

Evidence and Learning: Strengthening crisis and risk-related data and institutional education information systems

Case Study – UNRWA

Education in Emergencies (EiE) Bank of Indicators

Brief description of practice and the key learning

The UNRWA EiE Indicator Bank was developed in complement to the UNRWA Common Monitoring Framework (CMF), which includes mandatory indicators for measuring the performance of the UNRWA Education programme¹. The main objective of establishing the EiE Indicator Bank was to strengthen and harmonize the monitoring and evaluation of EiE activities implemented across the UNRWA Fields of Operation (Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan) in response to emergency related education and psycho-social needs.

The Indicators in the Indicator Bank are categorized according to the UNRWA EiE program strands: Access to education; Safe and secure learning environments; Psychosocial well-being of students; Quality teaching and learning; Parent and community engagement; Cross-cutting EiE Indicators.

Although some of its indicators have been integrated in UNRWA's EMIS, the EiE Indicator Bank is not intended as a mandatory tool for UNRWA's five Fields of operation to use, but rather as a stand-alone list of agreed, potential indicators that may be useful in certain contexts. Drawing indicators from this Bank ensures greater consistency of measurement between the Fields, enabling programmatic and Emergency Appeal monitoring and reporting to be more comparable.

What challenges does the practice/initiative address and why was the change needed?

Before the development of the EiE Indicator Bank, EiE was monitored through some indicators in the UNRWA Common Monitoring Framework (CMF), which includes mandatory indicators for measuring the performance of the Education program. This was in addition to some other indicators that the UNRWA Field Offices developed as part of the UNRWA Emergency Appeals. Nevertheless, there were no harmonized specific indicators -with common definitions and methodologies - that measured the implementation of EiE activities across the field offices. This created a large amount of inconsistencies when reporting on implemented activities and achieved results.

¹ The CMF includes indicators that measures the strategic objectives outlined in the UNRWA Medium Term Strategy 2016-2022. [Medium Term Strategy 2016-2021 | UNRWA](#)

What were you trying to achieve? How do the aims and objectives relate to improving the identification and monitoring of education needs and barriers in crisis-affected contexts and emergencies?

The indicator bank aims to provide an institutional reference to standardize data and build coherence among different Field Offices by providing common methodologies and definitions of EiE indicators across the different Field Offices on specific provision of services related to EIE.

In addition to indicators that are specifically related to monitoring provision of services, the tool also includes valuable indicators that - if systematically measured across the organization - can generate important evidence on the barriers to education faced by learners and educators, while showcasing trends that can demonstrate the impact of the activities implemented. (ex. # of student days lost due to military-related barriers preventing them from attending school; # of displaced UNRWA students facing legal documentation difficulties which affect their access to education, % of students accessing remote learning resources at least once weekly during emergency school closures, % of students enrolled in a given year who return to UNRWA schools the next year following an emergency).

Currently, the assessment of EIE related barriers appears to not be formalized across UNRWA and the monitoring of the indicators of the EIE bank is optional. However, through the harmonization of definitions and methodologies, the EIE Bank provides a great opportunity to build a culture within and across UNRWA of engaging in evidence-based programming, monitoring, and evaluation.

Did your practice meet the initial aims and objectives? What were the main results?

The roll-out of the Bank of indicators is at its initial stage – but it was noted that indicators from the EIE Bank are being deployed in measuring EiE responses designed as part of the UNRWA Emergency Appeals for 2022. It is also important to note that 24 of the EiE Indicators in the Bank are now integrated in the Agency’s Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Field’s staff are trained on data entry and reporting from EMIS on those indicators.

What stakeholders were involved? How did you ensure their involvement was participatory and collaborative?

Before developing the first draft of the EiE Indicator Bank, it was essential to conduct a review of EIE indicators used by partner organisation. These organisations included other UN agencies such as UNHCR, UNESCO, UNICEF, but also other organizations such as Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the Global Education Cluster, Education Cannot Wait, People in Need and Save the Children. This enabled UNRWA to reflect upon a wide-range collection of indicators and keep the most relevant ones to its operating context and priorities.

This exercise was led by a Task Force on EiE Monitoring and Evaluation that UNRWA established with UNESCO, UNICEF, SCI and UNHCR in 2017. The Task Force brought together partners in the MENA region and beyond, including Education Cannot Wait, the International Rescue Committee and INEE, as well as members of the Arab Regional Support Group for SDG4. In that sense, the collection of EiE indicators was

made collaborative from its first steps, because all these organizations shared their experiences and expertise in EiE measurement.

Within UNRWA, the practice was made participatory as well. The draft EiE Indicator Bank also included indicators from the UNRWA CMF that are particularly relevant for the measurement of EiE provision. Moreover, a two-day workshop was organised in November 2018 to discuss all these draft indicators in depth together with EiE and Monitoring and Evaluation staff from each UNRWA Field and the Headquarters. It is only once this feedback was incorporated into the indicators that the EiE bank was finalized.

How did the practice interact with and potentially strengthen the institutional education information systems in the context?

As noted above, the EiE Bank are being deployed in measuring EiE responses designed as part of the UNRWA Emergency Appeals for 2022. Also, UNRWA worked to integrate twenty-four of the EiE Indicators in the Bank in the Agency's Education Management Information System and Field staff are trained on reporting on those indicators.

While the EiE Indicator Bank is seen as a tool that will be subject to change and adaptation to reflect new data needs, UNRWA envisages it to be a resource for any institution that may want to dive into a similar effort of harmonization and integration of EiE Data.

With regards to its collaboration with the MoEs of host countries, there is room for UNRWA to advocate for the use of this Bank of Indicators with host Ministries of Education through its participation in Sector Working Groups and Education Clusters. This is something that UNRWA plans to do whenever an opportunity comes its way.

What challenges and barriers did you face and how did you change your approach to overcome these?

One challenge with regards to the implementation of the EiE bank of indicators was the Covid-19 crisis. Indeed, because of the crisis, the bank had to be reviewed and updated in 2020 in light of the Covid-19 education response. This led to the introduction of a number of new indicators and the removal of a number of indicators that, following testing, were found not to provide information that was useful or necessary to collect. It also meant working on the re-phrasing of some emergency-related indicators, which needed not to only address conflict situations, but also other emergencies.

What was the key learning from your practice? If you did it again, what would you do differently? What pointers would you give to help someone from another organization facing similar challenges?

A key learning of this practice relates to the (i) need to build on what was already developed; (ii) contextualize to the specific needs, priorities, and capacities of the context; (iii) involve and build capacities of the ultimate data providers to ensure relevance, accuracy and sustainability of the information systems.

The participatory process that led to the establishment of the Bank was key to the successful implementation of this practice. UNRWA was able to involve other Agencies in the process and learn from EIE data examples that existed including M&E Frameworks and was then able to translate this into its own specific operating context and organizational priorities.

The involvement of the Field staff in vetting the indicators for the Bank also enhanced ownership among them. And lastly institutionalizing the indicators / or at least some of them in the UNRWA Education Management System and building capacities on reporting on these indicators was also useful in ensuring the application of the Bank.

Submitted evidence

- EIE M&E Taskforce – Meeting Report (Nov. 2017)
- EIE Indicator bank before COVID
- EIE Indicator Bank after COVID:
https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/updated_eie_bank_of_indicators_-_september_2021_final.pdf