higher education).
- Providing children and youth in crisis-affected contexts access to more **flexible** education systems that meet their learning needs
- **Coordinating funding** mechanisms that respond directly to educational needs during crisis (e.g., BPRM, DoD, UNDP and the INGOs)
- Providing portable and recognizable government **certification and validation** of learning attainment, particularly for refugee and mobile populations
- **Learning outcomes:**
 - **Literacy and numeracy skills:** Children and youth living in crisis-affected countries often experience disruption in their regular sequence of literacy, numeracy instruction. These skills serve as the foundation of several other subjects, are often times the gateway for secondary instruction or financial independence. These skills therefore empower individuals. Carefully targeted remedial programs are important.
 - It is critical that these children not only attend school, and have access to school, but are in a **functional and productive environment**, with the right amount of support and materials that lead to learning. There are a lot of cost-effective, proven interventions (<https://economics.mit.edu/files/3117>) for "catching up" pupils who are behind, particularly in early grade literacy and numeracy. These have very high return on investment.
 - We need to define learning, well-being, safety and access outcomes for crisis-affected children. For learning: learning outcomes should include **social-emotional learning** outcomes. For well-being: need to look at **mental health**. For access: need to move beyond enrollment, and

look at **attendance and completion**. For safety: need to look at how **multiple forms of violence** are prevented and responded to. The important thing is that these are common outcomes across development and humanitarian funding streams.

- Improved **ability to read and write** for early grade learners (age 5-12). For youth, in addition to literacy and numeracy, one of the expected outcomes should be **digital literacy** for employment.
- Completing **formal education** is the most important outcome for the population we serve, out of school children and youth. These include finishing primary education or lower secondary education, usually by alternative or accelerated programs.
- A focus on the **social and emotional or psychosocial needs** of the learner in addition to the educational needs is important—in addition to regular textbooks, books that address psychosocial needs are critical. We're working on curating a collection of such books that would be available on mobile phones.
 - Developing a child's sense of her/his own **voice and agency** to make good decisions to follow through with their pursuit of an education. This goal can only be achieved in an education context that recognizes the importance of supporting children's social and emotional development and certain key competencies around this.
 - Look at an integrated/holistic approach with a focus on **social emotional learning, psychosocial support, and SRGBV**, as all of these factors impact learning outcomes. This can include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship building.
 - The highest educational outcome for children and youth is learning **core skills** (critical thinking, problem solving, effective communications, creativity and imagination), they need activities and experiences that develop self-esteem and for these to happen, all children and youth in crisis contexts need to be assisted to access quality education and or bridging programs to increase access.
 - A sense of **security and well-being**, basic **literacy and numeracy** skills in MT, SEL and psychosocial support as an integral part of EGR. Measures for EGR that include these things rather than looking only at EGRA.
 - Education outcomes that include gains and not only reading.
 - Children and youth suffer greatly from crises and displacement. They lose all security including friends and family and are physically and emotionally vulnerable. The main outcome should be **emotional and physical security**.
- **Critical thinking skills** (not just vocational or life skills), education for community and political agency and participation, teacher pedagogical training, Integrated curriculum, education for peace and social cohesion, youth primary and secondary education in emergencies (not just skills).
- Reinstalling formal education early in a crisis is essential. So is the need for designing age- and learner-specific support in the forms of **accelerated learning programs**, vocational education programs, early childhood interventions etc. Educational interventions that use mobile phones can be a good way to create continuity between informal and formal education.
- Safe, high-quality learning environments in crisis contexts that foster learning, **peace, social cohesion and resilience**.
- Focus on a **systems-strengthening** approach and connect investments in order to provide opportunities across the life cycle of the learner, and to provide a robust offering of modalities to meet the needs of exceptional learners.

