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LITERACY EDUCATION IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

FINAL REPORT

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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.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CYCLE	Countering Youth and Child Labor through Education program in Sierra Leone (US Department of Labor)
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EDC	Education Development Center
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EQuALLS	Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills, Mindanao
EQUIP3	Educational Quality Improvement Program
FQEL	Fundamental Quality and Equity Levels, Guinea
IAI	Interactive Audio Instruction
ICT	information and communication technologies
IDP	internally displaced person
IP	implementing partner
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRI	Interactive Radio Instruction
L1	first language
L2	second language
LAMP	Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme
LAP	Literacy Assessment Practices
LCEP	Learning for Community Empowerment Program, Afghanistan
LRHC	Learning to Read in a Healing Classroom
LOI	language of instruction
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	medium of instruction
MT	mother tongue
MTB-MLE	mother-tongue based-multilingual education network

NFE	non-formal education
NGO	non-governmental organization
OPEQ	Opportunities for Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education, DRC
PA	phonemic awareness
PACE-A	Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan
PHARE	Programme Harmonisé d'Appui au Renforcement de l'Éducation, Mali
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SEL	socio-emotional learning
SOMDEL	Somali Distance Education and Learning
SPLA	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army
TTC	Teacher Training and Coaching
ToTAL	Tout Timoun Ap Li (All Children Reading), Haiti
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNIVA	University Village Association
UFLP	University Village Association Functional Literacy Program
YES	Youth Education for Life Skills program
YRTEP	Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 Research purpose and rationale

This study seeks a better understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities involved in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating literacy programs for children and youth in conflict and crisis-affected environments. In recent years, USAID missions have increasingly been charged with designing and implementing literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected countries, thereby bringing together the commitments of USAID’s Education Strategy Goals 1 and 3. Goal 1 aims to improve reading skills for 100 million children in the primary grades by 2015, whereas Goal 3 seeks to increase equitable access to education in conflict and crisis-affected environments for 15 million learners by 2015.

This study builds on the current evidence base for literacy education in contexts of conflict or crisis by addressing the following research questions: (1) what is unique about literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts? (2) How do practitioners describe the ways that literacy programs might be modified to incorporate a conflict-sensitive perspective? (3) What empirical evidence or best practices exist on a pilot or national scale that could improve literacy program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation in contexts of conflict or crisis?

This report provides evidence-based lessons and supporting policy and research for conflict-sensitive program design. Together, these recommendations are the first steps in developing a framework for literacy education in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

I.2 Research methods

The research study reviewed the relevant literature and strategic frameworks—over 100 program documents from 15 country cases drawn from Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America—to guide case selection and the development of an appropriate tool for systematic analysis. This review included programs in which literacy education was a primary dimension or program goal and programs with broader goals in which literacy education was an embedded component.

Since other forms of data may be difficult to collect or access in these environments, semi-structured interviews were conducted between November 2012 and March 2013 with 30 professionals who work on literacy education in contexts of conflict or crisis. Interviewees were selected from a range of national and international actors working in international organizations and government entities. The interviews also included other experts and leaders from civil society, national NGOs, and non-profit and for-profit institutions. Finally, the research design and findings were discussed at two roundtables with key USAID staff working on literacy, youth, or conflict issues; feedback was incorporated into both the study design and final report.

I.3 Analytic framework—defining terms

The study’s methods and approach were informed by a review of the theoretical and programmatic literatures on literacy, conflict, and education. This review revealed important conceptual differences in how to define and approach literacy and how to think about conflict and crisis, with implications for both policy formulation and program implementation. It is essential to clarify the key terms involved.

In its narrowest sense, the term literacy refers to five key components of reading: phonemic awareness (PA), phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. This simple view of literacy may emphasize a “staged approach,” in which early instruction focuses primarily on PA and phonics, or it may emphasize a “simultaneous approach,” in which attention is paid to all five components at once. More inclusive

definitions of literacy include dimensions of writing and oral language development, alongside reading. Finally, a broader concept of literacy includes the various forms of communicative competency that individuals might develop across an entire lifetime, shaped by social, cultural, and political context.

The theoretical and programmatic literature also reflects multiple conceptualizations of conflict and crisis. The programmatic literature refers to a continuum of conflict from a relatively stable environment to increasingly escalating tensions that may lead to crisis. A staged concept of conflict implies sequential programming that accommodates the various phases and intensities of violence. Another perspective holds that conflict is always present; tensions can lead to productive change. A dynamic view of conflict also recognizes that populations within and across geographic areas experience conflict differently over time. Significantly, crises are not always the product of escalating conflict or violence; crises can, for example, be caused by natural disasters. But often, conflict, violence, and crisis overlap, compounding the effects on populations. For example, during a war, illicit drug and weapons trade can increase, intensifying violence and insecurity caused by the war. These types of highly insecure environments challenge the abilities of schools and communities to provide safe and effective learning environments.

Conflict sensitive programming draws on contextual knowledge to consider how best to account for the dynamic nature of conflict or crisis in the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of educational programs. In addition to implications for programming, conceptualizations of literacy, conflict or crisis, and conflict sensitivity can provide a framework for considering the various approaches to literacy education in contexts of conflict and crisis.

1.4 General description of literacy programs in conflict and crisis areas

Programs that cited literacy as their primary program component were more likely to define it as reading and writing, whereas programs that embedded literacy in a larger intervention were more likely to characterize it more broadly. More comprehensive literacy definitions often included life-saving skills such as mine safety awareness; reproductive health; HIV/AIDS prevention and protection; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); or conflict resolution. Programs that targeted youth were more likely to include literacy as an embedded program component along with activities like workforce development, civic engagement, and entrepreneurship training.

Literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts include formal delivery modes, such as schools, and non-formal delivery modes, such as community centers, homes, and work centers. Literacy programs target diverse beneficiaries, including different age groups, ethnicities, women and girls, and various categories of vulnerable children and youth such as orphans, child laborers, and learners with disabilities. A number of programs described for this study used an intergenerational or family approach to literacy, targeting children, youth, and caregivers, such as mothers, at the same time. Some programs worked with educators, but few programs focused only on adults.

Equitable access and inclusion were among the implicit or explicit goals of programs. Programs also had wide-ranging objectives, such as violence reduction, legitimation of government, and youth inclusion. They operated at varying scales (from small to large numbers of participants) and they involved multiple implementation partners (from Ministries of Education and other government entities, to local, national, and international civil society organizations).

2. CONCEPTUALIZING THE OVERLAP BETWEEN LITERACY EDUCATION AND CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAMMING: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that the link between literacy education and conflict or crisis has not been fully conceptualized and discusses the reasons for this omission.

2.1 Program documentation largely fails to clearly define literacy.

The lack of explicitly defined concepts of literacy can result in unclear program design and evaluation. On the one hand, a well-defined but constricted understanding of literacy can result in programs whose narrow focus ignores the specific needs of conflict and crisis-affected populations, such as socio-emotional learning, inclusive education, and the inclusion of peace education and conflict resolution. On the other hand, broader definitions of literacy that include social, political, and economic elements can make it difficult for programs to set precise goals and appropriately measure well-defined achievements.

2.2 Program documentation largely fails to address the conflict or crisis-specific aspects of education or literacy programs.

In general, literacy programs did not display a great deal of conflict sensitivity. However, conflict was considered in curricula development through review of political, gender, or ethnic bias and avoidance of inflammatory language. In addition, instructional materials on protection and safety, crisis preparedness, peace building, and conflict resolution were often included. Some programs paid attention to using effective pedagogical techniques as a means of inclusion and an appropriate medium of instruction to foster equity.

2.3 Program documentation does not conceptualize or identify the linkages between literacy and conflict or crisis.

Despite connections between literacy and conflict or crisis, the review of available documents and interviews with practitioners revealed that program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation that explicitly address both literacy and conflict or crisis, are notably rare. It is clear, however, that literacy programs can impact conflict or crisis situations and vice versa: they can either exacerbate or mitigate conflict or crisis situations. Providing literacy education to one clan or ethnic group and not another, for example, could result in resentment and even violence. The inclusion of negative stereotypes about one group in literacy curricula could perpetuate hatred.

But providing literacy education can also promote a sense of economic, political, and social inclusion. It can redress educational inequalities and reduce the sense of shame that may accompany the inability to read. Life skills or disaster risk reduction information in literacy programs could mitigate vulnerability during crises. Peace education and attention to psychosocial concerns may improve a learner's readiness to engage in reading. In these ways, literacy programs can potentially ameliorate the impact of conflict and crisis.

Finally, conflicts and crises often obstruct literacy programming. Educational systems may be decimated, schools may be targeted, physical structures and material resources may be destroyed, and children and youth may be recruited to armed service, sometimes directly from school sites. People may be uprooted from their homes and sent to neighboring areas or countries where they do not know or cannot read the language.

2.4 Several key recommendations emerge to better guide the design and implementation of literacy programs in conflict or crisis contexts.

2.4.1 *Define literacy clearly.* Use a simple, balanced model that attends to all of the five core components of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) simultaneously rather than sequentially. Consider other concepts of literacy when it's pertinent to expand the perspective.

- 2.4.2 *Define conflict and crisis clearly.* Employ a dynamic concept of conflict and crisis that takes into account direct and structural forms of violence, differentiated geographies of conflict, and an evolving context.
- 2.4.3 *Identify the linkages that have been forged between literacy and conflict or crisis for a particular program context.* Plan integrated literacy programs for conflict and crisis-affected settings that accommodate needed changes in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In particular, consider equitable access, the specific needs and interests of children and youth who have not had access, learner readiness, the impact of stress on learning capacity, and how to build student and teacher well-being and resilience through protection.

Greater attention to explicit definitions of literacy and dynamic conceptions of conflict and crisis—and how these intersect—are likely to better guide the design and delivery of programming.

3. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION: CORE ISSUES, SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND NEEDS

3.1 Policy, governance, systems, and infrastructure

CORE ISSUES

Conflict and crisis-affected contexts create multiple policy, governance, systems, and infrastructure challenges that impact literacy education:

- Governments may be particularly fragile, conflict-related issues may drive policy decisions, the teaching force may be decimated and may need intense pedagogical support, and infrastructure and other material resources and systems may be compromised.
- High ministerial turnover, bureaucracy, and corruption may disrupt policy progress or implementation work plans.
- There may be multiple, conflicted governments or political entities to navigate.
- In refugee situations, it is often hard to achieve the important consultations required with ministries of education in host and home countries.
- Governments may lack accurate, valid data or data management systems to inform policy-making and programming for literacy education.
- Donor alliances with implementing partners may further entrench community factions or reinforce inequalities between groups.
- Schools may have no basic facilities, such as water, light, electricity, toilets, or physical classrooms.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Flexible implementation that considers context and is less driven by contractual relations with the donor may be required for literacy programs in conflict or crisis settings.
- Literacy programs in conflict or crisis situations may require flexibility in project timelines and adaptability in program activities and outcomes based on the changing situation.

- Donors, ministries, and implementers may have conflicting goals and their differing viewpoints need to be taken into consideration when designing strategy.
- Distinct political entities involved in the conflict may hold opposing educational aims.
- Government fragility may create specific needs in the areas of system building, data collection to inform policy and programming, staff capacity, accountability and corruption, and infrastructure and other material resources.
- Fragility may also create needs for teacher policy, including teacher recruitment, gender and ethnic representation, teacher compensation, absenteeism, and teacher training, specifically in knowledge of literacy and language fluency.
- School facilities are a serious concern in conflict and crisis-affected settings. If schooling is to occur in formal spaces, schools must be locations where children and youth are safe from recruitment to armed forces, corporal punishment, or sexual abuse. In some locations and during certain phases of conflict, community- or home-based schooling may be more appropriate.

3.2 Language policy in education

CORE ISSUES

Language is related to conflict, learning, and exclusion.

- Language policy can exacerbate conflict, inequality, and exclusion.
- Language may be an overt identity marker of ethnic or political differences, leading to targeted violence.
- English-medium education policies may privilege certain groups.
- Language politics may be related to the current conflict phase and may shift as the situation evolves.
- Conflict and displacement often lead to greater linguistic heterogeneity of learning spaces.
- For youth, conflict creates push- and pull-factors towards certain languages, including the mother tongue.
- Youth psychosocial well-being is directly impacted by conflict.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Selection of instruction medium is critical and requires an inclusive, participatory policy dialogue.
- Language politics may exacerbate conflict and influence decisions about medium of instruction in literacy programming. Conflict analysis must include a consideration of the multiple relationships among language, conflict, and crisis.
- The influence exerted by language politics may wax and wane depending on the phase of conflict.
- Existing research strongly supports the value of (a) teaching literacy in the students' first language, (b) making concerted and sustained efforts to develop solid oral proficiency in the

second language before introducing second language literacy instruction, and (c) training teachers in the principles of second language acquisition.

- The advantages of teaching literacy in the students' first language depend on several conditions that may not be existent or possible in conflict and crisis-affected settings. As a result, it is essential to conduct situation and conflict sensitivity assessments to determine appropriate medium of instruction policies.
- There are significant debates over how long to provide literacy instruction in language 1 (L1) and when to transition to language 2 (L2) as the medium of instruction. However, research suggests the value of extending L1 literacy and language instruction through the elementary school years when feasible.
- There is a clear need for research on the feasibility of different medium of instruction models, the impact of those models on socio-emotional well-being, and the best approaches for building oral knowledge in both mother tongue and target language(s).

3.3 Teachers, professional development, and support

CORE ISSUES

Teachers are directly affected by conflicts and crises.

- Teachers may be displaced and have high levels of mobility and absenteeism in response to the security situation and immediate needs of their families.
- Teachers' own education or professional development may be disrupted, particularly in the context of protracted conflict, resulting in low levels of education or training. This may result in limited knowledge about the core components of literacy and effective literacy pedagogy.
- Teachers may be directly targeted at one time or another during conflict and may require psychosocial supports.
- As a result of displacement, teachers' first or additional languages may differ from the language(s) of instruction or the first language(s) of students.
- Teachers play an important role in exacerbating or alleviating the impact of conflict or crisis on learners.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Teachers need training and support in (a) the core components of literacy, (b) literacy pedagogy, (c) continuous assessment, (d) the needs of multilingual learners, (e) socio-emotional needs of students, and (f) classroom management (with attention to opportunities to learn).
- Scripted lessons provide essential support that may be particularly important for untrained and under-trained teachers in conflict or crisis settings. However, there is a healthy debate about the sustainability and cost-efficiency of this strategy, and the extent to which teachers will transfer that model of planning to other subject areas.
- Coaching and mentoring are popular strategies, especially for unskilled and low-skilled teachers in conflict or crisis settings, although much research is needed in this area. The cost-effectiveness of different models is currently being explored. In conflict or crisis-affected contexts, mentors who live close to or work in the school are more likely to show up. "Mutual coaching" through teacher learning circles may build teacher knowledge about planning and

pedagogy and may be beneficial for teacher well-being. Video-based professional development is one strategy being tested at this time.

- To advance equitable access and learning opportunities for young people, teacher policy needs to explicitly address: (a) salaries, (b) placement, (c) mobility, and (d) absenteeism in ways that enable teachers to do their work.

3.4 Curriculum and materials

CORE ISSUES

Curriculum development is a particular challenge in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

- Conflict is often reflected in the curriculum, particularly in the form of bias (e.g., invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance), selectivity (e.g., physical or visual isolation of certain groups), and the use of offensive language toward certain groups. It can also entail language bias or bias in the representation of historical narratives.
- Curriculum development and materials production and distribution are impaired by conflict or crisis.
- There may be conflicting government perspectives, conflicting curricula, or curricula that are not well developed.
- Because of their high level of mobility, refugees and IDPs may be caught between different curricular materials and educational expectations.
- Curriculum development processes and curricular content have the potential to address direct and structural forms of violence and to deliver life-saving and peace-building content.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Literacy programs need to engage in a formal review of curriculum bias as part of the initial conflict assessment. This may require delicate diplomacy with the government or governments involved.
- Implementing partners must think carefully about whether and how to fit the core components of literacy into existing curricular categories.
- Where existing curricula are minimal, programs should develop a literacy scope and sequence based on existing materials and learning needs, while explicitly planning for the supplemental materials that will be required and how they will be produced.
- Reading curricula at all levels should do more to incorporate life-saving, socio-emotional, and anti-bias information, such as contextualized forms of peace education, conflict resolution, and life skills, where appropriate.
- In developing literacy materials, programs should consider potential trade-offs between leveled texts that are professionally produced, and locally produced, more contextually relevant texts that may have greater teacher investment but will require adaptation to different reading levels.
- Distribution of teaching and learning materials is a significant challenge in fragile environments, requiring careful planning of timing, costs, and logistics.

3.5 Communities and families

CORE ISSUES

- Social capital and social cohesion are often threatened by conflicts and crises.
- Community and family structures and relationships may be altered as populations are displaced and members spend more time and effort trying to fulfill basic survival needs.
- Community and family support for literacy programs may be harder to achieve in these situations.
- Communities and families have an important role to play in literacy development and inclusion and may serve as important sources of psychosocial support for education actors, including teachers and students.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Community investment in and support of literacy programs is essential, particularly in conflict and crisis-affected settings.
- Ongoing, inclusive and participatory engagement of communities through needs and conflict assessments should be sustained from the beginning of a project.
- Building support among the community may require targeted social messaging.
- Cultural and religious values should be considered, and where feasible, integrated with literacy programs.
- Literacy programs should develop explicit plans for engaging community support and developing opportunities to practice literacy outside of school; expanded learning opportunities have demonstrated significant literacy gains.
- Parental, especially maternal, literacy has a significant impact on the literacy acquisition of children. As part of a comprehensive and conflict-sensitive approach to literacy, donors should consider funding adult and/or family literacy programs, or linking to donor agencies and programs that do so.
- Given the common challenges of large classes, community members, family members, and peers can make excellent para-teachers and tutors.

3.6 Youth and adults

CORE ISSUES

Youth and adults require distinct consideration when it comes to literacy in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

- Conflict affects youth and adults differently than children.
- Their education may have been interrupted and is often associated with a sense of missed opportunity.
- They may have been recruited into armed groups.
- They may have become a head of household at an untimely age due to loss in the family.

- Shame and stigma may be associated with an inability to read that discourages over-age learners from returning to school in the absence of programs that are attentive to these dynamics.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Youth and adult literacy programs are more likely to engage a broader view of literacy, linked to economic, political, and social practices—such as livelihoods and life skills, conflict resolution, and civic engagement. This broader definition is appropriate and ideally allows for a more relevant and motivational program.
- Teachers and programmers should examine their own assumptions about the relationship between youth and violence, including radicalization, recruitment into armed groups or gangs, and other concerns. Then, consider how literacy pedagogy and materials can directly benefit youth and promote positive perceptions of youth in society.
- Literacy programs for over-age students need to consider how the dynamic of shame can be addressed, and how a conflict or crisis perspective can be integrated in program design and implementation. Further, these programs should consider how transfer into formal schooling might be facilitated in ways that cause the least tension and promote social cohesion.

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION: CORE ISSUES, SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

4.1 Literacy Assessment

CORE ISSUES

Study participants identified the following core issues or challenges for literacy assessment in the context of conflict and crisis:

- Mobility and student turnover complicate sampling and measurement of student learning.
- Disruption to schooling and non-formal educational programs, teacher absenteeism, and changing governments create delays in programming, which contributes to difficulties in measuring outcomes when learning time is not continuous.
- Assessments are often postponed or cancelled amidst the heightened insecurity of rapidly shifting situations; access to examinations and certification may be particularly difficult for displaced populations.
- Teachers are often not trained to conduct meaningful assessments that could inform instruction.
- Assessment may be a reflection of teachers' learning process, rather than students' achievement, particularly in the absence of teacher professional development.
- Assessment is expensive and time-intensive in a resource-scarce, rapidly evolving environment.
- Assessments compromised by corruption, violence, and lack of transparency in contexts of protracted conflict, may negatively affect the value and trust placed in measures of student learning.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Moving from self-report data to assessment is critical to identifying needs and collecting baseline data on literacy.
- Multimodal assessment, including oral and written components, and comprehension, may more accurately reflect student learning.
- Simplified, context-specific, transparent assessment tools are needed, early and often. These should be short, inexpensive, easy to use, and adaptable, yielding valid skill-level results.
- There is less agreement on who—external enumerators, teachers, or others—should assess student learning. However, there is evidence that early and regular assessments by teachers will bring positive benefits, particularly in relation to transparency, capacity building, and sustainability.
- Conduct the literacy assessment in a way that is transparent. If changes are necessary due to evolving conflict or crisis dynamics, ensure open and frequent communication with stakeholders.
- Assessments should focus on comprehension, but may also gauge conflict or crisis-specific content or socio-emotional learning.

