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A RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT GUIDE: FOR EDUCATION IN COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY CRISIS AND CONFLICT

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Key

- Tools
- Mission staff
- USAID Assessment manager
- External assessment team
- Outside resources
- Checklist

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PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

USAID's 2011 Education Strategy includes Goal 3: increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015.[1] In these often unstable environments, a rapid needs assessment is critical to inform USAID staff decisions regarding design and delivery of programs aiming to provide equitable access to quality education for all learners in a way that does not contribute to conflict.

This guide serves two purposes: 1) to provide USAID Washington and USAID Missions with a clear, common framework for undertaking education rapid needs assessments; and 2) to provide USAID Education Officers with necessary information to conduct a conflict-sensitive, high-quality, rapid needs assessment of the education situation in a conflict or crisis environment.[2]

Contents of the Guide

Following the introduction, the guide is presented in three sections with corresponding tools:

Phase 1: Assessment Planning
- Setting the assessment parameters
- Hiring the external assessment team
- Gathering key resources

Phase 2: Data Collection & Analysis
- Creating and implementing a data collection work plan
- Analyzing the data

Phase 3: Reporting & Application
- Writing up the results
- Sharing the findings
- Using the data to develop programs

Table 1

Phases	Activity	Tools Provided
Phase 1: Assessment Planning	Setting assessment parameters Hiring external assessment team Gathering key resources	1. Assessment Parameters Checklist 2. Sample Assessment Scope of Work 3. Key Resources Matrix
Phase 2: Data Collection & Analyses	Creating and implementing a data collection work plan Analyzing the data	4. Sample Assessment Work Plan 5. Proposed Indicators 6. Data Analysis Framework
Phase 3: Reporting & Application	Writing up the results Sharing the findings Using the data to develop programs	7. Sample Assessment Report Outline 8. Action Planning Framework

Tools provided to support the activities in each phase are included in the end of each section and noted throughout the narrative with the icon.

Activities identified throughout the guide are tagged as the responsibility of Mission staff, the USAID assessement manager, and the external assessment team.

Finally, when outside resources are referenced, the icon is used and hyperlinks are provided to documents when available.

1. USAID. (2011). USAID Education Strategy 2011-2014.
2. USAID Basic Education Office mandate is to support education through 2-5 year programs. Therefore, this guide targets conflict and crisis within the development continuum, and not acute humanitarian emergency response. USAID Basic Education Office's primary contribution to acute emergency response is through funding of UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

INTRODUCTION

What Is A Rapid Needs Assessment?

A needs assessment is the systematic process of information collection and analysis regarding the type, depth, and scope of a problem.

A needs assessment can be one of two types – rapid or in-depth.[3] When a needs assessment is done "rapidly", it means that the information collection and findings are generated over 4 days to 6 weeks.[4] This rapid production of findings involves compromises and requires special attention to methodology if the findings are to be accurate and meaningful.[5]

A more in-depth assessment takes a comprehensive look at the effect of conflict or crisis on the population in order to identify recovery-orientated needs, capacities, and gaps. A rapid needs assessment is completed in a shorter amount of time than expected in order to develop a preliminary understanding of a situation quickly. This type of assessment focuses on priority areas to get a snapshot of the impact of the conflict or crisis.[6]

When Is A Rapid Needs Assessment For Education Needed?

A rapid needs assessment for education is needed in three scenarios: acute emergency onset, recent escalation of an ongoing crisis or conflict, and before implementation of a new program design.

An education needs assessment should be conducted immediately following an emergency onset. It should be used when the humanitarian community has declared a state of emergency and where the cluster approach is applied. The international response is typically carried out jointly by the appropriate education stakeholders, including the Education Cluster[7] and the national authority. Thus, it will be important for USAID education personnel to participate in this effort, or at a minimum, be aware of key findings to inform next steps which could include further assessment or a programming response.

The second scenario is when there is an ongoing chronic crisis, be it a conflict or a recurring disaster. In this case, a country-level Education Cluster lead may request that a rapid needs assessment be conducted because of a recent escalation of the crisis, or to better define the education response strategies on the ground. In this scenario, it is most likely that an Education Cluster will have been discussed or already established in-country. Support from the Global Education Cluster may be provided. However, most activities, decisions and actions would be taken by the co-lead agencies (typically, Save the Children and/or UNICEF) at the national and/or district level.[8]

The third scenario is when USAID is developing a new education strategy or program in a crisis or conflict setting and needs to develop a current understanding of the context related to education.

Why Conduct A Rapid Needs Assessment For Education?

The purpose of a rapid needs assessment for education is to collect information quickly to inform USAID Mission decisions regarding design and delivery of an education program that supports access to quality

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3. Rossi, P. H., & Freeman, H. E. (1993). Evaluation: A systematic approach. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
4. Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2012) *Real world evaluation: Working under budget, time, data, and political constraints.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
5. Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2012) *Real world evaluation: Working under budget, time, data, and political constraints.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
6. Global Education Cluster. (2010) *Short guide to a joint rapid needs assessment.* Geneva: Education Cluster Unit/Save the Children.
7. The Education Cluster is an open coordination group for humanitarian crises. The Education Cluster brings together international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, the Ministry of Education and other partners to coordinate the provision of education for populations affected by humanitarian crises. Established at the global level in 2007, it is led by UNICEF and Save the Children. For more information on how the cluster works and in which countries it is currently active, see: http://education.humanitarianresponse.info.
8. Global Education Cluster. (2010) *The joint education needs assessment toolkit.* Geneva: Save the Children.

education for all in a way that does not contribute to conflict. It is a first snapshot of information and should always be followed by a more in-depth assessment at a time when resources permit.

