

Conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning in education

Lessons learned

Introduction

Worldwide, one in six school-age children are affected when a country experiences conflict and protracted crises such as war, disasters, and public health emergencies. One in three of the world's 121 million out-of-school children live in fragile or conflict-affected situations (GPE, 2016). Natural and human-made disasters can have a devastating effect on education systems, destroying or damaging essential infrastructure, interrupting the school year, and jeopardizing past education gains and investments. To cite a few examples: in Burkina Faso, the September 2009 floods affected 38,000 students and damaged 405 schools. In South Sudan, the resurgence of violence in 2013 closed more than 1,000 schools, while some 90 schools were occupied by armed forces and internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Lotyam and Arden, 2015). In northern Uganda, during two decades of civil war, 60,000 children were abducted, many becoming child soldiers; half of primary school students dropped out of school, and 90 per cent of schools were damaged or destroyed. More recently, disasters and inter-ethnic violence in the country have resulted in closed or destroyed schools, and even cost learners their lives (Knutzen and Smith, 2012).

Addressing crisis through conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning

Education, when planned in a crisis-sensitive and risk-informed manner, can contribute to preventing and mitigating conflict and disaster. When equal access to all levels of education is assured, schools can provide safe learning environments, encourage social cohesion, enhance the safety and well-being of teachers and learners, and help build a peaceful society. Educational planning which is sensitive to the causes and triggers of conflict, and which addresses potential natural hazards, can reduce – and sometimes prevent – the effects of conflict and disasters on education, saving lives in the process. In addition, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning can be cost-efficient, protecting investments in infrastructure, equipment, and supplies. It has been estimated that every dollar invested in disaster risk reduction can save \$4 to \$7 in reconstruction costs (IIEP-UNESCO, 2015).

Crisis-sensitive planning is mindful of the bidirectional relationship between education, on the one hand, and conflict and disaster risks, on the other. It also considers how conflict and disaster can themselves be interrelated (e.g. when a drought increases social tensions between groups).



Given this complexity, crises and risks should be considered at every step of the planning process, from analysis to monitoring and evaluation.

This policy brief presents lessons learned and recommendations based on the experiences of three countries which have addressed conflict and disaster risks in their educational planning processes, with technical support from IIEP.

The three case studies*

1) In **Burkina Faso**, frequent floods and other natural hazards (droughts, violent winds, and storms), as well as socio-political tensions and conflicts, often interrupt education. After major floods in 2009 and 2010, the Ministry of National Education and Literacy (MENA) developed its 10-year Programme for the Strategic Development of Basic Education (PDSEB), which addressed these risks.

2) In 2015/2016, **South Sudan** – the world’s youngest country, plagued by recurrent conflict – developed its second general education strategic plan (GESP), within the context of a national economic crisis, extreme poverty, lack of infrastructure, and political instability. The need to plan and manage an education system that could mitigate and respond to the risk of conflict was evident. As a result, the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) developed an education sector analysis (ESA) and education sector plan (ESP) that addressed the country’s humanitarian needs and economic challenges, along with its long-term development objectives.

3) In **Uganda**, inter-ethnic conflicts, refugee influxes, and natural hazards (including floods, earthquakes, landslides, and droughts) have a considerable effect on the provision of education. In 2015, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports (MoESTS) endorsed a policy framework – the Conflict and Disaster Risk Management Guidelines for Educational Institutions (CDRM Guidelines) – to develop conflict and disaster prevention and mitigation strategies in and through education. The MoESTS also worked to strengthen education sector capacities for conflict and disaster risk management (CDRM) at central, district, and school levels, has integrated CDRM into primary and lower-secondary curricula, and has developed child-friendly CDRM booklets and a teachers’ guide to be operationalized at school level.

The crisis-sensitive educational planning process: Examples from three countries

This section introduces each step of the education sector planning process, giving brief, country-specific examples of how the process can include the adoption of a conflict-sensitive and risk-informed approach.