4.2 Monitoring and evaluation

CORE ISSUES

Monitoring and evaluation of programs face similar challenges.

- Mobility and teacher turnover create difficulties for sampling, monitoring, and evaluating teacher learning and professional practices.
- The capacity to collect data by national institutions may have been hampered or disrupted and there is often little or no baseline data. Where these data exist, changing demographics and a rapidly evolving situation may render the data inaccurate.
- Conflict sensitive program objectives may change over time, despite contractual agreements. Thus, flexible evaluation designs are necessary.
- Time constraints and inappropriate donor expectations of what constitutes evidence may limit or create missed opportunities for monitoring and evaluation.
- Corruption, violence, and lack of transparency may compromise monitoring and evaluation systems in contexts of protracted conflict and crisis.

KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The evidence on monitoring and evaluation suggests that:

- Processes should be simplified in complex environments.
- Greater attention should be paid to conflict analysis, needs assessment, and the collection of data that is meaningful to the community, including unintended positive and negative impacts of programming.
- Monitoring and evaluation should involve beneficiaries, teachers, and community partners, where possible.

- Conflict sensitivity implies monitoring operational “responsiveness,” not just pre-set program objectives.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes should make better use of qualitative data, as this is the best means of assessing the perception of relevance and impact of newly gained literacy on individuals and their immediate communities.
- Monitoring should include attention to ongoing bias and conflict dynamics within the instructional content, form, training, and other elements of program implementation.

5. CONCLUSION

There is a pressing need to expand access to and learning within quality literacy programs in conflict and crisis affected environments. However, designing, implementing, and evaluating programs under such circumstances require special consideration. In particular, attention must be paid to (a) language learning as a component of literacy acquisition and medium of instruction policy issues; (b) teacher preparation, psychosocial needs, support, allocation, remuneration, and absenteeism; (c) the development and distribution of curricular and learning materials; (d) the significant role to be played by communities and families; (e) the specific distinct needs of youth and adults; (f) the challenges and limitations of assessment associated with definitions of literacy; and (g) the difficulties of monitoring and evaluating programs in insecure environments. Attention to these dimensions of literacy programming will strengthen efforts to improve teaching and learning for vulnerable populations around the world.

I. INTRODUCTION

Building on its long experience in primary education and workforce development, in 2011 the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) renewed its support for education worldwide through a strategic commitment to three goals to be achieved by 2015 (USAID, 2011). The first is to improve the reading skills of 100 million children in the primary grades. The second is to increase the ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to produce a workforce with relevant skills to support country development goals. The third is to increase equitable access to education in conflict and crisis environments for 15 million learners.

Goal 1 has a clear focus on early grade reading,¹ but in a context of conflict and crisis, educational programming must simultaneously support learning opportunities for both children and youth, and strengthen crisis prevention efforts and institutional capacity to sustain educational services (USAID, 2011). Youth literacy rates are considerably lower in conflict-affected countries (UNESCO, 2011) and attention to equity in these circumstances requires a broader approach to educational programming in order to achieve USAID's three Education Strategy goals.

I.1 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

In recent years, USAID missions have increasingly been charged with designing and implementing literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected countries. This study seeks a better understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities involved in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating literacy programs for children and youth in these fragile environments. While USAID has strong technical expertise and tools to provide guidance and technical support for the fundamental elements of successful primary grade reading programs, insufficient evidence is available on the elements that make reading and literacy programs successful in more complex settings.

Effective technical expertise, tools, and support amidst conflict and crisis will depend on understanding the challenges that must be considered to ensure that learners are prepared to learn and structural supports are present to sustain their learning. For example, learners residing in conflict and crisis-affected contexts, whether attending formal schools or learning in non-formal educational spaces; may experience various psychosocial, cognitive, and health-related issues. These challenges are a result of many factors: exposure to physical and mental violence, fighting and forced conscription; destruction of schools and learning spaces; loss of family and displacement or forced isolation; and exclusion from education due to racial, ethnic, religious, geographic, gender, linguistic, and urban/rural identity. Amidst conflict and crisis, larger institutional or structural barriers may impede access to educational spaces.

Access to education can be severely limited in crisis situations in particular and increasing equitable access to education is a major goal that is central to USAID's work in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. Such sensitive contexts require further examination of how to enable access and a re-examination of how to improve reading outcomes. Long-running conflicts also require careful attention to community engagement to counter the negative effects of conflict on literacy development across generations that create new forms of inequality.

This study builds on the current evidence base on literacy education in conflict or crisis contexts by addressing the following research questions:

- I. What is unique about literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts?

1. USAID defines early grade reading as reading that normally takes place in the primary grades. "Primary grades can be defined by the partner country's system which can range from the first four to eight years of schooling. No matter how primary grades are defined, USAID will measure the performance of our programs primarily through the improvement of reading skills for primary grade students after two years of schooling, consistent with international measures adopted by the Education for All Fast Track Initiative" (USAID, 2011, p. 10). In the context of conflict, with children and young people missing out on years of schooling, early grade reading is complicated by the need to include the learning of youth and adults.

2. How do practitioners describe the ways that literacy programs might be modified to incorporate a conflict-sensitive perspective?
3. What empirical evidence or best practices exist on a pilot or national scale that could improve literacy program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation in conflict or crisis contexts?

Conflict sensitivity can provide guiding principles and suggest possible approaches to understanding and operating effectively within affected contexts by enabling ongoing, systematic analysis. Conflict sensitivity is already part of USAID guidance to missions; however this study seeks to further conceptualize conflict sensitivity and other key priorities, particularly in relation to literacy education.

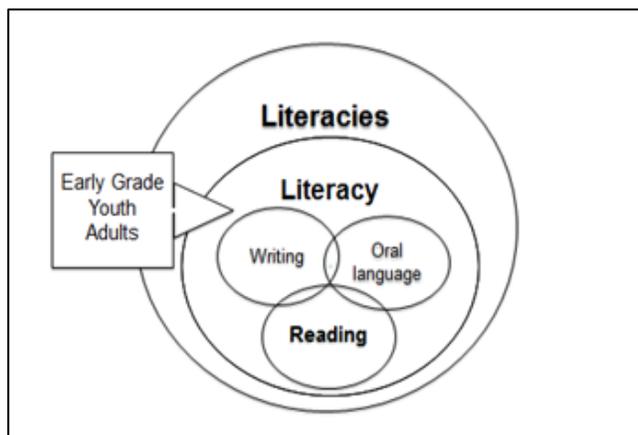
1.2 ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK: DEFINING KEY TERMS

The study's methods and approach were informed by a review of the theoretical and programmatic literatures on literacy and on conflict and education. From this body of work, important conceptual differences emerge about how to define and approach literacy and how to think about conflict and crisis, with implications for both policy and implementation. These key terms are briefly discussed here.

1.2.1 LITERACY

The research and programmatic literatures present multiple concepts of literacy, that, in general terms, reflect three increasingly expansive conceptual approaches (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Literacy and Reading



In its narrowest sense, literacy refers to reading. Following the U.S. National Reading Panel, and based primarily on psychological research, the “simple view” of reading has been defined to include five key components: phonemic awareness (PA), phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000; see also Abadzi, 2008). Comprehension emerges from the interaction of the reader and the text in context. This simple view of reading may emphasize a *staged* approach, in which early instruction focuses primarily on PA and phonics, or a *simultaneous* approach, that stresses

attention to all five components at once (Purcell-Gates et al., 2004). Staged approaches may be reinforced by the use of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), because the instrument emphasizes PA and phonics, and because timing tasks may interfere with valid measures of fluency (Goodman, 2006; Gove & Wetterberg, 2011; Hicks, 2009/2010; Pressly, Hilden, & Shankland, 2005; Riedel & Samuels, 2007).

More inclusive definitions of literacy include dimensions of writing and oral language development alongside reading. Evidence shows that oral development in a language greatly facilitates the acquisition of literacy and that reading and writing mutually reinforce one another (August & Shanahan, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000).

The broadest concept of literacy emphasizes that learning to read and write occurs across an individual's entire life span and in relation to specific institutions and contexts. This dynamic view of literacy draws on sociological and anthropological studies to describe multiple *literacies* and literacy *practices*. From this perspective, uses of reading and writing differ by domain (e.g., school, home, work, and religious

institution) (Barton & Hamilton, 2000); by language and script (Martin-Jones & Jones, 2000); by time period (Graff, 1979); by cultural context; and by situation. Repertoires of literacy practices are learned in response to changes in context and work/life demands. Computer literacy, for example, involves a new set of communicative skills. Situating literacies within their social, cultural, and political contexts helps researchers to understand how context shapes an individual's experience, development, and use of literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1993). The nested circles in Figure 1 illustrate the relationships among the various conceptualizations of reading, literacy, and literacies.

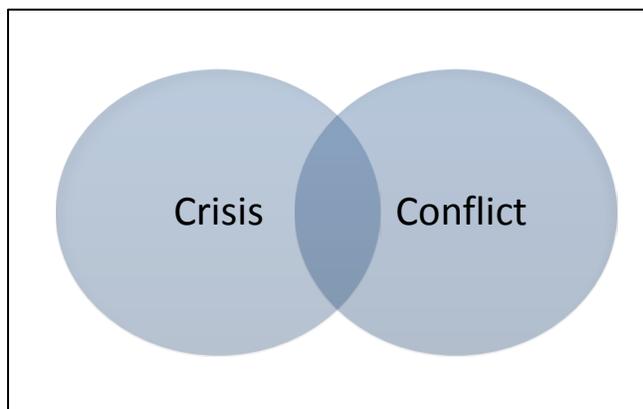
The dynamic view of literacy reflects the concept adopted by the United Nations' Literacy Decade (2003–2012), which emphasized “the importance of social context and the complex interaction between literacy and social change” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 18). UNESCO published a working definition:

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential and participate fully in community and wider society. (UNESCO, 2005, p. 21)

1.2.2 CONFLICT AND CRISIS

The research and programmatic literatures also present multiple concepts of conflict and crisis. Most contemporary armed conflicts occur within countries and are linked to social divisions (UNESCO, 2011). In conceptualizing conflict and crisis, the programmatic literature refers to a continuum of conflict from a relatively stable environment to increasingly escalating tensions that may lead to armed conflict or crisis. From this perspective, conflict is a term that denotes direct physical violence. Staged concepts of conflict imply the need for sequential programming that accommodates various phases and intensities of violence.

Figure 2: Conflict and crisis



Another perspective holds that conflict is always present and that tensions can lead to productive change. This view draws distinctions between direct physical violence and structural violence, or institutionalized forms of social injustice. Direct and structural violence due to illicit activities such as drug and gang violence create insecure environments that influence learners, schools, and communities.

A dynamic view of conflict also recognizes that populations within and across geographic areas experience conflict differently over time.

Differentiating geographies of conflict within and across boundaries makes it possible to accommodate the fact that conflict and crisis at one location may affect populations differently, at that location and at other locations (Zakharia, 2011).

Significantly, crises are not always the product of escalating conflict or violence. For example, crises can be caused by natural disasters. However, since natural disasters affect populations differently, they may reveal deeper sources of structural violence in their aftermath, which may lead to further strife.

1.2.3 CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

Conflict sensitive programming considers how best to accommodate the dynamic nature of a conflict or crisis-affected context. USAID defines conflict sensitivity as the ability of an organization or program to work effectively in conflict-affected environments to:

- understand the context in which it is operating;
- understand the interactions among aid interventions, the context, and group relations;
- minimize any negative impacts by acting on its understanding of these interactions; and
- maximize the positive impact of programs on the conflict (USAID, 2012a).

Conflict sensitivity in education seeks to move away from “conflict-blind” programming, which gives little or no consideration to conflict or crisis dynamics (Sigsgaard, 2012). There have been ample illustrations of how education can contribute to conflict, particularly by inequitable access to education or biased curricula (see Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Novelli & Smith, 2011; Smith & Vaux, 2003). Conflict sensitivity ensures careful consideration of such dynamics in the planning, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of educational programs² and effective provision of educational policies that promote equitable access to educational opportunity.

Primum non nocere—the principle, “first, do no harm”—is an essential element of conflict sensitivity. Contextual knowledge is required to guide understanding of how particular decisions in educational programming may contribute to conflict. Equally, education requires programs that actively seek to address inequalities, mitigate the impact of direct violence and insecurity, and work towards peace.

Concepts of literacy, conflict, and crisis have implications for programming, and for the purposes of this project, provide a conceptual framework for considering the various approaches to literacy education amidst conflict and crisis.

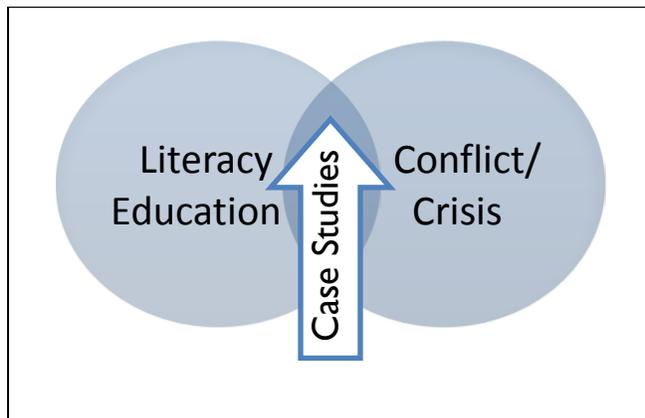
1.3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study seeks to locate the critical nexus of theoretical concepts and practical interventions that links literacy education—including early grade reading and reading for youth and adults—and the contextual demands of conflict and crisis. Research involved the following methods.

1.3.1 CASE SELECTION

A preliminary review of documents on literacy education and education in the context of conflict and crisis—the distinct contexts of USAID’s Education Strategy Goals 1 and 3, respectively—suggested that the central concerns of reading and those of education in conflict and crisis are discussed using different terms. Thus this study began by selecting cases in which literacy education programs were being conducted within conflict or crisis contexts (see Figure 3) to see whether evidence indicated unique program elements in these contexts. The study examined whether literacy was a primary dimension or an embedded dimension of the programs. Countries in which USAID and other organizations are working were included.

2. See USAID (2012a) and INEE (2013) for checklists and tools on incorporating conflict sensitivity into educational programming.

Figure 3: Case Selection—Literacy Programs in Conflict and Crisis Situations

1.3.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The study was preceded by a review of relevant theoretical literature and USAID’s framework and approaches for improving reading skills. This initial review informed the study’s analytic framework and methodological approach. A framework for reviewing the evidence base related to reading instruction and literacy in conflict and crisis-affected environments was derived from the research questions, the preliminary review of documents, and consultation with literacy and conflict experts in education. A wide range of published and unpublished documents were then collected and reviewed, including reports, studies, and tools. Over 100 documents were selected for systematic analysis using a review tool designed for this purpose.

1.3.3 INTERVIEWS

Because interview data are particularly important for knowledge generation in environments where other forms of data may be difficult to collect or access, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews and formal and informal meetings with 30 professionals who work on literacy education in conflict or crisis contexts. These informants were drawn from a range of national and international actors from international organizations and government entities, from representatives of civil society, including national non-governmental organizations, and from education experts and leaders of non-profit and for-profit institutions. Forty minute to one-hour interviews were conducted between November 2012 and March 2013. Some interviews required followed up with additional questions for clarification. Interviews were coded and examined for categories of analysis and related themes.³

1.3.4 CONSULTATIONS

Finally, the research design and preliminary findings were discussed at two roundtables and informal meetings with key USAID staff working on literacy, youth, and education in conflict and crisis environments to gain a deeper understanding of approaches and lessons learned.

1.4 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF LITERACY PROGRAMS IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS AREAS

Documentation of literacy programs in conflict or crisis contexts was analyzed using key categories to get a sense of the range of program objectives. Interviews with key practitioner experts expanded on explicit and implicit objectives not fully apparent in the written materials.

3. Interviews were conducted with a range of national and international actors, but limitations in the interview schedule did not allow for the inclusion of key host government personnel or beneficiaries and actors such as teachers and students.

The scope of the evidence review included literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts in four world regions: Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and South America. These contexts exhibited varying intensities of conflict or crisis at the time of program initiation, implementation, completion, and evaluation.

Some programs cited literacy or reading as the primary program component and others cited literacy or reading as an embedded program component, or as part of an effort to promote larger goals, such as youth employment or life skills development. An analysis of reports revealed that programs targeting youth were more likely to treat literacy as an embedded program component in conflict or crisis-affected contexts. Importantly, programs citing literacy as the primary program component were more likely to be based on narrower concepts of literacy as reading and writing, while programs including literacy as an embedded program component were more likely to be based on the broader concept of literacies. The latter programs often provided life-saving content, such as mine safety awareness, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS protection, DDR, or conflict resolution skill development. Programs also included broad implicit objectives, such as violence reduction, legitimization of government, and youth inclusion.

Literacy programs in conflict or crisis-affected contexts included both formal and non-formal delivery modes. Formal programs engaged learners in schools, frequently through official curricula, but also through accelerated learning and supplementary programming. Non-formal programs engaged learners in alternative educational spaces, such as community centers, homes, work centers, afterschool venues, and diverse community spaces such as arenas for sports and women's centers for handicraft production.

Programs targeted diverse beneficiaries: various age groups and ethnicities; women and girls; vulnerable children and youth, including orphans, child laborers, and learners with disabilities; and to a lesser extent, vulnerable adults. Programs also targeted educators. Equitable access and inclusion were among the implicit or explicit goals of programs, whether they focused narrowly on basic or functional literacy, or more broadly on multiple literacies. A number of programs used an intergenerational or family approach to literacy, targeting children, youth, and caregivers, such as mothers, at the same time.

Programs operated at various scales and on a number of timelines with various implementation partners, including ministries of education; other government entities, such as directorates that oversee youth policy; and local, national, and international civil society organizations.

1.5 OVERVIEW

The following sections summarize study findings, integrating interview data and document analysis. Key findings are discussed in three sections, followed by a set of recommendations.

Section 2 focuses on conceptualizing the literacy-conflict and crisis nexus as a framework for programming. The study demonstrates that the link between literacy education and conflict and crisis has not been fully conceptualized. Greater attention to explicit definitions of literacy and dynamic conceptions of conflict and crisis may better guide the design and delivery of programming.

Section 3 considers core issues and challenges in literacy program design and implementation in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. Sub-sections specifically address policy and governance, language issues, teacher concerns, curriculum and materials, communities and families, and youth and adults.

Section 4 examines monitoring and evaluation concerns, including assessment of learning outcomes and broader program operations.

Section 5 presents key lessons that are supported by evidence and recommendations for conflict sensitive program design, supporting policies, and further research. These recommendations provide the first steps towards developing a framework for literacy education in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING THE OVERLAP BETWEEN LITERACY EDUCATION AND CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAMMING: FINDINGS

This study demonstrates that the link between literacy education and conflict and crisis has not been fully conceptualized. Program documentation has largely failed to: (a) explicitly define literacy, (b) explicitly define the conflict and crisis-specific aspects of education or literacy programs, and (c) conceptualize or identify linkages between literacy and conflict and crisis.

2.1 LITERACY

Program documentation largely failed to explicitly define literacy.

Early grade reading programs seem to be guided primarily by USAID’s model of literacy and the definition of literacy used in the Early Grade Reading Assessment tool developed by RTI. That is, many of these programs use a ‘simple’ model of literacy focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Program documentation suggests that, rather than integrating these elements, many early-grade literacy programs maintain a notion of literacy progression through “stages” and are emphasizing sound-symbol correspondence and phonics more than other elements. Further, many programs focus on literacy to the exclusion of other subjects, based on a notion of “learning to read” first in order to “read to learn” in later grades and later life.

