Dynamics and Dilemmas within the Education in Displacement ecosystem

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1

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to dive deeply into the dynamics of the Education in Displacement (EiD)[1] ecosystem. It set out to build a foundation towards a better understanding of the "state" of this ecosystem, and how change occurs within it, at present.

While this piece of research is situated within and commissioned under Porticus' All Eyes on Learning (AEoL) programme, the issues and ideas explored here are likely to have wide interest and appeal beyond the programme's immediate stakeholders.[2] Despite a shared and concerted effort on the part of many to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for displaced learners, there is an acute sense across the EiD community that we may be making little headway towards this goal. This community increasingly acknowledges that we are working in a complex ecosystem which is interconnected and interdependent on a range of elements within and outside the purview of education actors alone. We are also recognising that oftentimes our actions function in unintended and non-linear ways.

Importantly, and made abundantly clear in the current global pandemic, is the acknowledgement that this ecosystem is not fixed, but is constantly evolving and adapting in light of, or despite, the chaos. And perhaps most significantly, the problems we are trying to address are in fact "wicked problems" – intractable, multidimensional, dynamic across time and context, and deeply interrelated with these very systems – and will rarely be met with perfect solutions (Ramalingam, 2013). This does not imply that we stop trying to achieve change, but rather that we may need to adopt new approaches and understandings of the change process itself and grow our capacity to respond to yet unknown future challenges.

This research is based on 32 in-depth interviews which capture the perspectives of stakeholders, identified by Porticus to be at the very centre of the EiD ecosystem at present time. These perspectives were synthesised alongside a significant literature review of programmatic reports, research, tools, and cross-disciplinary academic literature (see Appendix A for a full description of methods). While the report set out with specific research questions that corresponded to elements of the AEoL programme, the depth and nature of discussions encountered pushed well beyond this. The report is thus structured by key themes which speak to the above-mentioned necessary shifts in how we consider our field as a whole. In order to reflect the insight of research participants, direct quotes are included throughout this text.

Based on the rich discussions that occurred during this research process, it became clear that the EiD ecosystem is characterised by much diversity and uncertainty, which presented a challenge in offering a straightforward description of its current "state". Importantly, this diversity and uncertainty should not be interpreted as cause for alarm, but instead a nudge to reconceptualise and rethink how we consider and reflect on processes of change in the ecosystem. In other words, simple solutions like more funding, more evidence, more political will, greater engagement of actors from the "local context," or better evidence-based policy making are unlikely on their own to lead to change. Rather it is about developing and refining our thinking about how the sum of these actions, at various scales of the ecosystem, by different actors, and at varying time points might work more cohesively to institute transformation for learners in adversity.

[1] The term "Education in Displacement (EiD)" is used to refer to learners in contexts of displacement. This is based on terminology used in Porticus' global portfolio. The "field" we are referring to throughout this report is more commonly called "Education in Emergencies (EiE)" and we note that this research did not distinguish between the two. Here and in the remainder of the report, we use EiD rather than EiE to reflect its specific engagement within the EiE ecosystem.

[2] Through the programme, Porticus supports a range of initiatives – largely at global and regional levels – which collectively contribute towards ensuring that all children in contexts of displacement are attaining holistic learning outcomes to support their full development.

[3] According to Porticus' global EiD strategy (p.12), at the very centre of the EiD system are "institutions and networks [which] shape the sector and have a mandate to either set policies and/or fund EiD at a very significant scale… they include primarily a relatively small number of International Organisations (IOs), International NGOs (INGOs) and international networks. Behind those IOs, INGOs and networks there is however a larger circle of influential donor countries, private donors, smaller implementers, research institutions, partnerships and networks". Resultingly, many of the stakeholders who were interviewed for this study were these IOs, INGOs, international networks/coalitions, research institutions and other philanthropic donors. Given what is later explored in this report, this it seems, leads to a significant absence and void in terms of a lack of perspectives from national, subnational and local actors who are most directly engaged in providing services to displaced learners in context. For this reason, the report should be acknowledged as one in which the voices represented are from the Global North, and likely for a Global North audience.

2

Progress and enduring issues within the EiD ecosystem

Background and historical growth of EiD

The global crisis of displacement – both within and across national borders – has increased by over 50% in the last decade (UNHCR, 2019a). By mid-2020, UNHCR estimates that global displacement surpassed 80 million, including approximately 45.7 million internally displaced, 29.6 million refugees outside of their country of origin, and 4.2 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2020a).

This year was certainly unique, as the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the flows and pathways of global migration generally. By mid-April 2020, 168 countries had officially closed or partially-closed their borders, and more than half made no exceptions for those seeking asylum (UNHCR, 2020b). Both resettlement and return numbers decreased from 2019. Still, with numerous ongoing conflicts and mounting impacts of climate crisis, the trend continues towards increasing levels of displacement globally.

Even before COVID-19, approximately half of global out-of-school children and young people were living in contexts of crisis or conflict. This equates to 127 million primary and secondary school-aged learners (INEE, 2020a). Estimates are that an additional 6.8 to 11 million children may never return to school following COVID-19, with displaced learners amongst the highest risk(UNESCO, 2020).

The right to education for refugees has been foundational to global policy and strategy since the 1951 Convention. As the average length of displacement has steadily increased (to an average of 20 years for refugees and more than ten years for 90% of IDPs in 2019), global policymakers have had to consider education approaches within durable solutions narratives (i.e., repatriation, integration, or resettlement) noting that the majority of refugees will neither repatriate nor resettle (European Commission, 2019). Education in emergency contexts was recognised as a field within humanitarian response by 2010 UN resolution, and affirmed in the Incheon Declaration in 2015. This commitment has been reaffirmed by the establishment of the global funding pool Education Cannot Wait (ECW)

at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), and subsequently in the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which emphasises access to quality primary and secondary education for all refugee learners (ECW, 2020; UNHCR, 2018).

The WHS and GCR also affirmed the centrality of coherence across humanitarian and development-focused responses (otherwise known as the nexus), and the importance of ensuring responses for displaced learners are integrated into national systems. UNHCR's 2030 Education Strategy is reflective of this shift, prioritising the role and authority of national actors in this process (UNHCR, 2019b), and assuring that national education systems and policies are inclusive of refugee learners. Alongside this, the Grand Bargain coming out of the WHS led to agreement between 18 donors and 16 aid organisations to increase transparency, support local actors and ensure collaborative multi-year funding in humanitarian crises – signalling a nod to increased local ownership, coordination and coherence in humanitarian responses, including education.

Funding-wise, there has also been increasing mobilisation and support for contexts in which education in emergencies (EiE) programming is required. This is reflected for instance in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) directing the vast majority of its grants (76%) in 2019 to the needs of national governments affected by fragility and conflict. Likewise, intensive global advocacy efforts led eventually, in 2016, to the establishment of the ECW global fund for EiE. ECW has sought to ensure dedicated, flexible and longer-term streams of funding to countries facing acute and protracted emergencies in the education sector, and to enhance coordination between humanitarian and development actors. Resultingly, the amount of funding directed towards education in humanitarian crises has markedly increased in the last 20 years, from US $10 million to US $454 million.

Despite this exponential growth, funding has still not kept pace with need, and remains well below the UN set target of four percent of global humanitarian aid funding, and the EU target of ten percent. Moreover, the funding landscape within various humanitarian crises is starkly unequal and influenced by global geopolitics, with some appeals for education receiving no funding despite the enormity of need (INEE, 2020a; UNESCO, 2012).

The governance and geopolitics of aid to learners in displacement

Migration and displacement are key global issues of our time, with pronounced links to humanitarian aid and development. They are cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral in nature; impacting on and impacted by factors, including law, politics, strategy, and power at both global and national levels. Global policies, strategies, and institutions including donors collide with national systems, policy and law as people cross borders to seek asylum and protection under both international and state law.

Large scale, protracted displacement crises are intrinsically and deeply tied to governance. In considering the national education systems serving displaced learners, we are also talking about issues of state sovereignty and citizenship; of international human rights and processes of asylum; and of critically important global debates that are legal, geopolitical, and economic in nature. Providing education to refugees is, too, inherently a politics of inclusion related to notions of citizenship and priorities of curriculum, pedagogy, and practices of education. This includes decisions regarding, for example, language of instruction, choices of curriculum, and exams and certification (Dryden-Peterson et al, 2019).

> "We are asking nation states to provide education – and specifically education policy reform and funding – for non-citizens. And this in many locations where state systems were inadequately funded and developed to serve citizens prior to crisis. This is a question of governance. This is all politics."
>
> UN Agency, Global

Global humanitarian and development systems broadly, and educational aid in emergencies specifically, have increasingly confronted historic claims of lacking neutrality, especially donors. Bilateral donors often bear the brunt of such critique as they are the organisations most explicit in the operationalisation of diplomacy through aid dollars (Novelli, 2010). The top six bilateral donors to EiE (including their funding of multilateral efforts) account for nearly half (45%) of aid to EiE (UNOCHA, 2019). Yet, as analysis of aid flows shows, much of this aid is tied to a small handful of countries and regions (i.e., the Middle East) where there are clear geopolitical and securitisation interests in play (UNESCO, 2011; INEE, 2020a).

Political agendas and relationships are thus embedded in the ecosystem itself. Other funders – for example foundations or the private sector – may espouse apolitical agendas, but ultimately function, interact and manoeuvre amongst the explicit and tacit political agendas of numerous global actors. Ultimately, the aim of influencing national systems is an inherently political agenda, in which economic and/or technical support and expertise are used to influence the decision-making processes and direction of a sovereign state. National education systems, curricula, pedagogy, and practices are, too, deeply political and ideological in nature. While there is significant literature situating education aid in relation to nation-state politics and governance, it is critical to better integrate such perspectives into programmatic, funding, and research decision making in the EiD ecosystem (Davies, 2004; IIEP, 2010; King, 2007; Novelli, 2010; Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008; Tebbe, 2015).