Figure 1 indicates how each step of a typical planning cycle – analysis, policy formulation, programming, monitoring and evaluation, and cost and financing – can be crisis-sensitive.

Step 1: Analysis

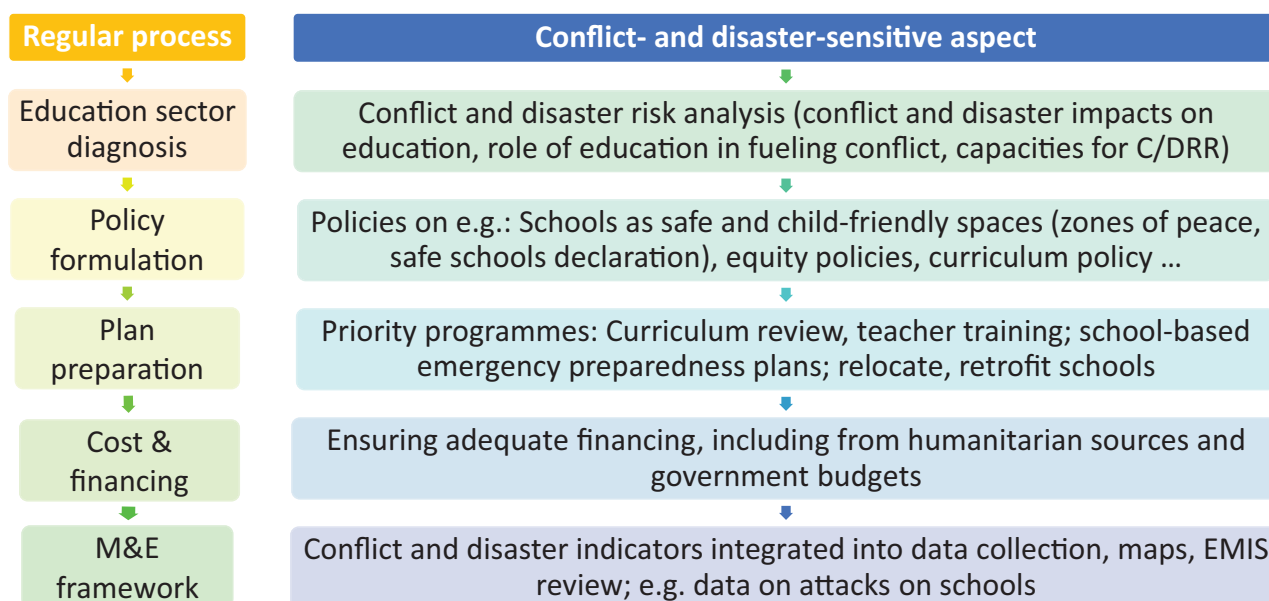
A crisis-sensitive analysis asks questions about the safety and protection of both learners and teaching staff, and examines the resilience of education systems to crisis and disasters. But it also needs to examine how education might itself contribute to conflict. Whenever possible, it should draw upon existing data, including – but not limited to – the country’s education management information system (EMIS). Additional surveys may be needed to fully understand the risks that the system is confronted with (or contributing to). Finally, the information collected must be analysed and processed to assess the potential (and/or actual) effects of disaster or conflict on the education system (and vice versa) and to understand existing mechanisms for conflict and disaster risk reduction.

In **Burkina Faso**, MENA analysed the education system’s vulnerability to risks of conflict and disaster in preparation for developing a risk reduction strategy as part of its 10-year PDSEB programme. The analysis built on interviews held by the Ministry and partners with representatives of educational and emergency departments and organizations at central and decentralized levels. Among other issues, it highlighted the importance of prioritizing school feeding programmes in drought-affected areas, and the need to carefully negotiate school locations with politicians to avoid school closures because of floods or landslides.