Most of the study’s interviewees unequivocally stated the value of this model. A few practitioners, however, questioned the application of the ‘simple’ model of literacy to all languages, literacy practices, and contexts. They also noted that partners in the MOE or field staff might not agree that the components are the same across languages. This is a major point: In many places, partners may not share or may explicitly question, the ‘simple model’ of literacy’s five core components, which is based primarily on research conducted in English-speaking contexts. The simple model prioritizes the five components of reading over other components, including oral language development. The concept that letters correspond to sounds is particularly challenging in contexts where reading has been taught using syllabic or whole-word methods. Interview participants noted:

In Malawi, they didn’t believe consonants had sounds. They taught vowel sounds only. It was in the official ministry content.

In Iraq, someone insisted we shouldn’t test letter knowledge and sounds, because [in Arabic] kids learn whole words. It’s not how people learn. If they have to memorize every word, it will take forever.

There are significant challenges. What is a letter sound? A letter without a diacritic still has a sound; the diacritic changes the [subsequent sound]. But that concept is really hard for our staff. Trying to get any programming going is really hard. How can we do literacy where we have nobody in the field who understands the basics of letter sounds and how to teach them? We need [field-based NGO] staff who are teachers.

Thus, among members of projects, and certainly among teachers, there may not be agreement on the precise “core components” or whether and how to teach phonemic awareness and phonics. This is a significant challenge in literacy programming.

One interview participant amplified the “simple model” in an illuminating manner. He identified “three essentials” that all literacy programs should have, regardless of context:

First, instruction in a language that students understand well, which need not be mother tongue, [but they should] have a vocabulary in excess of approximately 4,000 words... Second, instruction [must be] consistent with what we know from scientific research supports acquisition of literacy skills: teaching

components of literacy...Children and youth need to learn them and practice separately and then practice applying those skills together with text. [Finally, students] need enough time on task to make meaningful progress. Estimation is somewhere between at least 250 to 350 hours of instruction.

The benefits of oral vocabulary for not only phonemic awareness and phonics skills, but also, importantly, reading comprehension and writing is well demonstrated (August & Shanahan, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Notably, research regarding time on task required for basic acquisition of literacy has not been conducted in conflict and crisis contexts; this is an area for possible research.

Literacy programs for youth generally involve a wider concept of literacy than programs for children. They consider literacy learning in relation to the social, political, and economic needs and roles assumed by youth. They focus on functional literacy, especially related to workforce and livelihoods, but also, in some cases, related to political participation, thus providing opportunities to apply new literacy skills to authentic tasks. (See USAID EQUIP 3 or A Ganar Sport for Development.)

The lack of clearly defined concepts of literacy poses several problems. Fuzzy definitions lead to vague program design and unfocused evaluation; programs run the risk of not achieving goals that remain implicit rather than explicit. Broad definitions that consider social, political, and economic elements are less precise and can lead to difficulties setting goals or measuring achievements. Narrow definitions, however, can lead programs to ignore the specific needs of conflict and crisis-affected populations, such as a focus on socio-emotional learning, inclusive education designed particularly for conflict-affected children and youth, and the inclusion of peace education and conflict resolution in curricula.

2.2 CONFLICT AND CRISIS

Program documentation also largely failed to explicitly define the conflict and crisis-specific aspects of education or literacy programs.

In general, programs did not engage a conflict assessment. Most programs did collect data on access, thus making possible a consideration of equitable access and conflict, although documentation did not reveal whether such an analysis was completed. Certainly programs operating in the midst of active conflicts were forced to consider staff safety and formal institutions with which to collaborate, as well as how the conflict might affect program access and explicit and implicit goals.

Conflict was mostly considered in relation to curriculum, teaching, and learning materials. This included a review of curriculum for political, gender, or ethnic bias, avoidance of inflammatory language, and on occasion, inclusion of materials on protection and safety, crisis preparedness, peace building, and conflict resolution. Programs paid attention to pedagogical techniques to foster inclusion (e.g., IRC and UNICEF) and the implications of medium of instruction for conflict and equity (e.g., SIL and RTI).

Several programs promoted community engagement but reports offered little or no analysis of how community engagement fostered social cohesion or promoted peace.

2.3 LINKAGES BETWEEN LITERACY AND CONFLICT AND CRISIS

Program documentation did not conceptualize or identify the linkages between literacy and conflict and crisis.

As we demonstrate in this report, the relationship between literacy and conflict or crisis is complex and mutual. First, literacy education may exacerbate or mitigate conflicts or crises. For example, providing literacy programs to one clan or ethnic group and not another could result in resentment and even violence, including negative stereotypes about one group in literacy curricula could perpetuate hatred. On the other hand, literacy education can promote a sense of economic, political, and social inclusion

and redress educational inequalities and a sense of shame that may accompany the inability to read. Life skills or disaster risk reduction information in literacy programs could mitigate vulnerability during crises. Peace education and attention to psychosocial concerns may improve a learner's readiness to engage in reading. In these ways, literacy programs can either foment or ameliorate conflict and crisis. Second, conflicts and crises often obstruct literacy programming. Educational systems may be decimated: schools may be targeted, physical structures and material resources may be destroyed; children and youth may be recruited to armed service, sometimes directly from school sites; and people may be uprooted from their homes and sent to neighboring areas or countries where they do not know and cannot read the language.

Despite these potential connections between literacy and conflict or crisis, our review of available documents and interviews with practitioners revealed that program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation that explicitly address both literacy and conflict or crisis are notably rare. Furthermore, interview participants cited several reasons for questioning the possibility of integrating conflict sensitivity thoroughly into literacy programs: (a) each site experiences conflict and crisis in unique ways, even within the same country; (b) the "conflict element" could dilute the literacy component of programs; and (c) the "simple model" of literacy does not sufficiently account for context.

One response is to focus on equitable access, including an analysis on who is out of school, why, and how to include them. The CYCLE program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and implemented by IRC and five local NGO partners in Sierra Leone provides non-formal literacy, numeracy, and life skills training to child laborers aged 5–17. The report states that the "Ministry of Education firmly believes that the CYCLE program contributes to the reduction of conflict in communities through access to education and reduced child labor" (Nicolls, 2008, p. 39). USAID's Yemen Stability Initiative (YSI) seeks "to address alienation among disaffected, disenfranchised, vulnerable youth ages 15–24" in Yemen by "address[ing] their difficulties through an array of activities and programs to increase their civic participation, life skills competence, health, violent extremism management and mitigation capabilities, and livelihood opportunities" (EDC, 2008, p. 5). In this project, the seven-member local team (Team Leader/Education and Governance Specialist, Social Scientist, Conflict Specialist, two Youth Research Specialists, and two Youth Associates) conducted 25 youth focus groups over a three-week period "to determine current and potential capacity within Yemen to engage and empower youth" (EDC, 2008, p. 5). The fact that both the CYCLE and YSI projects identified a specific aspect of conflict—child labor and disenfranchised youth/youth unemployment—and tailored their literacy programming to address it allowed the program to have more direction and organization. Furthermore, the employment of conflict specialists was significant in the design and evaluation of the literacy program. This effective practice should be followed in the future.

Some programs target children and youth blocked by conflict from opportunities to learn to read and write. These programs have integrated literacy and psychosocial well-being, albeit minimally. In Sierra Leone, for example, (a) Concern has a literacy program that also addresses trauma, especially gender-based violence, and well-being through referral pathways and community conversations; (b) UNICEF supported community-based organizations to provide literacy and numeracy lessons as well as psychosocial support to female ex-combatants in Makeni, Kono and Kamakwie; and (c) USAID funded MSI to implement the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP) program (2000–2001), designed to provide ex-combatant and other war-affected youth with non-formal education (NFE) activities for reintegration, livelihood skills development, remedial education, and basic literacy and numeracy skills (CAI et al., 2002; Fauth & Daniels, 2001). In Liberia, the MercyCorps Youth Education for Life Skills (YES) program offers literacy education and conflict resolution skills to 13,000 ex-combatants and IDPs in 358 communities.

A second important response is to focus on socio-emotional learning and well-being. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has led the field in this area. IRC developed *Learning to Read in a Healing*

Classroom (LRHC), a literacy program grounded in their social-emotional learning model. LRHC focuses on five key aspects of students' well-being—material, emotional, spiritual, social, and cognitive. The healing classroom components include sense of safety, sense of control, feelings of self-confidence, sense of belonging, relationship with peers, personal attachments, and intellectual stimulation.

There is evidence that socio-emotional learning can be successfully integrated in a literacy program, resulting in positive academic and psychosocial outcomes (Jones et al., 2010). There is also evidence that safe school environments matter for child mental health in conflict-affected settings. A study to describe children's socio-emotional learning (SEL) outcomes based on baseline data from Katanga Province, DRC, found that disadvantaged children have more negative perceptions of the support they receive from teachers and other school personnel. Significantly, children's positive perceptions of supportive schools and teachers are associated with lower levels of victimization and mental health problems (Aber et al., 2011). The same study demonstrated the need for developing peer relationships and discouraging bullying: The vast majority of children experienced some level of peer victimization at school, with negative effects on their mental health (Aber et al., 2011). The study concluded that schools should become spaces where victimization is prevented for all children through the development of tolerance for diversity, empathy, and other moral emotions, as well as the mastery of non-aggressive modes of interaction (Aber et al., 2011; see also Brown et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2011).

LRHC is now being implemented in different modalities in parts of Afghanistan, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Pakistan, and Sierra Leone. In the DRC's Opportunities for Equitable Access to Quality Basic Education (OPEQ), funded by USAID (2010–2015), for example, IRC has partnered with the Ministry of Education to implement a high quality literacy and math curriculum, offer a school-based collaborative professional development system of continuous in-service teacher training and coaching (TTC), and strengthen community participation in education through school management committees and parent teacher associations. In addition, they seek to provide out-of-school youth with livelihood education. Notably, some parts of DRC are considered to be in a development context; some areas are affected by conflict, partly by hosting IDPs; and other areas are affected by ongoing conflict and insecurity. In Chad, IRC is bringing LRHC to camp-based education programs for Sudanese refugees; interviews suggest that implementation has been quite difficult.

Other programs have integrated conflict and literacy using a less central approach, one of which is through developing materials. For example, CODE Canada and WE-CARE Liberia (funded by the RJL Braydon Charitable Foundation, Ottawa, Canada and CODE Inc.) developed a series of books called "Reading Liberia" that addressed topics such as hunger during the war, homeless children after the war, and child labor (Spencer, 2011). However, the explicit and thorough integration of literacy and conflict perspectives is rare. In our review of literacy programming for 20 focal countries, the word "conflict" appeared just three times.

2.4 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This section suggests several key resolutions for conceptualizing the overlap between literacy and conflict and crisis:

- *Define literacy clearly.* Use a simple, balanced model that attends to all of the five core components of literacy simultaneously rather than sequentially. Consider other concepts of literacy that might coexist among project partners.
- *Define conflict and crisis clearly.* Employ a dynamic concept of conflict and crisis that takes into account direct and structural forms of violence, differentiated geographies of conflict, and an evolving landscape. Engage the *Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs*.⁴

4. See: <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/education/conflict-sensitivity-checklist#overlay-context=home>

- *Identify the linkages that have been forged between literacy and conflict and crisis for a particular program context.* Plan integrated literacy programs for conflict and crisis-affected settings that accommodate needed changes in program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In particular, consider equitable access, the specific needs and interests of children and youth who have not had access, learner readiness, the impact of stress on learning capacity, and how to build student and teacher well-being and resilience through protection.

Greater attention to explicit definitions of literacy and dynamic conceptions of conflict and crisis—and how these intersect—are important for guiding the effective design and delivery of programming.

3. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION: CORE ISSUES, SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND NEEDS

3.1 POLICY, GOVERNANCE, SYSTEMS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

CORE ISSUES

Multiple challenges exist for policy, governance, systems, and infrastructure in conflict and crisis-affected contexts:

- Governments may be particularly fragile, conflict-related issues may drive policy decisions, the teaching force may be decimated and may need intense pedagogical support, and infrastructure, other material resources, and systems may be compromised.
- High ministerial turnover, bureaucracy, and corruption may disrupt policy progress or implementation work plans.
- There may be multiple and conflicted governments or political entities to navigate.
- In refugee situations, it is often hard to achieve important consultations required with ministries of education in the host and home countries.
- Governments may lack accurate, valid data or data management systems to inform policy-making and programming on literacy education.
- Donor alliances with implementing partners may further entrench community divides or reinforce inequalities between groups.
- Schools may have no basic facilities, such as water, light, electricity, toilets, or physical classrooms.

3.1.1 WORKING WITH DONORS

Practitioners identified relations with donors as a challenge to running literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected locations. Some noted that programs might be threatened with suspension when conflict breaks out, or that programs in one part of the country could be deferred while the same program in other parts moves forward.

Practitioners noted the need for more flexible implementation that is less driven by contractual relations with the donor. The lack of flexibility and the concern for safety interferes with efforts to conduct needs assessments and respond to community concerns. Interviewees reported:

There's a conflict between donor schedules and needing to build community support.

One thing definitely needs to change: That we look at more flexible implementation. If situations are changing, we need to be able to change the program. [But the relationship with the donor is] contractual, and therefore difficult to change.

Programming should be different by location. Conflict differs broadly. [Donors] should not forget about other issues surrounding the communities in the conflict areas. It requires flexibility. Being responsive in a changing context requires flexibility.

Timing is a serious concern. There is pressure to start-up quickly, during the crisis or in the immediate post-conflict period, while funding is available. Needs assessments might take longer or require different

types of information. Although difficult, it is essential to conduct such analyses, rather than simply duplicating a model from another place regardless of cultural context, sensitivities, languages, or other dynamics. Pressure to begin quickly can lead to weak civil society actors, weak government institutions, and corruption. There is also pressure to demonstrate results quickly. Yet long-term change—change that requires teachers to thoroughly change their attitudes, expectations, and behaviors—takes time.

Finally, practitioners recognized that donors may have both explicit and implicit goals that differ from those held by implementers, but will nevertheless influence the program. One person stated:

[With a donor who engages in a post-conflict context, often] one purpose is to legitimize the government, and that can be problematic. In some places, we don't feel confident with a government that's just from one side of a conflict.

3.1.2 WORKING WITH THE HOST COUNTRY GOVERNMENT

Within the documents reviewed and among the participants interviewed, there is a clear recognition of the need to work with the government to build support and capacity. Yet in a conflict or crisis, governments may be particularly fragile, staff may have low capacity, conflict-related issues may drive policy decisions (e.g., language education), the teaching force may be decimated and in need of intense pedagogical support, and infrastructure and other material resources may be compromised. There are efforts to integrate literacy programs within ministries and to train ministry staff and teacher trainers. There are efforts to engage people in curriculum departments to help create lesson plans and in assessment departments to develop appropriate assessments tailored to clear definitions of literacy. Governmental support is critical to the effectiveness and sustainability of project impact and goals.

In some cases, however, government involvement can be cumbersome, especially in conflict scenarios with high ministerial turnover or heavy bureaucracy. Ministry officials may “not be amenable or interested,” may be “happy with the status quo,” or may hold a “broken idea of reading” (quoted from practitioner interviews). Several interviewees worried about ministry capacity.

Some NGOs engage in policy dialogue to build support for literacy programming or teacher allocation policies. For example, the Afghan government wanted to replace community teachers with qualified teachers from other regions. An NGO had to convince the government that qualified teachers wouldn't stay. Two practitioners noted the need for policy dialogue on questions of urban violence and poverty; “pushing” the government to provide schooling in these areas or to collaborate with existing non-formal efforts, and to provide paid, qualified teachers.

Further, in conflict locations, there may be multiple and conflicted governments. In refugee situations, programs need to consult the ministry of education in both the host and home countries, though that is not always possible. One expert stated:

In emergencies, we are not always working with a ministry that makes sense or with any ministry. Or sometimes we get caught between two worlds—for example, in the refugee camps in Chad, Sudanese teachers want to follow Sudanese systems, but we can't talk to the Sudanese Ministry and the Chad Ministry is not interested. We don't have any way to work on buy-in.

One source suggested that complicated politics were particularly difficult for UN agencies in situations such as Somalia:

UN agencies such as UNESCO seem to have particular problems in working with the authorities or governments of the different political entities in Somalia. For example, in a project to prepare textbooks for primary schools UNESCO was unable to officially recognize the existence of the Republic of Somaliland. Although the Government had declared Somaliland as independent, it was not recognized by any UN member state and so UNESCO faced a dilemma.

If textbooks referred to Somaliland and its capital of Hargeisa, the Governments and authorities in Puntland and South Somalia would refuse to accept or distribute the textbooks. If UNESCO did not refer to Somaliland and Hargeisa, the Government in Somaliland would refuse to allow schools to use them. Initially UNESCO produced text books based on the old borders of Somalia with Mogadishu as the capital. The result was that thousands of the textbooks were rejected by the Government of Somaliland and were left in warehouses, in some cases for up to three years, while school children in Somaliland had no text books. There were similar problems in renovating buildings and in training teachers in the disputed area which lies between Somaliland and Puntland. The Government of Puntland insisted that reconstruction and supplies could only be managed from the Puntland side of the border, while the Government of Somaliland similarly insisted that the work could only be done from the Somaliland side. Once again the result was that, even though funding was available, little if any of it reached the schools. (Brophy & Page, 2007, pp. 137–138)

Practitioners noted several key government limitations. Governments lack accurate, valid data or data management systems to inform policy-making and programming. Interviewees were concerned about teacher policy, such as teacher allocation, teacher quality, teacher’s knowledge of literacy and their fluency in the target language or languages, teacher gender and ethnic representation, absenteeism, and salary. The lack of quality instruction was identified as one of the major problems facing literacy programs, especially adult literacy education.⁵ Teacher remuneration is an area for engagement. Teacher salaries are expensive; some noted the need for other remuneration incentives. The inability or unwillingness of the government to support teacher salary costs affects project sustainability.

Sustainability, more generally, is a concern in working with governments in conflict and crisis settings. Interventions are expensive, in terms of teacher training, teacher salaries, and books and materials. Large literacy program budgets can outstrip a government’s entire annual budget for education. Further, the transition from “relief” to “development” poses key sustainability challenges (Mendenhall, 2012).

Finally, the practitioners interviewed asserted a need for system building, addressing problems of procurement and distribution of materials, and addressing rampant corruption through accountability mechanisms. One informant captured this eloquently:

I would spend more time thinking how to address systemic problems, engrained in their processes. Problem of procurement; of corruption; of teachers’ low capacity; of fragility in schools. For example, literacy programs require books. Getting \$1 million of books to the country, inventory it, package it, distribute it, having receipt forms for us, the school, and the district—ministry can’t do it. We aren’t really building their capacity on book distribution. [And] we aren’t addressing corruption.... The teacher training institutes were recently audited for procurement, finance accounting. Out of 29 categories, 24 to 25 were found catastrophic, and the remaining 4 to 5 were critical. And we were working directly with them in hopes they would do this work down the road. They can’t account for the funding we provided them.... There is a need for more thorough system building. We must have a long-term vision for a given country. We need a 10–20 year strategy for a country like Liberia or Congo. First, to have long-lasting impact, pay attention to systems and means of delivery, how to enable recipient government or ministry to carry this. [Second], as much as it’s appealing to work completely through local subcontractors, it’s a good idea, but a lot more thought needs to go into it because they need more support. They’ve spent 1–15 years not learning much. Expecting them to do it quickly is not reasonable. Think about capacity building in addition to literacy focus. [Finally, think about sustainability.] We train all the time for Ministry. Through both projects we always invite Ministry staff to participate in our training, come on our school visits, learn from what we are doing. There isn’t enough funding or thought about creating strategic plan to do capacity building at Ministry, where Ministry commits to learning certain aspects and

5. The discussion of teacher preparation appears in a later section.

eventually assuming responsibility. We went for scale, but at the cost of sustainability. We should create division between governance and executive level—a new accounting system, new reporting requirements, an employment manual. But if you go to the Ministry right now and ask for HR policies, or Teacher Training Institutes, there are no systems, policies, or manuals. USAID is starting to fund these efforts. It’s slowly happening, but it’s not our mandate.

Literacy programming in conflict and crisis-affected settings should set aside time and resources for capacity-building as an explicit part of the work.