- **Safe access** to education for children and youth, both male and females (in terms of safe learning places that fit in minimum global standards as well as safety on the way to and from school) enabling schools to respond to the overall needs.
- Improved community capacity in terms of **awareness to prioritize education** in crisis, particularly for females and community role ensuring their participation.
- We need to **harmonize accreditation** in the country of origin and country of asylum.
- The two high-level outcomes, based on our experiences in the Philippines, are (i) **less disruption of classes** by limiting the use of schools as go-to evacuation centers of the local government; and (ii) improved surveillance to promote child protection including providing "**accelerated learning support**" for children and youth who have dropped out. Disruption of education must be minimized and linked to certified levels of education. Uninterrupted education requires steady and reasonable compensation and training of teachers and school officials.
- Children should be equipped with skills and techniques to survive and live by their own, to **achieve global goals** in true spirit.
- Making it possible for children to pursue **alternate pathways** to educational attainment, and developing the capacity of national education authorities to spearhead these efforts wherever possible.
- I will refer to **SDG 4**. Here we need to focus on closing the gender gap in primary and secondary school completion (some crisis-affected countries like the CAR and Afghanistan have large gender gaps, with girls faring worse than boys in completion). We need to improve provision of quality education in such settings (ensuring trained teachers and materials are available) so as to ensure that young people are actually learning. And we need to ensure that there are good quality skills training programs available for young people in these contexts, including vocational/technical training to improve economic outcomes in post-crisis settings as well as life skills programs to help young people cope with crisis and encourage them to stay in and complete school. Finally, we need to ensure forced migrants (refugees, IDPs) have access to schooling: they are far less likely to be attending primary or secondary schooling.
- Each crisis context is unique, so there are **no standardized solutions**. This implies working on a small scale in many different contexts. Large-scale objectives, such as those set for literacy projects, would do harm, because they would set expectations for communities and schools without providing adequate guidance and tools. This is bad enough for literacy projects but even more harmful for SEL.

If the USG were to focus its investments on those outcomes, what medium term outcomes should we invest in?

Key Messages

- **Education outcomes must factor in the well-being, social emotional learning, psychosocial support, and mental health of learners and teachers.**
- **Develop the capacity of education institutions, learners and school communities to be resilient.**
- **Foster longer term USAID commitments and improved collaboration with Implementing Partners and national partners.**

- **Support research into crisis and conflict contexts and what works in terms of programming.**
- **Enhance access to and quality of education.**

Detailed Inputs

- The strategy should set out how education can **promote resilience** at various levels (institutional/systemic, school community, learner), and be based on the recognition that education can have two faces – it can either improve or worsen conflict and disaster factors.
- The strategy should address one major and unique challenge in these contexts: the dearth of accurate and timely **data** about the conditions on the ground, the populations and what their needs are. We need to be better at collecting data—or analyzing them.
- Lack of stability in the **education workforce**. Example: USAID invests money in training teachers, but those teachers may leave within 1-3 years...
- Effective education programs require **flexibility and adaptability**, but USAID's bureaucratic and contractual obstacles make this difficult. We should revisit USAID's 3-5 year lifecycle, as it takes 2.5-3 years to get a solid program running with a solid understanding on the ground. Unrealistic expectations about sustainability can also be addressed with **longer-term commitments**:
 - the best programs are the ones where we are on the ground for 10 years.
 - commitment and sustainability should require us to consult with local populations to understand their needs that they have identified themselves, instead of coming in as an external actor with a long-frame and a 5-year objective.
 - refer to [The Power of Persistence](#) that demonstrates that continual efforts yield results. This does not suggest 10-15 year contracts, but rather a consistent vision and long-term local relationships and partnerships.
- We must ask: high-level **outcomes for whom?** USAID? If a local population has other goals, are we prepared to support those?
- The most impactful projects are those in which **we work as a team** in consultation with USAID staff counterparts. Key characteristics of these staff include:
 - knowledgeable about education and the local context, are curious and creative, value local partners, respect implementing partners as bringing expertise and understand details that USAID may not.
 - mutually trusting relationship: they trust us, we trust them.
- Where **relationships with USAID staff** are strained, staffing factors can include:
 - Mission staff work in a sector silo and are unable to engage outside that silo.
 - there are too many cooks in the kitchen--for example, too many people designing a program evaluation.
 - staff have strained or poor relationship with the host government that can put the implementing partner in an awkward environment.
- USAID should pursue more donor **collaboration across partner international agencies** so programs and messaging to in-country constituencies are more aligned. This is particularly valuable in the case of institutional capacity building, where different donors can implement different (sometimes contradicting) programs/curricula.
- The USG should invest on building the capacity of individuals and communities to **mitigate conflict and promote peace**. In light of the SDGs, specifically Goal 16 (promoting peaceful and

inclusive societies), Goal 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and Goal 10 (reduced inequalities), there is a strong global imperative for understanding the essential connection between positive human development outcomes and ending recurrent cycles of conflict and violence. If education services, both formal and informal, are managed and delivered in conflict-sensitive, equitable and accountable ways, then they will create incentives for sustainable peace and build resilience to violent conflict. In Chad UNICEF's Learning for Peace supported equitable Education Management Information System data collection and analysis. For the first time, teachers and inspectors collected and reported information that supported analysis and understanding across dividing lines.