EiD and wicked problems

The AEoL programme identifies several root problems in the ecosystem, presented in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Root problems as identified by the All Eyes on Learning programme

- The EiD sector is heavily focused on access to, and enrolment in, education, with less attention to the quality of education and learning outcomes.
- Interventions working to improve the quality of learning are predominately focused on the measurement and attainment of basic literacy and numeracy outcomes, with insufficient attention to strengthening a more holistic range of learning outcomes in learners.
- There is a lack of agreement on what comprises quality education and the extent to which psychosocial support (PSS) and social and emotional learning (SEL) are a part of this.
- Effective, culturally relevant approaches and tools for measuring holistic learning outcomes (HLO), and specifically academic and social-emotional outcomes, are in the nascent stages and require further development.
- There is a lack of capacity amongst donors, implementers, and national education systems serving children in displacement to translate evidence-based approaches on to develop and measure HLOs.

Understood together – and alongside the historical and political dynamics outlined in the prior sections – these root challenges may best be understood as "wicked problems" that are notably difficult to tackle in isolation from each other, as well as from their specific contexts. These problems intersect with systems and policy tensions at global, regional, and national levels that may impede transformative change from taking place (Ndaruhutse et al, 2019; Ramalingam, 2013).

"Wicked problems" is a term developed to identify challenges and scenarios of complexity. Its origins and applications relate to development and aid approaches to tackling global poverty (ODI, 2014), as well as more recently in considering how to address intractable, non-linear global challenges such as education reform, private sector development, and

girls' education (Davies, 2008; IIEP, 2010; Ramalingam et al, 2008; Vogel & Fisher, 2013; Warren, 2013). Table 1, below, differentiates between scenarios that are simple, complicated, and complex. For the purposes of this research and report, this differentiation helps us to better examine and understand both the challenges inherent in the EiD ecosystem today, as well as the numerous approaches and strategies that are undertaken to respond to these challenges.

Table 1: Examples of simple, complicated, and complex scenarios

SIMPLE: Following a recipe	COMPLICATED: Sending a rocket to the moon	COMPLEX: Poverty reduction programme
The recipe is essential	Formulae are critical and necessary	Formulae have limited application
Recipes are tested to assure easy replication	Sending one rocket to the moon increases assurance that the next will be ok	Designing and running one successful poverty reduction programme provides experience but no assurance of success with the next one
No particular expertise is required but cooking expertise increases success rate	High levels of expertise in a variety of fields are necessary for success	Expertise can contribute but is neither necessary nor sufficient to assure success
Recipes produce standardised products	Rockets are similar in critical ways	Every situation of poverty is unique and must be understood as such
The best recipes give good results every time	There is a high degree of certainty of outcome	Uncertainty of outcome remains
Optimistic approach to problem-solving	Optimistic approach to problem-solving	Optimistic approach to problem-solving

Source: SDC, 2018 (adapted from Rogers, 2008 and Glouberman and Zimmerman, 2002).

Importantly, this classification is not meant to discretely categorise an entire field. Within the EiD community, there will be many straightforward problems that may be solved with technical solutions. Additionally, many complicated problems also exist. The term "wicked problems" is useful in considering how many problems interact and interrelate in a manner that creates a "complex" scenario, such as global poverty. **When technical, linear approaches to a specific systems problem fail (as many but not all do), reconsidering the nature of the problem itself is a useful starting point to then reconceptualise potential solutions or ways forward.**

Overall, challenges observed with the provision of quality learning for displaced learners are not straightforward technical problems requiring straightforward technical solutions. Simply put, linear approaches to change which expect that a set of actions/inputs will lead to certain outcomes for learners fail to acknowledge the full complexity of change-making processes within education systems (Davies, 2004; Fullan, 1999; Fullan and Miles, 1992; Hargreaves et al, 2009; Ndaruhutse et al, 2019; Sarason, 1990). Take for example, the decision under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to universalise access to primary education for millions of out of school children. While more children ended up going to school, many learned very little, and most of them dropped out of the system once again. For those who did make it through primary education, education systems globally were not equipped with the sudden demand on lower-secondary education, and the bottleneck for access moved up to this level of the system with millions of children again being excluded (GPE, 2018; Ndaruhutse et al, 2019). Subsequently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) expanded in its educational targets and cross-sectoral linkages – but critically the process of approaching the problem itself was also different by including local expertise and input into its design and implementation. This expansion reflects a more systems-aware approach.

An ecosystem approach: What does it mean?

An ecosystem approach starts from the premise that in contemporary social, economic and political systems, it is impossible to explain change based on linear models of causality (cause and effect) or find a singular solution or set of solutions to problems that are inherently intertwined and complex. Rather, the diversity of actors involved, the relationships and interdependencies which exist between them, and the multiple contexts within which they operate renders an ecosystem – such as the EiD ecosystem – as complex and adaptive.

A complex situation is one where: (a) there is a low level of certainty on how to solve the problem, and where there is unlikely to be a singular solution or set of solutions to the problem; and (b) where there is unlikely to be agreement amongst stakeholders about how to solve the problem. In recent years, complexity in particular has seen significant adoption in international development and humanitarian narratives, as experts and practitioners across the system grapple with the wicked problems of a changing geopolitical world order (Jones, 2011; Patton, 2016; Ramalingam, 2013; Ramalingam et al, 2008, 2014, Valters, 2014).

Complexity-aware approaches do not constitute a "new" field, but instead use theoretical frameworks and methods derived from multiple disciplines and build on (but go beyond) a systems-thinking approach. Major international donors, such as USAID, have been working with complexity-aware approaches for nearly a decade in order to offer tools and insight for more effective planning, programming, and monitoring in dynamic and unpredictable contexts (USAID, 2016; 2018).

There are several core features of complex and adaptive systems. They are noted below.

Connectedness

In an ecosystem there are a myriad of agents acting simultaneously, reacting and responding to the actions of others. It is this combination of responses and reactions which then shapes the context, and the future behaviours and actions of these agents. This means that agents and the context itself are constantly changing and evolving in relation to each other. By implication, **one element or entity of an ecosystem cannot be separated from the whole, and it is the relationship between actors, their actions and responses, and the context which shape patterns of change.**

Feedback processes to promote adaptation

Agents within an ecosystem are constantly learning, adapting and changing about the above processes. Ideally, this learning provides ecosystem agents with a heightened awareness of their interconnections, and the ways in which their actions are constrained by the actions of others, as well as their context. Much of this, however, requires functioning feedback loops which share learning (responses, counter-responses, consequences) across and between the various scales of the system. Without such feedback loops, an ecosystem's vitality begins to falter, and its future potential to evolve and change successfully is put in jeopardy.

Emergence

Interactions between agents occur in ways that may outwardly appear random and chaotic but do lead to regularities and patterns. These interactions between various agents cannot be completely foreseeable or

predictable, nor are they fully visible or known to any one agent. Importantly, change, when it does occur is frequently disproportionate and unpredictable. There are certain circumstances where a small change can lead to significant ripple effects across an ecosystem, and other times where seemingly large actions have little impact. We can only retrospectively understand how these patterns of regularity and change form, rather than predict them in advance.

The nested nature of ecosystems

An ecosystem is comprised of several interconnected elements and levels (scales), which are embedded within each other. Where connections between the various levels are strong, change in one level can have a ripple effect across the entire ecosystem. Conversely, where these connections are weaker, elements of the system have more independence and might be able to maintain equilibrium or stability, even when other parts of the system are affected by a change of context.

Open and dynamic, rather than closed and bounded

AAn ecosystem approach understands that systems are open and porous. The outer edges of an ecosystem are not immediately clear, nor are the borders of it impermeable to influences and actions from other sectors and systems. This renders measuring change in an ecosystem difficult because parameters for action cannot be clearly bounded and are challenging to model or forecast without full knowledge of the dynamics of all other systems (economic, social, political) which are influencing the outcomes observed.

There are several important differences between a systems-thinking and an ecosystems approach. These include the idea that:

- While systems thinking acknowledges multiple interacting parts, there is a view that this system is often stable and in equilibrium. In an ecosystem approach, the agents and the system itself are constantly changing, adapting and evolving – there is no constant or equilibrium state.
- Systems thinking suggests that different elements can be understood and acted upon in isolation, whereas an ecosystem approach requires us to see and understand the "whole" and the interdependence between different agents and contexts of action at all times.
- Systems thinking maintains a focus on predictable results, even it if attempts to theorise change as occurring through complex and multiple chains of causality. It maintains belief in a clear end state which can somehow be achieved through multiple points of entry. An ecosystem approach recognises that solutions are achieved through dynamic processes which may never be fully understood or result in a single end state.

Taking an "ecosystem approach" to understanding and affecting change in the EiD space is a significant paradigm shift from results-based management approaches. At the same time, it offers the opportunity to consider, in depth, how processes, norms, relationships, and power intersect and interrelate, and subsequently, better recognise opportunities for influence. As is argued in the remainder of the report, a better connected, informed, and open set of pathways amongst actors in the ecosystem will improve its overall functioning. This is explored through three overarching but interrelated themes. These are: (a) understandings of, and opportunities for quality learning for learners in displacement; (b) evidence and its role in change processes; and (c) connections, flows, and influence across the ecosystem. The themes were ones of focus and interest to the AEoL programme but have relevance for actors across the EiD community.

3

Quality learning for the whole child in context

Our lines of inquiry for this research were guided by general, broad questions with the intention of allowing interviewees to offer perspective and points of reflection that felt most relevant to them in considering the EiD ecosystem. We began by asking interviewees to describe what quality learning for EiD means; from their perspective and that of their organisation, as well as in comparison or contrast to meaning across levels of the ecosystem and contexts globally. Discussions centred on the whole child and moved away from reductive notions of learning as being primarily academic.

In this section, we elaborate on the rich discussions that ensued. The first sub-section offers description of the conversations related to attempts to "define" quality learning. We then offer insight and synthesis of more critical reflections on how quickly the field turned from expanding our ideas of what education may be, towards efforts and focus on measuring specific elements of that expanded conception. We describe the value and potential in these efforts to contribute to better understanding (and eventually, in turn, towards uptake of such holistic outcomes), but also reflect on the possibility that many critical pieces of quality learning will not be captured by outcomes that can be measured. In the third sub-section, we turn the discussion towards the emergence and strong focus on PSS/SEL in EiD at the current moment. The section concludes with a table summarising the five baseline descriptions that were synthesised from discussions with interviewees.

What is quality learning for EiD?

The concept of quality learning has undergone considerable expansion at the global level since the emergence of the SDGs in 2015; this growth has notably moved beyond just academic learning and into the realms of the development of the whole child in context. For learners in displacement, this is interwoven with a rights-based approach that shapes global narratives and response to mass displacement on a global scale.