3.1.3 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS AND IP STAFF

Given the difficulty of working with governments in conflict-affected sites, some donors worked directly with contractors or NGOs to manage and implement programs. There are benefits to this approach: the NGOs are established and have experience working with the authorities and the communities in particular zones. One informant stated:

[Donors] need to work with local NGOs; they know the context, particularly of the worst areas, including favelas, with the highest homicide rates. Programs have been shut down because of violence, or other threats. You need strong empathetic relationships to get accelerated learning.

Brophy & Page (2007) noted that “as international NGOs are registered with their own governments, their spending can be monitored and accounts externally audited” (p. 137).

However, donor alliances with implementing partners can further entrench community divides. Implementers tend to work in specific areas, not all over the country. Zones may be coterminous with a political group, such as a clan or sub-clan in Somalia. Such work may in fact reinforce inequalities among groups. One interviewee reported: “If there are tribal issues and we are supporting a school, half of the community from a different tribe will not come”. Such alliances may affect capacity to provide equitable education to all children.

Staffing within implementing partners can be a challenge. In several instances, the capacity of local staff was a serious concern, especially when staff members were required to conduct literacy pedagogical trainings.

[NGO] staff knew teachers and principals well. But [NGO] staff themselves didn’t really master some of the techniques we were trying to teach and train. We need to spend more time training [NGO] staff on the ground, because these approaches are so new to a lot of them.

However, expatriate staff members were less effective in some cases. Periods of direct conflict significantly interfered with the capacity of expatriate NGO staff to build the sort of rapport with communities necessary to conduct good work, as they were often required to live in isolated locations with armed guards and reduce their time in camps or in areas with active conflict.

3.1.4 INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

Finally, in many conflict and crisis-affected areas, especially those hit by natural disasters, schools may be without basic facilities for water, light, electricity, and toilets, or even, in some cases, physical classrooms. In Pakistan, for example, over 55 percent of schools have no proper restrooms, much less gender-segregated facilities. This discourages girls from going to school, exposes them to the risk of attack in the existing facilities, and accounts for the high dropout rate from schools once girls begin menstruating. In South Sudan, despite recent investments by a few key donors (including USAID and DFID), 70 percent of learning is done in the open air, under tents or in semi-permanent structures. Of these types, open air is the most prevalent. The learner to permanent classroom ratio at the primary level is 248:1. Approximately one-third of South Sudan’s schools do not have safe drinking water and

one half of the schools lack access to latrines. This absence of infrastructure and material support has obvious implications for learning outcomes.

If literacy is to be taught in formal schools, such schools must be locations where children and youth are safe from recruitment to armed forces, corporal punishment, or sexual abuse. In some locations and during certain phases of conflict, community- or home-based schooling may be more appropriate. One participant who had worked in Afghanistan for many years stated:

It doesn't have to be a formal school. If parents won't send children to school, can we provide reading books? If parents are literate or semi-literate and can read for and with their children, at least they have some means of access to books, materials, and resources. Even with literacy, we should be more open around types of literacy we are talking about. If our aim is to get kids to read and understand, it need not be in formal school. Parents, or get families together and identify someone who can read, who could with some intensive training give an hour or two to reading.

3.1.5 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, one cannot assume that all donors, governments, NGOs, communities, and other parties have the same goals for literacy education. These relationships require specific attention.

- Flexible implementation may be required in literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected settings.
- There are important considerations of timing. The pressure to start programs quickly can curtail a thorough needs assessment and conflict analysis, which could jeopardize the success of the program. The pressure to demonstrate results quickly does not recognize the extent of the task involved in changing the attitudes, expectations, and behaviors of educators.
- Donors, ministries, and implementers hold explicit and implicit goals that may be in conflict and merit full consideration.
- Distinct political entities involved in the conflict may hold opposing educational aims.
- Host country governments may be particularly fragile, with specific needs in the areas of (a) system building, (b) data collection to inform policy and programming, (c) staff capacity, (d) teacher policies (including teacher recruitment; gender and ethnic representation; teacher compensation; absenteeism; and teacher training, specifically in knowledge of literacy and language fluency), (e) accountability and corruption, (f) infrastructure, and (g) other material resources.
- School facilities are a serious concern in conflict and crisis-affected settings. If schooling is to occur in formal spaces, schools must be locations where children and youth are safe from recruitment to armed forces, corporal punishment, or sexual abuse. In some locations and during certain phases of conflict, community- or home-based schooling may be more appropriate.

3.2 LANGUAGE POLICY IN EDUCATION

CORE ISSUES

Language is related to conflict, learning, and exclusion.

- Language policy can exacerbate conflict, inequality, and exclusion.

- Language may be an overt identity marker of ethnic or political differences, leading to targeted violence.
- Language is a significant inclusion/exclusion factor in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.
- English-medium education policies may privilege certain groups.
- Language politics may shift with the evolving situation.
- Conflict and displacement often leads to greater linguistic heterogeneity of learning spaces.
- For youth, conflict creates push- and pull-factors towards certain languages, including the mother tongue, and may be linked to psychosocial well-being.

3.2.1 LANGUAGE, POLICY, AND CONFLICT

One area of strong debate in the literature consulted and among the experts interviewed concerned language—the relationship between language and conflict, and the need for language policy and programming in literacy programs. The potential contribution of language to conflict is clear. Four examples reflect the complex dynamics. The first is a quote from a published study; the other three are from interviews with experts during this study.

One of the underlying causes of the civil war in Southern Sudan was the Northern Government's policy of 'Arabization' of the curriculum. The Muslim Government in the North wanted Arabic to be the medium of instruction in all schools. The mainly Christian Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) in the South rejected this and wanted English and local languages to be the mediums of instruction. Donors and agencies were, therefore, faced with a choice—support local languages or English, and be accused of supporting the rebels, or support Arabic and so help to maintain the status quo, and be accused of supporting the government. Some donors reacted by refusing to provide any funding for education, suggesting for instance that providing support for education would only prolong the war. (Brophy, 2003a)

Pakistan is an example of a place where the international language is promoting conflict. Urdu [is valued above other languages;] it's a conflict factor and marginalizes populations because they aren't doing well with language and literacy acquisition. India has done a good job of mother tongue, Hindi, and English.

In the Kenyan election violence of 2007-2008, mother tongue became more important to people when they were kicked out of where they were living because they didn't speak the language there. They were ethnically cleansed. They went back to their original language area but had no place to live, had issues fitting in....

It could be dangerous in Liberia to use the [many] tribal languages, some of which aren't standard.

These examples illuminate the interrelationships between language and conflict and crisis. In Sudan, the government tried to impose a language policy and curricula that people in the southern areas resented. This example is similar to the current situation in Pakistan, where the colonial language policy of teaching English and Urdu is still enforced, despite the fact that three other languages (Punjabi, Sindhi, and Saraiki) are spoken as first languages by significantly larger percentages of the population than Urdu. Notably, Sindhi is used as the medium of instruction in primary schools in Sindh and Pashto is used in government schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The 2009 Pakistani Educational Policy states that provincial and area education departments “shall have the choice to select the medium of instruction up to Class V,” but this has been unevenly implemented. Decisions to privilege one ethnic or religious

group through language in education policy can exacerbate tensions and lead to disparate educational outcomes.

Language may also be an overt marker of ethnic or political differences that can lead to targeted violence, as in the case of post-election violence in Kenya. As two experts explained:

If you are in an area where local people don't appreciate your presence, language is a problematic identity marker.

Language can label you—you're the ones we are killing.

The forced migration resulting from targeted violence strips populations of their material resources, economic opportunities, and social networks, aggravating inequalities and unequal access to social goods such as schooling.

Language is a significant inclusion/exclusion factor. If refugees or IDPs move to a place with a different language, literacy, and script, they must learn it or face further exclusion. However, if they don't learn to speak and read in their home language, it reduces the possibility of returning home and completing schooling in their home country.

It was a challenge to determine language policy in the Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. Many want to learn [mother tongue]. Burmese is not their national language. Some believe medium of instruction should be English. They do not want to go back to Myanmar; they want to stay in Bangladesh or go elsewhere, so they want to learn Bangla and English. We talked to them and told them it is important to learn [their language in order to improve learning], but there is no recognition of this language. We explained... [that] quality learning will be important to get a job, regardless of the language that they learn in. [We] used job incentives to direct the debate on language of instruction.

Finally, in a post-conflict setting, language in education policies that emphasize ethno-linguistic differences may, indeed, inflame ethnic differences. Equally, however, ignoring the fact that English-medium education policies privilege certain groups may also aggravate tensions.

Understandably, language politics shift. They may, for example, exert a pressure in the immediate post-conflict period that wanes over time.

In Liberia post-conflict, it had to be English only, because [the government felt that] if we acknowledged the importance of other languages, we would have a divisive culture. [Over time,] we have tried to convince them that [literacy learning] results would be better in mother tongue. Now they are opening a bit, teaching mother tongue in early childhood while building oral English.

Language policy requires concerted policy dialogue. As two experts explained:

That's a mountain to climb in policy advocacy. You can get scientific. But if they think people will kill each other if we reinforce language differences, you can't argue with that.

Gambia was adamant about English [medium instruction in literacy]. But the [literacy] results kept being bad. Staff at Ministry interviewed teachers and realized they couldn't speak English well. Now they are rolling out a mother tongue literacy program. But it wasn't until they tried to understand why results were so poor, and collected data on it, that they understood.

The multiple relationships among language, conflict, and crisis demonstrate the need for conflict analysis that considers language and the importance of concerted policy dialogue about language in education with all involved partners.

3.2.2 LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

The existing research base demonstrates that learning to read or be literate in one's mother tongue produces better learning outcomes, including better reading proficiency in the second language (August & Shanahan, 2006; Geva, 2006; Martin et al., 2008). Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in their second language, especially if the scripts and languages are similar and there is more knowledge transfer (Ball, 2011; Bender et al., 2005; Goldenberg 2008; Walter & Chuo, 2012; Walter & Dekker, 2008). For example, a ten-year study in Lubuagan, the Philippines, showed that children learning in schools using their mother tongue were outperforming their linguistic peers in Filipino and English medium schools in math, Filipino, English, and other subjects (Dumatog & Dekker, 2003). Second language learners need solid oral proficiency in order to develop word-level and text-level knowledge. They need concerted oral language development and contextualized, explicit vocabulary instruction with opportunities for repetition and use in the second language (L2) while they are learning to read in their first language (L1) (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Mother-tongue (MT) literacy instruction in the early grades improves equitable access, especially among language minorities, which is an important goal in conflict and crisis contexts.

[Children] who understand the language of instruction are more likely to enter school at age-appropriate times and attend school regularly; moreover, they are less likely to drop out than those who receive instruction in a foreign language. An analysis of data from 22 developing countries and 160 language groups revealed that children who had access to instruction in their mother tongue were significantly more likely to be enrolled and attending school, while a lack of education in a first language was a significant reason for children dropping out (Smits et al., 2008). In another study in Mali, students in classrooms that used children's first languages as the language of instruction were five times less likely to repeat the year and more than three times less likely to drop out (Bender et al., 2005). (MTB-MLE Network & RTI, 2011, p. 1)

By reducing repetition and dropout rates and promoting learning, L1 literacy instruction becomes more cost-effective (Bender et al., 2005; Heugh, 2006).

Children and youth may also experience more positive psychosocial development in L1, but the research base in this area is less clear. Some of the literature argues that students have improved self-esteem and sense of identity when learning in their mother tongue (Ball, 2011). Some of the experts interviewed felt that MT literacy was particularly important in conflict contexts:

Mother tongue education is more important than ever in conflict contexts... Language becomes a way to feel you control something and have something in common with people. Where am I comfortable? What do I know? If you want a kid to feel safe, you don't put him in a school environment where he is intimidated by the language. [Language promotes] psychological safety as well as social and community integrity or solidarity... It's not only academic outcomes. It's about security, psychological well-being.

In Eastern Chad you have refugee camps for Sudanese. These families were kicked out of an Arabic speaking place. They hate Arabs. They have their own language. But script is a problem—Chad uses Latin script and French medium of instruction, while Sudan uses Arabic script and Arabic medium of instruction. These refugees are among people who resent them. They have to figure out what they know, where they are safe, how to gain the knowledge they need. How quickly can they learn to adapt? They need to learn in the language they speak. They need structured programs to facilitate that.

Studies of language acquisition in children show that at age 6, they have a 5,000-7,000 word vocabulary. When they hit school, they have limited vocabulary in that international language [of instruction]. Kids in mother tongue medium classes learn about 1,000 words per year. Kids do well if they learn 500 words per year in the international language. So by grade 3 they have only 1,500 words

in the language of instruction. It's important that they move from concepts they know in mother tongue to the same in the medium of instruction. They need targeted content area vocabulary, and also interpersonal communication skills. Reading and writing skills need to be taught in one language until they are strong at it. Requiring them to learn new letter sounds, syllable structures, and grammatical structures while learning in their own language is destructive.

Given the trauma experienced by children in conflict and crisis contexts, the possible connection between mother-tongue instruction and psychosocial well-being is worth pursuing.

Research among school-aged youth in Lebanon suggests that conflict creates push- and pull-factors towards certain languages, including mother tongue, and language issues in education are articulated by youth in terms of insecurity and inequality (Zakharia, 2009, 2010a). However, schools can mitigate vulnerabilities created by direct and structural forms of violence through language learning (Zakharia, 2010b).

There are significant debates over how long to provide literacy instruction in L1 and when to transition to L2 as the medium of instruction. Existing research suggests that it takes five to seven years to gain proficiency in an academic register--including relevant vocabulary, expression, grammatical form, and structure--in a second language (Cummins, 2000; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Geva, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002). It takes even longer if teachers are not well prepared or lack the necessary teaching and learning resources. One report on 14 African countries showed that children who transferred from L1 to L2 instruction after two to four years dropped in academic achievement after one to two years (Alidou et al., 2006). This decline occurs, in part, because children are learning so little vocabulary in L2 (Heugh, 2006). Existing research suggests that teachers should continue to use L1 language and literacy as a resource even after transitioning to L2 instruction; when possible, L1 literacy and language instruction should continue through elementary school.

However, teaching literacy in the students' first language depends on conditions that may not be existent, possible, or optimal in a conflict or crisis-affected setting: (a) a written form of the local language; (b) low levels of linguistic heterogeneity among the students; (c) support for mother-tongue instruction among policy-makers, school leaders, teachers, and parents; (d) teachers with proficiency in the languages of instruction or teachers who can mobilize bilingual student peers or community volunteers as language assistants in the classroom; (e) teachers trained in the principles of second language and literacy learning; and (f) sufficient teaching and learning materials in the local language(s). These conditions are difficult to achieve in conflict and crisis contexts. As one practitioner reflected:

I am a manager. I can say that doing this work, developing materials, printing books, teaching teachers how to use it—it's such an undertaking. I don't know what it would take to expand to multiple languages. For example, we could not rent a single truck to deliver our books because of the rain. It took six months to get decodable books in English. It depends on the place, the politics and feasibility.

The costs of developing and distributing materials in multiple languages are exorbitant in many conflict or crisis-affected contexts.

There is little research on how literacy instruction is affected by bilingual instruction in contexts with few materials and unskilled teachers. As a result, one expert argued forcefully against the "orthodoxy" that mother tongue instruction is best:

We need to move away from orthodoxy regarding using mother tongue as language of instruction. We have advocates, rather than researchers, pushing [for mother tongue] regardless of context and feasibility.... For example, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia are very different cases. They came up with different language policies: Uganda uses mother tongue, Kenya doesn't, and Ethiopia has a regional language policy. Programs can't follow a "pure" point of view. Language of instruction should be

determined as part of a needs assessment.

As this quote illustrates, needs assessment is critical to determining language of instruction, in addition to understanding the policy context. When mother tongue literacy instruction is not possible or feasible, educators must work to develop, in a thorough and accelerated way, students' oral proficiency in the language in which they will first become literate. Furthermore, teachers need solid training in how best to support students who are less familiar with the medium of instruction. Fortunately, research on second language acquisition provides a solid foundation (see, e.g., Pinnock, 2009; Ouana & Glanz, 2011).

3.2.3 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Medium of instruction selection is critical and requires an inclusive, participatory policy dialogue.
- Language politics may exacerbate conflict and influence decisions about medium of instruction in literacy programming. Therefore, conflict analysis must consider the multiple relationships among language, conflict, and crisis.
- The influence exerted by language politics may wax and wane depending on the phase of conflict.
- Existing research strongly supports the value of (a) teaching literacy in the students' first language, (b) making concerted and sustained efforts to develop solid oral proficiency in the second language before introducing second language literacy instruction, and (c) training teachers in the principles of second language acquisition.
- The advantages of teaching literacy in the students' first language depend on several conditions that may not exist or be possible in conflict and crisis-affected settings. As a result, it is essential to conduct situation and conflict sensitivity assessments to determine appropriate medium of instruction policies.
- There are significant debates over how long to provide literacy instruction in L1 and when to transition to L2 as the medium of instruction. However, research suggests the value of extending L1 literacy and language instruction through the elementary school years when feasible.
- There is a clear need for research on the feasibility of different MOI models, the impact of different MOI models on socio-emotional well-being, and the best approaches for building oral knowledge in both mother tongue and target language(s).

3.3 TEACHERS, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND SUPPORT

CORE ISSUES

Teachers are directly affected by conflicts and crises.

- They may be displaced and have high levels of mobility and absenteeism in response to the security situation and the immediate needs of their families.
- Teachers' own education or professional development may be disrupted, particularly in the context of protracted conflict, resulting in low levels of education or training.
- Teachers may be directly targeted during conflict and may require psychosocial supports.
- As a result of displacement, teachers' first language or languages may differ from the language(s) of

instruction or the first language(s) of students.

- Teachers play an important role in exacerbating or mitigating the impact of conflict or crisis on learners.

3.3.1 TEACHER KNOWLEDGE OF LITERACY

There are a number of key issues to consider regarding teaching staff for literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

There is a definite need to educate teachers about the core components of literacy.

We must improve teacher quality: teachers must be at center of whole thing. Teachers are the black box. Teacher training through donor programs has been too general, focusing on active pedagogy and classroom management but not content. Lack of knowledge on basic content is the problem in elementary grades. Teachers are short on knowledge base and how to deliver the content.

We worked with teachers on simple activities that they can do to help children learn to read. In Afghanistan, we gave them six activities, told them to use three per day for 45 minutes of literacy instruction. We were trying to improve skills of teachers. What activities can I use to teach PA? Phonics? For PACE-A, we did a post-training teacher observation to understand how teachers were using the techniques. We learned quickly that certain activities are more difficult. We need to provide more scripted lesson plans to help them with keeping time. For example, one piece of the lesson was morning message, it was meant to use five minutes, and instead teachers spent 20 minutes on it. We worked a lot around time management, helped teachers prepare lessons. We are trying to be more systematic now, look at changes in teaching practice in DRC, Afghanistan, potentially in Iraq.

The need for explicit training in the components of literacy was particularly pressing in post-conflict settings where teachers themselves may have low levels of education and professional development.

In Sierra Leone—I'm not sure if it's a result of the conflict—but we are dealing with teachers who before our training didn't know letters had sounds. One teacher hung his alphabet strip upside down in classroom. If they hadn't had conflict, the teachers might be in a different place.

In Afghanistan, we implemented literacy in post-conflict areas through community-based primary schools. We used a methodology that provided a structured approach for teachers. Many of the teachers were volunteers, not trained. You don't always find qualified primary school teachers in conflict locations. So you must prepare someone who has been a higher-grade teacher or a religious leader, who is the only literate person close by. We had to be flexible and not only focus on instructional approaches but build teachers' understandings of how language develops in young children. Then we looked at a structured, systematic way of teaching. In 45 minutes, you'll do two to three things. We gave them activity options...[Teachers] become more creative over time, so we didn't give prescriptive lesson plans but a guide for morning sessions and how much time to give each activity. For example, we taught how to tell the story; how to make it interesting; how to teach phonemic awareness using a menu of six activities.

A report on literacy in Sierra Leone noted that teachers are being asked to move from a teaching model that treats words as ideographs to a paradigm in which they teach that words are composed of sounds. The resulting task for students is not rote memorization but participation. This change requires a revolutionary conceptual shift (Kuyvenhoven, 2012a).

3.3.2 TEACHERS' PRACTICES: CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT, SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, AND TIME ON TASK

Teachers need to learn more about using continuous assessment to assess reading levels.