- Literacy (including financial literacy), numeracy, transition, leadership, new technologies, STEM.
- **Building and staffing schools**, and equipping them with high quality materials and instructional support.
- Education needs to be about more than economics, livelihoods, and skills. Relevant education needs to be understood as wider than immediate needs. Expanding the goals of education work to **educate the whole person for full participation** in their communities and society will:
 - build more advanced economies for the U.S. economy to interact with (to the U.S.'s advantage);
 - reduce the risks of conflicts, making states and regions more stable to the benefit of the U.S. economy and national security;
 - reinforce democratic values and processes, building greater linkages between developing countries and countries in crisis and the U.S. and the West at large; and
 - reinforce USAID's and more broadly the U.S. Government's efforts in other sectors, increasing the value-for-money of other initiatives.
- **Improve access and quality** in education programs serving children affected by crisis--including through collaborative and focused investments by governments, private institutions, and community groups in the provision of education. Examples include teaching and learning materials, improved management, modern technology and equipment, play equipment and WASH facilities.
- Provide learners with multiple pathways to enhance access to education by offering such things as **alternative learning** programs, vocational and skills training with particular focus on primary level education.
- Focus on a **functional curriculum** and educational programming that provides for increased student capability based on the core principles of developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities (KSAA). The students should be offered soft/core skills such as critical thinking; problem based learning, conflict negotiation, financial literacy and entrepreneurship.
- **Reform teacher and school leadership management** practices currently in place to facilitate effective delivery of curriculum and children's attainment of learning outcomes.
- Center mobilization outcomes on **changing attitudes towards education**, teachers and the profession. Enhance Communication for Development (C4D) at the community level to have buy-in at all levels.
- Have supporting mechanisms for **out-of-school children** affected by crisis and their families to enable them to participate in education.
- **Teacher quality** (as determined by their attendance, knowledge and care, i.e. no corporal punishment, no sex for grades).
- Sustained, cost-effective, proven interventions (<https://economics.mit.edu/files/3117>) for "**catching up**" pupils who are behind, particularly in early grade literacy and numeracy gaps. Much more study into pedagogical interventions that may have high return on learning-it would be wonderful to have

a "**What Works Clearinghouse**" (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>) for crisis-affected areas, as well as low and middle income countries.

- For the **foundational skills**, a medium-term outcome would be for children to '**catch up**' which would imply an outcome related to mechanisms for assessing children's needs and mechanisms for providing remedial education. For **social emotional** development goals, or more specifically, building a child's sense of their own voice and agency to make positive decisions (see above). The medium-term goal would be to establish a positive and supporting learning environment that is designed to strengthen a child's social skills and resilience. We also know that children who have experienced chronic toxic environments, in the absence of human support networks (i.e. close family members who are always there for them, not just sporadically, or other people who care and provide a sense of belonging and attachment during this time) are at high risk of diminished executive function (i.e. attention, focus, etc.). Finally, we can't overlook the importance of the medium term goal of establishing a conceptual and measurement framework to guide the research, evaluation and monitoring of this work.
- To secure future generations from trauma, it is best to offer them educational tools that can assist them to express their **feelings and emotions**.
- It is also crucial to provide the youth with education in a **proper learning environment** (temporary buildings can be set up using containers) in order to offer them some sense of security and hope for the future.
- **Sports** is also a good way to keep their minds away from all the distractions.
- Invest in greater **emergency response capacity** for acute emergencies to involve children in learning opportunities in the first three months of a crisis.
- Invest in **online/offline digital technology** that can create a transition from emergency response to sustained service. Even amidst instability, people carry mobile phones with them, and it's a natural next step to use mobile phones to deliver educational resources like books, games, tips for parents/caregivers to strengthen bonds with children and help them learn.
- Invest in parents, caregivers, and teachers/communities to establish **safe learning environments**. Teacher training, access to quality teaching and learning materials and psychosocial support to this work force is needed. Trainings must focus on the emotional as well as the educational needs of a child affected by crisis.
- Simply focusing on **one stage of life is insufficient**—donors must invest in early childhood through tertiary education and ensure increased percentages of refugee and conflict impacted children participate and learn.
- **Access to education**, in terms of ensuring safety of learning spaces (building or renovation or mobile spaces) and provision of learning tools as well as enabling schools to respond to overall needs, psychosocial, protection, social emotional skills, etc.
- Teachers who understand the importance of **social emotional learning skills** and how to help children acquire them.
- School systems with the **human and material resources** to support the teachers and students.
- Teachers and caregivers are critical to achieving these outcomes for children. So medium term outcomes should focus on **building teacher and caregiver capacity**—improving the quality of not only the classroom environment but of instruction, and parent/child interactions. There is a strong evidence base on best approaches for teacher professional development and supporting caregivers that can be drawn upon from stable contexts that includes important lessons for mentoring/coaching and peer learning opportunities. Community engagement in ensuring access, learning, well-being and safety outcomes is also crucial.