In interviews for this research, there was no universally agreed upon (nor concise) definition for quality learning in EiD contexts. However, actors do agree that this lack of universal definition is logical and sensible, as "quality learning" is complex, multidimensional, and context specific. Overall, this was not regarded as a "problem" per se. Interviews elaborated that there is risk, instead, of "getting caught up" in standardised definitions at the global level and noted that the value of meaning comes from a definition appropriate for context. More important is to assure that diverse actors across the ecosystem are aware of differing priorities, strategies, ideas, and applications of quality learning. Communication and collaboration across these diverse ideas and contexts is essential to make meaningful progress towards achieving quality learning outcomes. Definitions of quality learning will (and should) be deeply context-dependent; there is particular need for emphasis on meaning and application at the national and local levels.

When considering the idea of meaning or definition, there was a lot of diversity offered from participants. Few organisations have a standard definition of quality learning that individual representatives were able to speak to. Many referenced the comprehensive definition of quality education offered by UNESCO, but noted the necessity of considering that definition in context and/or for a particular programme[4]. **Across the ecosystem (including national and regional level actors), there is general consensus that overall focus has been shifting from access towards quality in recent years.** This shift has been partly engendered by the adoption of the SDGs, which explicitly expanded education focus from access and enrolment to an enlarged and cross-sectoral focus on quality (United Nations, 2015). (As will be elaborated on in subsequent sections, influence towards such change is often not linear nor simply causal. There were certainly other influences towards such focus shifting towards quality, and notably earlier global strategy such as Education for All centred quality education prior to 2015.)

Instead of asking interviewees to define quality, we requested descriptions of the most salient aspects of quality learning. This led to much reflection on the value of difference across contexts, as well as the need to include the perspective of non-global-level actors. **There were two overarching characteristics of quality learning that were articulated in the majority of these discussions. These were:**

(a) Quality learning acknowledges and includes consideration of the whole child (or, in other words, applies a holistic lens) in order to assure learning readiness and capacity. Importantly, this moves beyond the purely academic; and

(b) Quality learning must be relevant to the desired and real potential futures of the learner. It is both learner- and future-centred.

Both characteristics – and the descriptions offered broadly – coalesce with prominent perspectives in the field of education broadly that articulate its purpose for learners and society. This includes, for example, in the Delors Report which depicts learning as "to know, to be, to do, and to come together" (Delors, 1996); as well as with a capabilities approach that pushes understanding of wellbeing and agency beyond just outcomes-based or development measures and towards individual values in context (Sen, 1985, 1999). Table 2 presents descriptions of important characteristics of quality learning for EiD, as offered in the interviews – these are included in full to demonstrate both similarity and difference across a selection of actors.

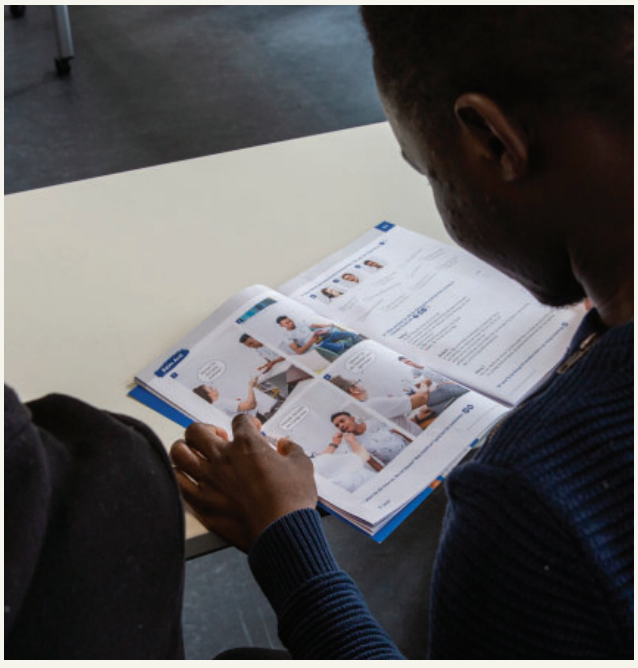

Table 2. Quality learning descriptions from interviewees

Actor	WHAT IS QUALITY LEARNING FOR EID?
Research, Global	"Quality learning is ensuring that young people are actually able to build on their knowledge, and that the content that's being delivered is being delivered in it in such a way that they're able to actually learn… It's not just about getting them into a classroom environment, but also that wellbeing and holistic learning and whole child development is essential for the learning to take place. So, access and wellbeing have to be in place for quality learning to occur."
Donor, Regional	"Quality goes beyond academic achievement. It is about pedagogies that are caring, protective. It is about school and learning experience, and the interactions between students, and between students and teachers. But if donors want measurable outcomes, then this becomes challenging to measure something like 'quality of relationships' as it relates to learning… I'm not sure you can have indicators for these holistic ideas, no matter how much you focus on trying to contextualise meaning."
Network/ Coalition, Global	"Quality education is learner centred. For different ages, this may mean very different things. A different level of focus on literacy and numeracy for younger children versus education relevant to potential livelihoods for youth. At the heart of it, it's about providing a meaningful and relevant education."
Donor, Regional	"Definitions of quality will differ a lot by actor, by disciplinary background and the kind of evidence they value. Some organisations will favour economic perspective and definition, which will place value on measuring and calculating outcomes. Others might focus entirely on the classroom level, concentrating on teaching and pedagogy. And there will be perspective in the middle of these. It's not just that definition is based on context, but also on the actor offering the definition and their own understandings and priorities."
Implementer, Global	"Quality education is about centring the learner. It needs to fit the context where kids are currently living, and also to be appropriate to the context of their potential futures. We can't always predict this, but we need to do a better job of considering this and that it may be very different for different learners."
Network/ Coalition, Global	"Quality learning is about teaching to the potential of students. It needs to be relevant to the population at hand, to their opportunities and their potential futures. There also has to be a responsiveness, on both an individual but also a population level. There needs to be the readiness to adjust and to be flexible to the needs of students. So holistic elements like psychosocial support are a critical part of quality education especially in displacement; this is the underpinning of being able to learn academically towards a given purpose."
Systems, National	"Quality learning leads to positive change in both skills and attitudes. It is not only providing knowledge, but also life skills that are needed in a labour market, too. Quality learning includes the full environment, a fully enabling environment. This promotes self-efficacy and resilience. It includes psychosocial support, safety, gender equity, and the availability of resources for enrichment."
UN Agency, Global	"For displaced learners, in particular, there is just so much to quality learning. There is literacy and numeracy, and there are the issues of protection and psychosocial support for children who have experienced trauma. But additionally, these learners are in a new, host country where they may be remaining. What do these kids need in order to live in this new country? To become participating citizens? There are certainly many complicating discussions around assimilation and preserving identities. But these learners are going to be living in this context, and so a big part of the discussion in education needs to be about what they need in order to do so. Suddenly the 'quality' in 'quality learning' is so much larger than it may be for other populations."
Systems, National	"The main areas of focus for quality education are specific academic competencies such as science, math, reading, social sciences… In addition, we are interested in the climate of schools, and understanding quality in the complex system. This includes schools' environment, the conditions of the community as a whole, and of course the institutional environment that takes charge of these pieces."

From an ecosystem perspective, such diversity of description is both logical and ultimately advantageous[5]. The meaning of quality learning for the individual learner (e.g., related to potential futures) is situated within a broader quality learning in their community (e.g., factors related to markets and livelihoods opportunity; through to group dynamics that may relate to conflict). This broader quality learning is in turn situated within quality learning as considered at the national level (e.g., relating to measurements and testing; to funding opportunities and limitations). National systems/governments navigate external relationships, too, as they accept funding and sign on to the agreements that facilitate such support. These global funders (in addition to other global level actors) possess their own understandings of, and priorities in terms of, quality learning. Additionally, such understandings and prioritisations change over time, as is exemplified by the shift in educational focus from MDGs to SDGs.

Still, while there is a definite trend towards expanding the view of quality education beyond academics, it is important to note that in displacement contexts access is still a fundamental challenge (INEE, 2020a). In such contexts, the educational and protective needs of children are often great and the capacity to respond is often (at least initially) limited; national education systems that are already stretched to provide quality education for their citizen learners may focus primarily on access. With 127 million school-aged children out-of-school in crisis-affected contexts globally, improving access is still an essential area of focus.

"In a context where learners have missed out on years of schooling, a very relevant priority of education programming may be to simply 'catch these learners up'. For alternative education programming for refugees going beyond academics is certainly important but also difficult at a classroom level. Yes, the learners need more, but how much can be truly effectively done in a single classroom?"

UN Agency, Regional

Additionally, interviews noted that for displacement contexts characterised by great need and low resources, interventions are often forced to prioritise. In particular, this may be relevant for contexts with limited, coordinated response broadly, as well as for overcrowded, multi-age, and multi-level classrooms in terms of education specifically. In particularly challenging contexts, multiple interviews emphasised that this expanded definition and larger set of considerations (for learning beyond the academic) often falls upon classroom- or school-level actors only who are not adequately supported to do so.

Quality learning beyond academic outcomes

The expanding vision about the purpose and nature of education – as evidenced across levels of the ecosystem – is both valuable and notable across global contexts. With this expansion in definition, though, follows a clear drive towards capturing and measuring the impacts of quality learning. **According to interviews, there was consensus that EiD interventions focused on quality tend to measure mainly literacy and numeracy outcomes but that this, too, is changing.** This is the result of an increasing number of approaches, tools, and measures which are helping to demonstrate the value of promoting and supporting non-cognitive learning outcomes within specific EiD contexts. Nascent cross-sectoral collaborations are helping to strengthen the argument that quality education extends beyond the academic and provides the necessary skills and competencies to support whole child development, and this is reflected in recent EiD literature (Burde et al, 2019; INEE, 2020a). The critical need for cross-sectoral response via integrated programming for education and child protection, for example, is emphasised across recent research and efforts at institutionalising such collaboration in order to achieve impact (The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020). Approaches for EiD contexts – and subsequent toolkits for these approaches – include both programmatic considerations, resources for multiple levels of actor (including programmatic staff, teachers, trainers, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff) and measurements of outcomes beyond the academic (see: Save the Children's Learning and Wellbeing in Emergencies Resource Kit (2016); IRC (2016) Creating Healing Classrooms). Generally, the programmatic and academic literature and tools point to an emerging commitment to examine, track, and measure outcomes beyond the academic.