Specifically the purpose of a rapid needs assessment for education in a conflict or crisis environment is to:

- Describe the dynamics of conflict or crisis as they relate to education programming
- Describe education capacities and gaps
- Inform prioritization of education program parameters (i.e., who, what, when, where and why)
- Help ensure that the education program—at the very least—does not exacerbate conflict and—at most—contributes to peace.

CHECKLIST

What Questions Does A Rapid Needs Assessment For Education Ask?

A rapid needs assessment asks three primary questions:

1. What is the impact of the conflict and/or crisis on learners and the education system?
2. What are the education capacities and gaps, specifically those relating to out-of-school children?
3. What should be considered in a program strategy that delivers access to quality education for all and does not contribute to conflict?

To answer the three primary questions a second level of questions is required:

The impact of conflict or crisis on learners and the education system

1.1. What happened?

1.2. Where did it happen?

1.3. Who was affected and to what extent?

1.4. What is the current context and how might it change?

If a conflict:

1.5. What are the dividers and sources of tension among the education community?

1.6. What are the connectors and local capacities for peace?

1.7. What are the perceptions of different identity groups regarding the cause of the conflict?

The education capacities and gaps

2.1. What were the supply and demand characteristics of the education system before the crisis?

2.2. What are the supply and demand characteristics of the education system now?

2.3. What are the barriers to education access and whom do they affect?

2.4. What is the impact of 2.1 through 2.3 on out-of-school children and youth?

2.5. What are the infrastructure, learning materials, and information needs?

2.6. What kinds of teachers are needed, and where? What support do they need?

2.7. What local education capacities, resiliencies, and resources exist?

Recommendations for the USAID education response strategy

3.1. What is the recommended response strategy to improve access to quality education for all in this conflict and crisis affected context?

3.2. How may the recommended response strategy impact the previously identified dividers (or capacities for war), and connectors (or capacities for peace)?

Who Should Be Involved In A Rapid Needs Assessment For Education?

A good needs assessment will be a participatory process that involves multiple stakeholders including USAID Mission staff, external assessment consultants, and other partner or government organizations. The main roles that will need to be played in the needs assessment are:

1. The USAID Mission education assessment manager – Oversees the "big picture," provides quality control, communicates with partner and government organizations, guides USAID staff working on the assessment, and supervises the external assessment team of consultants.
2. The external assessment team leader – Develops assessment work plan; manages data collection, analysis, and report writing; supervises and trains other external assessment team members; provides quality control; and regularly communicates with USAID Mission education assessment manager.
3. The external assessment team members – Undertake specified assessment tasks and contribute to producing required deliverables.
4. Other USAID staff – Assist in setting the direction of the needs assessment, help hire the external assessment team, gather needed resources, use data to develop strategy, and provide administrative and logistical support.
5. Partner and government organizations – Provide needed documents and resources, help identify key informants, and help interpret and use findings for strategy development.

How To Do A Rapid Needs Assessment For Education?

The remainder of this guide addresses this topic in detail. It is important to note that assessments in a conflict or crisis are particularly challenging because of time, budget, security, and staff constraints. Therefore, a rapid needs assessment process and content is a realistic and practical first step in a more in-depth, full-scale assessment.

In short, a rapid needs assessment for education is a three phase process.

1. **Assessment planning** includes setting the parameters for the assessment (e.g., identifying education sector and geographic focus), hiring an external assessment team (e.g., looking for consultants with the right competencies), and preparing for in-country work (e.g., identifying relevant documents, resources, and key informants).
2. **Data collection and analysis** involves creating and implementing a data collection work plan and analyzing data.
3. **Reporting and application** of the findings includes actions and activities related to reporting assessment results, sharing findings, and using data to make decisions about programming.

PHASE I: ASSESSMENT PLANNING

Phase I: Activities that will be accomplished
• Set parameters of needs assessment • Hire external assessment team • Gather needed resources

Activities Timeframe
2-7 days

Tools Provided
• Assessment Parameters Checklist • Sample Assessment Scope of Work • Key Resources Matrix

Ideal Workspace
• USAID Mission

Personnel
• USAID Mission - Education Assessment Manager • Other USAID Staff • Partner and Government Organizations • External Assessment Team Leader

Defining The Rapid Needs Assessment Parameters

To have clear and useful needs assessment results, begin by determining the assessment parameters: what, where, when, who and how. This process of prioritization should be informed by the existing constraints, such as budget, security and time.[9]

The first step of the process should be to identify **what** information is essential for USAID to make decisions. Because the focus will be on the education system, it is necessary to decide whether information should be gathered on the primary, secondary, and/or tertiary education sectors; and from public, private and/or non-profit providers. USAID will also want to determine if there are any types of learners they want to concentrate on (e.g., males, females, out-of-school youth).

The second step is to determine **where**: which regions, provinces, or municipalities are to be included in the assessment? If the geographic parameter is predetermined then a rapid assessment will collect information only in those areas. If not, then a representative sample covering all potential program areas will be necessary. Whichever is the case, when deciding which geographic area to assess, it is important to consider how the selected assessment area will interact with dynamics of conflict. For example, how the area relates to lines of conflict division, and how those not assessed may react to the exclusion.

When? As mentioned before, a rapid needs assessment should be conducted soon after the acute emergency or the escalation of an ongoing conflict. Additional considerations in a conflict-affected context include avoiding trigger events (e.g., elections, national holidays, teachers union protests, and strikes).

When deciding **who** should be consulted, consider this: a guiding principle of assessment in a conflict-affected context is to gather information from as wide a range of sources as feasible, both for wide representation and for comparison of information from a variety of identity groups. A participatory process with local actors can inform this process. But remember every assessment is vulnerable to the bias of implementers. Self-awareness is important for addressing bias and achieving a diverse respondent group.

The Assessment Parameters Checklist provides a framework for making decisions on the scope of information-gathering work. It will also be useful to the external assessment team as it develops a work plan.