Continuous assessment should be included, but we haven't evaluated any of it. We did a small [assessment] thing to ensure training worked. What we offered to them were similar tests or tools, give a kid a paragraph or several words and see if he can read it. Show picture and ask what word is that corresponds, and then ask first letter. And we encouraged teachers in Afghanistan to do them timed, e.g. reading paragraph, as a quick check to see.

Implementing partners with structured or scripted lessons have done a better job of identifying assessment strategies, but there is a need for research on how teachers understand and use continuous assessment to improve their literacy instruction.

Teachers also need specific pedagogical training on how to support students affected by conflict.

[Teachers face a] room full of kids who are scared or being bullied. So teachers need to provide a sense of security; they need a special understanding of how to deal with their kids. Teachers need a whole range of competencies. But I haven't seen them given those tools.

Teachers must account for the social and emotional needs of students in order for them to learn: a sense of belonging; a sense of control; developing peer attachments; teamwork to build relationships with peers. How to accept questions as a contribution, not a threat.

Teachers have to consider the effect of violence on children. Teachers must understand the psychological needs of children. It goes beyond literacy. Think of non-cognitive, character, social skills: how do I interact with others? Have an explicit focus on important skills related to self-confidence, persistence, and discipline. How you work as a student, how you succeed. They are particularly important in these contexts.

Teachers must account for the social and emotional needs of students in order for them to learn: a sense of belonging, a sense of control, and teamwork to build relationships and develop attachments with peers. Teachers need to consider the effect of violence on children and the psychological or developmental needs of traumatized children and youth. Trauma may hamper children's capacity to learn, affecting their social relationships, self-esteem, emotional well-being, and even mental processes (Aber et al., 2011; Betancourt, 2001, 2002; Brown et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2010, 2011). In addition, as discussed in the previous section, teachers must understand the needs of multilingual learners.

Interviewees expressed concerns regarding teachers' classroom management skills and time on task:

The biggest problem is getting time to instruct. In Afghanistan, kids get 2.5 hours per day for everything. They have many vacation days and three months of holidays during winter. When we counted hours of instruction we have, and then half of those are wasted. These are things you have no control over.

Students need time on task to make meaningful progress. Estimation is somewhere between at least 250 to 350 hours. We don't get that in these contexts.

More broadly, the literature on "opportunity to learn" identifies eight critical factors: "total instructional time, hours in school year, days school is open, teacher attendance and punctuality, student attendance and punctuality, teacher-student ratio, instructional materials per student, time in classroom on task, and reading skills taught by grade" (Gillies & Quijada, 2008, p. 2). Specifically, the report recommends:

Foundational elements: inputs and management

I. The school year has a minimal instructional time of 850–1000 hours per year.

2. The school is open every hour and every day of the school year, and the school is located in the village or at least within 1 kilometer of the student.
3. The teacher is present every day of the school year and every hour of the school day.
4. The student is present every day of the school year and every hour of the school day.
5. The student-teacher ratio is within manageable limits, assumed to be at least below 40:1.
6. Instructional materials are available for all students and used daily.

Foundational elements: pedagogy

7. The school day and classroom activities are organized to maximize time-on-task—the effective use of time for educational purposes.
8. Emphasis is placed on students developing core reading skills by the second or third grade. (Gillies & Quijada, 2008, p. 5)

These elements of opportunity to learn may be further compromised in conflict and crisis-affected settings where schools may be distant from communities due to weak or damaged infrastructure and frequently offer reduced instructional time, using un-credentialed and unpaid volunteer teachers, with high student-teacher ratios, and few instructional materials.

3.3.3 TEACHER POLICY

Experts expressed additional concerns regarding teacher absenteeism, expectations, mobility, and remuneration.

Teacher absenteeism is rampant.

You have to address teachers' expectations. A study by Norma Evans of teachers' perception and expectations showed that 75 percent of teachers did not expect students to read things they haven't memorized before fourth grade.

We need government commitment not to move teachers from target schools for five years to have program longevity.

In Afghanistan we tried to get staff from local communities. They don't leave when security gets worse, so it's more sustainable. But we could not find young literate people. Some teachers were 70-year-old mullahs, and training them was not easy.

We would like to do something in host communities along Liberian border with Ivoirian refugees—places that are almost stable, where we've got staff trained. But UNHCR won't pay the teachers unless they are in camp. The Ivoirian government refuses to pay if the teachers don't come back to the country. Meanwhile, the kids have been out of school for over a year as conflict in west getting worse. I recently met kids who had no letter knowledge. There are things available but no one is using them.

There is a clear need for careful teacher policy planning in settings affected by conflict and crisis.

3.3.4 SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS-AFFECTED SETTINGS

The review of literature and interviews revealed an important debate on the best way to provide professional development to teachers in conflict and crisis-affected settings, who generally lack the educational levels and professional development experiences that teachers elsewhere may have. A number of implementing partners are investing in lessons, which provide scripts for what teachers should say, how they should time activities, and precisely how they should integrate available texts. RTI

led the field in scripted lessons, beginning with their work in Liberia. The pilot study conducted there supported the assertion that scripted lessons with supplementary reading materials improve both the quality of instruction and students' literacy learning.

In Liberia, we initially gave the teachers a week-by-week outline. But they came back and said, "We don't know how to do this." So we moved to daily strategy. We provided heavily scaffolded daily plans. We've had effective results, comparing to status quo, which is an unfair comparison. Only the academic community and some ministry people think [scripted lessons are] insulting. In a conflict context, it's necessary.

Linguists and educational experts critiqued our idea of scripted lessons. But the data during the pilot showed we needed it. Some consultants said we should not provide scripts. So for the first year, in pilot phase, we did that. Two months later we conducted a small assessment in 12 schools, and nothing had changed. The books [provided] were not used. We had coaches who went back to the schools, they said teachers were struggling to use materials because they aren't used to it and don't know the content, e.g., how to teach digraphs. They don't have the training—and five days of training can't teach much. So we brought people back for a mid-year lessons learned discussion. They all said we need scripted lessons. The data supported it. So our reading experts broke everything down by day. Those lessons were tied with student books, so lessons required the use of student books.

Scripted approaches have attracted donor support.

We are moving toward scripted lessons—repetitive templates or scripts that teachers can follow. [The idea is to] teach teachers [a specific] template so that they are doing the same thing each day, but expanding the content by following a textbook and using the words and stories. It requires them to do things that support good learning. For example, in an approach taken by PRATHAM in India, they have a simple script: Say something, do something, read something, write something. This is [an example of] a template. Teachers [start by] saying something, such as teaching letters or words. Then students do something with that—they practice in small groups. Then students read something and relate it to [what was introduced earlier], and [finally] they write something related to it. [This sort of template] gets teachers to do activities that build skills and knowledge, rather than standing in front of the class and doing rote memorization.

Interviews with practitioners revealed divergent opinions concerning scripted lessons. Some felt there was not a sufficient research base to support efficacy or viability of scripted lessons once a program goes to scale. Others argued that influencing teacher behavior required a deeper learning process over a longer period of time. They asserted that it is important to build teachers' planning skills, so that such an approach is adopted in other subject areas as well. Still others observed that "over-scripting" without appropriate training might lead to mechanical teaching and learning processes that might reinforce memorization, rather than active learning. Several complained about the cost of developing these materials and the dependency it invoked on the part of teachers and the ministry.

People look at EGRA Plus in Liberia and want effect sizes like that. If we do that, we dump something on teachers and turn them into robots. Those teaching techniques may not transfer into other subjects. We need a more realistic approach to influencing teacher practices.

In an emergency situation, we are dealing with under-skilled teachers who may be volunteers. They need detailed teacher guidebooks to complement the basic primer materials. We must develop the initial scaffold to teach reading and math, in a way they can deliver in the classroom. But they need to learn how to do it.

We decided not to give daily lesson plans because of the time and effort it would require to develop those. It would have taken a lot of time to provide lesson plans for every grade every day, and in this

context we had to start quickly. Also, we didn't have the money to pay teams of writers to write a set of scripted lessons.

We provide one week of lesson plans per month. Throughout the month the teachers should replicate that in the lesson-planning workbook that we provide. We thought this would give an opportunity to model for teachers the skill, and then they learn how to write their own lesson plans. Every week the teachers work together in their grade level to write the next week's plans and the director reviews the plans. Our team does regular spot checks and revisions, providing quality control. Where teachers are having difficulty, we provide additional training to teachers.

Others have adopted a scripted approach and added an information and communication technology (ICT) component. In Mali (PHARE), Rwanda, Guinea (FQEL), and elsewhere, the Education Development Center (EDC) is using Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI), or its pre-recorded, non-broadcast version, called Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI). Their early grade reading program provides daily scripted lessons, assessment tasks to monitor student performance on key skills, and student print and audio materials. Print materials include decodable books and read-aloud books. IRI and IAI provide teachers who have little or no training in literacy with carefully sequenced instruction in fundamental reading and writing skills. "Each program builds on and extends skills presented in previous programs. Within a single program, each activity builds on the previous ones. Activities are diversified and 'minds-on' in order to maintain student engagement levels" (EDC, n.d., p. 1). Further, instruction is multichannel: In addition to activities directed by audio characters, programs use a variety of printed materials (flash cards, posters, decodable texts, read aloud books, etc.) as well as student-teacher and student-student interactivity, to support teaching of reading, writing, and oral language.

Evaluations conducted in Guinea, Bolivia, and Thailand suggest that IRI-based programs can reduce urban-rural equity gaps (Anzalone & Bosch, 2005; Bosch, Rhodes, & Kariuki, 2002); while research in Honduras and South Africa suggests reductions in gender equity gaps (Hartenberger & Bosch, 1996). IRI and IAI can be costly to develop, although they are less expensive than video or computer-based work. Once developed, IRI and IAI provide broad outreach with minimal infrastructure, as appropriate in conflict or crisis settings. Recurrent costs include batteries and machines to play the recording, staff salaries, printing and dissemination of materials, teacher training, and airtime. The cost of airtime can be eliminated with the use of CDs, MP3s, or other recording devices.

IRI has demonstrated particularly effective results with the skills components of literacy and numeracy (Ho & Thurkal, 2009). It also trains and supports teachers whose skills may be minimal (Gaible & Burns, 2005). However, as with other scripted approaches, there is some concern that its reliance on direct instruction does not sufficiently stimulate work on reading comprehension or higher order thinking.

Thus, decisions about scripting and other supports for teachers in conflict- and crisis-affected settings require a careful understanding of the context in order to determine the most appropriate approach. Organizations are also drawing on different professional development models to support instruction. There is general agreement that "one-off" trainings and general trainings on pedagogical approaches such as "active learning" do not help improve literacy instruction. Training takes teachers out of classrooms in contexts where there is already insufficient time on task. Further, training is hard to access for many in conflict and crisis-affected sites.

Coaching has become a popular professional development model in developing countries. It often requires that organizations work with the ministry to repurpose supervisors from monitoring to support. However, when this is not possible, there are various options.

In conflict setting, you must get mentors as close to the school as possible, because safety affects travel. It could be a teacher within the school who is strong. Mentor teachers can be coaches.

In Liberia, the coach's distance from the school affected results; so this was considered in the scale-up, to ensure that the coaches selected lived close to their schools.

In a post-conflict setting, non-technical things matter, like the ethnicity of the supervisor.

Given that availability of trained personnel will be low [in post-conflict settings], you'll have untrained coaches. You need a group process through which teachers and coaches discuss and problem-solve. Coaches need to understand theory of literacy acquisition and keep everyone focused on the evidence base of how kids acquire literacy.

In conflict settings, mentors who live close to or work in the school are more likely to show up – mentor teachers can be coaches. Faculty and staff from teacher training colleges may also be contracted. Coaching is expensive, thus work is underway to compare different models in terms of impact and cost-effectiveness.

Other organizations are pursuing approaches meant to build teacher capacity and well-being, reduce dependence, and reduce costs. Teacher well-being is a particular concern in conflict and crisis-affected settings, because teachers themselves have often lived through trauma that has compromised their psycho-social well-being. Although there is a need for further research, one study suggests that teacher well-being may enhance instruction quality and thus improve students' learning outcomes. Teaching itself can improve teachers' sense of well-being: the respect accorded them in the community, and their abilities to serve as role models for young girls (Shriberg, 2007). IRC has adopted learning circles that have the additional benefit of addressing teacher well-being in post-conflict settings. In this model, teachers are offered a structured observation tool to observe each other and thereby prompt guided discussions of good pedagogy (Frisoli, 2013). Another organization, Dignitas Foundation, was pursuing a similar developmental strategy and “provides teachers a rubric with five areas, calibrated for the conflict situation” (practitioner interview).

Finally, also in relation to on-going training, several organizations are using videos of teachers demonstrating best practices. This might be particularly useful in a conflict and crisis-affected setting, where transportation infrastructure may preclude travel of teachers or trainers.

3.3.5 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Literacy teachers in conflict and crisis-affected settings may need to revolutionize their concept of literacy and literacy pedagogy. To do this, teachers need training and support in the following areas: (a) the core components of literacy, (b) literacy pedagogy, (c) continuous assessment, (d) the needs of multilingual learners, (e) the socio-emotional needs of students, and (f) classroom management.
- Scripted lessons provide essential support to teachers that may be particularly important for untrained and under-trained teachers in conflict and crisis settings. However, there is a healthy debate on the sustainability and cost-efficiency of this strategy, and the extent to which teachers will transfer that model of planning to other subject areas.
- Coaching and mentoring are popular strategies, especially for unskilled and under-skilled teachers in conflict and crisis settings, although much research is needed in this area. The cost-effectiveness of different models is currently being tested. In these contexts, mentors who live close to or work in the school are more likely to show up. “Mutual coaching” through teacher learning circles may build teacher knowledge about planning and pedagogy and may be beneficial for teacher well-being. Video-based professional development is one strategy being tested at this time.

- Teacher policy is needed to explicitly address (a) teacher salary, (b) placement, (c) mobility, and (d) absenteeism in ways that enable teachers to do their work.

3.4 CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

CORE ISSUES

Curriculum and teaching and learning materials are significant concerns in the literature and among the experts interviewed. Curriculum development is a particular challenge in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

- Conflict is often reflected in curricula, particularly in the form of bias (e.g., invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance), selectivity (e.g., physical or visual isolation of certain groups), and the use of offensive language toward certain groups. It can also entail language bias or bias in the representation of historical narratives.
- Curriculum development, materials production, and distribution are impaired by conflict and crisis.
- There may be conflicting government perspectives, conflicting curricula, or curricula that are not well developed.
- Because of their high level of mobility, refugees and IDPs may be caught between different curricular materials and educational expectations.
- Curriculum development processes and curricular content have the potential to address direct and structural forms of violence and to deliver life-saving and peacebuilding content.

3.4.1 CURRICULUM

Curriculum development is a particular challenge in conflict and crisis-affected countries. There may be conflicting government perspectives and conflicting curricula, or the ministry of education may have low capacity and a curriculum that is not well developed. Providers generally seek to follow the national ministry's curriculum, at least ostensibly.

In all of the countries, we use the curriculum from the country or the host country. We've adapted teacher training packages and curriculum, by that I mean a textbook. We ask: How do we make sure that they can use the one piece of support they have, which is the textbook? So the curriculum we develop for teacher training is linked to the textbook. We reference specific pages. Often, only teachers have access to the text. In Sierra Leone, the teacher writes on the wall, and students copy. In Afghanistan, kids had textbooks. They arrived late but they arrived.

We need a more respectful approach to curriculum reform. We must acknowledge that we are doing curriculum reform. It's hard to change the status quo. It's hard to find the textbooks and curriculum, map them, and insert our suggestions in what exists. We must build on what they have and the texts they have. But if there's no ministry to work with, or conflicting ministries, it's challenging.

We use government's curriculum, without creating a new reading curriculum. We didn't want to do what [two other implementing partners] do; they create their own whole curriculum on how to teach reading. The teachers in the contexts where we work are already stressed; they have heavy workloads and they have their own socio-emotional issues. If we change the curriculum, it wouldn't get implemented, it would only increase the workload.

However, curricular elements may promote conflict and thus require revision. Forms of curricular bias include invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance and selectivity, physical or visual isolation of certain groups, and the use of offensive language with regard to certain social groups (Sadker & Sadker, 1982). In anti-bias curricula, there are four basic goals: (a) to nurture self-concept and group identity; (b) to promote awareness of different and empathetic social interactions; (c) to spark critical thinking about bias, stereotypes, and discrimination; and (d) to develop students' capacities to rebuff bias (Derman-Sparks; 2001; Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2011). The experts interviewed recognized the importance of a review of curricular bias but expressed concerns:

I would call for an analysis of curriculum to make sure offensive materials are removed.

Conflict and fragility issues are sometimes coming from the fact that people don't have equal access to quality or appropriate education. Sometimes, when you are coming in not directly from government or interested institutions, implementing partners have an opportunity to think about how materials will work for everyone and not just a certain group or environment.

We seldom get to review a country's curriculum, and we can't change it. What's the content of some of the text there? Who gets excluded and included? So language of instruction and curriculum are [factors that may foment conflict].

However delicate it may be, implementing partners need to engage in an explicit review of curricular bias with the host-country government and in their work on curriculum development.

Another challenge is that the national curriculum may be thin or non-existent:

We work within existing objectives and standards. What people call curriculum varies widely. [One country] said that they had a curriculum, but it was two pages of topics. We must respond to the curriculum. But we could also build in pieces on social emotional skills and conflict resolution.

I helped with a camp project in Ethiopia. They tried to work with mother tongue; looked at EGRA results in different mother tongues, and tried to develop reading appropriately. But we couldn't get a syllabus in one of the languages. They tried to develop their own based on what existed in English and Tigrinia.

Further, the existing language arts curriculum might use different categories from the core components of literacy. One participant explained that the ministry of education had to be convinced to allow inclusion of comprehension strategies in periods reserved for reading instruction; phonemic awareness and phonics in periods dedicated to orthography; and fluency in moments dedicated to elocution or oral expression.

When the curriculum is thin or non-existent, programs try to develop a scope and sequence based on existing materials. A representative of one organization described their process as follows:

We start with existing materials, if there are any, and develop word lists. [We use software] to determine the frequency of words and a scope and sequence for letter sounds and word families. The computer formula generates a productive sequence of letters that gets us to the highest number of high frequency words. For example, in English, you would start with M A S T, and you can already combine them to create words like mama, mat, sat, etc. That way you quickly get children reading actual words. You shouldn't spend 26 weeks on 26 letters and never introduce a word. The letter order is meant to get them reading the most words possible. Then you can develop materials, like decodable stories with bounded vocabulary, to build up comprehension skills. And you introduce sight words that are tricky or high frequency.

Other groups are developing more independent curricula, usually in consultation with the ministry. For example, EDC uses international consultants to write the scope and sequence for radio programming,

which is then reviewed locally, adapted, and tested in the field. In Haiti, Save the Children worked with the MENFP to develop a teacher guide with daily lesson plans and to provide reading materials. The Haitian *Lekti Se Lavni (Reading is the Future)* curriculum contains a structured approach to phonemic awareness, repetition of high frequency sight words, listening comprehension, guided and independent reading, and regular assessment. Data from the *Lekti Se Lavni* pilot study suggested a significant impact on reading skills (Save the Children, 2010). Also in Haiti, ToTAL (*All Children Reading*) was initiated with USAID funding in August 2012. To date, ToTAL has focused on providing new learning materials and curricula, while also implementing community literacy strategies and testing the correlation between effective school management and student reading performance (Li, 2012). The project is explicitly aiming for inclusion of more disadvantaged students in this fragile context by convincing the ministry of education to allow development of curricular materials in Kreyol, which will be paired with scripted lessons to teach reading in Kreyol in the early grades.

Efforts to incorporate conflict sensitivity into early grade reading curricula remain modest and limited to the development of materials. Embedding non-violent messages into texts or producing developmentally appropriate texts with sanitation, nutrition, life skills, or other content are also important considerations. IRC's *Healing Classrooms* and UNICEF's *Child-Friendly Schools* provide a model for how to integrate a concern for well-being and life skills. There is a need for more research on the effects of such efforts on reading outcomes. On concerns about reading content, experts noted:

We are developing materials with Yemeni locals to include an indirect message of peace—or at least of non-violence—[embedded in the materials]. We promote tolerance through the materials, by changing the stories and content of the reading materials, in a way that is suitable to the context and culture.