In **South Sudan**, the crisis-sensitive ESA draws on data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and specifically on its risk index. This index is based on a series of indicators for each risk (conflict affected civilians, death and disease, food insecurity and livelihoods, and widespread malnutrition) that are collected regularly at county level. To conduct

*This policy brief is based on IIEP case studies in Burkina Faso, South Sudan, and Uganda (MacEwen and Chimier, 2016; Diaz-Varela, MacEwen, and Vaessen, 2016; Seeger and Pye, 2016).

Figure 1: The crisis-sensitive planning process



the country's ESA, the risk index was merged with EMIS data to assess the potential links between the various risks and the performance of the education system in terms of access, quality, and management. Counties with the highest severity index were found to be low performing in most aspects of education.

In **Uganda**, district education officials in two conflict- and disaster-prone districts developed risk assessment and capacity self-assessment tools and mechanisms that allow district education departments and school representatives to determine how risks impact learners' and teachers' safety and well-being, education continuity, and education quality. The tools help to assess existing and required infrastructure, as well as human and financial capacities at school and district level to prevent and mitigate the impacts of conflict and disaster.

Step 2: Policy

Once risks have been identified, a dialogue on how national and local policies can address conflict and disaster risks in and through education should be started or strengthened. As part of this process, existing policy frameworks and their implementation should be reviewed and, if needed, revised. When necessary, new policies can be created to enhance the safety and resilience of the education system.

In **Uganda**, the CDRM Guidelines provide the framework for policies on such issues as the inclusion of CDRM in syllabi and national curricula, and the routine safety inspection (by national and district committees) of school facilities and buildings. The guidelines also identify the roles of stakeholders in

mitigating and responding to risks and disasters (e.g. district disaster management committees), and present strategies for CDRM such as ensuring that all schools have conflict and disaster preparedness and evacuation plans, and conduct regular disaster drills. At district level, by-laws and ordinances provide entry points for addressing conflict or disaster risks in education. For example, districts can request a flexible school calendar if floods or other risks lead to lost hours of teaching and learning.

In **Burkina Faso**, MENA developed a conflict and disaster risk reduction strategy which served as the policy framework for risk reduction activities in the education sector. After analysing the education system's exposure to different risks, and examining existing capacities for risk reduction, the Ministry identified a series of priority preparedness and prevention activities.

Step 3: Programming

This step consists of identifying priority programmes for preventing and mitigating conflict and disasters. Planners should reflect on possible options for conflict-sensitive and risk-informed programmes, prioritize these options based on desirability, affordability, and feasibility, and define programme targets. Programmes that are sensitive to conflict and disaster risks can be developed in addition to regular education programmes, or can be integrated in regular sub-sectoral programmes. Programming can and should be flexible and respond to unexpected changes, as well as to urgent needs as they arise.

In **Uganda**, a specific programme on strengthening the awareness and capacities of central- and district-level officials, including through the operationalization of the CDRM Guidelines, was designed and implemented by the MoESTS and partners. Between 2014 and 2015, 150 central- and district-level education and administration staff were trained in planning techniques and approaches for CDRM.

In **South Sudan**, issues related to safety and social cohesion were mainstreamed throughout the ESP (e.g., safe learning spaces; learning opportunities for out-of-school children, including IDPs; refugee education; improved coordination between MoGEI and humanitarian partners). The Ministry also developed new curriculum that includes elements of safety, resilience, and social cohesion.

Step 4: Cost and financing

Once programmes are designed, planners estimate costs (including for safety, resilience, and social cohesion priorities) to identify existing resources and mobilize additional ones as necessary. A simulation model can test different scenarios to ensure the relevance and feasibility of a plan and its targets. A key aspect of crisis-sensitive planning is to ensure the equitable distribution of education resources between regions and identity groups. Once costed, planners identify funding gaps and resources, and mobilize these resources. If national resources for activities that address safety and social cohesion are insufficient, it may be possible to raise necessary funds from development or humanitarian partners.

In **South Sudan**, a simulation model was used to help identify targets for the GESP, including initiatives focused on safety and social cohesion. The model was used by MoGEI to discuss and test the effects of a variety of scenarios on key educational indicators. The scenarios also illustrated the decline in domestic funding available for education resulting from the country's economic crisis. This analysis was especially important given a shift in donor funding to support the country's humanitarian crisis.

