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CHECKLIST FOR CONFLICT SENSITIVITY IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

NOVEMBER 2013

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Valerie Haugen and JBS International, with substantial input from Nina Papadopoulos (E3 Senior Field Technical Advisor).

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DISCLAIMER
The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to Valerie Haugen (private consultant), who helped develop and pilot the Checklist; Nina Papadopoulos (USAID/E3/ED), who commissioned and supported this project; and to Yolande Miller-Grandvaux (USAID), Christine Beggs (USAID), Christina Olenik (JBS International) and Wendy Lee (JBS International), who provided guidance and assistance throughout the process. The publication also benefited from the assistance of Terrie Young, who is with the Design Team of JBS International.

Thank you also to the USAID Education staff working in Somalia and Liberia for their warm hospitality and cooperation in enabling the pilot of the *Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs.*

Recognition and thanks also go to the following agencies and organizations for their participation during the in-country piloting process: MercyCorps, CARE, Save the Children, Africa Education Trust (AET), UNICEF, UNESCO, Global Partnership for Education Secretariat, European Union, Advancing Youth, Peace Corps, Concern Worldwide, World Bank, Action Aid, World ORT, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEAL), Plan Liberia, Liberia Education Trust (LET), Somalia Ministry of Education, and the Liberia Ministry of Education.

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INTRODUCTION

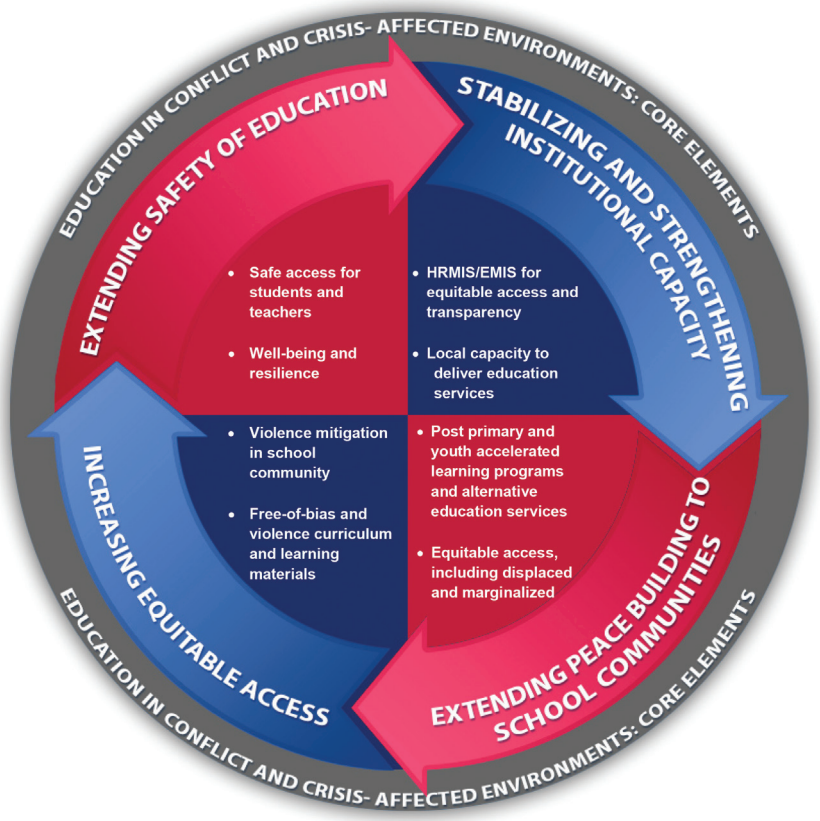
Roughly half of USAID's assistance goes to countries affected by conflict and fragility. Children living in countries affected by violence are three times as likely to be out of school. Under the USAID Education Strategy, programs should ensure equity of access to education by explicitly addressing such inequalities. Inequalities in access to learning opportunities may be a consequence of any number of factors. For example, disparities in access to education can be localized or systemic, arising from consistent inequalities in policy frameworks or exclusionary practices. Inequalities can and often do lead to feelings of marginalization and grievances.

One core principle for good international engagement in fragile and conflict-affected states is to ensure all assistance is "conflict sensitive." This principle has been endorsed by USAID and the international community. It is based upon the recognition that all foreign assistance—education programs included—interacts with conflict dynamics in some way, whether positively or negatively, intentionally or unintentionally. The goal of conflict sensitive development practice is to minimize unintended negative outcomes and increase intentional positive ones, while remaining focused on our fundamental development goals and objectives.

