



POLICY BRIEF:

**Education Data Systems
in Conflict and Protracted
Crisis**

The Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) Research Programme Consortium is a global research and learning partnership that strives to transform education policy and practice in conflict and protracted crisis around the world – ultimately to help improve holistic outcomes for children – through building a global hub for a rigorous, context-relevant and actionable evidence base.

ERICC seeks to identify the most effective approaches for improving access, quality, and continuity of education to support sustainable and coherent education systems and holistic learning and development of children in conflict and crisis. ERICC aims to bridge research, practice, and policy with accessible and actionable knowledge – at local, national, regional and global levels – through co- construction of research and collaborative partnerships.

ERICC is led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) with Academic Lead IOE, UCL’s Faculty of Education and Society, and expert partners include Centre for Lebanese Studies, Common Heritage Foundation, Forcier Consulting, ODI, Osman Consulting, Oxford Policy Management and Queen Rania Foundation. During ERICC’s inception period, NYU-TIES provided research leadership, developed the original ERICC Conceptual Framework and contributed to early research agenda development. ERICC is supported by UK Aid.

Countries in focus include Bangladesh (Cox’s Bazar), Jordan, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Syria.

Disclaimer

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I. Background

Data and evidence are a prerequisite for evidence-informed decision-making. However, governments and donors often face challenges in gathering the most reliable data and evidence to inform policies and allocate budget to implement educational programmes. These challenges often arise from a lack of granularity, timeliness and credibility in the data system. Moreover, many education data platforms are not user-friendly, which deters stakeholder engagement, particularly at regional and school levels. In contexts of conflict and protracted crisis, data is fragmented across different education authorities, and the humanitarian and development projects.

Better data systems are vital for improving access, quality and continuity of education for children, as well as holding education stakeholders accountable for effective disbursement of often limited education funding. This evidence brief provides a summary of challenges and ways to improve Education in Emergencies (EiE) data systems. It draws on findings from a comprehensive evidence review (Salmon-Letelier, forthcoming) based on a review of more than 400 peer-reviewed articles and grey literature as well as seven country-level case studies of data systems in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, South Sudan, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

II. Obstacles in establishing effective education data systems

Education systems in conflict-affected and crisis settings face a range of challenges in establishing effective data systems. Our analysis reveals two main areas of difficulties relating to the data process: "data identification and collection" and "data-sharing and utilisation".

Data identification and collection	Data-sharing and use
Difficulties with collecting data on out-of-school, refugee and internally displaced children	Lack of incentives to use data for strategic decisions via sector mandates and financing mechanisms
Limited use of local stakeholders' knowledge and needs during tools design and data collection	Lack of coordination and data-sharing among different sectors and education actors due to political economy constraints
Limited availability of conflict-sensitive methodologies	Lack of interoperability of different data sets due to project-driven monitoring demanded by external donors
Emphasis on inputs (number of schools, textbooks, teacher-to-student ratio) which are usually disconnected from student needs and learning outcomes	Delays in data availability for timely policy decisions and programme implementation
Lack of incentives at regional and school levels to collect quality data	Absence of affordable and secure data platforms to make data available to a wide range of users
Lack of emphasis on multi-sectoral and longitudinal data	Lack of data-sharing with school- and regional-level stakeholders
Limited technical skills capacity	Limited technical skills capacity
Limited time and budget capacity	Limited time and budget capacity

III. What could work better to strengthen data systems?

Including local stakeholders and strengthening their capacities

1. Recognise, respect and strengthen the leadership and initiatives of local, national and regional partners and authorities (INEE, 2023).
2. Engage education beneficiaries in the design, development and implementation of education data collection tools and programmes, starting with early-stage design consultations (Yusuf, 2019).
3. Collaborate with local communities during data collection and analysis to leverage their knowledge, mitigating geographical barriers and enhancing the understanding of the data needed (Halman, 2019).
4. Invest in technical, financial, human resources and infrastructure capacity across individual, organisational and institutional levels throughout the data value chain (UNESCO, 2023).
5. Create user-friendly, context-specific data collection tools and data platforms to address challenges in data relevance and use (Nicolai *et al.*, 2016).

Harmonising indicators across different data sources

1. Collaborate to build shared understanding and use of terms, definitions and taxonomies across assessments and programmes (UNESCO, 2023).
2. Collaborate to identify a core set of indicators for monitoring collective outcomes, ensuring country-driven and context-specific formulations (UNESCO, 2023).
3. Develop a standard data dictionary for national and refugee Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) to enable integration of data on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees into the national systems to ensure sustainability and strengthen government capacities for emergency response (Dutton, 2019).
4. Standardise processes of data collection, analysis and dissemination across actors (UNESCO, 2023).

Incentivising collaboration and data-sharing

1. Encourage collaboration among donors via sector mandates and financial incentives to minimise duplication, enhance coordination, and ensure adequate use of limited resources.
2. Implement a dedicated mechanism for strategic coordination around EIE data, harmonising efforts, and aligning them with education sector policies (UNESCO, 2023).
3. Agree on system-wide shared priorities to minimise fragmentation across projects (UNESCO, 2023).
4. Establish clear roles and responsibilities, outlining necessary resources, governance mechanisms, and procedures (Rauschenberger and Sabella, 2023).
5. Establish a secure shared data management platform and accreditation processes (UNHCR, 2019).
6. Normalise purpose-driven data- and evidence-sharing through specific arrangements between organisations and international/national platforms (INEE, 2023).

Enhancing quality and relevance of data

1. Expand focus of data collection to encompass learning and other outcomes (INEE, 2020).
2. Promote impact evaluations, qualitative research, participatory and innovative data collection methods to address data limitations (Montjouridès and Liu, 2019; UNHCR, 2019; Achraouaou, 2019).
3. Ensure that data incorporates longitudinal elements for better analysis of programme effects and overarching trends (Yusuf, 2019; La Rose, 2016).
4. Offer multi-sectoral perspectives such as the relationship between health and education (Yusuf, 2019; La Rose, 2016).
5. Strike a balance between limiting complexity and capturing sufficient information, considering crisis settings and humanitarian responses (UNESCO, 2023).

Ensuring key stakeholders have timely access to data

1. Advocate for affordable and user-friendly national data platforms that recognise the needs and capabilities of actors across different sectors and levels of governance in the country.
2. Regularly update data and make it readily accessible to stakeholders (Dutton, 2019). This is particularly important in contexts with recurrent emergencies and protracted crises.
3. Curate the style of data presentation to user needs to enhance navigability (Buckner et al., 2019).
4. Establish meaningful feedback loops across all levels of the data ecosystem, especially top-down sharing of aggregate data to regional and school-level actors to reciprocate their data collection efforts.

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