In **Uganda**, district government officials often have limited funding for activities that exceed the 'basics' of education service delivery. Only a few districts, for example, have successfully integrated costed CDRM activities for education in their five-year district development plans. In these cases, costed activities mainly included investments in education infrastructure, such as lightning arrestors for school buildings and school gardens to ensure food security,

but also included some inexpensive activities, such as holding awareness-raising meetings (community 'barazas') to discuss strategies for reducing conflict and disaster risks.

Step 5: Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation allows planners to measure whether a programme achieved its targets. It provides an opportunity to learn and gather insight on what worked and what did not. This involves developing a logical framework matrix that includes conflict and disaster risk indicators, and reviewing the EMIS to incorporate related indicators. Planners must also address issues of data collection in areas affected by crisis, and should ensure that relevant indicators are included in annual operational plans.

In **Uganda**, an initiative is being developed to integrate more comprehensive CDRM indicators that address the impact of crisis on school infrastructure, teaching, and learning into school inspection tools and the centrally administered EMIS. The initiative aims to collect school-level data and establish a baseline on conflict and disaster risks and needs at school level. This will assist with the development of strategies and the measurement of future progress.

In **South Sudan**, relevant key performance indicators in the ESP addressed the issue of disparities between states. In order to ensure a reduction in such disparities, the plan targets deprived areas and states first. For example, the state gap in the primary gross enrolment ratio (GER) will be monitored over the course of the plan's implementation to track progress on eliminating inequities in access across states. These equity indicators exist within each sub-sector, and also look at eliminating gender differences.

Lessons learned: Breaking the cycle of response by anticipating and preparing for crisis

This section presents lessons learned from the country case studies, structured around the essential principles for successful educational planning developed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and IIEP (IIEP-UNESCO and GPE, 2015; 2016), and examines how these principles can be applied during the process of conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning.



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Principle 1: Conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning and programming should be country-led

Lesson: Government engagement and leadership in the planning process reinforces ownership and facilitates the development and implementation of a country's education plan, policy, or programme.

In crisis contexts, government leadership may be weak, and responses may be ad hoc or insufficient to meet immediate education needs. In such situations, a ministry may benefit from enhanced external support, ideally from local experts with context-specific knowledge and technical expertise, paired with international support, if needed. External support with an emphasis on capacity development and learning by doing can help a ministry to strengthen or regain ownership.

In **South Sudan**, the ESA and ESP development process was led by MoGEI and brought together education stakeholders from central and state levels, civil society, the Education Cluster, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, to develop a common strategy. Working with national staff in hands-on planning workshops, demystifying technical aspects of the work, and facilitating ministry discussions on priorities contributed to ensuring government ownership of the process. Furthermore, the active involvement of both government and

non-government education stakeholders enabled ownership of the outcomes of the process.

In **Uganda**, government leadership for CDRM at central level has improved in recent years. Senior education planners and policy-makers are now actively involved in operationalizing the CDRM Guidelines and in providing an institutional mechanism that is conducive to addressing conflict and disaster risks. However, the development of the Guidelines has not always led to increased political will and capacities for CDRM in the country's 111 district local governments. In order for CDRM planning and programming to be adopted by districts, the district local government and district education authorities will need to strengthen their capacities and display commitment. Nevertheless, initial capacity development measures at district level have encouraged central-level leadership, as districts have increasingly requested guidance and support for CDRM, and demonstrated how such an approach could be applied at local level.

Principle 2: Conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning and programming should be participatory

Lesson: Conflict-sensitive and risk-informed measures are more relevant and effective when national and sub-national authorities, teachers, and partners participate in their planning and implementation.

The principle of ‘participation’ is particularly important in the context of crisis, as those who are most affected by disaster and/or conflict are usually not involved in decision-making processes. However, bringing stakeholders affected by crisis or disparity together to set priorities will help ensure that their needs are addressed, and that relevant strategies are used.