- Teaching **peacebuilding** in schools.
- **Improve learning facilities** to guarantee dignity and great learning experiences and reduce crowding, train and facilitate teachers and educators.
- Internally, we can start with USAID country-missions to **improve humanitarian- development coherence** so that education in emergencies could be implemented in a more structured and consistent way.
 - Look at the current funding cycle and bridge development and humanitarian funding/work so that there is greater sustainability. Flexibility and opportunities to re-program education funding to education in emergencies during a crisis or emergency is critical.
 - Set up child friendly spaces in the emergency phase towards transitioning these to offer interventions on accelerated learning activities so students can catch up on lessons that they have missed during their displacement; tracking of students; helping children to go back to school such as securing lost documents; and generally bringing development expertise into emergencies.
- Less disruption of classes by **limiting the use of schools as the go-to evacuation centers**, which, when used appropriately, can and should provide safe and adequate spaces for school-aged children and youth to continue their studies and be engaged in other activities that promote child agency at these spaces.
 - Explore collaboration between teachers, principals and local governments to identify alternate safe and appropriate locations that will serve as evacuation centers in their locality. Schools and local government units should develop plans for the quick resumption of education services in their locality.
 - Improve surveillance to promote child protection including providing "accelerated learning support" for children and youth that have dropped out.
 - Schools and local governments set-up mechanisms to track children affected by disasters and have dropped out, and children that have received accelerated learning support, and were able to re-enroll or go back to schools.
- Ability to **read and write** in mother tongue (age 5-12); ability to read with fluency and comprehension a simple passage (age 13-17). Medium term (three to six years) should be completion of formal education (primary, lower secondary).
- Acquisition of **basic life cognitive competencies** certified at least to level two of a national qualification framework (level three desirable). For youth embarking in TVET, also at least level three.
- A medium term outcome would be that **teachers are paid** as soon possible after an acute event and that in sustained emergencies they are paid consistently over a given period of time a reasonable salary. Brookings wrote a report on this but has never received the full visibility that it deserves.
- Creating an **enabling environment** for learning (maybe a set of competencies and behaviors), looking at the school environment and classroom, school leadership. school readiness, positive relationships
- Strategies that communities and governments can use to **ensure access** to schooling/educational opportunities or keep learning momentum going during times of instability (venues, formats, instructors).
- Quality **coordination** efforts in acute and protracted emergencies, through the Education Cluster working with LEGs.

- Supporting partners to **measure and document the impact of education** interventions on children's wellbeing and learning.
- **Research tools** for the assessment of the children, teachers and parents with refined tools for gathering information followed by advocacy for influencing policy.
- Researching and scaling up **proven alternate pathways** to educational attainment, including e-learning, but most importantly enabling students to track and receive credit for their progress (in their native language)
- For **critical thinking skills**: Curricula and pedagogies updated to mainstream critical thinking;
- For **youth**—community and political agency, and participation:
 - Increased youth participation in community engagement and decision-making, particularly on issues or topics that directly pertain to youth;
 - Increased acceptance of and support for active youth participation among parents and other community leaders, Improved attitudes toward youth on the part of the community;
 - Youth access to primary and secondary education in emergencies--expansion of education programs in emergencies to include youth-compatible comprehensive primary and secondary education;
 - Expansion of well-monitored and evaluated accelerated education programs and improved evidence on current AEPs' efficacy
- For participatory and critical pedagogy **teachers training**: Standardized teacher trainings being updated to be rooted in participatory and critical pedagogy, Increased number of current and new teachers at the primary and secondary levels trained in and employing participatory and critical pedagogy;
- For education for **peace and social cohesion**:
 - National curricula revised to integrate peace education themes and skills into all subject areas;
 - National curricula revised to meet conflict sensitivity standards.
 - Teachers and administrators trained on creating a classroom and school environments consistent with and conducive to teaching peace education.
- Ensuring adequate **financing** for education programs.
- Ensuring adequate numbers of **trained teachers** (including providing teachers with training).
- Ensuring adequate **infrastructure and materials**.
- Ensuring adequate numbers of children and youth enrolled in **training programs**.
- Sensitization programs to emphasize the value and safety of schooling (especially for girls).

What are the two biggest challenges you face in trying to achieve those educational outcomes for children and young people?