9. When considering parameters, is important to note that USAID education assessments are most commonly conducted at the national scale from secondary and administrative data (i.e., rarely involve focus groups at a micro level). Therefore, this guide prioritizes information relevant at this macro level (e.g., national indicators and administrative and secondary sources of data). The guide does not provide comprehensive information regarding micro-level assessment (e.g., focus groups with affected individuals or school observations).

USAID Mission staff will need to take responsibility for completing this tool and sharing it with the external assessment team and other stakeholders as appropriate.

The Joint Education Needs Assessment Toolkit (Global Education Cluster, 2010) is an excellent resource for identifying additional assessment parameters (see pages 14-16 for additional topic areas of interest). Also a Short Guide to Rapid Joint Education Needs Assessments (Global Education Cluster, 2010) provides ideas on important questions to incorporate (see page 9).

Hiring The External Rapid Needs Assessment Team

Who should conduct the assessment? The external assessment team should consist of a minimum of three external consultants – a team leader and two research experts. At least two of the team members should be experienced educationalists who understand well the education system and sectors as well as the unique education-related issues in conflict and crisis environments. At least one person on the assessment team should have expertise in conflict analysis. The assessment team should also be encouraged to hire local research specialists that can assist with data gathering and provide important insights into local context.

Expected activities of the external assessment team are:

- Creating and implementing a data collection and analysis work plan
- Developing or recommending data collection tools or protocols
- Reviewing and analyzing documents or secondary data
- Interviewing key informants
- Writing a report of assessment findings
- Providing an in-person briefing on assessment findings.

It is recommended that the external assessment team and local research team consist of both male and female researchers, as well as appropriate representatives from local ethnic/identity groups. Team members should have experience in the following:

- Sampling methods (e.g., representative, snowball, stratified, and purposive)
- Qualitative research (e.g., interviews, focus groups, content analysis, measurements of perceptions and attitudes)
- Quantitative research (e.g., secondary data analysis, survey design, statistics)
- Conflict sensitivity in education (i.e., analyzing education's interaction, both positive and negative, with conflict dynamics)
- Data analysis, including triangulation, validation and disaggregation of data for specific identity group characteristics (e.g., gender, disabled, ethnic, and religious)
- Management of local research teams
- Research project management in challenging post-conflict and post-crisis contexts
- "Do No Harm/Local Capacities for Peace" or "Peace and Conflict Impact Analysis" (i.e., examining the interaction between proposed program elements and the dividers and connectors of the conflict context).

To hire a qualified assessment team, the USAID Mission will need to develop a scope of work that can be shared for recruiting purposes. Once developed, Mission staff can begin reaching out to colleagues with experience in assessment, research, or evaluation within conflict- and crisis-affected contexts. It is recommended that the interview process use a team-based approach with a standardized set of questions. It will also be important to gather previous work samples from those expressing interest to find out whether they can produce a high-quality assessment report.

Finally, a conflict context is highly political and it is therefore critical to be aware of how the characteristics of the assessment team will influence data collection. Hiring decisions should be informed by the conflict dynamics and a diverse team should be selected, allowing for greatest access to data, internal dialogue about data validity, and self-examination of biases.

The Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building: A Resource Pack provides guidance on what to consider when deciding who should conduct an assessment (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2004, Chapter 4, p. 8).

The ***Sample Assessment Scope of Work (SOW)*** provides a template to use when recruiting and hiring the external assessment team. It is recommended that the parameters of the assessment identified in the previous activity be included in the SOW.

USAID Mission staff will need to take responsibility for developing and disseminating the external assessment team SOW.

Gathering Key Resources

In preparation for the needs assessment, USAID staff will need to begin gathering resources from as wide a range of sources as possible. Information will be needed to describe the pre-crisis situation as well as the in-crisis situation (and in some cases, post-crisis situations). Two types of data will be needed: primary—information collected for this study; and secondary—existing data in documents (e.g., USAID guidelines, national policies, research studies, and secondary data reports). To collect this preliminary information, staff should consider establishing contact with Ministry of Education counterparts, local authorities, NGOs, peacebuilding actors, and others already working or in contact with education structures and services.

Types of source documents may include:

- Education Sector Policies and Plans
- Education Sector Diagnosis/Assessments
- Disaster Analyses
- Conflict Analyses/Assessments
- Gender Analyses/Assessments
- Research Studies
- Education Program/Project Documents
- Country Development Cooperation Strategy (or similar)

The ***Key Resources Matrix*** provides a framework for naming relevant documents on a variety of topics, as well as recommendations for possible key informants from different types of organizations.

USAID Mission staff will need to take responsibility for completing the Key Resources Matrix and sharing it with the external assessment team and other stakeholders as appropriate.

The **INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education** suggests sources for reports and analyses on conflict and peacebuilding dynamics.

To identify education gaps, the education capacity before the crisis must be known. In some conflict- or crisis-affected contexts this information may not be available in-country. **UNESCO-IIEP-Planipolis Website** includes education plans and policies from various official sources, which can be useful for both data analysis and and triangulation.