"You cannot divorce quality education outcomes from the wellbeing of the learner."

Network/Alliance, Global

The effort to understanding learning beyond the academic has coalesced into approaches such as Whole Child Development (WCD) which applies a holistic lens to the myriad of factors in a child's life that impact on and interact with their development (ACER, 2020). Social ecological models have placed the learner in context, and their development and learning in relation to the nested levels of influence in their life. The dimensions of Porticus' WCD framework (safe environments; health; social and emotional learning; spirituality; values; life skills; academic knowledge; student engagement; adult support; community; and academically challenging learning) have overarching relevance to learners in displacement (ACER, 2020). And yet the relationship between these domains and quality learning will differ across humanitarian contexts globally.

As noted above, offering a single definition of quality learning for EiD is a perhaps futile exercise. Thus, the challenges of measuring and showing non-academic outcomes that result from such programming (and indicate positive impact) are complex. As noted in the previous section, quality learning should be relevant to learners' potential futures, which means that meaning and value may be dynamic and change across time and place. What are the ways in which we seek to understand this meaning in context and for specific populations (and individuals)? And do we need to "measure" in order to facilitate this understanding? What sort of learning cannot be captured or measured, and what do we risk if we do not seek ways to understand such phenomena?

"The whole child development and quality angle that is currently emphasised is an approach to broaden the nature of what is considered as education...it is about shifting the emphasis away from the solely academic dimension; a shift away from what has been a reductive period of education generally to a narrow set of academic subjects and, essentially, whatever we can measure."

Network/Alliance, Global

According to discussions in the interviews, this strong focus on measurement and outcomes may, in fact, lead us towards reductive approaches and diminished expectations. Indeed, in the Porticus WCD study reference above, it was noted that, in many contexts, investment in approaches such as WCD were driven by the evidence of impact, which was in turn tied to the ease and availability of measurement tools (ACER, 2020). While one interpretation of this may be a drive towards more non-academic measures, it should simultaneously (and perhaps more importantly) prompt critical reflection on the role (and power) of measurement on decision-making processes for education programming. There are, indeed, real implications for reducing quality learning to only that which can be accurately and effectively measured.

Overall, key global level discussions on quality learning at present are strongly focused on learning outcomes and the measures needed (both academic and beyond) to demonstrate those outcomes. This is evident in the significant and valuable work of the INEE Quality and Equitable Learning Outcomes (QELO) workstream in the past few years (for example, in comprehensive work to map current EiD assessments tools for both academic and PSS/SEL outcomes, respectively, as well as the subsequent policy paper that abstracts findings from each) (INEE, 2020b; Johnston and Costa, 2021; Jones et al, 2020). Our intention here is not to diminish the value of this work, but instead to facilitate reflection and conversation of the potential for expanding our view of what is relevant, significant, and valuable to understand quality learning in displacement.

PSS/SEL

In moving "beyond academic outcomes," significant effort in recent years has been towards a focus on PSS/SEL outcomes; and the momentum of PSS/SEL in the EiD ecosystem at present cannot be denied. In the last decade significant research efforts have documented the positive impacts of, more broadly, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) interventions for mental health and wellbeing outcomes in children in humanitarian (and specifically displacement) contexts (Ager et al, 2011; Eiling et al, 2014; Fazel et al, 2014; Jordans et al, 2016 Kamali et al, 2020). And in high income, Western contexts, there is a strong evidence base – built over the last 25 years – demonstrating the positive impact of SEL programming on children's wellbeing and academic outcomes (Durlak et al, 2011). Building on this evidence base, there is a strong and recent wave of interest in the potential of school-based PSS/SEL programming to improve both the MHPSS and learning outcomes of children in displacement, along with acknowledgement of the lack of evidence supporting such interventions in EiD settings at present (Gallagher, 2018).

As interventions and tools to deliver programming have emerged, there has come an increasing desire to understand "what works" in order to best serve learners in displacement that is buffered by the lack of contextually relevant data. This has set forth significant evidence- and measurement-generating efforts, many of which are centred on the adaptation of Western frameworks, measurements and tools (this point will be further elaborated on later) (Aber et al, 2017, 2021; Jones et al, 2020).

Indeed, in the second round of applications to Dubai Cares' E-cubed research funding, the majority of proposals focused on SEL (Alalami, 2019). While there seems to be growing consensus on the importance and value of SEL programming as part of a quality education amongst EiD stakeholders at the global level, there may still be gaps when it comes to issues of ownership and action on this at the national and local levels. In part this might be a product of the fact that many of the concepts, constructs and labels around SEL are driven from the Global North and are, at present, without sufficient contextualisation. Likewise, external approaches often assume that concepts and ideas of PSS/SEL are not already embedded in the educative processes of a given location. In other words, if an approach is not "named" PSS/SEL (or does not resemble PSS/SEL as understood in the Global North) is there potential for such approaches to be overlooked or undervalued? And, perhaps most relevant to our current priorities, if its outcomes are less measurable?

Like quality learning broadly, there is no standard nor universal understanding of PSS/SEL programming for EiD contexts, nor a shared vision of how or where it "fits" within definitions of quality learning. Rather, there is agreement that social emotional competencies are highly subjective and vary in meaning, approach, and importance across contexts. Additionally, defining SEL (or the components of SEL programming or its outcomes) at a global level is an ill-advised and likely impossible undertaking; instead, it is important to consider meaning, application, and value in context, and to not assign meaning from the global to the local. Importantly, this includes acknowledgement that contextualisation of global approaches or tools (including the identification of outcomes themselves) is not the same thing as approaches/tools originating from, or being developed in, that context.

"There is a lot of essential work happening at the global level in regard to SEL. But we should also be emphasising that, in many of the contexts we work, this is already in place. These types of support occur; teachers already have skills and are often already doing it. It's important that we don't take a concept that is present and working, and just put new labels and titles on it. Here's our approach, a package that we bring in from the outside. And here's the test to measure it... There needs to be room, too, for this to be ground up."

Network/ Alliance, Global

Current EiD work in this area acknowledges this point. The INEE / Harvard EASEL Lab partnership emerged because of a lack of common terms, measures, and frameworks for SEL make understanding "what works", as well as generating evidence more broadly, notably challenging. However, their current work to develop frameworks (and tools for developing frameworks in context) does not seek to offer a single solution, but instead to better equip practitioners, researchers, and donors – as well as in partnership with national education systems and actors – to identify and understand commonality and difference across contexts in order to improve programming. Thus, while research, approaches, and tools may be in a nascent phase of development, significant and important work has happened to date that forms both the foundation to build upon, as well as the acknowledgement that critical questions should be considered as further development occurs. It is noteworthy that the actors involved in such programmes are actively engaging in such critical discussions.

The relationship between knowledge and tools flowing upward and downward in the ecosystem is notably complex, and global level strategy and policy to support refugee learners overwhelmingly emphasise the need for evidence-based measures (e.g., the Global Compact, UNHCR 2030 Education Strategy). Thus, the efforts to "package" approaches and tools for SEL to be contextualised and adapted for quick use elsewhere is not entirely illogical. Still, these processes that focus largely on contextual (and linguistic) translation of approaches and tools have significant potential to miss details and nuance that are most contextually meaningful and could lead to key programmatic considerations.

SEL requires locally-led, locally conceived terms and priorities for interventions as well as research. This is due to it having a more wide-ranging focus on non-cognitive competencies, relationships and interpersonal skills, as well as other non-academic learning (INEE, 2016, 2018; Osher et al, 2016). These are therefore laden in contextual meaning that reflect social norms and values, as well as individual competencies such as, for example, resilience, self-esteem, self-identity, and character (Osher et al, 2016). The meaning and understanding of these terms are highly dependent on, and variable across, social, cultural, and political realities. Both interviews and literature emphasise how deeply subjective the field of SEL is, both in Western and humanitarian contexts ("considerable conceptual messiness" according to Bull & Allen, 2018, p.396) while also being one of real and emerging priority around the world (Ecclestone, 2017; Humphrey, 2013; Williamson, 2019). This is relevant to both the content of SEL interventions, as well as the measurement tools used to assess or learn about their impact.

An ecosystem perspective underlines the value of such localised, tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge, based on local interpretation, understanding, perspective, and experience should feedback into decisions and understanding of terms across all levels of the system (Fullan, 1999). In doing so, it is essential for global level stakeholders and actors to prioritise perspectives from the field and on the ground. National and systems level policy, narratives, and change should reflect the realities from below, not just above. In a complex ecosystem, feedback is critical for survival of the system, but it also often changes the nature and behaviours of the system itself (Fullan, 1999; Ramalingam, 2013).

Interviews emphasised the subjective nature of PSS/SEL, and how the import of global terms, concepts, or domains reflect global level discourse and normative frameworks. How do we consider the ways in which respective value systems – largely originated in the Global North – are reflected in this content? While we may officially acknowledge the need for contextualisation, how often does this include reflection on our own behaviours, norms and values; and, in particular, how these reflect our own relationships to equity? As EiD actors adapt global "blueprints" to context, how often and how critically are these actors examining what else may be embedded in such exports?

> "In the West – in the countries of the largest bilateral donors to EiD – we do not do a great job ourselves of talking about issues of class, race, gender, or disability within our own education systems, or societies for that matter. So, what are we exporting in terms of SEL – what it means, how we measure it, and specifically how we have tough social and political discussions... related to equity?"
>
> Donor, Global

Notably, many interviews reflected on the opportunity to makes changes based on the particular political and social moment spurred by events and circumstances of 2020. For education systems, this includes the notion of not simply returning to pre-COVID norms and instead "building back better". For evidence-generation and social influence, this may additionally include greater focus on intersectionality: "At this current moment – this past summer's social and political changes and momentum – it feels like there is some appetite to integrate questions of equity into our knowledge and understanding of evidence-based decision making. It is a moment with real focus on equity. To consider intersectionality. Let's think harder about how we capture, research, and seek to understand these things." (Donor, Global)

[4] UNESCO puts forth three principles of quality education: (a) the need for relevance, (b) for equity of access and outcomes, and (c) for proper observance of individual rights. UNESCO's framework on the variables of education quality additionally has five dimensions (learning characteristics; context; enabling inputs; teaching and learning; and outcomes). See UNESCO (2004) for elaboration on each.