Key Messages

- **The lack of multi-year prioritized and predictable funding linked across humanitarian, recovery and development.**
- **Unrealistic USAID education outcomes given that the agency may contribute only 5% to the total amount of education funding in a country.**
- **Insufficient evidence-based interventions supporting higher level education outcomes.**
- **Inadequate national level education data.**

Detailed Inputs

- It is hard enough to be a teacher in these challenging environments, so how can we provide ongoing **teacher training and support**?
 - Support teachers, particularly within the **psychosocial** support field. Teachers need support themselves as they too, have experienced trauma and crisis training should not focus only on how to support children. This has been challenging, along with teacher retention once they have been trained.
- Children aren't getting education services fast enough—we need to **early focus on learning** right from the beginning when entering these contexts.
- We lack a common framework across agencies and across humanitarian-development spaces about **cost efficiency**.
- There is too much **disruption to switch donors**.
- An **absence of coordination across sectors** to pursue countering violent extremism outcomes. Consider workforce development--new research is emerging that quality education without the opportunities to use that education can do more harm/create grievance.
- Our **outcomes can be problematic**. USAID will typically contribute 5% of the total level of effort in the education sector in a given country, but often we set our goals as if we can accomplish mighty goals for the entire 100% of the system. We also need to increase the LOE for improving coordination.
- We have several levels of challenges, but the one listed below affects directly the education system of most developing countries: the **lack of transparency or exclusion** within political decision-making processes targeting children's and youth education. This results in:
 - Perpetuation of divisions based on identity due to the lack of equitable access to education and social services, or inequitable and inaccessible Education and social service provision.
 - Inability of government mechanisms to appropriately guard against and respond to violence.
 - Inability of the state to respond to shifts in demand for education and social services caused by displacement and migration.
- In Uganda, to remedy damaged relationships between citizens and government, Learning for Peace partners worked with schools and the security and law enforcement sectors to strengthen the police and judicial systems' case management capacity to address violence in schools. Police officers received case management training and visited 1,478 schools across 20 districts, during which they raised students' and teachers' awareness of reporting and protection mechanisms. These interventions helped improve government authorities' understanding of their responsibilities, and increased citizens' trust in the law and security measures. Between 2014 and 2015, of more than 500,000 calls to the Child Helpline Service, police responded to 6,828 child abuse cases.
- The **challenges in numeracy** are a critical point, and how the lack of basic skills affects adolescents in the midterm (poor STEM outcomes, limited financial literacy) and long term (limited skilled workforce on science/engineering, limited capacity to engage with innovative technologies to solve local issues, low capacity to expand local businesses). It is also critical to look at the gendered aspects of numeracy and logical thinking development.
- Ensuring **consistency** at scale, and creating and retaining high quality teachers.

- **Financing:**
 - The funding available for a humanitarian crisis rarely prioritizes education and is often short term, which makes it difficult for education stakeholders to undertake long term planning. The lack of multi-year prioritized and predictable funding for Education in Emergencies is not enabling children and youth to complete a basic education cycle and transit into further education and/or employment.
 - There is a need to strength the linkage between the funding available for humanitarian relief, recovery and development nexus to ensure continuity and commitment to provision of a full primary education cycle.
- **Data Collection, Analysis and Management:**
 - In a crisis context, it is very difficult to get valid demographical baseline data for children and youth impacted by crisis. This restricts effective resourcing and the planning of interventions due to the use of estimates.
 - Collecting accurate data on indicators such as enrolment, attendance, retention and completion during interventions on a periodic basis is challenging and can affect implementer's ability to modify programing and measure impact.
- **Teaching:**
 - Classrooms in crisis-affected countries have children of variant ages and literacy or numeracy levels. Every teacher experiences the difficulty of meeting a wide range of needs in his/her classroom, but the issue is more pronounced in these classrooms. We are exploring ways to meet every child for where his/her current level, first through whole-class interventions (ensuring that our learning materials are at the level of the classroom average, and giving differentiated tasks to pupils at different levels), and also through exploring re-sorting children according to their level for a portion of the day. These are all imperfect ways that need further innovation.
 - It is difficult to change adult behavior, especially in systems that have not held them accountable for generations, or systems that have been vulnerable or disrupted by conflict around them. Yet, teacher quality is a key driver of student achievement, as demonstrated by overwhelming research.
 - In many crisis-affected contexts, the most efficient way to improve teacher quality would be to hold a rigorous selection process (not tied to formal qualifications); hold educators accountable for diligence (e.g. attendance), and driving learning gains. We have found that formal qualifications do not correlate with driving pupil learning gains, but that other metrics—teachers' literacy level, the teachers' numeracy level, how conscientiousness the teacher is - are much more predictive of student success. (There is a lot of evidence in similar context: <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/340/6130/297.full>).
- Short funding cycles in humanitarian conflicts as well as underinvestment in this space lead to **short term investments** that do not necessarily coordinate, which is especially critical for technology-based interventions. This leads to insufficient encouragement for community- or refugee-led efforts to foster quality learning environments.
- The **competing social norms** that have considerable influence and present enormous barriers to achieving even the medium-term goals. Societal structures of inequality and injustice established as a result of longstanding gender norms and the imbalance of power related to gender, economic status, age and privilege interfere with measures to