In crisis secondary data for education may be found from the Ministry of Education, NGOs, and UN Agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

TOOL ONE: Assessment Parameters Checklist

Question	Yes	No	Maybe	Why or why not?
Will the assessment take into account the following education levels?				
Primary education[10]				
Secondary education				
Higher education				
Will the assessment take into account the following education type?				
Formal education system				
Non-formal education system				
Technical/vocational				
Will the assessment take into account education provided by:				
Government/public agencies				
Private organizations				
Faith-based groups				
Community groups				
Parallel education system (e.g., that which is delivered in separatist regions)				
Other (e.g., World Bank, Global Partnership for Education, UNHCR, INGO, or LNGO)				
Do these categories overlap?				How? For example, 90% of community based schools are also faith-based institutions or schools.
Will the assessment take into account the following learners?				
Males				
Females				
Learners of a specific age range				
Out-of-school learners				
Learners with specific group identity characteristics (e.g., disabilities, minority language speakers, displaced).				List the specific group identity characteristics separately.
Orphans and vulnerable children				

Which geographic/administrative areas will be included in the assessment?		
(Use local terminology)	Which?	**Why?**
Regions		
States or Provinces		
Districts		
Municipalities		

10. The Early Childhood Development and Education level is not a priority of USAID under the current strategy.

TOOL TWO: Sample Assessment Scope Of Work

1. USAID Cover Sheet

Most USAID reports begin with a summary cover sheet. The model below can be replicated and adapted for the respective context.

USAID Mission	USAID/South Sudan
Region/Country	Africa/South Sudan (Geographic Area 650)
Program	Bi-lateral under Strategic Objective A12/A055
Government of South Sudan Counterpart	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)
Funder	United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
USAID Mission Assessment Manager	
Agreement Information	Leader Cooperative Agreement No. Associate Cooperative Agreement No. Modification #01 Associate Cooperative Agreement No.
USAID/South Sudan Education Budget	US$
Important Partners	Government Partners Donor/Development Partners Civil Society Organization Partners Child/Youth Partners
Assessment Target Locations	Nationwide or Region X or States/Provinces A, B, C or Districts/Counties D, E, F

2. Background

a. Brief Description of the Context

b. Conflict and Crisis Situation

c. Education Sector

d. USAID/Mission Direction

e. Rationale for the Scope of Work

f. Pre-existing parameters (e.g., timing)

TOOL TWO: Sample Assessment Scope Of Work (*continued*)

3. Experience, Required and Preferred

For USAID, a team of three external assessment experts is required to carry out an education rapid needs assessment. Qualifications will vary with the type, scale and scope of the rapid needs assessment for education. The list below is illustrative, not prescriptive; it should be adapted to the local context.

Priority qualifications include experience with the following:

- Education systems in conflict and crisis environments, including both the supply and demand issues in these contexts[11]
- Knowledge of the evidence base on effective approaches to increasing access and improving learning in fragile contexts
- Sampling methods (e.g., representative, snowball, stratified, and purposive)
- Qualitative research (e.g., interviews, focus groups, content analysis, and measurements of perceptions and attitudes)
- Quantitative research (e.g., secondary data analysis, survey design, and statistics)
- Conflict sensitivity in education (i.e., analyzing education's interaction, both positive and negative, with conflict dynamics)
- Data analysis, including triangulation, validation and disaggregation of data for specific identity group characteristics (e.g., gender, disabled, ethnic, religious)
- Management of local research teams
- Research project management in challenging post-conflict and post-crisis contexts
- "Do No Harm" or "Project Impact" analysis (i.e., examining the interaction between proposed project elements and the dividers and connectors of the conflict context)
- Other locally relevant qualifications

Preferred qualifications may include:

- Experience with the relevant conflict or crisis dynamics, either in region or in similar context
- Relevant language skills
- Other locally relevant qualifications

4. Purpose of the Rapid Needs Assessment

To inform the USAID Mission response strategy, the rapid needs assessment provides information regarding:

- The impact of the conflict and/or crisis on learners and the education system
- The education capacities and gaps, specifically for out-of-school children
- Considerations for a program strategy that delivers access to quality education for all and does not contribute to conflict

11. Depending on the context, these may include: development and maintenance of Education Management Information Systems, Human Resource Management Systems, school safety, gender barriers, teacher professional development and accreditation, accelerated learning, equity promotion in education, or other local issues.

TOOL TWO: Sample Assessment Scope Of Work (*continued*)

5. Rapid Needs Assessment High-level Questions

Specifically, the rapid needs assessment team will provide a report that answers the following primary questions (see the Checklist for list of relevant secondary questions):

1. What is the impact of the conflict and/or crisis on learners and the education system?
2. What are the education capacities and gaps, specifically those relating to out-of-school children?
3. What should be considered in a program strategy that delivers access to quality education for all and that does not contribute to conflict?

6. Methodology

The assessment will use a mixed methods approach to the extent possible. This means that both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed. Sources of information will include secondary sources as well as primary sources, via interviews, focus groups and observations. It is also expected that the methods used will be sensitive to dynamics of conflict, gender, and disabilities. Team members must ensure that all fieldwork is done in an ethical manner that does not cause harm and conforms to a code of research ethics.

7. Annexes to the Scope of Work

Annex 1: Completed Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs

[This annex should contain the completed Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs produced by the USAID Mission. This annex will enable the External Assessment Team to gain a clear understanding of the Mission's view on the conflict sensitivity of its education programming and the conflict sensitivity of the partner government education sector.]

Annex 2: Document and Secondary Data Sources

[This annex should contain a list of all the relevant secondary source literature deemed essential for the external assessment team to examine. It is recommended that the documents be provided electronically with clear and explicit file names (e.g., author, date, and title).]

12. Primary data are information collected for this study directly from key informants and focus group participants. Secondary data are literature and information that already exists.