[5] Notably, the definitions here **do not** reflect definitions, priorities, or perspectives on quality education at community level, nor for individual displaced learners. In order to truly represent perspectives across the ecosystem, many additional voices are still needed. This lack of local-level perspective is a clear limitation to this report, though it is also notable that such perspective would additionally differ across local contexts. In building on the learning in this report, it is a suggested next step to incorporate more perspective of actors at more localised levels.

[6] According to INEE, SEL "refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, and related 'non-academic' skills, attitudes, behaviours, and values that help direct their thoughts, feelings, and actions in ways that enable them to succeed in school, work, and life" (INEE, 2020b, p.24). PSS is "a holistic approach to protecting and fostering psychological well-being and resilience in individuals, families, and communities that takes into consideration the dynamic relationship between psychological and social dimensions of a person" (INEE, 2020b, p.25). Importantly, "PSS is often conflated with SEL; however, SEL sits under the umbrella of PSS and is considered an important component of a broad PSS approach to EiE" (INEE, 2020b, p.25).

4

Evidence and its role in the ecosystem and change processes

Interviewees offered rich, in-depth reflection on a multitude of topics related to evidence, which were interesting to situate within the growing narrative within the EiD community for more and better evidence. Overall, **there was general agreement that there is still great need for more evidence in the field of EiD at present, and that in particular there are content areas (e.g., PSS/SEL) and geographic contexts where we have extremely limited data and understanding**. Interviewees agreed that all actors in the ecosystem value evidence and data; and that evidence is a powerful tool to influence decision making at various levels of the ecosystem.

The discussions of evidence that took place in these interviews were rich with reflection, critical questions, and insight into the complexity of the topic. Evidence is valued for (and used via) a multitude of reasons and purposes, and these should be thoughtfully unpacked and examined. This includes expanding our ideas of the type of evidence that we value, as well as prioritising evidence generation across all levels of the ecosystem. Simultaneously, it is important to note that there is a strong potential role for funders and other global level actors to play in supporting a re-evaluation and expansion of such discourse and subsequent action.

The EiD field is at an important moment wherein decisions about the future of our evidence base may be critically reflected upon. The discussion points raised in interviews emphasise how much potential there is across the EiD ecosystem for collaborative, reflective efforts aimed at growth and change.

Evidence for who, by who, how and for what purpose?

Across interviews, there was definitive agreement that evidence makes a difference to what donors, implementers, and education systems do, and evidence is an important factor influencing the decisions of influential actors. Utilisation of evidence requires both access to useful, relevant, and accessible information, as well as increased capacity to use such evidence.

Evidence plays a critical role in the EiD ecosystem. It helps to:

- Understand context, dynamics, and relationships;
- Reveal specific needs, which can inform decisions and priorities – ideally at multiple scales of decision making;
- Support programme design to be more effective and relevant;
- Show impact and causality so we know "what works";
- Explain and narrate phenomenon and relationships in its respective time and place;
- Identify patterns, similarities, and differences across and within locations; and
- Refine and ask new and better questions.

The generation of new evidence, the building of the evidence base, and the better usage and sharing of evidence are central conversations in the EiD field. In recent years, notable progress has been made to this end. This is demonstrated by the 2017 establishment of the Dubai Cares E-cubed funding, as well as the GCR Fund commitments to education in protracted crisis in 2018. Important research-practice partnerships have been established since 2016, such as between IRC and Global TIES NYU; INEE and the Harvard EASEL Lab; and NRC (in particular the Better Learning Programme) and the University of Tromso. Other global level implementers, such as Save the Children and FHI 360 have committed significant resources and capacity development towards rigorous research and evidence generation. In 2019 NORRAG published a Special Issue dedicated to the state of evidence in EiD which comprised of 33 individual articles reflecting on research and practice globally.

Evidence, and actors interactions with it across the EiD ecosystem, is deeply complex. Each of the following is deeply contingent on prevailing paradigms of the field within which global actors are responding, acting, and funding:

- The ways in which evidence is collected and used.
- The type and source of data; the objectives of data use.
- The type and methods of analysis.
- The nature and structure of conclusions and recommendations made as a result.
- The ways in which such evidence is communicated and distributed.

Evidence – generated as data collected and analysed – is comprised of a checklist of strategic decision making informed by theoretical and conceptual frameworks and applied by individuals, organisations, and institutions. Processes of measurement, in particular – what works, how, and for whom – are subjective in nature, even as individuals, researchers, and institutions strive towards an idealised scientific method touting objectivity. B**ased on this research, it is clear that in the EiD ecosystem such conceptual frameworks and processes of research are still largely driven by global-level, mainly Western, actors and normative frameworks, not by local actors in context.**

> "Evidence in its best form and for its best purpose...is being able to lift evidence from other contexts and think 'this is not exactly the same as what I was trying to do or think about, but it has important insights that I can build off of and has prompted me to think of a whole new set of questions'. This is how knowledge advances broadly."
>
> Donor, Global

Interestingly, while the strategic interests and underlying motivations of donors (for example, the foreign policy interests of bilateral aid agencies) may be increasingly acknowledged, that same type of critique of research and critical questioning of evidence and measurement practices is not nearly so pervasive in the field at large. It is important to note that many researchers and practitioners themselves do reflect on these points (often, for example in methodological articles that are more reflective or descriptive in nature[7]; or in group/panel discussions and Q&A[8]),

but this type of insight is often not attached to papers, tools, or presentations on findings and results. Reflections on process, ethics, and critique are often siloed away from the more "practically-oriented" shared reports. Whose responsibility is it to assure such conversations take place? And could this be an opportunity for all actors in the EiD ecosystem to demand the time and place for (and, thus, emphasise the value in) greater and in-depth reflection?

Additionally, **research in the EiD ecosystem at present is largely focused on questions of effectiveness and impact and utilises a narrow set of positivist research methodologies**. This is the result of those producing and demanding the evidence believing that it is this type of research that is the most useful or influential for policymakers and decision-makers. Such focus is consistent with broader global education approaches such as the specified indicators of quality education in the SDGs. Indeed, if the field of EiD seeks to meet the education SDGs for learners in displacement (to be accomplished via use of those specific indicators), there is a tremendous amount of work to do and an understandable urge to tend to emergency problems immediately – rather than to continuously pause and reflect on possible unintended consequences (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008). Still, when considering complex interactions and processes of evidence production within an ecosystem, this is likely only part of the puzzle. What are we missing with such an approach and what are the implications of this focus for our growing evidence base? What would it mean to apply a more regenerative perspective that would consider the whole EiD ecosystem in our approach to developing a collectively beneficial evidence base? Overall, the drive towards increased evidence, use of data, and evidence-based decision making needs to be better unpacked, examined, understood, and communicated. Importantly, discussions about evidence and data require sharp consideration centred around the questions: for who, by who, how, and for what purpose?

"Implementation data alone is not going to unlock some key to a problem when we are missing the bigger picture... We are not producing the data that it takes to answer systems level questions and I don't think we're going to answer them by only studying and measuring individual projects."

Donor, Global

Additionally, actors across the EiD ecosystem – but particularly at the global level – should expand ideas of "what counts" as evidence, as well as critically examine the ways in which that evidence reflects hierarchies of knowledge across all levels of the ecosystem. Whose knowledge is prioritised and whose is subjugated – in global level strategy and text? In national systems' priorities, discourse, and policy? In research that is driven by global-level agendas and priorities, and conducted largely by those from the Global North? Importantly, who drives these decisions and discussions – and how can global-level actors (in particular, in this case, those in the AEoL programme) create spaces that are truly collaborative and value the knowledge of those most impacted by EiD decision making at all levels?

"One of the most important pieces to working in context and affecting change is to understand who holds power, over what, over whom, and how that power is being organised and used."

UN Agency, Global

Do we have enough evidence?

Across all interviews, there was general agreement that there is still great need for more evidence in the field of EiD, and that in particular there are content areas (e.g., PSS/SEL) and geographic contexts where we have extremely limited data and understanding. This echoes the prominent global discourse of the EiD ecosystem, which notes the state of evidence for the field is characterised, still, by "opportunities, but mostly gaps" (Mendenhall, 2019).

This makes sense. Crafting rigorous research in challenging contexts, as well as appropriate and usable measurement tools (when appropriate) is time-intensive, multidimensional, and incredibly context-specific. The recent QELO policy paper on learning assessments explicitly notes the tremendous challenge (and cost) of developing, testing, and validating tools. It requires long-term investment and buy-in at both the global level and in context (i.e., national systems, local actors) to increase capacity for developing, using, and evaluating location-specific research approaches to generate meaningful data.

"I think one of the things that we are trying to shout from the rooftops is that donors need to continue to invest in research because we still don't have enough of it... But importantly this needs to be a marathon, not a sprint. We can't just deliver easy yes or no answers about whether something works or doesn't work."

Researcher, Global

Not only does good research take time, but it also requires tolerance of failure and an environment that embraces trial and error – within ethical boundaries. Refining research questions, methods, and theoretical frameworks is both time-consuming and critical to better understand complex systems and how to best operate within them. In the EiD ecosystem, there are a lot of different actors, at various levels, producing and interpreting evidence (and then subsequently using it) in diverse ways. As the evidence base grows, employing a complex ecosystem lens will help us to better acknowledge and understand such difference, as well as both its implications and potential.

Alongside producing new evidence, there was agreement in the interviews that we should embrace the opportunity to make stronger use of evidence (and knowledge) that already exists, as well as streamline systems and processes to share data. **At present, the ecosystem lacks comprehensive and widely used and accessible platforms for sharing existing data on various dimensions of quality learning**. Rather, expectations for sharing and learning of successes and failures of specific programmatic or policy efforts in EiD contexts are not explicit, and evidence/knowledge that is generated remains proprietary to a specific organisation or institution. Relatedly, there is a lot of data generated and used for specific purposes that may be also useful and shareable for other purposes and audiences within the larger ecosystem, but at present such sharing is not often supported. Such sharing and reuse of data would reduce redundant data collection, as well as maximise the value/use of information gathered in challenging contexts to benefit the transformation of the whole ecosystem across levels.