strengthen children's sense of self and agency. These are often exacerbated in centers of conflict and crisis and where the marginalized have little status. The second challenge is methodology. The conventional methods of training, sensitization and advocacy just don't work to shift the norm toward inclusion and loving environments where any form of disrespect, violence or injustice is not tolerated. New methods of engagement and interaction are needed.

- There is a self (agency)-imposed requirement to go to a **scale** that is not supported by an adequate budget and prohibits flexibility in design and experiential learning in implementation.
- How to achieve a continuum of education services from **acute emergency through recovery**. We face inconsistent levels of support where traditional humanitarian donors do not invest in education in crisis contexts; short-term humanitarian funding for crisis contexts that is insufficient given the number of years children in crisis remain out of school and displaced; donor fatigue to continuously invest in education in protracted contexts; bureaucratic delays in deploying resources for education quickly during crisis. This creates a lack of predictable, consistent funding, disrupting education services for children and resulting in differences in the quality of education children receive.
- The **lack of a consistent and transparent costing method** and an evidence base on what works as well as how/under what conditions, which result in policymakers and donors failing to have information they need to make informed decisions about the best use of their resources in order to reach the most number of children with the greatest impact at the lowest cost.
- The field could benefit from the types of **multi-year funding** that USAID offers for all types of crises—and funding for research alongside programs.
- How to provide **safe places** for children and youth to be able to attend educational programs when working in unsafe communities.
- We face **substandard school systems** and facilities that don't motivate learners and are undignified.
- We lack accurate and timely **registration of the displaced populations**. Tracking of children at the community, schools and local government units in the aftermath of disasters can be improved to ensure that adequate education and protection services are provided from emergency to recovery phases.
- Structural and systemic constraints that lead to schools being used as **evacuation centers** thereby disrupting the delivery of education services; poor execution of laws and policies that can bring more financial support and investments to do EiE as well as prevent and address incidents of children dropping out of schools or engaging in worst forms of child labor.
- **Poor government support** or commitment to deploy resources for teacher training and monitoring
- For children, there is a **scarcity of programs to prevent dropout** (being expelled) from the formal educational system; for youth, a lack of programs, and qualified personnel, to provide **alternative education**, TVET and workforce development services Institutional weakness (regulatory, organizational, financial, and human resources) to design, oversee and or deliver these programs
- **USAID insistence on learning outcomes**, when perhaps stable and safe access is most important children's well-being.

- USAID's imposition of a "classic" and increasingly overloaded **early grade reading model**, which may not be feasible in crisis settings.
- Lack of **light, inclusive ways to measure learning** in crisis contexts.
- The lack of teacher familiarity about **attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder**.
- Dearth of **longitudinal research** funding to identify evidence-based methods for attainment. Lack of financial support to scale up proven approaches to early childhood education for literacy and numeracy. Insufficient access to funding to carry out research on what works in improving education access, completion, and quality outcomes for children and youth in crisis and conflict.
- The tension between immediate education needs and the **shift to longer-term growth** in efficacy and efficiency. Often the emphasis is on number of children reached with basic needs which inhibits the growth and professionalization of education. As the global agenda increasingly focuses on quality (SDGs and other policy instruments), it becomes important to prioritize long-term results that may not produce immediate quantitative results. The lack of resources and unfamiliarity of ministries and development professionals with these areas may lead to the urge to revert to old program models, which do little to prepare students for full social participation beyond livelihoods, which cannot build advanced economies. Education needs to be about more than jobs; it needs to empower people to determine their future through peaceful, democratic processes. This requires a shift many stakeholders resist.
- **Insufficient evidence-based initiatives** that demonstrate the benefits of these outcomes internationally and the long-term nature of evidence gathering and impact: These proposed outcomes have never been pursued systematically or consistently, or appropriately resourced, making evidence for efforts to achieve them thin. This requires creative planning, innovation, and willingness to learn from failings over acceptance of mediocre results from safer initiatives. A robust, long-term M&E scheme would also need to be developed early and sustained over time to determine the full impact of initiatives. Resource and implementing partners alike would need to accept limited immediate results in favor of greater longer-term and sustainable results.
- We need to have a greater commitment to **those left behind**. The number of children with disabilities in areas of crisis are much higher than in stable areas. Children with compound challenges are seldom discussed. For instance, female disabled youth can form a minority tribe.