TOOL THREE: Key Resources Matrix

Key Informants or Focus Group Participants

Name	Organization	Phone	Email	Relevant Information	Documents Informant Can Share
Juan Salcedo (example)	MOE-District Education Official	234-4567	Jsalcedo@MOE.org	Pre-crisis education situation Map of schools Impact of crisis on education Education gaps/needs Conflict dynamics	• 2013 Education Management Information System Report • 2013 Education Policy and Plan • Map of schools in the affected area • Names of additional informants
Also Consider:					
Children					
Civil Service Organizations					
Community Education Committees					
Donors					
Education Cluster Leads (Save the Children & UNICEF)					
Government Partners					
International NGOs					
Local NGOs					
Ministry of Education					
Ministry of Emergency (Local and Natl. Levels)					
Parents					
Specific Identity groups					
Teachers					
UNESCO					
UNICEF					
Youth					
Others					

TOOL THREE: Key Resources Matrix (*continued*)

Documents/Resources for Review				
Title	**Source/Hyperlink**	**Date of Publication**	**Agency/Author**	**Relevant Information**
Education Cluster Needs Assessment Report (example)		2012	Education Cluster	• Education pre- or in-crisis data • List of education stakeholders • Identification of education gaps/needs
Consider:				
Academic research studies				
Ed Mgmt. Information System Reports				
Education policy and plan documents				
Education Cluster Assessment				
Maps				
Post-Conflict Needs Assessment				
Post-Disaster Needs Assessment				
Teachers'/Principals' school records				
USAID education project documents				
Facebook pages of education stakeholders, teachers unions, MOE, affected populations				
Twitter feeds of education stakeholders				
Websites of education stakeholders, (e.g., MOE)				
Other				

PHASE 2: DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

Phase 2: Activities that will be accomplished
• Creating and implementing a data collection work plan • Analyzing the data

Activities Timeframe
4-21 days

Tools Provided
• Sample Assessment Work Plan • Proposed Indicators • Data Analysis Framework

Ideal Workspace
• USAID Mission • Designated workspace for external assessment team in the field

Personnel
• USAID Mission - Education Assessment Manager • Other USAID Staff • Partner and Government Organizations • External Assessment Team Leader • External Assessment Team Members

Creating and Implementing A Data Collection Work Plan

A data collection work plan will be developed that describes the steps to be taken as part of the needs assessment. Specifically, the work plan will explain the purpose of the assessment, key questions to be answered, the methodology to be used for collecting and analyzing data, deliverables expected, responsibilities, timeline for completion, and budget.

The ***Sample Assessment Work Plan*** provides an outline for the types of information that will need to be included. These types of information are discussed in more detail below.

The first step in a work plan is to clearly state the **purpose** of the assessment and the **key questions** to be answered. Both can be informed by the information in the introduction of this guidance note (refer to the Checklist on p. 5).

Second, determine the **method and tools** to be used. It is recommended that both quantitative and qualitative data be collected during the rapid needs assessment. Quantitative data provides information on the size or breadth of an issue (e.g., how many children have dropped out of primary or secondary school), whereas qualitative data can provide information on why or how the issue came to be (e.g., families' fear sending their children to school because of the conflict or crisis) (Rutman, 1984)[13] (see Table 2). Existing sources can be reviewed for both types of data, and various measurement tools can be created to gather needed information. Secondary data reports (e.g., local data reports on poverty, health, and education statistics) and surveys would be the likely sources for quantitative information. Existing reports (e.g., USAID or other donor annual reports), key informant interviews, focus groups, and observation would be possible ways of collecting qualitative information.

Table 2: Information and sources based on type of data

	Information	Sources
Quantitative data	Size or breadth of an issue – how many are impacted	✓ Secondary data reports ✓ Surveys
Qualitative data	Depth of an issue - why or how it came to be - perceptions regarding causes of conflict, dividers and connectors	✓ Program reports or documents ✓ Key informant interviews ✓ Focus groups ✓ Observations

13. Rutman, L. (1984). *Evaluation research methods: A basic guide.* (2nd ed.). Beverly Hills: CA. Sage.

Once the purpose, key questions of the assessment, and the methods and tool types have been agreed on, the external assessment team will need to identify the appropriate indicators and questions. This will lead the team to develop the detailed data collection tools. A table such as the one below can ensure that the tools developed include the necessary and sufficient information to answer key assessment questions.

The USAID Foreign Assistance Indicators is a useful tool. It provides a menu of potential assessment indicators, and an indication of relevant data that may already exist in USAID literature. Some of the context (as opposed to USG program outcome) indicators in the "peace and security" and "investing in people" sections are of particular relevance - for example, net enrollment rates, share of public expenditures devoted to education, percentage of war victims receiving social services, and percentage of displaced children and orphans receiving social assistance or services.

The Global Education Cluster Top Needs Assessment Indicators may serve as a starting point for developing locally appropriate indicators or as the minimum list to be included in multi-sector assessments.

Education System Analysis Methodological Guidelines Volumes 1 and 2 2013 by The World Bank, Pole de Dakar, UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education and UNESCO-BREDA contains a comprehensive list of education assessment indicators across thematic areas: context, access, cost and financing, quality and management, external efficiency, equity, and others.

Key Assessment Questions	Indicators	Tool Questions	Tool and/or Source
Who was affected and to what extent? (example)	# of school-age population in the province # of school-age population without access to school or learning space	What is the school age population of the affected area? Since the conflict, how many children have not had access to school or a learning space?	Parent focus group MOE EMIS data Child focus group

After the types of people targeted for response have been determined, a sampling method should be selected. Because of limited time and budget constraints, purposive sampling is often used for rapid emergency assessments. Purposive sampling selects informants based on certain characteristics and availability, rather than random selection. This sampling method is vulnerable to bias, a particular concern in a conflict-affected environment. Therefore, the external assessment team should include in its preparation examination of possible biases of the sampling method and what might be done to counteract them. For example, if chiefs select the students to be involved in focus groups, what biases might be in play? Which students are excluded and why?

Once the tools, sources and sampling method have been determined, a schedule and budget should be developed. The schedule should be informed by time and budget constraints. The guiding principle of data collection in a conflict-affected context is to gather information from as wide a range of sources as feasible to allow for comparison across methods and sources. Because the contexts affected by conflict and crisis can change quickly, it is useful to have a few contingency plans prepared in case the original schedule is not feasible. To avoid this, key events should be considered in the scheduling, such as election dates or politically charged holidays.