The *Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs* will assist USAID education programs in effectively and efficiently meeting Goal 3 of the USAID Education Strategy: Increase equitable access to education in conflict and crisis environments. Applying conflict sensitivity to program design, implementation, and monitoring will improve education programs by making them more equitable, effective, efficient, and sustainable.

The Core Elements of programs that increase equitable access are illustrated below. (See Figure 1.) These represent the building blocks of programming under Goal 3.

Figure 1: Core Elements in Increasing Equitable Access



1. OECD. Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States, 2007, found here: http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/principlesforgoodinternationalengagementinfragilestates.htm

What is the purpose of the Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs?

The Checklist offers a practical framework for analyzing the operational and technical aspects of education programs. This ensures the reduction of conflict and tensions, which promotes equity and social cohesion and builds peace.

With this Checklist, USAID expects Missions to develop and maintain a deeper, context- specific understanding of the underlying sources of conflict and their interaction, influence on, and impact within the education domain.

What is conflict sensitivity in education and why is it important?

Conflict sensitivity in education includes:

- Understanding the context in which the organization or program is operating, particularly inter-group relations;
- Understanding the interactions between interventions and the context/group relations; and
- Acting upon the understanding of these interactions in order to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts of a program or other intervention.

When education increases social tensions or division, it can contribute to conflict. For instance, if children or youth from one ethnic group have less access to education than those of other groups, or if a history textbook favors the dominant group, then this can increase tensions that may contribute to conflict. Conflict sensitivity requires diagnosing these elements and taking actions to remedy them.

Education that is conflict sensitive encompasses policies, activities, and approaches that promote equitable access to educational opportunity and curricula based on skills and values that support peace and social cohesion.

Conflict sensitivity as "do no harm"

A minimum requirement of being conflict sensitive is to "do no harm"—keeping in mind the impact of education assistance on conflict. This requires making all decisions with an awareness of how they could affect power relations and inter-group relations that may contribute to conflict. For example, there should be enough awareness of the context to ensure that new programs do not favor one side of a conflict through language of instruction, teacher recruitment, or location of schools.

Conflict sensitivity as promoting inclusion and equitable access

By collecting and analyzing data, we can determine who does and does not have access to education and why. Once this is determined, we can design and monitor our programs to meet education needs of marginalized and vulnerable population groups, thereby making education more inclusive and equitable.

A conflict-sensitive education program may also work to actively transform tension and support peace by teaching respect for diversity, as well as local, national, and global citizenship.

Why a Checklist?

Oversights in programming occur for two main reasons: (1) lack of information, and (2) misuse of the information that we have.[1] Many of the oversights made in education programs in conflict and crisis environments reflect the second error due to the complexity of working in these contexts.

This checklist can help reduce unnecessary and harmful actions. It serves as a guiding framework, providing the key steps to promote inclusion and increase equitable access to education in conflict and crisis environments.

1. Gawande, Atul. *The Checklist Manifesto: How to get things right.* 2009.

How is the Checklist structured?

The Checklist is divided into 7 categories:

Category	What it Measures
Commitment and accountability	Whether and how the organization and key stakeholders maintain up-to-date knowledge about conflict dynamics.
Strategy	Whether the education strategy demonstrates an understanding of the conflict context and its interaction with the education domain. Whether contracts and grants include requirements to apply tools and processes that routinely analyze and assess the interaction between conflict and the education domain.
Equitable access	Whether and how the education program is designed and carried out based on equity and inclusion, and whether it systematically ensures safety and protection.
Curricula, teaching and learning	Whether learning materials are vetted for inclusion of content on safety and protection, crisis prevention, peace building and social cohesion; whether methods promote inclusion; and whether language of instruction is unifying rather than divisive.
Capacity building	Whether management decisions regarding education personnel including recruitment, placement, qualifications, and compensation are sensitive to sex, race, ethnicity, and power dynamics.
Community engagement	Whether the approach to community engagement aims to rebuild social cohesion, mitigate conflict, and promote peace and stability.
Monitoring and evaluation	Whether indicators that measure the relationship between conflict mitigation and peace-building are identified and measured. Whether data that identifies who is and is not accessing education is collected and analyzed based on age, ethnicity, sex, location, religion, etc. Whether Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) collect data on students and teachers based on inclusion and equity; and whether decisions are made based on analysis of this data.

Who is the Checklist for?

USAID education personnel, implementing partners, and partner government counterparts should utilize the checklist when planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating education programs.

When is the Checklist used?

Planning – Utilize the checklist to guide assessments and data gathering during the program design phase. This can help to identify key categories where more attention is needed.