Across the USG, what opportunities exist to leverage various agencies' comparative strengths for improved education outcomes in crisis and conflict?

Key Messages

- **Demonstrate the contributions of education to other sectors (democratic governance, CVE, economic growth, WASH, food security, etc.) and convene other offices/agencies in the development of education outcomes.**
- **Enhance the inclusion of multi-sectoral concepts, such as resilience and youth, into education outcomes.**

Detailed Inputs

- It could be strategic to look at the exercise from **perspective of other sectors** to articulate and leverage the contributions of education to their sectoral goals (CVE, Democratic Governance, Economic Growth, etc.). This can further argue for investing in education and for collaboration across strategic goals. For example, the El Salvador RERA surfaced how education can be the most local interface between citizen and state at a time of great strain on the social compact, how police and schools can collaborate (better), how school communities can reduce violence, etc.
- Thinking differently about education is made difficult due to the **funding structure**. If there's a way we can loosen that up, education can really be seen as part of the integral strategy to address common goals.
- What if we replaced “education” with “**sustainability**” in all four of these questions, how would our answers to these questions be different?
- Look at the **White House funding to Kenya** in the post-election period (project: [Yes Youth Can](#)), a multi-sectoral mechanism that addressed enterprise, education, health, civic engagement with successful results.
- Cooperation and coordination within USAID—there are still challenges integrating sectors within the agency. **Country Development Cooperation Strategy** examples:
 - There has been a fair amount of support to work with local governments in monitoring and evaluation.
 - The CDCS process is really dependent on who is in the mission and what their relationship is with local government partners.
 - In addition to the USG level strategy, is there a coherent USG strategy at the mission level amongst agencies?
 - It would be interesting to see how the CDCS approach and USAID's restructuring conversations align or not.
- Setting **peacebuilding as an explicit goal**. Most NGOs and UN agencies recognize that “complementary interventions, such as peacebuilding, are necessary for achieving results in conflict-affected contexts”. Donor agencies supporting the provision of social services in conflict-affected contexts could use their financial and political leverage to promote conflict-sensitive, risk-informed and peacebuilding programming. This could include requiring conflict analyses for programs and promoting the incorporation of peacebuilding indicators within national Education Information Management Systems.
- Developing a more **common approach to conducting conflict analyses**: While a range of conflict assessments developed by various international actors exists, there is significant variability on how the findings from such analyses inform programmatic interventions and accountabilities. The Learning for Peace program provided a model of how a full range of needs and issues can be considered at the outset, and how national ownership and understanding about risks can be facilitated and acted upon. The exercise of linking conflict analyses, theories of change, and programmatic initiatives and M&E systems to the country program is worth reviewing as well.
- **Leverage agreed vision and existing, tested resources**: Through the work of the Learning for Peace program, and the guidance developed in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), there now exists an agreement on what ‘conflict-sensitive education’ looks like, as well as how it might be implemented

across the range of education sub-sectors. The development of the Conflict Sensitive Education Pack, funded by Learning for Peace, has produced a tool that can be used systematically to guide the design and implementation of interventions in partnership with national governments and/or non-state actors.