The work plan, and any real-time modifications made to it, should be examined for possible interactions with the conflict or crisis dynamics. For example, if a newly ignited armed conflict prohibits access to an area populated by a certain ethnic group, how can informed estimations fill that data gap? How might omission of that group by the collection team trigger anger and tensions? How might transparent communication with stakeholders help ameliorate tensions?

Ethical considerations also demand that provisions be made for informed consent and assurance of confidentiality for assessment participants. The external assessment team should adhere to a peer-reviewed code of research ethics standards as well as USAID policies.

The following assessment principles should be kept in mind to ensure quality and usefulness (adapted from INEE, 2006):

- Data are **relevant** – the data to be collected are timely, focused on a set of key questions, and can easily be used to make decisions
- Inquiry is **consistent** –the content of questions and indicators should be based on core areas of inquiry
- Data collected are **not duplicative** – the assessment should build upon data that have already been collected by other actors
- Data collection tools and methods are **uncomplicated** – because of the complicated context, rapid framing of the assessment, and likely limited time to train data collectors, tools should be easy to implement
- Data collection tools and methods are **quick** – to avoid risk for the assessor and the respondent in an insecure environment, data collection protocols should be short and to the point
- Data are **easy to compile** – due to the rapid nature of the assessment, summary findings should be easy to generate
- **"Do No Harm"** – the needs assessment content or process should not jeopardize people's lives, exacerbate people's emotional and psychological vulnerabilities, or contribute to the conflict or crisis.

Finally, the work plan should note **limitations** of the needs assessment methodology. For example, the number of days allocated to preparation, fieldwork, and analysis may have implications for the quality of the assessment process, including the volume and variety of data that can be collected, or security concerns may prohibit access to a certain region. In addition, depending on the security situation, the external assessment team may be restricted from carrying out field visits. Either creative approaches to gathering data will need to be implemented or limitations to assessment findings will need to be presented in any final reports.

The external assessment team will be responsible for development and implementation of the work plan and any data collection tools.

The USAID team is responsible for review and providing feedback on the work plan and ensuring partner organizations are aware of the assessment timeline.

The How to Guide to Conflict Sensitivity provides a list of considerations to ensure the assessment is conducted in a conflict sensitive way. (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012, p. 8)

The Short Guide to Rapid Joint Education Needs Assessments (Global Education Cluster, 2010) provides additional information; see pages 28-41 for key informant, focus group, and observation forms and pages 17-20 for a short discussion on data collection strategies.

Real World Evaluation: Working Under Budget, Time, Data, and Political Constraints (Bamberger, et. al., 2012)[14] discusses issues related to data collection and time constraints; see pages 63-64 for options on reducing time required for data collection and analysis.

The Joint Education Needs Assessment Toolkit (Global Education Cluster, 2010) is an excellent resource for considering how to develop appropriate data collection tools; see pages 65-109 for sample secondary data, key informant, focus group, and observational tools. For information on sampling strategies and other methodological concerns, see pages 19-23.

14. Bamberger, J.M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2012). *Real world evaluation: Working under budget, time, data, and political constraints.* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: CA. Sage.

Analyzing The Data

For quantitative data, information from secondary data sources can be repurposed to answer specific needs assessment questions (see Table 3). If surveys are implemented as part of the data collection process, then data will need to be entered into a software program (e.g., Excel) and analyzed. The outputs will generally be graphs, charts, and tables.

Qualitative data can be analyzed quickly by having the team of researchers write down and discuss themes as they arise during interviews, focus groups, and observations. In rapid data collection situations, it is better for researchers to write down and organize their notes daily. Topics that arise continually can also be verified by referring to any relevant documents and reports.

Table 3: Analysis strategies and outputs based on data type

	Analysis Strategies	Examples of Outputs
Quantitative	✓ Re-presentation of secondary data ✓ Data entry and formal analysis using software package	✓ Graphs ✓ Charts ✓ Tables
Qualitative	✓ Rapid content analysis or theming ✓ Transcription and coding	✓ Overarching themes ✓ Quotations

Triangulation, disaggregation, and validation are critically important for data management in conflict-affected contexts.

Triangulation is comparing information gathered across different sources, methods, or data collectors to identify consistencies and inconsistencies that may require more research (Global Education Cluster, 2010, p. 21). This is very important in environments that are conflict or crisis affected, where misinformation can flow freely and data can be politically charged or biased.

Disaggregation is separating information according to different characteristics to find underlying inequities that may be masked by aggregate data. Disaggregation is critical in conflict- or crisis- affected contexts where average education indicators may mask extreme discrepancies across identity groups or geographic regions.

Validation is the presentation of information to people familiar with the issues to elicit their feedback on accuracy. The external assessment team should share findings with diverse stakeholders before a final report is written to confirm initial impressions and highlight issues that may require more research.

The ***Data Analysis Framework*** offers a general guideline on how data findings can be organized. It is recommended that the key assessment questions be used to classify information found during document review, key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, and so forth.

The external assessment team will be responsible for analyzing the data and completing the analysis framework. It is recommended that USAID staff, and as appropriate, partner and government organizations, receive a briefing on the material incorporated into the framework.

The Joint Needs Assessment Toolkit (Global Education Cluster, 2010) can also be helpful in determining how to analyze assessment data; see pages 32-41 for analysis strategies and pages 110-113 for suggestions on data compilation.

TOOL FOUR: Sample Assessment Work Plan

1. Purpose of the Assessment

- Why is this assessment taking place?
- Who will it inform?
- How will the information be used?