Implementation – During project start up, apply and fill out the checklist to develop a baseline for conflict sensitivity within the education program. Use this baseline to identify the main areas where the education program is particularly conflict blind or conflict sensitive. Plan for actions to improve conflict blind aspects and

build on strengths, develop indicators to monitor these actions, and incorporate them into the project work plan and performance management plan (PMP).

Monitoring and evaluation – Once a project is being implemented, the checklist can be used to (1) gauge progress in conflict sensitivity from the baseline, (2) bring key education actors together to revisit initial project assumptions, and (3) reflect on recent events both within and peripheral to the education domain that may affect project implementation or results. Events that could alter program activities include outbreaks of violence, forced migration or displacement, natural disasters, a change in country or education sector leadership, changes to curriculum or education-related policies, and economic strains that affect resources for education, to name a few.

How the Checklist is used?

Step 1: Fill out the Checklist

Bring key education actors together in a workshop setting for at least two days. During this period, group participants by project, location, or organization; instruct the participants fill out the Checklist individually.

Step 2: Reach consensus

After filling out the Checklist, have individuals meet in groups to discuss their rationales for answers and any disagreements.

Step 3: Score

After consensus is gained, tally points, and use scoring table to interpret the level of conflict sensitivity. Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point. Totals for Sections I-VII of the Checklist can be totaled by hand or the accompanying electronic tally sheet can be used which can be downloaded here: http://ow.ly/u45Pn

Step 4: Take action

Some of what we learn after applying the Checklist will require adjustments in project implementation or data collection practices and systems. Much of what we learn will require systemic actions at a national level.

What to be careful about?

Conflict-sensitive education strategies can be controversial. Strategies are more likely to be sustainable if they are based on a broad dialogue and buy-in from a wide range of education actors. Further, such strategies may require more political traction, and donor and stakeholder coordination than the Education Ministry alone can generate.

CHECKLIST FOR CONFLICT-SENSITIVITY IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

I. COMMITMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. My organization is well-informed about the dynamics and effects of conflicts and crises at the:			
1. National level	☐	☐	☐
2. State or provincial level	☐	☐	☐
3. Local level	☐	☐	☐
4. Cross-border level	☐	☐	☐
B. My organization undertakes or collaborates on periodic assessments of conflict and crisis and education.	☐	☐	☐
C. Implementing partners regularly analyze and report on the following aspects of the implementation context:			
1. The causes of conflict	☐	☐	☐
2. The dynamics of conflict	☐	☐	☐
3. The actors involved in conflict	☐	☐	☐
4. How the conflict affects a current or planned intervention	☐	☐	☐
D. Documents produced by consultants and implementing partners are vetted by the education unit to ensure that analysis and reports reflect:			
1. Understanding of the context in which the program is operating, particularly inter-group relations	☐	☐	☐
2. Understanding of the interactions between the program and the context/group relations	☐	☐	☐
3. Action upon the understanding of these interactions, in order to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts of the program	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 1. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Commitment and Accountability

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
9 – 12	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
6 – 8	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
3 – 5	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 2	No or little conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

II. STRATEGY

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. The education strategy incorporates the findings of country conflict assessments	☐	☐	☐
B. The education strategy or program demonstrates an understanding of:			
1. Issues that drive conflicts	☐	☐	☐
2. Actual or potential actors who drive conflicts	☐	☐	☐
3. Actual or potential actors who can build peace	☐	☐	☐
4. Socio-cultural elements that connect people in a positive way	☐	☐	☐
5. Opportunities for transforming conflict in a positive way	☐	☐	☐
6. How education services and resource allocation may unintentionally exacerbate conflicts	☐	☐	☐
7. How education services and resource allocation may have positive effects on a conflict-affected context	☐	☐	☐
C. The theory of change or development hypothesis is clear about:			
1. The expected effects of programming on conflict.	☐	☐	☐
2. The expected effects of conflict on education programming	☐	☐	☐
D. Procurement documents and contracts include specific expectations about how and when to review the interaction between conflict and the program throughout the program cycle.	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 2. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Strategy

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
9 – 11	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
6 – 8	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
3 – 5	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 2	No or little conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

III. EQUITABLE ACCESS

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. Data is collected to enable a clear understanding of who is and is not accessing education based on:			
1. Age	☐	☐	☐
2. Ethnicity (if possible)	☐	☐	☐
3. Sex	☐	☐	☐
4. Religion (if possible)	☐	☐	☐
5. Location (urban/peri-urban/rural)	☐	☐	☐
6. Disability type	☐	☐	☐
B. The interventions increase protection of learners and education personnel in and out of school from:			
1. Forms of sexual and gender-based violence	☐	☐	☐
2. Insecurity	☐	☐	☐
3. Exploitative and hazardous work	☐	☐	☐
4. Risks associated with natural disasters	☐	☐	☐
5. Abduction	☐	☐	☐
6. Trafficking	☐	☐	☐
C. The equitable access approach supports learners':			
1. Physical protection	☐	☐	☐
2. Emotional well-being	☐	☐	☐
3 Cognitive development	☐	☐	☐