- ECCN, INEE Working Groups, and ECW.
- USG Section 385, USAID grants, PRM grants. Broader engagement with **non-government advocacy organizations** like INEE and GSF, and their non-state members.
- A “**What Works Clearinghouse**” (<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>) would be a superb applied resource for crisis and conflict regions. One centralized repository for allowing operators to access high quality evidence for what works in these contexts would be an excellent service to the community. Development and crisis experts have (and will continue to) study these contexts carefully; we need a way of getting that information out.
- The NCES and NAGB would be useful partners in **developing higher-quality assessments**. We strongly recommend keeping high-quality assessment at the forefront of any strategic effort to improve outcomes in crisis-affected regions. This will promote accountability to support the most fragile populations. Testing and measurement in low and middle income countries is far behind what the U.S. DOE (and various state education agencies) produce, and what NAEP and NAGB have in place. While there are high-quality assessments available, many come with limitations. Tests such as EGRA, EGMA have been groundbreaking, but are limited to the early grades, and expensive or time intensive to administer. SACMEQ has done excellent work, but their test is limited to a specific grade. Other tests like TIMSS and PIRLS have historically been administered to OECD countries, and only piloted in low and middle income contexts. USAID would benefit from some collaboration with NCES and NAGB to further investigate improvements for measurement of learning outcomes.
- **Bring expertise together**: empower local organizations by partnering with other INGO's to maximize capacity and strength for better improved results; partner with other agencies to capitalize on local knowledge, community presence to maximize outreach and strengthen role of empowerment.
- **Greater cooperation and coordination within USAID**, especially around integrating sectors within the agency.
- **Social emotional learning** is attracting much interest among US educators, but what we are learning in various US contexts needs to be thoughtfully tried and applied in the even-more various non-US contexts. This is an opportunity for long-term, collaborative partnerships among US agencies and their implementing partners (US and non-US NGOs), who face common challenges and can learn from each other.
- **USAID and other USG agencies should leverage strengths**.
 - The strength of USAID projects is its focus on outcomes, accountability, and evidence generation through multi-year financing. USAID also has strong value in its links to government and ability to leverage its influence to engage and sustain key in-country policymakers to invest in a national response. The strength of humanitarian donors--although not always in education--is their ability to reach conflict-affected children, including refugees and IDPs, quickly and focus on well-being and safety. Pulling this together to ensure a continuum of education

services; a comprehensive and whole child approach of a focus on learning and well-being and safety; and obtaining government buy in and investment.

- USG agencies should also leverage their strengths to engage in systems-building in a way that brings the right stakeholders to the table and ensure consistency in response—this includes not just at the government level, but involves communities, local and international NGOs as well.
 - Pursue meaningful outcomes for children defined and agreed to across USG agencies, with funding available quickly and over multiple years across contexts and from all agencies to meet these outcomes; and transparent communication about where resources are going, how much, to whom and with what results across agencies.
 - USAID's YouthPower initiative has developed a strong framework for Positive Youth Development and Soft Skills that could easily be used/adapted for emergency education.
 - Look at synergies around inputs like food, water, WASH, latrines, (USDA, Feed the Future, EFP) and creating an enabling environment for learning.
 - OFDA has a strong voice at the table when it comes to humanitarian donors. OFDA's voice should be leveraged in support of protective quality education in all crisis contexts. USAID has a wealth of experience on improving learning outcomes in development contexts that could be learnt from in crisis contexts.
 - DoS's public and direct diplomacy resources can strengthen approaches to advocacy for these areas. Expertise from DoS CSO, DRL, PRM, and TIP, as well as S/GWI, could also prove helpful. DoE can also provide experience and expertise that could be applicable. Explore interactions of diverse departments and agencies around youth work as a model for how to put forward a whole-of-government approach to education in crisis and conflict.
- We need more public agencies that support effort to teach **peacebuilding** in public schools.
 - **USG's convening power** to tap into the resources of the host government, academia and business/NGO sectors.
 - Coming up with a **single strategy** with inputs from different agencies within the USG.
 - Coordination and, when feasible, integration of the work conducted by the various agencies is key. Otherwise, the various agencies may duplicate efforts, compete for the same participants (which may generate rivalries and perverse incentives), and often, develop programs that are mutually damaging. The gold standard would be to have synergistic interventions by the different agencies.
 - UNICEF and other international and national health institutions are looking into the subject of **special children or children with disabilities**.
 - The opportunity exists, but has not been taken, to utilize a **Collective Impact approach** to bringing all stakeholders to the table to work on shared vision and shared measurements, and put collective shoulder to the wheel. However we continue to use siloed and competitive approaches, which aren't going to work.
 - Use of **data/technology to map out violence against schools** (connecting with NASA, military, etc.); cooperation with military and humanitarian missions to ensure school and education personnel safety as well as rebuilding education infrastructure; cooperation with finance agencies to ensure sufficient funding.

- **Pursue long term programs** rather than short term projects. Programs with a future sustainability can be designed with consultation within countries. And if the communities are involved in the design of the program, they can also take responsibility for its sustainability. A commitment from communities can be secured before the initiation of the program. People are willing to take ownership, if they see benefits to their children.
- **Social emotional learning and safe and supportive school environments** are key. When working in crisis, it is crucial to work on various aspects simultaneously, the system, the community as well as ensuring quality of education. Child labor and violence are major issues in crisis that can be eradicated through a well thought education program that can reach the community and the school.
- **Early childhood education** and pre-primary education should also be prioritized, as interventions have the highest success potential when are conducted at early ages. These interventions also have the highest ROI, both socially and financially.
- Consider partnering with the **Stanford Social Innovation Review** to develop the kind of backbone organization and constant communication between broad range of partners to make change happen.