[In some places] they use harsh stories to teach kids. Sometimes local books are upsetting. I read one about how to not to wet one's bed; the story told about a kid who wet the bed, and then his dog and his parents die.

If there is local language content, it's for adult readers and depressing. I need bounded decodable texts on hand washing where no one is dying.

Some interviewees believed that the existing limited integration of content such as life skills was sufficient:

Through stories we have targeted hand washing, school cleaning, social aspects of being a good community citizen, how to help the elderly. You can incorporate that [in a literacy program]. I would encourage it. They need life skills. I would have a separate objective for that. But don't go overboard.

We would argue, however, that early grade reading programs have not sufficiently integrated peace education, conflict resolution, socio-emotional learning, or life skills into existing materials. Among other topics, such work could include communication and conflict resolution skills; explicit discussions of the causes of violence, as well as peace, tolerance, diversity, and equality as shared values; and a consideration of human rights (Smith & Vaux, 2003, p. 35). These reading programs might also fruitfully address socio-emotional learning, specifically the sense of safety, control, and belonging, as well as relationships with peers, feelings of self-confidence, personal attachments, and intellectual stimulation.

3.4.2 PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS

Developing materials is an area of significant activity among literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected settings. Notably, the global shift from content-based curricula to a 'learning outcomes' model has significant implications for learning resources; the need for these supplemental materials will likely be greater in fragile contexts. Learning materials can take many forms, including visual diagrams, letter strips, multiplication tables, word or sound charts, pocket charts, flashcards, story cards, radio, and

other forms of ICT. Learning materials such as textbooks must address the needs of average learners in order to have the desired impact on learning outcomes (e.g., Glewwe et al., 2009).

Although teaching and learning materials are vital, it is challenging to provide them.

Getting reading materials out there and maintaining them is more difficult in conflict settings. It probably requires creativity. There needs to be more R&D on this. There must be some way to break materials needs into meaningful pieces and have people ready to develop these things. Often these conflicts occur with no one preparing for them. Normal text in primary school may be available, but maybe not in the language of students. We need a group of people who can sequence the curriculum. They can apply general learning theory: simple to complex, concrete to abstract. Start with easy letters, easy and common words. Work with a linguist to put the primer together. [Then you need to develop] practice materials, for in and out of class. Pratham is developing story cards, get learning materials down to least expensive, easiest to produce. Quite often lacking are teaching and learning materials: Letter cards, alphabet cards. Reinforce word recognition with word cards, chart of how letters and how they blend, diacritical marks for vowels, etc. So you need people with skills to put these things together. Some of this requires regular organizational skills to find out what's available, but there are a few technical skills required too. [We] must identify those. Someone needs to think about preparing for that, planning in advance of a crisis.

While some wanted to develop texts that were structured and leveled, others focused more on working with local partners and teachers to produce context-relevant material. These goals were occasionally at odds with each other.

Writing curriculum and developing materials does not mean picking a few MOE people to invite to a workshop. These people are not [children's literature] experts. They can write a curriculum framework, but they can't sit down and write stories. They do it too quickly. It's not scientific. Going forward, [we should] work with the local publishing industry to turn what MOE defines as curriculum into teacher training manuals and books. Our reading experts sit with the Department of Curriculum to come up with a scope and sequence, and let the publisher expand to daily lesson plan. They can do it with graphic designers, writers, etc.

The lack of reading materials is a major challenge. EDC, in DRC, did some great stories. They had script writers write. On one side of the paper, they recorded the title of book with an illustration and the name of the author. On other side, there were six boxes to structure the entire story—beginning, middle, and end. They were told to develop strong characters and a clear setting. The books were illustrated by a local artist, who worked with staff to support the meaning of the text. So we were able to provide several of those for every grade level. Budget [for materials] is a huge problem. That's a cheap and easy solution.

Lack of materials is an issue. We have found that when you create materials, contextually based, it's powerful for teachers. Do it with teachers. That becomes part of their program, for it to become more sustainable. We do writing workshops as part of learning circles. Teachers are writing stories and turning them into big books. They write songs. Also, we have a locally made resources section in the teachers' guide. During learning circles, teachers start to create materials—e.g., use pebbles to count sounds, syllables, numeracy. There is a whole section on materials you can create that are locally available.

Working with teachers or local authors can take time and teachers may not have a strong grasp of appropriate storylines for children or how to write in a way that engages students' interests. Further, unless specifically instructed to do so, local authors may not use targeted, decodable vocabulary that results in leveled texts. However, working with local authors and artists may: result in more culturally relevant stories and images for students, help teachers feel comfortable with and invested in the materials, and develop capacity among teachers to generate further teaching and learning materials for

their own classrooms.

The production of multilingual materials is a particularly difficult task in conflict and crisis-affected settings. There are virtually no teaching and reading materials in many of the mother tongues, much less leveled or decodable texts. Significant efforts to produce local-language texts are notable in NGOs such as Room to Read, which works with local authors, illustrators, and publishers to develop texts that introduce basic vocabulary and math, health issues, and culturally-relevant stories and illustrations.

The distribution of materials has proven difficult in many areas.

There are not enough print materials, and getting them to schools is hard. I went to one school 200 miles from capital, and it took 12 hours. We were on a dirt road, stuck in mud. Then we couldn't hire delivery trucks for 2.5 months during the rainy season.

However, several people cautioned that just providing texts is not sufficient.

Make sure you invest in providing materials and make it transparent that there's a regular schedule of delivery. Teachers are protective of them, they are not willing to share [with students]. There was a World Bank study about one country, maybe Sierra Leone. It showed that the reason why teachers and principals were hoarding materials is that they are rational; they don't expect subsequent delivery of materials. If they are delivered [regularly], people will stop locking them away.

The study referenced here suggested that expectations of future deliveries and also parent pressure to distribute texts prevented hoarding of materials (Sabarwal et al., 2012). In addition, several of the experts mentioned that one must make sure the materials are required.

Make materials explicitly required to use in lessons; write, "Turn to page three of book." If it's not in the strategy for delivering the lesson, they won't use it.

As illustrated by this quote, materials must be made relevant to teaching and integral to the delivery of literacy lessons.

3.4.3 AUDIO, RADIO, AND ICT

In an effort to overcome the challenges of distributing materials or having mobile pedagogical trainers in fragile contexts, several organizations have invested in audio, radio, and information and communication technologies (ICT). Audio approaches have particular advantages in contexts such as South Sudan and Somalia, where there is minimal infrastructure in terms of ministry of education capacity, teacher training institutions, curriculum centers, experienced district staff, and trained teachers. Audio requires only a short period of orientation and either a good radio and firm signal, an MP3 player and batteries, or a similar device.

EDC, in particular, has invested in audio and radio formats. Their Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) provides structured lessons for unskilled and under-skilled teachers in fragile contexts. The audio, generally provided in English, directs the teacher and the students through activities including flashcards and phonics charts. As mentioned above, IAI has demonstrated effective results with the skills components of literacy and numeracy (Ho & Thurkal, 2009). EDC's experience with literacy programming in South Sudan is illuminating. There, EDC invested in MP3 players with manual cranks, to avoid the cost of batteries, and teachers receive all the lessons on a memory stick. In this situation, teachers can deliver the programs on their own schedule, at times when students are able to gather. If they wish, teachers can review the programs to prepare the lesson in advance. Further, the digital copy allows teachers to control the lesson, pausing playback when necessary.

However, EDC's approach has also involved many challenges. Many teachers lack sufficient fluency in English to translate instruction into a local language. Class sizes frequently exceed 50 students, making it

difficult for students to hear the lessons. Finally, teacher absenteeism and low levels of remuneration have demotivated teachers (EDC, n.d.). This experiment reflects the lessons presented in the section on mother-tongue literacy instruction: in areas where teachers lack proficiency in both languages of instruction, literacy learning is jeopardized.

In linguistically homogeneous areas of active conflict, radio instruction may be particularly beneficial. For example, Africa Education Trust's (AET) SOMDEL literacy program in Somalia relied on radio instruction, incorporating "key life skills areas such as health, nutrition, environment and human rights, not just for those enrolled on the course but also for many thousands of others who can listen to the broadcasts." "Distance teaching programs are suitable for areas in conflict where one cannot rely on qualified teachers being able to improvise or adapt materials to suit the needs of their students" (Brophy, 2003b). Independent evaluations show that 88% of the 33,000 learners involved in the programs have passed the final literacy examination set by AET staff and the local national examinations board (Fentiman, 2003; Thomas, 2006). The program was especially successful at integrating women and internally displaced people. A review of the program posited that its success could be attributed to several factors, including cultural openness to radio programming and its significant reach into conflict-affected territories.

Alternately, radio can be used to develop oral fluency in "minoritized" languages.⁶ On weekdays in Guatemala, for example, the national program to promote reading—*Leamos Juntos* (literally, "We Read Together")—broadcasts a series of radio stories in Spanish and either Maya, Garifuna, or Xinka.

Reviews of other forms of ICT in literacy education are mixed. In conflict and crisis-affected areas, the feedback on use with schoolchildren is often negative (e.g., ICT widens the rich-poor accessibility gap). For youth and adult life skills education, however, ICT is necessary. But evidence suggests that simply providing computer equipment and software is not enough; without teacher training on how to use ICT and teach with it, ICT becomes a distracting, ineffective tool in building literacy. Given increasing interest in ICT and its use in education, it is essential to determine how best to introduce new technologies and encourage their use in ways that optimize learning gains.

3.4.4 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Literacy programs need to engage in a formal review of curriculum bias as part of the initial conflict assessment; this may require delicate diplomacy with the government or governments involved.
- Implementing partners must think carefully about whether and how to fit the core components of literacy into existing curricular categories.
- Where existing curricula are minimal, programs should develop a literacy scope and sequence based on existing materials and learning needs, while explicitly planning for the supplemental materials that will be required and how they will be produced.
- Reading curricula at all levels should do more to incorporate life-saving, socio-emotional, and anti-bias information, such as contextualized forms of peace education, conflict resolution, and life skills, where appropriate.
- In developing literacy materials, programs should consider the potential trade-offs between leveled texts that are professionally produced, and locally produced, more contextually relevant texts that may have greater teacher investment but will require adaptation to different reading levels.

5. Minoritized languages are those that have been socially, politically, and/or economically marginalized over time through unequal policies and processes. Their speakers may or may not be numerical minorities.

- Distribution of teaching and learning materials is a significant challenge in fragile environments, requiring careful planning in terms of time, cost, and logistics.

3.5 COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES

CORE ISSUES

Communities and families are directly impacted by conflicts and crises, in turn shaping their support of literacy programs.

- Social capital and social cohesion are often threatened by conflicts and crises.
- Community and family structures and relationships may be altered as populations are displaced and members spend more time and effort trying to fulfill basic survival needs.
- Community and family support for literacy programs may be harder to achieve in these situations.
- Communities and families have an important role to play in literacy development and inclusion and may serve as important sources of psychosocial support for education actors, including teachers and students.

3.5.1 UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING THE ROLE OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES FOR LITERACY EDUCATION IN CONTEXTS OF CONFLICT AND CRISIS

Social capital and social cohesion are often threatened by conflicts and crises (Coletta & Cullen, 2000) and community support may therefore be harder to achieve in such contexts. Building community investment in and support of literacy programs is essential in any context, but particularly in conflict and crisis-affected settings. As one expert stated, “because structures of state may be missing or compromised, communities have a strong role to play.” As another person explained:

We need formal and non-formal complementarity. Get the community active. Get peer support. Get adults mentoring and tutoring. Don't wait for things to be in the formal system. Get materials to support those folks who haven't taught to be able to do it on their own. Give them the recipe book.

Community support is also essential to meet the goal of more inclusive classrooms that reach girls and women as well as “minoritized” groups, children or youth affected by conflict, and children or youth with special needs.

Ideally, communities would be involved from the beginning of program design, particularly through a participatory needs assessment.

Our agenda [in Afghanistan] was to expand access. Given that we went from one million to five million kids in school, access was the issue. Our aim was really to establish community-based primary schools. We had to do an assessment of communities to see if they really needed it. Our partners worked in areas with more conflict, Taliban presence, and they came up with home-based schooling. Because we spent a lot of time on community mobilization, it worked. Communities helped to pay for teachers in cash or kind; our project was not designed to pay salaries. Eventually the government agreed to put teachers on payroll. They had to work together for the school, so it worked well.

Don't come with the assumption that we know. Just listen to them, find out what they think they've been doing. Why is education important to them? We ask them to tell us what they think. We brought mullahs and others. We wanted them to tell us what Islam says about education. “Boys and girls are equal.” “So education is important for girls.” Then we listed issues that prevented girls from going to

school: male teachers, distance, toilets. Then we asked them for solutions they could propose. They came up with a daily schedule of parents to walk with them. We worked with Ministry to hire female teachers for short term, but agreed with community that they should send girls who finish high school to Teacher Training Institutes. We provided scholarships. Go with the understanding they have of the best solution. Otherwise, they will accommodate for a short time, but it's not sustainable.

Community leaders should have the opportunity to be involved in education, including what would be learned; language of instruction; professional education for themselves and others. If there is no discussion on the importance of education, it will not succeed!

Involving educated members of the community will give them a chance to do work; others will send their kids....

Interviewees suggested that programs should be adapted to integrate cultural and religious values, when feasible, in order to build community support for literacy programs.

Involving community as a key partner in this is key. Target parents to help them understand the program. Connect program ideals to Islam and one's duty to community and to country. Provide feedback as a result of the program, in order to show commitment.

For us, every education program where we are somehow involved, we have involved communities. Raising awareness of importance of education, so every kid goes to school, including girls. So, for example, in Afghanistan we used a lot of messages straight from the Qur'an, so it helps support the message.

We spend a lot of time mobilizing communities. We didn't just set up schools. For example, we supported preschools in Kenya. We started with marginalized Muslim communities that wouldn't send their kids to school but would send them to madrassas. They wanted us to establish secondary schools. But we told them they needed to focus on pre-primary. We worked with community to communicate how secular and Islamic education could come together. We did a lot of mobilization and built trust. What do kids aged three, four, and five need to know about Islam? We asked them. Then we told them what they need from a developmental perspective. Then we created madrasa preprimary schools, but they are actually holistic. Trust of communities is the most important factor. We are so concerned about getting the contract, implementing, and then convincing [the donor] that we did what we pledged to do. [The interviewee references a project that] built schools and clinics but they are empty. Half of the community doesn't want to send their children. Government won't set up a school because they have a quota for the number of children required. Sometimes there are dynamics of community that must be understood.

Furthermore, religious and cultural values may be significant motivators for literacy education. For example, a MercyCorps survey of women in Iraq found that:

The most common primary goal of participants in the program was to be able to read the Qur'an independently (57%), followed by returning to school (26%) and obtaining employment (16%)...For women in all age groups 20 and older, reading the Qur'an independently was the primary goal (45–78%), increasing by age group. In the 30+ age groups, obtaining employment was the most common goal second to reading the Qur'an (11–20% of respondents). (MercyCorps, 2010, p. 12)

Spiritual leaders can be among the primary allies in literacy campaigns and should not be discounted.

Building support among the community may require targeted social messaging.

Getting support in the community also poses a challenge: how do you promote the appropriate messages within a community that is itself illiterate? [i.e., using what modes of communication?] It may require using pictures.

A few organizations work in community training, but feel obtaining donor support is difficult, in part because of the lack of impact evaluation.

The organization most widely recognized for building on community potential is Save the Children through its Literacy Boost work. Literacy Boost recognizes that students have significant, untapped opportunities to learn outside of school. Fulfilling those opportunities requires access to interesting, relevant reading materials. To address that need, Literacy Boost has developed community-based book banks, weekly reading camps, paired reading buddy activities, parent awareness-raising and training sessions, and reading festivals, among other means. Through training and the *Community Strategies for Promoting Literacy* flipbook (Dowd et al., 2010) parents and other adult volunteers are encouraged to build reading readiness at home by learning letters and letter sounds; singing songs, telling stories, and learning rhymes; making reading materials; and reading books together in order to build oral fluency and vocabulary, build children's awareness of sounds and letters and ability to combine them into words, and build children's recognition of letter shapes and sight words. The intervention has shown significant gains among involved children. For example, 2010 data from Pakistan showed greater comprehension gains among children involved in book borrowing and reading camp than their peers.

There is a clear need for programs that teach parents why literacy is important and how to support their children's literacy (Mithani et al., 2011; Kuyvenhoven, 2012b). Parental support is essential during early childhood (Burns et al., 1999) and may be particularly important in conflict and crisis-affected contexts, where the fragile environment may have influenced children's health and development and families rarely have access to early childhood education of any sort.

Parental, especially maternal, literacy has a significant impact on the literacy acquisition of children; it is unfortunate that there is so little funding and support for adult literacy programs. These programs are generally underfunded, with inadequate teaching and learning materials, poorly trained or prepared teachers, and students who have a variety of competing demands.

It was noted that many times primers meant for children were being used for adults without taking into account the psychological, sociological, and physical differences between them. The use of children's primers may explain why many adult learners drop out of literacy classes.... Adult learners withdrew as a result of lack of funds, lack of motivation, occupational factors, migration and the non-functional nature of the project.

Adult literacy and education for over-age young people was largely ignored as something to be considered only after the formal school system had been re-established.

Beyond parents, there is widespread recognition of the value of other family members, volunteers, and youth as para-teachers for children (e.g., Guatemala MOE, 2012). This may be particularly important in the overcrowded classrooms that characterize many crisis-affected and post-conflict settings.

Peer tutoring is also effective. Informal peer teaching naturally occurs among learners. Save the Children Pakistan's *Reading Buddy* program, which assigned younger children with an older "reading buddy" student from a higher grade, encouraged younger children to spend more time practicing reading (Mithani et al., 2011). As one expert reflected:

We have read a lot on the evidence around remedial instruction. Pull out kids who are lower performing to help them improve their reading. When you have a teacher with an overcrowded classroom, it's

difficult to do this equally, fairly. The teacher concentrates on those that are performing. It's a huge challenge. A focus could be to really hone in on lowest performing students. [She references a JPAL study.] In India, they used community volunteers. With little training, just having lower-performing kids grouped together has helped them catch up quickly. They tested different models. They mixed abilities to see if there's peer learning. Then grouped lower performers together.

Peer tutoring has been shown to be effective in other contexts as well.

3.5.1 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Community investment in and support of literacy programs is essential, particularly in conflict and crisis-affected settings.
- Ongoing, inclusive, and participatory engagement of communities through needs and conflict assessments should be sustained from the beginning of a project.
- Building support within the community may require targeted social messaging. There is benefit in including a program component for teaching parents why literacy is important and how to support their children's literacy.
- Cultural and religious values should be considered, and where feasible, integrated with literacy programs.
- Literacy programs should develop explicit plans for engaging community support and developing opportunities to practice literacy outside of school.
- Parental, especially maternal, literacy has a significant impact on the literacy acquisition of children. As part of a comprehensive and conflict-sensitive approach to literacy, donors should consider funding adult and/or family literacy programs, or linking to donor agencies and programs that do so.
- Given the common challenges of large classes, community members, family members, and peers can make excellent para-teachers and tutors.

3.6 YOUTH AND ADULTS

CORE ISSUES

Youth and adults require distinct consideration when it comes to literacy in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

- Conflict affects youth and adults differently than children.
- Their education may have been interrupted and is often associated with a sense of missed opportunity.
- They may have been recruited into armed groups.
- They may have been placed in the position of being head of household at an untimely age.
- Shame and stigma may be associated with an inability to read that discourages over-age learners from returning to school in the absence of programs that are attentive to these dynamics.