In **Uganda**, district-level education officials and head teachers developed tools to assess and monitor conflict and disaster risks and their impact on education, and developed school-level strategies to address these risks. Participants’ active involvement and local knowledge was critical, as it ensured the relevance of the tools and the continued engagement of head teachers.

Principle 3: Crisis-sensitive and risk-informed planning and programming should be well organized and coordinated

Lesson: Coordination mechanisms can ensure appropriate follow up and alignment with government priorities on crisis-sensitive education and sustain long-term commitment.

In crisis situations, many partners often respond quickly, and in parallel to the government. A planning process that is well organized and coordinated can ensure that resources are used in the most efficient and equitable way, create synergies, and avoid

duplication of activities or focusing on some areas to the detriment of others.

South Sudan’s MoGEI benefited from the technical support of a coordinator based in UNESCO who was tasked with information gathering and sharing, and liaising with development partners. Ministry staff, however, were responsible for discussions that led to the identification of agreed priorities and activities in the plan. The participation of development and humanitarian partners such as the Education Cluster, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, and OCHA was key to ensuring that ongoing humanitarian work was also aligned with government priorities and supported national objectives.

In **Uganda**, a CDRM working group was set up within the Ministry to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the Directorate of Education Standards, the Planning Department, and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). The working group fosters information exchange leading to informed decision-making for mainstreaming CDRM in education across departments. The country has also benefited from local consultants who brought specialized expertise to the development of the CDRM policy framework, and encouraged cross-departmental collaboration between the MoESTS and the Office of the Prime Minister’s Department of Disaster Preparedness and Management.



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In **Burkina Faso**, a national coordinator, with expertise in disaster risk reduction, but external to MENA, facilitated group discussions and fostered experience sharing within the Ministry during the PDSEB planning process, which resulted in a common understanding of how the 10-year programme could reduce disaster risks.

Principle 4: Conflict-sensitive and risk-informed planning and programming should incorporate capacity development at all levels

Lesson: The need for capacity development is particularly severe in a context of crisis, as the crisis may have depleted capacities, and weak capacities may have contributed to the crisis.

Capacity development measures the need to build on indigenous knowledge and local capacities, and should be hands-on. When supporting ministries of education to develop crisis-sensitive ESAs and ESPs, it is important to address individual, organizational, and institutional capacities for planning.

In **South Sudan**, regular training (eight workshops over an 11-month period) and the use of a 'learning-by-doing' approach ensured that ministry staff gained knowledge and practical skills through directly carrying out planning work. As a result, staff could immediately put their learning to use. Furthermore, the participatory nature of the workshops strengthened relationships between key actors in MoGEI, as well as with civil society, donors, and other partners – providing space for them to develop a shared understanding of the process. Finally, some ministry

representatives also participated in an IIEP distance course on planning for safety, resilience, and social cohesion. Linking this type of training with in-country technical support lends itself to improved mastery of new skills and improves the effectiveness of the process.

As shown in **Uganda**, the commitment of government education staff increases when capacity development interventions are relevant to day-to-day work, and when staff are equipped with the required knowledge, skills, and tools. Initiatives that built on indigenous knowledge, such as the vulnerability and capacity self-assessment tool for schools, generated high levels of responsiveness and engagement at the school and grassroots level. Nonetheless, strengthening capacities in CDRM cannot be achieved through a one-off activity. In Uganda, sequenced training over two years helped district education staff operationalize the sector-specific CDRM policy framework. Continuous training and technical and financial support allowed district education departments to build a solid foundation for engaging in CDRM.

Continued advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives can also play a role in developing capacities at an institutional level, by establishing a shared understanding of the importance of exploring prevention and mitigation strategies through planning with ministry officials, at both central and decentralized levels. In **Burkina Faso**, advocacy workshops helped ministry officials to understand the relevance of crisis-sensitive planning.

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