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III. EQUITABLE ACCESS (continued)

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
D. The equitable access approach includes an emergency preparedness plan that is:			
1. Documented	☐	☐	☐
2. Updated regularly	☐	☐	☐
3. Monitored, assessed, and evaluated	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 3. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Equitable Access

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
14 – 18	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
9 – 13	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
4 – 8	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 3	No or little conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

IV. CURRICULA, TEACHING & LEARNING MATERIALS, & METHODS

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. A standardized framework is used to ensure the content of curricula and teaching/learning/training materials by checking for:			
1. Political bias	☐	☐	☐
2. Ethnic bias	☐	☐	☐
3. Religious bias	☐	☐	☐
4. Gender bias	☐	☐	☐
5. Bias against people with disabilities	☐	☐	☐
6. Violence	☐	☐	☐
B. Curricula and teaching/learning/training materials:			
1. Accommodate learners from different language backgrounds when possible	☐	☐	☐
2. Foster a sense of belonging	☐	☐	☐
3. Are provided equitably	☐	☐	☐
4. Accessible (affordable and available)	☐	☐	☐
C. The following themes are included in the curricula and teaching/learning materials:			
1. Protection and safety	☐	☐	☐
2. Emergency preparedness	☐	☐	☐
3. Peace-building and social cohesion	☐	☐	☐
4. Non-violent conflict resolution	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 4. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Curricula, Teaching & Learning Materials, & Methods

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
11 – 14	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
7 – 10	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
3 – 6	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 2	No or little conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

V. CAPACITY BUILDING — EDUCATION SECTOR PERSONNEL

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	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. Management decisions about recruitment of education personnel are fair based on:			
1. Power relationships	☐	☐	☐
2. Gender norms	☐	☐	☐
3. Qualifications	☐	☐	☐
B. Management decisions about recruitment of education personnel do not discriminate based on:			
1. Ethnicity (or tribe, clan)	☐	☐	☐
2. Sex	☐	☐	☐
3. Age	☐	☐	☐
4. Place of origin	☐	☐	☐
5. Religion	☐	☐	☐
6. Disability	☐	☐	☐
C. Management decisions about placement of education personnel are fair based on:			
1. Power relationships	☐	☐	☐
2. Gender norms[2]	☐	☐	☐
3. Qualifications	☐	☐	☐
4. Age	☐	☐	☐
5. Location	☐	☐	☐
6. Security and safety	☐	☐	☐
7. Emergency preparedness	☐	☐	☐
D. Management decisions about placement of education personnel do not discriminate based on:			
1. Ethnicity (or tribe, clan)	☐	☐	☐
2. Sex	☐	☐	☐
3. Disability	☐	☐	☐

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2. Male/female teacher roles within school community.

V. CAPACITY BUILDING — EDUCATION SECTOR PERSONNEL (continued)

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
E. Management decisions about professional development opportunities are fair based on:			
1. Existing qualification	☐	☐	☐
2. Gender norms	☐	☐	☐
3. Location	☐	☐	☐
4. Power relationships	☐	☐	☐
F. Management decisions about professional development opportunities do not discriminate based on:			
1. Ethnicity (or tribe, clan)	☐	☐	☐
2. Sex	☐	☐	☐
3. Place of origin	☐	☐	☐
4. Religion	☐	☐	☐
5. Disability	☐	☐	☐
G. Management decisions about compensation/salary are fair based on:			
1. Existing qualification	☐	☐	☐
2. Gender norms	☐	☐	☐
3. Location/hardship posting	☐	☐	☐
4. Teaching load	☐	☐	☐
H. Management decisions about compensation/salary do not discriminate based on:			
1. Ethnicity (or tribe, clan)	☐	☐	☐
2. Sex	☐	☐	☐
3. Place of origin	☐	☐	☐
4. Religion	☐	☐	☐
5. Disability	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 5. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Capacity Building – Education Sector Personnel

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
28 – 37	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
19 – 27	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
10 – 18	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 9	No or little conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