3.6.1 SUPPORTING YOUTH AND ADULTS

Literacy programs targeting youth are distinct from early grade reading programs. They are more likely to engage a broader concept of literacy, to seek relevance, and to link literacy to economic, political, and social practices. For example, one program document regarding Moroccan youth captured the different literacies that youth need to survive, thrive, and contribute to society:

Young Moroccans' vulnerabilities to change seem to be especially pronounced, as they are still in a life stage focused on the development of core human assets (including literacy and numeracy skills, critical thinking and problem solving abilities, technical-vocational and broad employability skills); the cultivation of social assets (including networks of supportive adults, community spaces and structures, peer groups and life partners) along with the accumulation of financial assets (such as financial literacy and access to both savings and credit services). The way attitudes are formed, behavior is reinforced, and young Moroccans' immediate social, economic, and political context either supports or frustrates their efforts to cope with change, all join together to shape young people's approach to the world. These attitudes, behavior and context are often kinetic and mutually influence each other. They can either serve to engage that young person in positive pathways to the future, or push and pull them onto pathways marked by increased social conflict, growing disaffection and radicalized thoughts, and participation in socially negative actions including crime, violence and support for terrorism. (EDC/EQUIP3, 2007, p. 14)

The quest for relevance takes many forms. For example, SOMDEL's Level 2 focused on developing literacy in what are described as "real literacy tasks" (Rogers, 1999)—activities that are common in everyday life in Somalia, such as reading and writing letters and reading instructions and labels. The A Ganar/Sport for Development programs in Central America emphasize teamwork, trust, respect, leadership, conflict resolution, and literacy through sports. They teach reading, but link reading to more holistic approaches and areas of interest for youth. As one person stated:

People do literacy classes with a specific point or purpose in mind. For example, in northern Kenya there was a famine 20 years ago. Cattle restocking became a huge piece of a project that also featured literacy. People need resources, but they aren't going to come to school and learn when in trauma. You have to find ways to mitigate that, and give tools to make their lives work better. We do development related materials, like clean water. When offered in context of literacy project, people catch on. They are practicing their ability to read and write while getting key skills.

Youth need opportunities for political engagement and cooperation in the community. The Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP), in Afghanistan is illustrative:

LCEP participants, including youth themselves, valued youth contributions to their community yet wanted more opportunities for constructive youth engagement, training and employment. Follow on activities should contain a strong emphasis on life and vocational skills, training; capital access and continued growth opportunities for youth. Also, youth programming should include a community service requirement in which youth employ their emerging skills toward village-level improvements. (Janke, 2007, p. 20)

The majority of existing programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts that target youth and integrate literacy are livelihood or workforce oriented (USAID, 2012b). They may include a focus on life skills training, apprenticeships, internships, and support and coaching for entrepreneurship development (e.g., Fauth & Daniels, 2001; USAID, 2012b, n.d.; Van Dyck, 2012; World Bank, 2010). The importance of work-oriented literacy programs (known by different names such as functional, work-based, work place or entrepreneur education) is underscored in the focus group discussion of the UNIVA literacy program in Nigeria: "Apart from encouraging high retention rates, it also confirms its potential for sustainability"

(Aderinoye, 2002, p. 39). The successful programs reviewed for this study involved non-formal education that had a *practical* output with demonstrable benefits.

Literacy programs for youth in conflict settings require flexibility in terms of time and space. Find temporary classrooms; work in the afternoons; find a house people are willing to come to. Talk with the youth to identify times they can come. They need to prioritize economic activities.

Include life skills, especially conflict resolution. Provide with reasons not to engage in delinquent activities. Link literacy and math to economic skills. Help them create and manage their own business; learn skills like construction, sewing, hair dressing. Literacy skills are lost without a way to use them over time.

Accelerated programs are a popular option for youth.

They are at all different levels, probably out of school for several years. You need an initial assessment of skill levels, and then you should group according to ability, not age. Adapt content to their level and interests. Need it to be accelerated, they are able to sit longer and be more engaged.

Moving non-formal to formal: systems are broken. You have to prepare them not to be intimidated, to be ready to learn in the medium of instruction. They are trying to get back in the system. They've failed for various reasons: language, financial, etc. Often after one year of reading, writing, and math, they can move into grade four in formal schooling. That's what we find in West Africa.

One thing we've worked on is providing services in non-formal environment for kids or youth that streams them into the national school system. Start with reading, writing, and numeracy in a "sheltered" environment where the teacher won't beat them for speaking their own language. And then they can stream into formal systems. We've seen it in Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. Find their needs, provide for them in their own language, and make space for them to integrate. You have to prepare them in the language they speak. Teach them to think about new knowledge in a language they speak. At the same time, we provide second language acquisition; really it's a foreign language, not a second language. You have to get their oral vocabulary to a level necessary.

There are debates, however, about whether programs should be designed to facilitate transfer into formal schooling.

Should literacy programs be designed as a compensator that allows people to transition back to formal education? My experience is that this is often difficult to do, because the teacher base lacks the training and the content. If it's early grades, then building reading, math is enough to transition child into third or fourth grade. This could be assessed in the country they are returning to, what is the knowledge and skill base of a fourth grader?

Too few of the programs targeting youth have fully integrated a conflict perspective. There is minimal recognition of the need to focus on addressing children affected by conflict, including those recruited as child soldiers, and to include life skills and conflict resolution. Other elements are generally missing as well. As one expert stated:

Boys were involved in the unrest—10–15 year olds, sometimes younger—they suffered from the crisis and were easily targeted. These boys are problematic to tackle, because they have not had the right educational opportunities or a quality education from the outset. It's a problem and an opportunity to find programs for them. You cannot mainstream them because, there are early grade programs, and there are adult programs, but not youth programs focused on integrating them into schools. A grade 6 boy that I know personally could not read. So he felt shy to go to school. He dropped out. [Not reading] has become an obstacle for him and for his return to school. His father let him stay at home and thought he could get involved in other work, for example, at the market. His son was not happy with this, but also could not go to school. During the revolution/unrest, the boy got involved with the fighting.

It was hard to get him back after that. His father says: “My son’s problem is reading and low self-esteem.” This could be improved through alternative programs for him. Not reading creates psychological issues. Whereas war provides a purpose. This is a common situation in Yemen.

There is a deep-rooted assumption in program literature that lack of opportunities makes people, and young men in particular, more vulnerable to recruitment into “armed movements and local criminality and provides fodder for anti-government political agendas” (Lund & Ulman, 2009, p. vii). This assumption was particularly prominent in documentation on youth programming in Mindanao and Yemen. Thus youth employment and employability skills were designed and implemented as an effort to combat terrorism and youth involvement in armed groups. It has been observed that “youth are both an ‘overlooked’ vulnerable group, and idle and disillusioned youth are a potential threat to peace building” (Scanteam, 2005, p. 78).

Yet there is recognition that schooling itself can be a risk.

In DRC there is such a limited economic environment. Finding a job and doing something with literacy skills is hard. University graduates are driving cars. It’s hard to say that literacy is a key to those youth engaging in economic development. So potentially schooling becomes a risk—educated youth are disillusioned.

The existing literature demonstrates a preoccupation with youth violence and an assumption that engagement in literacy or formal education will stem that tide. It is important to examine such assumptions. Although evaluation research has shown that youth violence can be prevented through comprehensive programs with multiple program activities for at-risk youth, it is not clear which intervention components work to achieve what outcomes (USAID, 2012b). Furthermore, evidence from Bhutanese refugee youth in Nepal demonstrates that youth “simultaneously engage in humanitarian agency projects, which promote human rights and peaceful values, and with political groups advocating violence” (Evans, 2008, p. 50). Indeed, youth were found to employ the same skills learned through non-formal educational programs, such as poetry and theater, in their engagement in violent political activities.

3.6.2 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Youth and adult literacy programs are more likely to engage a broader view of literacy, linked to economic, political, and social practices—such as livelihoods and life skills, conflict resolution, and democratic engagement. This broader definition is appropriate and ideally allows for a more relevant and motivational program.
- Teachers and programmers should examine their own assumptions about the relationship between youth and violence, including radicalization, recruitment into armed groups or gangs, and other concerns. Then, consider how literacy pedagogy and materials can directly benefit youth and promote positive perceptions of youth in society.
- Literacy programs for over-age students need to consider how the dynamic of shame can be addressed, and how a conflict or crisis perspective can be integrated into program design and implementation. Further, these programs should consider how transfer into formal schooling might be facilitated in ways that cause the least tension and promote social cohesion.

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION: CORE ISSUES, SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, AND NEEDS

4.1 ASSESSMENT

CORE ISSUES

Assessment of student learning outcomes has many challenges in the context of conflict and crisis, and students commonly seem to not be achieving real gains in reading words, sounds, and comprehension. Being in school is not a guarantee that students are learning.

- Mobility and student turnover complicate sampling and measurement of student learning.
- Disruption to schooling and non-formal educational programs, teacher absenteeism, and changing governments create delays in programming, which contributes to difficulties in measuring outcomes when learning time is not continuous.
- Displaced populations may face obstacles accessing examinations and certification.
- Assessments are often postponed or cancelled in rapidly evolving situations with escalating insecurity.
- Teachers are often not trained to conduct meaningful assessments that could inform instruction.
- Timing and modality of assessments may not be appropriate for the context.

4.1.1 THE DIFFICULTIES IN ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

Study participants held different views about whether large-scale assessments of student learning were realistic in the context of conflict or crisis. Some felt that it was impossible, while others suggested that simplified tools for literacy assessment offer a potential way forward.

Practitioners noted that being in school is not a guarantee that students are learning to read. Whereas student enrollments have served as a proxy indicator for learning, signaling “one dimension of a return to normalcy” (Management Systems International, 2006, p. 15), there is substantial evidence for the poor quality of learning, despite widespread improvements in school attendance. For example, even though nearly 97 percent of children in India ages 6–14 years are enrolled in school, the 2011 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) showed that 17 percent of students in Standard II could not read letters (J-PAL South Asia, 2012, p. 6).

High mobility and student turnover characterize conflict and crisis-affected educational settings. Challenges to student learning assessment include the high probability that students and their families are not fixed in one location throughout a year or from year to year. They may attend four different schools in one year. Sometimes this is because they “run up a bill in one place, so they move again and again” (practitioner interview). Sometimes it is because of a shifting security situation or other security-related family choices. In any case, mobility and turnover make sampling and assessing student reading progress difficult.

Disruptions due to deteriorating security conditions, teacher absenteeism, and changing governments all create delays in literacy programming, which in turn contribute to difficulties in measuring outcomes when student learning time is not continuous.

Furthermore, access to examinations and certification for displaced populations may be difficult. Where government assessments and official certifications are available, displaced youth and adults' access to examinations may be blocked by the required papers or procedures, conflicting policies between home and host institutions, or lack of physical access to examination sites. International organizations can play a critical role in brokering arrangements to improve such access.

Even when national, school, and other literacy assessments are scheduled, they are often postponed or cancelled in rapidly evolving situations with escalating insecurity. Government and school examinations may be further compromised by corruption, violence, and lack of transparency in contexts of protracted conflict and crisis, in turn affecting the value and trust placed in student assessment (Zakharia, 2011).

In addition, teachers may not be trained to conduct meaningful, formative literacy assessments in their classrooms, and the timing and modality of assessments may not be appropriate. Assessment may be a reflection of the teachers' learning process, rather than students' achievement, particularly in the absence of teacher professional development.

Importantly, large-scale assessment is time-intensive and expensive in what is often a rapidly evolving, resource-scarce environment.

4.1.2 TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

The need for simple, cost-effective literacy assessment tools that are easy to understand and produce is widely recognized; particularly when teachers are meant to be responsible for ongoing assessment (see section 4.1.3 below on Who Should Assess?). The simplest tools test component tasks of reading, such as consonant recognition, and words going from short, simple, common, and concrete to longer, more difficult, and rare. According to one literacy specialist, simple tools are not difficult to develop for consistency with primary school curriculum and textbooks. Simple tools, however, tend not to have the same accuracy as well-developed reading component tools. For example, an RTI study of the early grade reading assessment EGRA showed that real word reading test components correlate with reading comprehension at a rate of .85, .90, or .95. A general concern is that many tests, particularly in rapid assessments, lack a focus on comprehension. Furthermore, interview participants were concerned that: "early skills are easier to teach, and there's an assumption that early skills build to later ones, when we could argue they are necessary but not sufficient" (practitioner interview).

The EGRA is widely acknowledged as an efficient, cost-effective tool to measure gains in reading. Yet although the EGRA is more efficient and accurate than other more simplified tools, more training and expertise is required to analyze results. Different views emerge on whether the EGRA is appropriate or possible in contexts of conflict or crisis. What is the best way to modify the EGRA to reflect and support different levels of learning associated with literacy in children and youth in the context of conflict? Questions have also been raised about whether EGRA is a good test for languages that use non-Latin scripts.

Recognizing that "it's not enough to focus on general teaching methodologies," many programs have shifted focus to what they perceive to be fundamental or foundational skills (practitioner interview). Teachers tend to fall back on what they know, even after years of pedagogical training.

So we've assessed kids now. [We] haven't just relied on national assessments that happen at the end of primary when it's too late. We are relying on a simple assessment. That has been successful where we work. Everyone can see that the kids aren't reading. Understand that this is a skill that needs to be taught, it needs practice, and there are specific teaching approaches. We have seen some evidence now about how to teach teachers to teach reading, there are pieces of evidence that show a few things are working. But the question is: what is it that makes the difference? We do complex interventions and it's difficult to evaluate in those settings, to see what makes the difference. Was it the training? The

community and its support for children at home? There are many components that people feel very strongly about.

Such programs have implemented a modified EGRA tool in order to show staff and trainers where concerns are for student learning and to provide data for the ministry of education. Such assessments are conducted by independent assessors, organization staff, or government workers, but not by teachers. However, benefits of sharing these tools with teachers have been noted. By seeing the assessment tool, teachers have a clearer understanding of the components of reading, particularly in contexts where memorization of words is common practice.

The pros and cons of using these tools have also been noted, especially when there is pressure for quick results. Interview participants identified “easier and quicker tests,” such as Pratham’s one-page test, which includes letters in one box, words in another, and a paragraph in another. This test is conducted by volunteers in communities. “It’s a wake-up call for everyone in the village, [when you are going out and] testing every child in the village” (practitioner interview; see also Gove & Cvelich et al., 2010).

Timing assessment tasks is another issue. Timing has been shown to interfere with children’s response rates, particularly where learners have never been tested in this manner before. To paraphrase one enumerator: “You give learners five seconds per item, then move on, otherwise any assessment would take too long.”

Some programs, such as Room to Read, track students monthly using a progress monitoring piece to identify who is struggling.

In programs where literacy is an embedded component of a larger youth-focused program, assessment is often integrated with longer-term goals, such as employment or returning to school. Such programs may use qualitative measures of skill development. These are undertaken by those closest to the youth, namely the educators in the programs. For example, A Ganar’s youth literacy program, Sport for Development conducts pre- and post-surveys of youth. Surveys include qualitative measurement of core skills—whether the skill is *fully developed*, *moderately developed*, or *less developed* (practitioner interview). Such measures are documented by NGO workers who work closely with youth, observe them in their programs over time, and have insights into youth progress and program impact. While some of this is anecdotal, it points to transformational processes. Although such a process may suggest a conflict-sensitive approach, the question arises regarding how such approaches might respond to the demand for large-scale assessments by donors.

Others, such as UNHCR have been working with the Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP) for a year and a half to figure out how to monitor youth and adult literacy skills in refugee camps. A noted benefit is that LAMP targets the skills adults need to function in society, such as calculating a yearly budget or reading information about medicine or credit.

The Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI) has adopted two indicators of early grade reading achievement for FTI countries:

1. Proportion of students who, after two years of schooling, demonstrate sufficient reading fluency and comprehension to “read to learn.”
2. Proportion of students who are able to read with comprehension, according to their countries’ curricular goals, by the end of primary school (Gove & Cvelich et al., 2010, p. 33)

These serve as proxy measures for the quality of basic education. Each country then sets its own benchmarks for fluency and comprehension (Gove & Cvelich et al., 2010). In Kenya, the “Quality Education in Developing Countries” initiative led by RTI and funded by Hewlett Foundation, has conducted benchmarking exercises for four languages.

4.1.3 WHO SHOULD ASSESS?

There is a general consensus that assessment should happen early and often. However, discussion has emerged over who should collect data on student learning outcomes. On the one hand, external enumerators are associated with more reliable data. On the other, educators may have more continuous contact with student learning. Teaching educators to use these assessment tools allows them to incorporate such measures as part of continuous student assessment, which is what EGRA was originally meant to do. Furthermore, teaching educators, government staff, or others is a fundamental aspect of capacity development and sustainability. However, training educators and community members to conduct and analyze assessments can be costly and time-consuming. Still, some civil society organizations such as Pratham and Uwezo have turned to community-based surveys, where children and youth are at home and not in schools. Training community members in assessment has the benefit of identifying and developing local assets and building support for quality schooling.

4.1.4 KEY LESSONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The evidence on assessment suggests:

- Moving from self-report data to assessment is critical to identifying needs and collecting baseline data on literacy. Many people who conduct literacy assessments continue to hold the view that literacy is something you either possess or do not possess. This leads to an over-reliance on “self-report” literacy data: You ask a person whether he or she can read and write, and the answer is assumed to be valid. As noted in a study of literacy assessment practices in Nigeria, “continuing reliance on self-reporting enumeration of literate citizens without a realistic literacy assessment survey will not augur well for the country development as it will be difficult to know the actual number of people that are literate, their level of literacy and in what language are they able to read and write” (Aderinoye, 2002, p. 37). While discussion is ongoing on what sorts of literacy assessments are appropriate and viable for conflict and crisis contexts, there seems to be agreement that a shift away from self-report data is paramount.
- Multimodal assessment, including oral and written components, as well as comprehension, may more accurately reflect student learning, particularly for those students who have moved beyond the level of emergent reading and are concentrating on building fluency and comprehension.
- There is general agreement that simplified, context-sensitive, transparent assessment tools are needed, early and often. These should be short, inexpensive, easy to use, and adaptable, yielding valid results on skill levels. These simpler tools need to be accompanied by short manuals or protocols on how to develop instruments for multilevel skills.
- There is still debate on *who* should assess student learning (external enumerators, teachers, others). However, there is evidence that early and regular assessment by teachers and others who work closely with learners will bring positive benefits, particularly in relation to transparency, capacity building, and sustainability. “Get [data] in the hands of supervisors or coaches of teachers and in the hands of teachers themselves, so they have feedback on whether their teaching is working and which students aren’t learning much” (practitioner interview).
- There is also debate about *what* should be assessed. It was noted that the close focus on reading means that assessments do not always check for comprehension. Student assessment also generally does not include conflict and crisis-specific content or socio-emotional learning, except in some cases where literacy education is part of a larger youth program.

- Students, parents, and teachers should have access to assessment data and every means should be used to make measures, including report cards, transparent. Assessment outcomes have been critiqued for informing implementing organizations and not their community counterparts. Evidence suggests that transparent assessment can lead to increased family and community support of programs, where progress is evident, and disengagement where the opposite is true (practitioner interview).
- Longitudinal tracer studies of learners are a challenge in conflict and crisis contexts. It is generally difficult to evaluate the long-term progress of students because, as one study participant put it, “40 percent of the student population at any time is different from the one you started with” (practitioner interview). Evaluating long-term progress would require longitudinal tracer studies of learners, which may not be possible.

4.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CORE ISSUES

Program monitoring and evaluation faces challenges similar to student outcomes assessment.

- Mobility and teacher turnover create difficulties for sampling, monitoring, and evaluating teacher learning and professional practices.
- Baseline data on which to design programs is often lacking. National institutions’ capacity to collect such data may have been hampered or disrupted. Where these data exist, a rapidly evolving situation and changed demographics may render the information inaccurate and irrelevant.
- Conflict-sensitive program objectives may change over time, while contractual agreements are rigid.
- Time constraints and donor expectations of what constitutes evidence may limit M&E possibilities or result in missed opportunities.
- Corruption, violence, and lack of transparency may compromise M&E systems in contexts of protracted conflict and crisis.

4.2.1 THE DIFFICULTIES OF MONITORING AND EVALUATING PROGRAMS

Mobility and teacher turnover are among the primary difficulties for sampling, monitoring, and evaluating teacher learning and professional practices over time. Resources may be invested in teacher professional development at a particular location, for example, but it may not be possible to evaluate the outcomes of that professional development over time because a substantial number of the trained teachers have moved away.

Another common concern for working in conflict and crisis-affected contexts is the lack of available baseline data on which to design programs, as the capacity of national institutions to collect such data may have been hampered or disrupted. Where these data exist, a rapidly evolving situation and changed demographics may render the information inaccurate and irrelevant. Thus, considerable time must be allocated to devising a strategy for collecting baseline data efficiently and cost-effectively.