2. Key Assessment Questions

- What is the impact of the conflict and/or crisis on learners and the education system?
- What are the education capacities and gaps, specifically those relating to out-of-school children?
- What should be considered in a program strategy that delivers access to quality education for all and does not contribute to conflict? (Also see the secondary questions in the Checklist included in the introduction of this guide)

3. Methodology

- Will qualitative and/or quantitative methods be used?
- What data collection tools will be developed?
- What indicators and questions will be used?
- What sampling method will be used? Why?
- What is the data analysis strategy?
- How will the data be triangulated, validated, and disaggregated?
- What are the limitations of this methodology?
- What actions will be taken to ensure the assessment does not contribute to conflict?
- What research code of ethics will be employed?
- Who will do what?
- How will ethical considerations and potential bias be addressed?

4. Schedule & Deliverables

- What will be collected, from whom, when, and how?
- When will the final deliverable be completed?
- Outline of the final report

5. Budget

TOOL FIVE: Proposed Indicators

The indicators are drawn from the Education System Analysis Methodological Guidelines Volume 1 2013 and mapped onto the proposed assessment questions.[15] This list is not prescriptive or finite, rather it is proposed as a starting point for consideration in each unique context. Detailed definitions are available in the cited document. As mentioned previously, efforts should be made to disaggregate all indicator data according to geographic areas, gender, relevant group identity characteristics, and level and type of schooling to reveal inequities in supply and barriers to demand for education. Where possible, map and chart disparities of given indicators across administrative regions.

Household surveys such as Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are considered to be the best source of information for many indicators. Additional sources may include those listed in the Key Resources Matrix, such as the most recent conflict, vulnerability, or post-disaster needs assessments of the education system.

	Proposed assessment question	Possible indicators by category
1. Impact of conflict or crisis on learners and the education system	1.1 What happened?	When and why of crisis or conflict
	1.2 Where did it happen?	
	1.3 Who was affected and to what extent?	
	1.4 What is the current context and how might it change?	Share of the population living below the poverty line
		Demographic density rate
		Human development index
		Gini index
		GDP per capita
		Population growth rate
		Share of the population unemployed
If a conflict:	1.5 What are the dividers and sources of tension among the education community?	According to perceptions of different identity groups, list the dividers: political, economic, social, governance and education
	1.6 What are the connectors and local capacities for peace?	According to perceptions of different identity groups, list the connectors: political, economic, social, governance and education
	1.7 What are the perceptions of different identity groups regarding the cause of the conflict?	Illustrate a conflict causal analysis and indicate the role education played and major differences in perceptions across identity groups

15. A few indicators are added from the Conflict-sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building: A Resource Pack, cited previously.

TOOL FIVE: Proposed Indicators (*continued*)

	Proposed assessment question	Possible indicators by category
2. Education capacities and gaps	2.1 What were the supply and demand characteristics of the education system before the crisis?	In-take, repetition, promotion, drop-out and completion rates
		Gross enrollment rate, net enrollment rate
		Number and share of children out of school, never had and never will have access to school, unenrolled school-aged children and likely to drop out
		School-aged dependency ratio
		External and domestic resources for, and expenditure on, education; total and per pupil
	2.2 What are the supply and demand characteristics of the education system now (compared to the above, and perhaps projected into the future)?	Availability of qualified teachers vs. expected increases in enrollment rates by location
		Availability of safe learning spaces vs. expected increases in enrollment rates by location
		In-take, repetition, promotion, drop-out and completion rates
		Gross enrollment rate, net enrollment rate
		School-aged dependency ratio
		External and domestic resources for, and expenditure on, education; total and per pupil
		Increase/decrease in incidence of teaching of language X in schools
		Existence of bias in curriculum
	2.3 What are the barriers to education access and who is affected?	Absolute gap in performance rate between two groups across a chosen performance indicator (e.g., access rate for wealthy urban Latinos compared with poor rural Mayans in Guatemala, through the primary cycle)
		Share of public education resources consumed by the 10% most educated
		Social distribution (household wealth, area of residence, gender, and other) of school-aged population among education levels and administrative districts
		Scattercharts of supply and demand comparisons (e.g., basic education enrollment compared with supply of teachers per pupil ratio across administrative districts)
		Safe access to education by group X in region Y
	2.3.1 What is the impact of 2.1 through 2.3 on out-of-school children?	Increase/decrease in out-of-school children in X identity group
		Number and share of children out of school, never had and never will have access to school, un-enrolled school-aged children and likely to drop out

TOOL FIVE: Proposed Indicators (*continued*)

	Proposed assessment question	Possible indicators by category
2. Education capacities and gaps	2.4 What are the infrastructure, learning material, and information needs?	Ratio of schools, textbooks, didactic materials, and subsidies to enrolled students
		Percentage and number of textbooks and didactic materials that are biased
		Percentage and number of textbooks in national language and other primary languages of school-aged children
		Percentage and number of instructional days lost
		Scores on national examinations or learning assessments
	2.5 What kinds of teachers are needed, where? What support do they need?	Ratio and numbers of teachers to students
		Rates of teacher compensation
		Level of highest training received
		Level of pedagogy based on observation
	2.6 What local education capacities, resiliencies, and resources exist?	Percentage and number of schools with active parent-teacher associations
		Percentage and number of students attending schools resourced from community
		Number and percentage of schools with established codes of "zones of peace"

TOOL SIX: Data Analysis Framework

Key Questions	Highlighted Findings – Document Review	Highlighted Findings – Key Informants	Highlighted Findings – Focus Groups	Highlighted Findings – Secondary Data Reports/Surveys	Discrepancies Across: Methods, Sources or Collectors	General Conclusions	Possible Recommendations

PHASE 3: REPORTING & APPLICATION

Phase 3: Activities that will be accomplished
• Writing up the results • Sharing the findings • Using the data for strategic planning and program development

Activities Timeframe
4-14 days

Tools Provided
• Sample Assessment Report Outline • Action Planning Framework

Ideal Workspace
• USAID Mission • Designated workspace for external assessment team in the field

Personnel
• USAID Mission - Education Assessment Manager • Other USAID Staff • External Assessment Team Leader • External Assessment Team Members • Partner and Government Organizations (as appropriate)

Writing Up The Results

Depending on how much time there is for writing up results of the needs assessment, the report may be more or less formal. Once initial findings and conclusions are discussed, it is recommended that a report outline be developed and approved. The length of the report should be decided on ahead of time. If there is less time to develop the report, it may mostly consist of tables, charts, and graphs. If more time is available, further analysis and narrative support should be provided to discuss findings and recommendations.