"In education, we don't have a system in place to really share evidence and learning; we are fairly proprietary about evidence generation... And then we don't have a great way to synthesise things, especially [projects and programmes] that didn't turn out the way we hoped."

Donor, Global

Alongside the point above, data, evidence and knowledge are currently being used and generated in very limited ways. For example, organisations most often use their own data (e.g., impact evaluations) in very specific ways (e.g., accountability) for a particular audience (e.g., donor) which will not be made publicly available. Additionally, there are often limited conceptualisations of "what counts" as evidence, with less emphasis and value towards experiential knowledge of staff, as well as qualitative and descriptive data. As we consider evidence use across the ecosystem, it is critical to acknowledge that evidence and data will have differing value and use by both level and type of audience; and that at different levels there will be differing priorities, capacities to use, and social/political/cultural lenses to account for in terms of relevance. In short, evidence does not have a single audience and, importantly, this is true both **across** and **within** levels of the ecosystem.

Who produces data, for who, and why does it matter?

Such a shift in thinking asks us to consider the value of data collected by who, as well as the hierarchies of method and data type in terms of considering evidence. Importantly, it also asks us to carefully consider who is left out of participating in data collecting and evidence generating activities. In acute humanitarian contexts, that participation may be severely limited, especially by those most impacted by decisions made based upon data. Additionally, emergencies have the potential to further exacerbate already unequal access to participation (Anselme et al, 2019; Burde et al, 2015, 2019). This has implications across the humanitarian system (especially regarding the relationship between assessed needs and funding allocated based on that information), but also for more specific aspects and characteristics of education programming (for example, the way SEL is integrated into a classroom in context).

In these ways, inclusion of data generated at the most local levels of the ecosystem – as well as the strength of the connection and "flow upwards" – is critical. Interviews that represented implementing organisations emphasised that one barrier to such upward flow is the organisation's capacity to support such research, especially at the most localised levels.

Actors who described lesser capacity often offered comparison to the larger INGOs which have invested significantly in research department growth in the past decade. This is perhaps best exemplified by IRC's commitment to evidence use. In 2016, IRC declared a goal for all programmes "to be either evidence-based or evidence-generating by 2020" (IRC, 2016). Such commitment from IRC, alongside other large INGOs, has led to considerable development of tools, measurements, and evidence of impact via rigorous research that has made significant contributions to the field at large. These efforts have also emphasised the value of research-practice partnerships, wherein universities (or other research institutions) and implementing organisations establish strong working relationships to assure research is use-inspired and relevant (Aber et al, 2021).

"Our capacity to do research is low. We just don't have that skillset at an organisational level, and we cannot compare to the bigger INGOs in that regard. I would love to be able to learn more about our programming through research. I would love for us to be able to better use some of the tools and measurements out there. But we just don't have that capacity in-house."

Implementer, Global

In the ecosystem, the capacity to use data and evidence in a meaningful way (as defined in context) is as important as the access to that evidence. At present, such capacity to use evidence differs dramatically across organisations, contexts, and levels of the ecosystem. When programme approaches, tools, and measurements require contextualisation and sensitisation to context, actors often do not consider how such efforts are supported. Both actions – contextualising programme approaches and design, and using measurements/tools to assess a programme – require distinct technical expertise that have substantive costs and time commitments. **For many smaller implementers, such technical capacity simply does not exist within the organ-**

isation. Thus, at present such organisations are often unable to utilise or benefit from the growing evidence base and tools available to the field.

Large international implementers rely on an internal structure that connects from the global all the way to field offices on the ground. In discussions of evidence, there was scepticism about not just the strength of "flow upwards" of information, but also of how successfully support to generate and use information effectively "flows down" to the local level. "We do and invest a lot in research at the global level, and this is reflected at some regional and field locations. But in others, especially in acute contexts, this is just not true. Our field teams in acute emergencies may not have the capacity – nor the time to focus on building that capacity – at present" (Implementer, Regional). And while respect for the priorities and needs of staff in context is essential, a reconceptualisation of what kind of data can be used, how it may be collected, and from whom, may lead to such critical perspectives being better reflected in our evidence base. The same interviewee as above (implementer, regional level) noted that, when provided with the opportunity to be trained in and use new methods, staff in acute emergency contexts embraced and embedded participatory, qualitative data collection methods in subsequent data collection endeavours. Capacity, in this case, was not simply about new training but also acknowledgment "from above" (i.e., donors, global level headquarters staff) that such local level, descriptive data was both valued and useful.

This has real implications for systems level change – if driven even partially by evidence – and who affects it. It offers a clear opportunity for donors to affect such change via, for example, prioritising funding for such capacity development and support to field-level evidence generation and use.

Importantly, this spectrum of research and evidence-generating capacity **is ultimately reflected in the evidence base itself**. Simply put, organisations with higher capacity to do research are then overrepresented in the evidence base, and additionally likely to be recipients of further research funding. Funders and other global level actors explicitly noted the power and influence wielded by actors with "rigorous evidence" in their corner. Across both interviews and literature, it was emphasised that, in such cases, research partners are largely Western universities or institutions. Importantly, we emphasise this as – above all else – a point for reflection not criticism, as these organisations' commitment to evidence use and generation, as outlined above, has laid a critical foundation for our understanding of EiD.

> "When you look at investments, for better or for worse many donors are very much influenced by their implementing partners. And there is certainly a spectrum of influence. [High power actors] can have impact on the decisions of donors simply because they are able to speak to evidence-based decision making."
>
> Donor, Global

As was noted earlier, however, the shifts in our "ways of working" that would truly move the needle towards locally-driven evidence, data, and priorities are clearly difficult and complex to enact. Dubai Cares' E-cubed funding to support evidence generation, for example, explicitly prioritises inclusion of local actors and partnerships with local research institutions. Still, in a 2019 review of proposals, it was noted that examination of context and potential solution (the "what" and the "how") still did not originate with local actors or local-derived solutions. In the same review, a critical conclusion is drawn: "In order to support the generation of a body of evidence that aims to understand rather than impose, we need to take action in order to ensure that we support research approaches that explicitly empower and build the capacity of local actors to set the learning agenda" (Alalami, 2019, p.77).

Such an important "call to action" is critical for consideration by all global level actors in the EiD ecosystem:

- To funders, in their consideration of funding future research (for example, in expanding notions of the "type" of research, enlarging the focus beyond "what works" and towards methods that seek to capture in-depth, descriptive knowledge of those on the ground).
- To international implementers, whose very structures may enable or constrain flow of knowledge, information, and capacity in multiple direction (Is that flow truly multi-directional?).
- To researchers, in their emphasis on adapting tools and measures from global (largely Global North) contexts to the local; when "partnering" with local research institutions, how can we assure that those local researchers drive both the learning agenda and methods?

The nature of the data and how it is used

New areas of focus within EiD are in many ways less suited to traditional human-capital-oriented evidence frameworks. As explored in the previous section, PSS/SEL interventions and outcomes are an increasing area of interest that are notably complex to understand in context and define or measure. While it may be true that such measurements have been developed and used in other contexts to show impact (Jones et al, 2020; World Bank, 2013), to date there is still very little evidence pointing to the efficacy of, for example, SEL programming in emergency contexts.

Crafting research and understanding of what works and how to measure it are notably complex, subjective, and deeply context dependent. Still, we see massive efforts aimed at instrumentalising measures and outcomes that are often based on the contextualising/ adaptation of Western-produced tools (Alalami, 2019; Bacchi, 2000, 2009; Rudolph, 2017; Williamson, 2019). According to interviews, this "blueprint" of contextualising global-level tools is certainly the norm in the EiD ecosystem. Thus, the influence of global level donors, implementers, and research institutions is notably present for programmes in context. Despite this being the norm, interviewees expressed notable concern that such tools and measures are limited in their ability to capture the nuance and intricacy of each context in full. Thus, our understanding of quality learning beyond academics is limited. While it is a critical point of this paper to note that such evidence should speak beyond just outcomes, it is also true that our understanding of impact is, too, reduced without a move towards more qualitative, descriptive data.

The EiD literature is, in fact, full of these types of "call to action". In the opening remarks to the 2017 INEE Roundtable on PSS/SEL, Paolo Orefice specifically called for participatory action research as a "consolidated method for pulling together emotional and rational knowledge" to better understand both the meaning of and, subsequently, efforts to support PSS/SEL programming for learners in displacement (INEE, 2017, p.7). Numerous programme reports from displacement contexts globally describe the need for qualitative approaches towards evaluation and research. For example, a 2018 Save the Children report on PSS/SEL programming in the Syria response notes that PSS/SEL research and evaluations "are mainly quant-focused, reflecting donor preferences. However, the overwhelming opinion of child protection and education informants was that qualitative assessments would be better suited to the PSS context, in order to fully explore local concepts of child wellbeing" (Soye and Tauson, 2018).

> "When we are trying to answer challenging questions – especially about really subjective and context-dependent phenomenon (for example related to wellbeing or resilience) – many of our standard, quantitative methods just won't work... or at least they just cannot capture the situation in full. So much standardised research runs the risk of diluting or essentialising such that the data loses so much of itself. We should be broadening our ideas of how we understand and learn, make better use of descriptive and qualitative methods, so we can have a better chance at truly understanding contexts and then contributing to change."
>
> Global, Donor

Beyond the EiD space, there is significant cross-disciplinary literature pointing to the ways in which indigenous, community-based, and localised knowledge and approaches to "quality education beyond academics" are critical to human rights pedagogies and practices in education globally (see, for example: Gruber and Scherling, 2020; Ndagijimana and Taffere, 2020; Zembylas, 2020). Much of this literature elaborates on aspects of holistic learning – embedded in localised approaches – that align with current trends, concepts, and ideas of the SEL movement that originates in the Global North (Chiu and Sumida Haumen, 2020; Dobia, 2020). Importantly, we should

not take such similarity to mean these approaches can be "fit into" our globally-driven frameworks and narratives. Writing for UNESCO, Chiu and Sumida Haumen (2020) note that "for SEL to go beyond a Western academic exercise, we must be open to multiple approaches to inquiry while being aware of the risk of co-opting other knowledges".

Overall, while the value of producing and using evidence for change seems to be growing across all levels of the EiD ecosystem, interviews emphasised that discussion and decision making about the nature of this evidence are still very globally driven. Additionally, the demand for more evidence and information is largely influenced by donors and the international community (or by accountability to them) rather than national and local actors themselves (Alamami, 2019; Soye and Tauson, 2018).