VI. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. Community engagement programs/interventions incorporate the following:			
1. Identification and strengthening of non-violent, conflict resolution mechanisms	☐	☐	☐
2. Inclusion of diverse community members	☐	☐	☐
3. Community monitoring of issues and actors driving conflicts that affect education services	☐	☐	☐
4. Definition of the role of youth (in and out of school), students, girls, and women as positive change agents	☐	☐	☐
B. The education community is responsive to emergencies in the following ways:			
1. Hosting displaced populations	☐	☐	☐
2. Addressing the education needs of displaced children and youth	☐	☐	☐
3. Other (list and describe) _____ _____ _____	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 6. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Community Engagement

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
5 – 7	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
2 – 4	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
0 – 3	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

VII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
A. A monitoring system is in place to ensure periodic analysis of contextual changes that directly impact program activities (e.g., rolling assessments).	☐	☐	☐
B. The program collects data that is disaggregated by location and by sex (where relevant) for the following risk indicators:			
1. Number of schools closed and/or operating at reduced capacity due to conflict.[3]	☐	☐	☐
2. Number of academic calendar days lost due to conflict	☐	☐	☐
3. Number and type of education personnel affected by conflict	☐	☐	☐
4. Number of learners negatively affected by conflict	☐	☐	☐
5. Number of education personnel affected by sexual and gender-based violence	☐	☐	☐
6. Number of learners affected by sexual and gender-based violence	☐	☐	☐
C. The program collects and reports on qualitative data related to:			
1. Perceptions about safety and security	☐	☐	☐
2. Perceptions about inclusion and exclusion	☐	☐	☐
3. Perceptions about school-level governance (transparency, accountability, legitimacy)	☐	☐	☐
D. Education Management Information System (EMIS) exists that generates sex-disaggregated data on the following:[4]			
1. Net enrollment rates	☐	☐	☐
2. Completion rates	☐	☐	☐
3. Location of schools (urban, peri-urban, rural, pastoral, other as per context)	☐	☐	☐
4. Ethnicity	☐	☐	☐
5. Language of instruction	☐	☐	☐
6. Disability type	☐	☐	☐
7. Orphanhood and reasons (e.g., parent is casualty of violence, HIV-AIDS, other epidemic)	☐	☐	☐
8. Displacement and reasons[5]	☐	☐	☐
9. Number, type, and condition of education institutions	☐	☐	☐

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3. Flare-ups, insecurity, or crisis including epidemics
4. There may be additional variables that are important for your context.
5. Reasons should include, at a minimum: targeted attacks on students, targeted attacks on teachers, targeted destruction of education infrastructure, random destruction of education infrastructure, take-over of education infrastructure, generalized insecurity, localized conflict flare-ups, war.

VII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION (continued)

	Yes	Partly Yes	No
E. A Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) exists that generates the following sex-disaggregated annual data on education personnel:[6]			
1. Compensation	☐	☐	☐
2. Age	☐	☐	☐
3. Nationality	☐	☐	☐
4. Ethnicity	☐	☐	☐
5. Qualifications including training received	☐	☐	☐
6. Socio-economic status	☐	☐	☐
7. Disability type	☐	☐	☐
8. Location (urban, peri-urban, rural, pastoral, other per context)	☐	☐	☐
9. Type of education institution	☐	☐	☐
10. Grade level and subject focus	☐	☐	☐
F. An electronic education Financial Management Information System (FMIS) exists that ensures:			
1. Financial transparency	☐	☐	☐
2. Timely delivery of funds to all levels of the education system	☐	☐	☐
3. Timely identification and resolution of issues	☐	☐	☐
Section Total			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

6. There may be additional variables that are important for your context.

Table 7. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Monitoring and Evaluation

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
24 – 32	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity	Keep up the good work
16 – 23	Good in conflict-sensitivity	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
8 – 15	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 7	No or little conflict-sensitivity	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

TOTALS

Totals for Sections I-VII of the Checklist can be totaled here by hand or the accompanying electronic tally sheet can be used which can be downloaded here:

TOTALS			
	Yes	Partly Yes	No
Section I			
Section II			
Section III			
Section IV			
Section V			
Section VI			
Section VII			
TOTAL OF ALL SECTIONS			

Note: Each Yes carries a point while each Partly Yes carries half a point.

Table 8. Rating Matrix for Conflict-Sensitivity in Overall Programming

Tally (number of Yes checks)	Assessment	Action
99 – 131	Excellent in conflict-sensitivity programming	Keep up the good work
66 – 98	Good in conflict-sensitivity programming	Action required to formulate a plan for tackling remaining gaps in order to move to the 'Excellent' category
33 – 65	Emerging in conflict-sensitivity programming	Immediate action required to formulate a plan for tackling gaps
0 – 32	No or little conflict-sensitivity programming	Immediate action required to identify and address the most pressing areas

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE

NOTES/ACTIONS TO TAKE