The ***Sample Assessment Report Outline*** offers an outline that can be used to report on the assessment findings.

The external assessment team will be responsible for writing the assessment report. Feedback should be gathered from USAID staff and, as appropriate, partner and government organizations.

The Joint Needs Assessment Toolkit (Global Education Cluster, 2010) has some ideas on various ways to report information; see pages 42-45 for information on verbal reports, executive summaries, and full reports.

Sharing The Findings

The USAID Mission may find it useful to share the findings of the needs assessment either internally with other staff or externally with partner and government organizations. A verbal presentation can be a good catalyst to begin discussion. If done in a workshop setting, it could also be the precursor to a strategic planning session (see below).

The findings presentation can be done either by the external assessment team or the USAID assessment manager. If a deeper discussion is wanted of how the data were collected and/or how conclusions and recommendations were made, it might be best to make this part of the external assessment team's scope of work. If it is to be used as a brief springboard for internal USAID strategic planning or for planning with partners, the USAID education assessment manager can make the presentation.

Using The Data For Strategic Planning

Conducting a needs assessment is of little value if the information gathered is not fully utilized to plan programming. In fact, the strategic planning process is as important as the methods for data collection when it comes to determining what aid will be offered to which populations and how. It is suggested that pertinent USAID staff and valued partner and government organizations be invited to a half or full day workshop to discuss assessment findings and plan the education response.

Various approaches can be used to solicit discussion and promote decision making. Simple brainstorming can be used in large or small group settings based on a set of key questions to be answered. Other techniques include SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, problem/objective trees, and force field analysis (which looks at facilitators and barriers to help identify actions or strategies).

The ***Action Planning Framework*** is designed to enable the development of strategic goals based on the needs assessment findings. For each goal, specific actions can be chosen that include a provision for thinking through needed resources, personnel, and time. It also encourages considering expected outcomes of each action.

The USAID assessment manager should be in charge of creating the agenda for the strategic planning workshop. Depending on level of comfort and skill, he/she may or may not facilitate the session. Important skills for a facilitator to have are: listening, repeating, and summarizing; managing group involvement; and catalyzing group decision making.

TOOL SEVEN: Sample Assessment Report Outline

Cover Sheet

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Assessment

- Why did this assessment take place?
- Who was it conducted for?
- What is the expected use of the information?

Background of Context

- Map of affected area
- The impact of conflict or crisis on learners and the education system
  - What happened?
  - Where did it happen?
  - Who was affected and to what extent?
  - What is the current context and how might it change?
- If a conflict:
  - What are the dividers and sources of tension among the education community?
  - What are the connectors and local capacities for peace?
  - What are the perceptions of different identity groups regarding the cause of the conflict?

Findings

- The education capacities and gaps, particularly for out-of-school children
  - What were the characteristics of the education system before the crisis?
  - What are the characteristics of the education system now?
  - What are the barriers to education access and who do they affect?
  - How do findings of interest listed above interact with the circumstances of out-of-school children?
  - What are the infrastructure, learning material, and information needs?
  - What kinds of teachers are needed, where? What support do they need?
  - What local education capacities, resiliencies, and resources exist?

Recommendations for the USAID Education Response Strategy

- What is the recommended USAID response strategy to improve access to quality education for all in this conflict and crisis-affected context?
- How might the recommended response strategy impact the previously identified dividers and connectors?
- How might the USAID/Mission underpin its response to immediate and pressing needs with a "development not dependency" lens?
- What are the risks of contribution to the dynamics of conflict or crisis? How may these be avoided?

TOOL SEVEN: Sample Assessment Report Outline (*continued*)

Annexes

- Data tables
- Methodology of assessment
- List of documents reviewed
- List of types of informants (do not include real names, unless safe to do so)
- Other

TOOL EIGHT: Action Planning Framework

Strategic Goal 1: For example, provide out-of-school, school-aged girls in rural areas with equitable access to primary education.

Conflict Sensitivity Education Concerns: A conflict sensitive approach should consider the context:

- Hierarchical, religiously affiliated, patriarchal power structures
- Cultural and religiously held beliefs that girls should not access education
- Girls would be put at risk both in and moving to and from a school
- History of impunity for attacks on students and schools
- No national expenditure on girls' education in this rural area

Action To Be Taken	Resources Required	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date of Implementation	Desired Outcomes (improvement measures)
Acknowledge local power structures by listening to their concerns and discussing possible ways forward.				
Mobilize local advocates for girls education (if it will not put them at risk), find local role models.				
Establish in-home learning environments with volunteer female teachers for small groups of girls.				

Strategic Goal 2:

Conflict Sensitivity Education Concerns:

Action To Be Taken	Resources Required	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date of Implementation	Desired Outcomes (improvement measures)

Strategic Goal 3:

Conflict Sensitivity Education Concerns:

Action To Be Taken	Resources Required	Person(s) Responsible	Target Date of Implementation	Desired Outcomes (improvement measures)

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
Tel: (202) 712-0000
Fax: (202) 216-3524
www.usaid.gov