"We talk so much about Global South perspective, about participatory approaches and collaboration and partnerships at the local level. But the truth is this takes a tremendous amount of effort and is really time and labour intensive. Are we still as committed when things are hard? For all the good intentions and talk, we still have so far to go."

Implementer, Global

But what is clear from interviews is that, simultaneously, there is hunger from those in the ecosystem to expand the notion of "what counts" as evidence, and to be critical of how these norms are formed. Global organisations and institutions often require evidence for accountability, rather than for learning. Could the details of this accountability (e.g., evidence of impact, cost analysis, etc.) be adapted to better reflect local needs and perspectives in context? Donors play a critical role in this conversation and, thus, the implications for change in the ecosystem.

Overall, the diversity of EiD contexts – as well as the relative youth of our research field – offer the unique opportunity to broaden our scope of "what counts" as evidence, as well as who determines the focus, scope, and methods via which we gain greater understanding of contexts and programming. There is a real opportunity to avoid the traps of evidence generation and utilisation which have pervaded international development practices, to ensure evidence (in its diverse forms) is for learning and growth, rather than results-based accountability.

[7] For an excellent example of such reflection and description of research processes, see Aber et al, 2021 for description and examination of the journey to produce evidence on PSS/SEL in EiD contexts.

[8] See INEE's 2020 webinar introducing research on PSS/SEL frameworks with the Harvard EASEL Lab for discussion of process, challenges, and epistemological reflections underpinning research direction.

5

Connection, flow, and influence in the ecosystem: How does/can change happen?

This section builds on previous sections and integrates important discussions around quality learning and evidence with reflections on the structures and processes that comprise the EiD ecosystem. We describe interviewee perspectives on how decision-makers view and use evidence, as well as how knowledge and support flow across various levels of the ecosystem. We note that while evidence may be useful and valued for moving change agendas forward, it is certainly not sufficient on its own.

Throughout this section, we note that many of the interviewees were not as "comfortable" with this topic as with others – and found it difficult to articulate the more complex and situated processes of social influence and change. This points to the potential need to better examine how actors across the ecosystem acknowledge their own "influence" amongst many others who might share similar ambitions. Additionally, the reflections signal three additional needs. Firstly, a need for more in-depth understanding of processes of change that are both generated from above and from below. Secondly, a better understanding of how the connections and conduits amongst actors in the system function. And thirdly, reflections of our own positionality and power when advocating for transformative change in the EiD ecosystem.

Influence, flow, and conduits connecting global and local levels of the ecosystem

In the EiD ecosystem at present, national and field-level actors are strongly influenced by global and regional donors and implementers. This is despite considerable efforts and emphasis on the importance of engaging local, national, and field perspectives into the development and design of actions and solutions. Overall, global/local action and collaboration is valued, and yet the ecosystem is still characterised by the prominent influence of global stakeholders.

An important characteristic of the EiD ecosystem – noted in many interviews – is the structure of international organisations that have offices and staff distributed across many levels of the system. This is, in particular, true for donors, implementers, and UN agencies (to use our broad categorisations). For networks/alliances and research institutions, outreach to and inclusion across levels is also prioritised, though the processes of this outreach functions in different ways than the former categories.

The connection points or conduits that link various levels of the ecosystem are of varying strength and effectiveness for moving information. Many describe **deep ruts between global level and field level understanding, perspective, and beliefs about the state of, and processes within, this ecosystem**: "There are different priorities, even though I can see the value of the other priorities, too. But I think there is a disconnect sometimes between understanding the reason why something should happen versus understanding what it is like to make that thing happen on the ground" (Implementer, Regional). Significant effort has been made to bridge this divide and to acknowledge and include field/local/national level perspectives in programme decision making; priorities such as participatory approaches and stakeholder workshops emphasise these efforts. Still, the pathways and conduits that connect the global with the local look different across contexts and organisations; and there are many examples of this being done well, as well as done poorly.

The pathways that connect levels of the system carry programmatic and contextual knowledge; they are also the conduit through which ideas, trends, norms, paradigms, and belief systems move (from global to local and vice versa). Social influence itself is reliant on these structures and conduits, and critically what flows between them. In interviews, many questions about the "wiring" of these systems arose: How strong are the connection points? How "far" must information travel? Are these conduits truly multi-directional, or are there more consistent "flows" in one direction versus the other? Or do flows in different directions follow different pathways with different sets of rules, norms, and effect? And importantly, how do these connections translate to relevant, useful action points in the contexts where that action is most critical?

> "A question is what could the global level do to actually support those who are sitting in with governments, sitting in key roles in the humanitarian architecture? How could we strengthen the internal communication operations and pathways, so those key individuals were best supported, so that there is a greater chance of the global and regional being on the same page? But alternatively, it's important to also ask to what extent are those people in the global echo chamber having their conversation influenced by the reality that people are facing when they come to implementation on the frontline of this? This is an important role for NGOs who have field teams and people on the ground; it is important in this space. The conduit can't just run in one direction."
>
> Network/Alliance, Global

An interviewee noted that "most individuals in an organisation will say the same broad set of things; they are going to be on script related to most topics. And this may be true at both the most global and most local levels". It is unclear, however, how this translates to decisions and actions across the different levels of the ecosystem. The negotiations made at the global level may not look the same as those in national or local contexts. An entirely different set of variables may be present; with the disposition of the system itself to move or change being entirely dependent on these. The assumption is, perhaps, that local and national level staff adapt message, norms, and paradigms to context in real time. The same interviewee noted: "I think that's where I worry that the echo chamber isn't as well connected as it should be. What sort of compromises or negotiations have

to happen on the ground that are not acknowledged in the discussion in the echo chamber?" (Network/ Alliance, Global).

Global stakeholders exist and interact in a "global echo chamber", which offers both opportunity for good and risks for how change occurs in the ecosystem as a whole. There is positive potential in terms of originating ideas that reinforce and advocate for a shared, collective vision of change, as well as evidence of how this can work. For example, one interviewee noted that it has been the result of consistent, unabating pressure that has moved the needle on funding to EiE in recent years. Simultaneously, the echo chamber is often not well- nor effectively connected to other levels of the ecosystem, in which case ideas may not permeate downwards. Additionally, at present there is less effective movement of ideas and perspectives "upward" from the local to the global.

> "I think there is a risk of global echo chambers on some of the key issues [in EiD]. There is a group of major players in the education space, or hyperconnectivity at the global level, wherein everyone knows each other; they are in the same meetings and webinars; at the same table. To some extent they create their own reality, though this is not in any kind of evil or deceitful way. But it is an echo chamber. And in this global echo chamber, for some years now there has been greater emphasis on certain ideas such as quality learning as well as related concepts and ideas. There are cross-cutting issues such as gender, or timely social political discussions like Black Lives Matter. I think one of the challenges is for us to consider how much actually gets out of the echo chamber. What begins to affect or contribute to dialogue or action at the regional or national level? I think a challenge for us is to make sure that we're not just feeding the echo chamber."
>
> Network/Alliance, Global

At present, there are problems in the functioning of parts of this system – such as a persistent mismatch in perspective and priorities; fragile relationships; inefficient flows of information especially in the "upward" direction – and these have impact beyond their immediate implications. The feasibility of systems level transformation that global actors are working towards in the EiD ecosystem is dependent on the strength and functioning of the conduits between this echo chamber and the front line (i.e., local levels) where any meaningful change would actually be realised.

Decision-makers, relationships, and influence

Across the interviews, relationships with national actors were described more often in terms of "supporting" or "partnering with" versus "influencing". The term "influencing" – frequently used in the literature from advocacy and policy fields – was used with hesitation and greater care than other terms covered in this research. Perhaps this indicates a vaguer understanding of its dynamics in the EiD ecosystem, or potentially that its interconnections with power, governance, and the politics of national systems change were less comfortable topics in terms of individuals' considering the perspective of themselves, their grants, and their organisations.

However, the importance of identifying key influencing actors and investing in relationship-building efforts was emphasised in interviews. The power of the individual to champion change was noted and is also underlined in advocacy and policy-change literature. Relationship and network building – what Mayne et al (2018) call "webs of influence" – require investment of time as well as close attention to the contextual factors that influence decision making at systems level (Braithwait and Drahos, 2000; Mayne et al, 2018). Additionally, leaders share power across sectors and levels of a national government ecosystem; relationships and network building that is cross-sectoral and inclusive of a range of problems (and potential solutions) strengthens the power of relationships to both affect change and withstand disruptions to the system (Gaventa, 2006).

"Institutional support and partnership are central to what we do, and this involves really listening to governments. To their plans and needs, and then to support this, to grow this towards the goals we share together. The partnership is about understanding what capacities are in place, and those that are missing. And then thinking about how can we offer support."

UN Agency, Global

The interviews described how relationship building is contingent both on specific relationships, but also on the "ways" in which such relationships are institutionalised. For example, partnership – considered as support to and capacity building for national system actors – is a central tenet of the approaches of the World Bank, GPE, and UNESCO. Bilateral donors such as USAID rely on the close working relationships between national governments and their regional/national hubs or missions. Universities and international research institutions partner with researchers and universities on the ground in order to provide contextual insight, framing, and access to research sites. **At present, such global-local relationships and partnerships are largely structured via these global norms or blueprints.**

On the ground, investment in relationships is an incredibly human endeavour that takes considerable time. Interviewees reflected here on the positive impact of relationship building and its role in supporting incremental change that reflects partnership and collaboration. Still, many noted the fragility of such relationships, and wondered about the mechanisms of relationship building that become institutionally embedded. If a discrete shock like staff change dissolves the accomplishments of years' efforts, the resilience of the relationship is unclear. In terms of work towards transformative change, are there ways in which such relationship building can be done more collaboratively and with more comprehensive vision of what sort of change is valued in context?

"So much is contingent on relationship building over the course of a project. You invest so much in these individual, interpersonal relationships; and the ideal is that you are investing in an organisational, systems level relationship building process. This relationship should, in an ideal world, be resilient to something like staff changes – that the relationship-building accomplished more than just this one-to-one. But is this actually true? Often, if one individual leaves the Ministry, then years of work and the efficacy of that partnership – all the work can just dissolve."