Furthermore, conflict-sensitive program objectives are likely to shift over time in response to an evolving situation and the changing needs of beneficiaries. For example, a Mercy Corps literacy program for women in Iraq modified its activities to meet women’s stated expectations and needs over time

(practitioner interview). However donor contractual agreements can be rigid, creating tensions for monitoring and evaluating program objectives.

Time constraints and donor expectations of what constitutes evidence may further limit M&E possibilities or result in missed opportunities. Practitioners noted that complex monitoring procedures established away from duty stations may not be context-sensitive and can take critical time away from program development, coaching, and mentorship.

Corruption, violence, and lack of transparency may compromise M&E systems in contexts of protracted conflict and crisis.

4.2.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The importance of needs assessments for informing programming is widely recognized, but may be discounted in practice. It was noted that, because of the conflict or crisis context, an attitude of “we have no time for this” is likely to be adopted, with serious consequences. In reality, conducting a needs assessment is hampered by time constraints, lack of available data, and an evolving context that makes access to information and indicators a challenge. As a result, needs assessment is often cursory or based on assumptions about the context from experience elsewhere.

The question is: What kind of needs assessment is possible? From one perspective, “literacy should be taught according to what the learners themselves want and what is needed on the national level to contribute to the social and economic advancement of the country” (Aderinoye, 2002, p. 55; practitioner interviews). For a literacy program to be relevant and meaningful a needs assessment or baseline survey should be conducted to ascertain the need, vocation, acceptable period of lessons, and cultural practices that have to be appropriately considered before the instructional materials and methods are decided on and developed. Given the earlier observation that community (parental, teacher, governmental) buy-in is crucial to the success and sustainability of any literacy program, it follows that influential programming would require (a) consulting the community regarding their needs; (b) receiving confirmation of this need; and (c) communicating the logic behind the crucial role of literacy in human development, future employment opportunities, and security.

4.2.3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A common pitfall and complaint observed within programs from the community perspective is that donors did not consult them, either on their actual needs or on the nature of the literacy programs. Furthermore, participatory monitoring and evaluation is rare. This dismissal or perceived attitude of “the West knows all” is seen as condescending and has the potential to create conflict, tension, and suspicion toward the programming. The consequences of failure to solicit advice from beneficiaries have not been taken seriously in the documentation thus far. However, it has been observed and documented that community involvement motivates community participation (e.g., MercyCorps, 2010). From this perspective, literacy programs should be community-driven, not donor- or external agent-driven. It has been established that people become committed to a program when they are involved from the planning stage; their involvement assures them of future ownership.

In one example of successful consultation, over 260 stakeholders from Somaliland, Puntland, and the South of Somalia were consulted for the study of SOMDEL’s project. A wide range of stakeholders were involved: illiterate men and women living in both rural and urban areas; disabled men and women; members of disadvantaged minority groups (Sab); former members of militia groups; male and female workers with local community organizations and women’s groups; young men and women who had recently completed literacy courses; heads of households; local literacy and adult education teachers and health care trainers; workers with local human rights and conflict resolution organizations; staff of UN agencies and international NGOs working in relief, development and human rights; officials of the local ministries of education; senior academics at a local university; local medical and hospital staff; editors of

Somali language newspapers; BBC staff resident or temporarily working in Somalia; Somali exiles with specialist qualifications in Somalia language, literacy, culture, health, environment and human rights; European academics with specialist knowledge of Somalia, its language and culture; and specialists in literacy, education, the environment, health, and nutrition.

In an external evaluation, Felicity Thomas (2006) identified the main reasons for the success of the program:

The emphasis on close community collaborations and consultation, AET's ability and experience in adapting educational programs to suit the needs of disadvantaged groups (particularly women), the high level of access to radio in Somalia and the popularity and prestige of the BBC, the educational quality and entertainment value of the broadcast, access to regular tutorial classes and course materials, [and] the level of inter-regional co-operation and learning amongst the Somalia partner organizations. (Brophy & Page, 2007, p. 144)

The importance of studying the lifestyles and work habits of the target beneficiaries was critically noted, in order to identify when people—in this case—would most likely be able to listen to broadcasts and attend classes. The timing and locations that suit young women, for example, are not necessarily those that suit young men.

4.2.4 THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPONENT IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A question being pursued by the IRC in the Democratic Republic of Congo is whether there is any added benefit to including a socio-emotional component in teaching early grade reading. Several interview participants noted that, given the impact of conflict and sustained insecurity on psychosocial well-being, it would seem logical that inclusion of such a component in M&E might be of value. A Ganar's Sport for Development program staff and educators, who have a close relationship with youth participants and their communities, conduct qualitative evaluations of indicators such as increased confidence, teamwork, and other behavioral adjustments. Other examples related to life skills may be drawn from programming in Iraq and Uganda.

It is important to identify the need for a structure, or set of minimum standards, in which the socio-emotional component might be recognized. One suggestion is that such guidelines follow a child protection referral policy that includes a definition of different types of separated and unaccompanied children.

4.2.5 CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Understanding the conflict dynamics for communities, teachers, and learners is central to conflict-sensitive program design. For literacy programs in contexts of conflict and crisis, conflict analysis must include an analysis of language dynamics and how particular language policies in education have contributed to conflict, historically and in the contemporary period. In addition, conflict analysis for literacy programs must include a review of teaching materials and textbooks for bias in the reading curriculum. Very little discussion of conflict analysis emerged from the literacy program documents reviewed for this study.

4.2.6 WHO SHOULD EVALUATE?

Should M&E be internally or externally contracted? There is disagreement about who is best placed to monitor and evaluate literacy programs in contexts of conflict and crisis. Among the concerns for internal oversight of M&E are conflicts of interest and the potential for biased reporting. Alternatively, internal M&E processes may allow for more context-sensitive reporting, including the ability to monitor operational "responsiveness" of programs in evolving situations. In general, there seems to be growing recognition that a greater use of beneficiary, community, and local expert voices should be included in monitoring and evaluation schemes.

4.2.7 KEY ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Greater attention should be paid to conflict analysis, needs assessment, and the collection of data that are meaningful to the community, including unintended positive and negative impacts (e.g. Aderinoye, 2002). A concern emerging from the evidence base is that data are often used to inform donors, rather than the host government or communities. For example, if monitoring and evaluation involves educator professional development, teachers are rarely told how they are doing. Furthermore, an overemphasis on reading can result in failure to measure impact of the acquisition of literacy skills in the lives of the learners, that is, “whether the new skills and ideas acquired by the learners had relevance to their lives or not” (Aderinoye, 2002, p. 52).
- M&E processes should be simplified in complex environments. When people and resources are taxed, one cannot have a complex system. Furthermore, simplified M&E tools could lead to a greater participatory process. Participatory M&E must be active and in expert hands early on. Lessons from LCEP Afghanistan suggest that:

For a detailed participatory progress monitoring approach to be useful, it must be functional no later than the second quarter that the project is active at the field level. Also, time and technical capacity must be built into the M&E work plan and management structure to allow for adequate analysis and dissemination of the data collected. Finally, data collections should focus on a limited number of indicators to facilitate data analysis and use for management purposes. (Janke, 2007, p. 21)

- M&E should involve beneficiaries, teachers, and community partners, where possible, to advance participation and transparency.
- M&E processes should make better use of qualitative data as an effective means of assessing perceptions of relevance and impact of literacy on individuals and their immediate communities. Simple observation, interview, and/or focus group data collection tools can support such endeavors.
- Processes for monitoring conflict sensitivity in program implementation need to be developed. Like programs in other contexts, monitoring should focus on whether or not teachers are teaching literacy effectively and if materials, textbooks, and supplemental readers are in the classroom and being used. Specifically in conflict and crisis-affected contexts, monitoring should include attention to ongoing bias and conflict dynamics within the instructional content, form, training, and other elements of program implementation and classroom experience.
- Conflict sensitivity implies monitoring operational “responsiveness” within evolving contexts, not just pre-set program objectives.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Key lessons supported by evidence are brought together in this section to provide recommendations for conflict-sensitive program design, policy and research. These recommendations provide the first steps towards developing a framework for literacy education in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

Considerations of conflict sensitivity provide a useful framework for designing and implementing literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. Evidence suggests the following key recommendations for program design.

5.1.1 ACCESS ISSUES

- Improving equitable access to literacy programs for children and youth in conflict and crisis-affected contexts requires special consideration of safety above all other concerns. Learning spaces must be located where children and youth are safe from violence, recruitment to armed forces, corporal punishment, sexual abuse, and unsafe or unsanitary infrastructure. In some locations and during crisis, community- or home-based schooling may be more appropriate. Such considerations should be part of the initial conflict assessment.

5.1.2 LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

- Language policy should be a primary consideration as part of conflict analysis, including needs and feasibility of engaging LI in literacy programs, particularly in the early grades.
- Conflict analysis should include LOI issues such as: What are the historical dynamics between LOI and conflict? How do current LOI practices divide people? Are certain groups excluded because of the LOI? Who is excluded and how might this relate to conflict? How might LOI policies promote social and community integrity or solidarity?
- LOI selection has implications for peace and conflict; this process should be completed through inclusive and participatory dialogue. Additionally, the relationship between LOI and conflict should be continuously monitored, and programs should be adjusted as needed, given that conflicts and crises are constantly evolving.
- More attention needs to be paid to oral development in the medium of instruction when it is not the students' first language. Students must have a strong grasp of any language – including vocabulary and syntax – used for literacy instruction.

5.1.3 CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS

- The initial conflict assessment should include a formal review of the curriculum for elements of bias. Specifically, where are the points of bias (e.g., ethnic, religious, and gender)? Which identity groups are targeted by bias? How can the curriculum and literacy materials be edited to avoid bias and instead promote tolerance and inclusion? Conflict or crisis may present an opportunity to build better curricula.
- Whether and how to fit core components of literacy into existing curriculum should be carefully considered. All of the core components should be included. Evidence suggests that vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension should be developed from the earliest stages. In newly heterogeneous classes, where feasible, develop language-specific curricular objectives, scope, and sequence of instruction.

- Where existing curricula are minimal, programs should review what exists and establish a plan to fill the gaps in order to have a core materials package: teacher guide, student lesson book, fiction and non-fiction reading material, leveled and decodable texts. Develop a literacy scope and sequence based on existing materials and include plans for development of supplemental materials.
- Teaching of reading at all levels should be relevant and meaningful for learners in a conflict or crisis-affected environment. This may mean involving learners in lesson themes related to recent events. Where appropriate, integrate socio-emotional learning, peace education, conflict resolution, and life skills in early grade reading curricula. The teaching of reading at all levels in conflict and crisis-affected contexts should include aspects that connect students' experiences with learning activities.
- When developing literacy materials, consider the potential trade-offs between professionally produced, leveled texts and locally produced, contextually relevant texts that may result in greater teacher and community investment. Draw on support from local educators and community members. Involve them in the choice to purchase external materials or produce them locally.
- Development of curriculum and materials should draw on existing materials and knowledge from educators and the community. Where delivery of materials is difficult, consider ways to break down the literacy curriculum into meaningful segments. Identify inexpensive, simple materials that local teams can design, produce, and deliver.

5.1.4 TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

- Conflict-sensitive recruitment and deployment policies are needed to ensure adequate recruitment and training of male and female teachers from different ethnic groups. This should include careful consideration of the ascribed identity of trainers within a conflict-sensitive framework and recruiting teachers who can work with different groups in their first language.
- Professional development for teachers should include support to handle social and emotional needs of students to facilitate learning.
- Whether and to what extent lessons should be scripted to provide support for teachers in the short term needs to be considered along with transferability, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of this strategy in the long term. In particular, scripting for youth learning has been associated with rote teaching and learning techniques. Youth teachers should be supported to effectively offer participatory forms of learning.

5.1.5 COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT

- The conflict analysis should include information on community and family perceptions of literacy, through questions such as: How does literacy relate to the political and economic dynamics of the conflict or crisis? Who has power because they are literate and who does not?
- Communities should be engaged in literacy programs from the beginning of a project, starting with needs assessment and conflict assessment,
- Community investment should be inclusive, participatory, and sustained throughout the life of the project. Building support may include targeted social messaging and integrating community cultural and religious values into literacy materials to promote buy-in.

- Explicit plans should be made for developing opportunities to practice literacy outside of literacy programs and schools. This may include adult literacy programs for parents to support their children's reading at home.
- Engaging family and community members as para-teachers and tutors is one way to address family and community support, while drawing on community assets and increasing potential for sustainability, especially in locations where there are few qualified teachers and/or class sizes are large.

5.1.6 YOUTH AND ADULTS

- Youth and adults require distinct consideration when it comes to literacy in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. Consider ways to make literacy flexible in terms of time and space and relevant for youth and adults by linking curriculum and literacy materials to livelihoods, health, life skills, and peace-promoting themes such as conflict resolution and civic engagement.
- Establish a literacy learning environment that is safe and respectful so over-age youth learners may overcome feelings of shame and feel encouraged to participate.
- Teachers and programmers should examine their own assumptions about the relationship between youth and violence, including radicalization, recruitment into armed groups or gangs, and other concerns. Then, consider how literacy pedagogy and materials can directly benefit youth and promote positive perceptions of youth in society.
- Literacy programs for over-age students need to consider how the dynamic of shame can be addressed, and how a conflict or crisis perspective can be integrated in program design and implementation. Further, these programs should consider how transfer into formal schooling might be facilitated in ways that cause the least tension and promote social cohesion.

5.1.7 ASSESSMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Because conflicts and crises are dynamic, continuous conflict assessment should be included in the design and modification of programs from the beginning.
- Conflict assessment should consider the relationship between language and conflict. Language dynamics should be considered as part of conflict assessment in order to inform MOI policy and teacher and trainer recruitment. Conflict assessment should also include a formal review of bias in available literacy curricula and materials.
- Simple, cost-effective tools that are easy to understand and produce should support initial and ongoing assessments of learning outcomes. Such adapted assessment tools should include attention to conflict sensitivity in content, form, and method of delivery.
- As part of the planning process, the trade-offs between assessments conducted by teachers and others who work closely with learners compared to assessments conducted by external enumerators should carefully considered.
- A conflict-sensitive approach to assessment includes transparency of assessment and involvement of teachers to ensure they receive direct feedback on student learning and information on academically struggling students.
- Flexible monitoring and evaluation is important in dynamic conflict and crisis contexts, since program objectives are often shifting based on the rapidly changing situation. Furthermore,

security issues may require flexible data collection timelines. A means for monitoring operational “responsiveness” may need to be developed, not just pre-set program objectives.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICIES TO SUPPORT PROGRAMS

5.2.1 NEED FOR CONCEPTUALIZATION

- The link between literacy and conflict and crisis requires further conceptualization, including their relationship to equitable access to programs and conflict assessment.
- There is a need to develop a comprehensive and explicit definition of literacy that is both precise and takes into account the broader social, political, and economic elements that bring attention to the specific needs of conflict and crisis-affected populations. These needs include socio-emotional well-being; inclusive education, particularly for conflict-affected children and youth; and the inclusion of peace education and conflict resolution in curricula.

5.2.2 NEED FOR CONSIDERATIONS OF TIMING AND FLEXIBILITY

- Flexible implementation and monitoring and evaluation may be required to adapt to the changing environment. This includes the possibility of modifying program objectives and timelines in order to be responsive to community concerns. Discussions about flexibility between donors and implementing partners should be part of the planning and contractual agreement process.
- The pressure to start programs quickly and to demonstrate results within a specified timeframe does not recognize the scale of the task and important considerations in conflict and crisis-affected contexts. It is critical to build in time to undertake a thorough, and when possible, participatory, needs assessment and conflict analysis on which to base program design decisions. It is also critical to build in time, for example, to develop strong relationships with the community and host governments, social marketing efforts, etc.

5.2.3 NEED FOR A BROADER ANALYSIS BASED ON A DYNAMIC VIEW OF CONFLICT AND CRISIS

- Conflict and crisis are dynamic and they affect populations differently within a country context and across borders. Broader analyses of conflict and crisis will avoid the pitfalls of compartmentalized programs and planning.
- Distinct political entities, even within the same government, may hold opposing educational aims, and donors, ministries, and implementers may have different goals. These differences in perception merit full consideration within a dynamic context of conflict and crisis.

5.2.4 NEED TO ENGAGE IN LANGUAGE POLICY DIALOGUE

- There is a need to engage in language policy dialogue and to make this dialogue participatory wherever possible, to include government, civil society, teachers, and other inputs. Understanding language dynamics within the conflict and crisis context is crucial to conflict-sensitive policy. Social marketing may be required to rally support behind policies that improve equitable access to particular populations.

5.2.5 NEED TO CONSIDER ADULT LITERACY

- Parental, especially maternal, literacy has a significant impact on the literacy acquisition of children. In contexts of sustained conflict and crisis, interrupted education and impediments to equitable opportunities for early learning mean that adults are likely to have low literacy rates, which affect their families. As part of a comprehensive, conflict-sensitive approach to literacy, donors should consider funding adult and/or family literacy programs or linking to donor agencies and programs that do so.

5.2.6 NEED TO CONSIDER MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

- Monitoring and evaluation processes require sensitivity to the evolving nature of conflict and crisis contexts, including flexible timelines and simplified tools to allow for monitoring of program implementation and instruction. Better use of qualitative data collection tools may mitigate some of the difficulties with procuring meaningful quantitative data in such contexts.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

There is an incipient research base on the following topics that should be reinforced.

5.3.1 LITERACY AND CONFLICT

- The impact of curricula that combine socio-emotional learning and literacy on student outcomes. Does the inclusion of peace education, conflict resolution, or life skills in literacy curricula improve reading outcomes?
- The relative efficacy of support models: coaching, mentoring, teacher circles, video-education, and distance-education.
- The relative efficacy of scripted versus structured lessons.
- The effectiveness of reading materials that have been developed from a psychological perspective emphasizing scope and sequence versus materials developed from a sociocultural perspective emphasizing relevance and meaning.
- The impact of having reading materials available and accessible in the community.
- The impact of stress and insecurity on learning capacity in general and reading in particular.
- Whether and how teachers are using continuous assessment, including assessment of students' needs and interests, to improve instruction.

5.3.2 LANGUAGE ISSUES

- Analyze the feasibility of different MOI models in contexts of conflict and crisis and the impact of different MOI policies on socio-emotional well-being.
- Understand the context-specific barriers to adopting mother-tongue instruction by governments and other stakeholders.
- Investigate bilingual reading instruction in the context of conflict and crisis. In what settings is it appropriate, with which students, and for how long?
- What level of skill in L1 does a teacher need in order to be an effective instructor? What material resources are essential?
- How long should students receive literacy instruction in L1? When is it appropriate to transition to L2? The research base on these questions is inconclusive and does not take conflict and crisis-affected contexts into account.
- The best approaches for building and accelerating oral language development in target languages, MT, and L2. This may require allocating time in the curriculum for oral language development, separate from literacy, and may require strategies outside the classroom.

5.3.3 TIME ON TASK

- Research on the minimum time on task required for basic acquisition of literacy and meaningful progress has not been conducted in conflict and crisis-affected contexts.

5.3.4 EQUITABLE ACCESS

- A systematic analysis of data on education access across contexts of conflict and crisis should be undertaken in order to reduce widespread barriers to equitable access.

5.3.5 LONG TERM IMPACTS

- Longitudinal tracer studies of learners could shed light on the longer-term progress of students in contexts of conflict and crisis, where student and teacher populations are highly mobile.

6. CONCLUSION

There is a pressing need to expand access to and learning within quality literacy programs in conflict and crisis-affected environments. However, designing, implementing, and evaluating programs under such circumstances require special consideration. Attention must be paid to medium of instruction policies and language learning as a component of literacy acquisition; teacher preparation, psychosocial needs, support, allocation, remuneration, and absenteeism; the development and distribution of curricular and learning materials; the significant role to be played by communities and families; the specific needs of youth and adults; the challenges and limitations of assessment, which are linked to definitions of literacy; and the difficulties in monitoring and evaluating programs in insecure environments. Attention to these dimensions of literacy programming will strengthen efforts to improve teaching and learning for vulnerable populations around the world.

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U.S. Agency for International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20523

Tel: (202) 712-0000

Fax: (202) 216-3524

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