Research, Global

Global influence and how change happens

In the interviews, there was much discussion of how "decision-makers" view and use evidence across various levels of the ecosystem. There was general acknowledgment that impact and cost are still the most influential or valued data points for both funders and policymakers, underlining a key aspect of the AEoL programme (namely, that national systems are highly dependent on aid and, thus, accountable to donors). Notably, however, individuals representing these donors were themselves willing and able to critically examine and question this valuation, while still acknowledging its overarching power to guide action. Disrupting such entrenched norms requires profound (and different) paradigm shifts at both global and national levels, with effects across all levels and amongst all actors in the ecosystem. And since national systems (in countries which host displaced learners) are largely dependent on foreign aid to move towards greater inclusion of refugees, such disruption to the paradigms that come with this funding may be unlikely from those national level actors.

"Both donors and Ministries are looking for impact for money; they are looking to invest finite resources, and so straightforward data that demonstrates impact, lower cost, and the ability to scale is still prioritised. Yes, there will be exceptions but it's important to understand that this fact is fundamental in the international development system. And these two levels reinforce each other. If a bilateral donor wants to see cost benefit analysis, a national system will be interested in this type of evidence in order to attract funding. The availability and use of this kind of data is then enticing to donors because it is straightforward and useful for accountability of their spending."

Implementer, Global

The behaviour and nature of national education systems change as a result of feedback and inputs from multiple sources and levels, especially global funding and priorities. National education systems in refugee-hosting countries adapt and change in response to external forces. Some change occurred in response to the massive influx of refugees, including displaced learners and their education needs (for example, via adoption of an absorptive tool such as second shifts to accommodate more children). But other changes, interviewees noted, occurred largely in response to the international aid dollars made available to systems that followed global standards and priorities in terms of inclusion of refugee students. While inclusion of refugees in national education systems meant that governments retained some autonomy and decision-making power, the way those systems responded was bounded by accountability to external, international donors.

As was noted in the background section of this paper, in the EiD ecosystem "we are asking nation states to provide education – and specifically education policy reform and funding – for non-citizens" (Research, Global). Such governance directives are globally driven and constructed via global level strategies codified in the Global Compact for Refugees and UNHCR agendas (Ferris and Martin, 2019; UNHCR, 2017). For education specifically, UNHCR 2030 Education Strategy places responsibility for refugee education on host country national actors (with support from external aid) who will assure refugee learner inclusion in national systems (UNHCR, 2019).

Such discourse itself becomes a structure of power, which in turn influences the way we consider and ultimately design interventions. Inherent in this system is influence from the global down to the local.

Unsurprisingly, many interviewees focused on relationships between actors at global levels of the EiD ecosystem. While this may reflect that individuals were most familiar with global levels, it is likely that it also reflects overarching perspectives about "where" influence originates. And these perspectives are situated within the global governance discourse of refugee response.

National actors, within this discourse, should be further considered as both influenced and influencing. Ministries and systems level actors hold distinct positions of power and influence, even as they too are influenced by global actors and dollars. Nationally, technical experts and formally educated professional staff occupy a specific, central role in policy making decisions. The power and relations of power at this level of the system impact possibilities for action and change that may still preclude the participation and knowledge of those below (Bachhi, 2009). The role of evidence in decision making at national levels is often unclear, and particular to specifics of context and timing (Cairney and Geyer, 2015; Mayne et al, 2018). **Change, in these cases, is reliant not only on more traditional hierarchies of evidence (e.g., impact or cost), but also of the value systems and priorities of "influencers". Contextual trends, paradigms, and formal/informal power relations are as important as "empirical" evidence in moving the needle on specific issues**. Indeed, our interviews offered numerous examples of policy-level decision making occurring despite not because of evidence of intervention impact.

Overall, change in an ecosystem is complex, nonlinear, and often unpredictable. Importantly, change may simultaneously be affected (and demanded) from below. In most interviews (and at all levels) individuals emphasised the importance of recognising power and potential, too, in the collective action of those outside of formal systems. How are we considering power and change for the most localised level of the ecosystem, and what kinds of knowledge are generated there?

> "The past few years have, on a global level, truly showed us the power and impact of collective action. Social and political changes that have occurred in real time. Some good, some bad, a lot of aftermath of the effects of these changes. But this does feel like a moment to recognise the power of organising and of collective action in the face of power and norms."
>
> Research, Global

An ecosystem perspective encourages us to reflect beyond the global discourse, and to simultaneously reflect on the ways in which that discourse shapes and is shaped by other levels of the ecosystem. For education specifically, this invites us to consider the tensions in the ecosystem "ways of working" at present. In order to do this, we must expand our "ways of thinking" and, specifically, embrace more regenerative thinking that offers possibility for growth and transformation, not just improvement in terms of "what works".

6 Conclusion

The early sections of the report guided us through both historical and present-day geopolitical considerations of the field of EiD and grounded our present-day challenges in a conceptual framework of complex adaptive systems and an ecosystem approach. As demonstrated from the findings of this report, the EiD ecosystem appears to have:

1. Diverse perspectives and differing, sometimes contradicting objectives.
2. Different levels of capacity and power across the system and at different levels – all of which are relevant to the AEoL programme's aims and intentions.
3. Various strengths of both formal and informal relationships and pathways which connect actors in the system.
4. Uncertainty about how change occurs; there are likely a myriad of pathways and mechanisms of change.

Overall, the ecosystem at present is complex in nature with numerous, interrelated wicked problems that must be considered in full in order to affect or influence transformative change processes. The act of conceptualising EiD as an ecosystem involves pointing out various, disparate parts of the ecosystem as a whole (i.e., different meanings, different objectives, different ideas, different ways of functioning). This process can be of great use in creating a better overall understanding of how transformative change can happen. This complexity should be acknowledged and considered when thinking about overarching programme goals and assumptions, as well as where and how the AEoL programme (or any programme or stakeholder) is situated within the system. Additionally, the value of an ecosystem approach is to reflect on how various, disparate "parts" connect to a larger whole – to something common amongst all actors and processes – in order to consider how the whole system may thrive.

Even though this report reflects much description of the many variables and processes that contribute towards change, this research found tremendous uncertainty related to "how change happens" in the EiD ecosystem at present. **However, it is abundantly clear from this research that global-originating ideas, "blueprints," discourses, methods, and framing of ideas are still regarded as uniquely powerful**.

How do we organise or motivate towards building a "coalition" aimed at an end goal of displaced learners having their right to access quality learning realised? At the moment, it does seem like our "co-

alition" is largely driven by a fairly positivistic interpretation of the ways in which we understand the world around us – including how change occurs. We emphasise that empirical evidence of "what works" will have the most and fastest impact on policy making and change. And yet, in most fields (including the extensive literature on evidence-informed decision making) there is no such single answer nor overwhelming agreement amongst experts. Instead, most decision making may be, at best, "evidence-informed", but also intrinsically linked to, and affected by, social, political, economic, and cultural factors.

Where organisations and actors in the EiD ecosystem are able to identify shared interests and a common vision for change, there is potential for the "echo chamber" to amplify this vision. Yet, this type of activity appears to be the exception rather than the norm for several reasons. **Current organisational practices, cultures and belief systems result in actors operating in silos, and in competition with, rather than working with, each other – with such work driven by a paucity of time to deliver outcomes, and an acute shortage of financial and technical resources**. This results in actors throughout the ecosystem replicating and duplicating the work of others in some areas, either because they do not know, or fail to understand, what others are doing; and in other areas of need, leave large voids where funding and expertise are currently not available or appropriately tapped into.

A key learning point from this research emphasises the value of local knowledge and how that is reflected in meaning, definition, and evidence generation and use across the ecosystem. Since this knowledge captures social and political realities, it should be viewed as equally essential towards goals of transformational change. The response to displacement crisis globally is largely driven by international funding and globally originating strategy and agenda. There is inherent opportunity, then, in seeking to transform our own (at a global level) "ways of thinking" and "ways of working."

An important first step is to recognise that both evidence and social influence are situated within a range of self-interests which may have little to do with displaced learners. In other words, it is a disservice to the field at large to insist on technical narratives which ignore or diminish the critical importance of organisational practices, cultures and belief systems.

From this research, we believe that the current moment – as well as the unique space of reflective, collaborative community work set out by the AEoL programme – offers tremendous opportunity for global EiD actors to deeply consider the following:

- The need to continue working towards better and more functional connections between the most global and most local levels of the system, while being mindful of the nature, strength, and the direction of all those connections in between, and how power functions at various levels of this complex ecosystem.
- The desire (amongst actors at all levels) to critically question the ways in which certain global – and specifically Global North – originating paradigms and normative frameworks (such as a significant focus on outcomes and measurements) could exclude and risk missing locally-driven responses, approaches, and ideas.
- The potential good and power of coalitions and networks of like-minded actors that truly value the transformative potential in the ecosystem and are committed to better understanding the implications of their work, in order to function in radically different ways.

Perhaps the most poignant finding from this research was the overwhelming desire amongst interviewees for greater collaboration and the willingness to reflect and ask critical, self-referential questions. To "become ecosystem gardeners" (Green, 2016 p.20) in order to move towards the shared goal of ensuring quality learning for the whole child in context, in settings of displacement globally.

Appendix A: Methodology

The research was carried out via multiple methods of data collection, as well as multiple instances of collaboration and iteration with Porticus throughout the research process. These methods included literature review as well as primary data collection via key informant interviews with both AEoL partners and external actors in the EiD sector. The themes and overarching ideas in the paper emerged via a largely inductive approach that was guided by our research questions, but importantly remained open to examining and unpacking new ideas and theories brought about by participants.

Literature review

An in-depth literature review was conducted to contribute to the framing of the process and report, as well as to situate the research, not only within the AEoL programme but the sector generally. During this process, it was critical to develop an understanding of key actors in the EiD system. Documents were obtained from Porticus, online and database searches using key words (generated from research questions), and through outreach within our team's networks for relevant documentation. During all interviews, participants were asked to suggest additional relevant documents, with particular attention paid to the suggestions of regional and local level actors. Table 3, below, shows count of documents reviewed by type.

Table 3: Document count by type

DOCUMENT TYPE	COUNT
AEOL PROGRAMME DOCUMENTS	15
AEOL GRANT DOCUMENTS	15
AEOL PROJECT AND OTHER REPORTS	10
RELEVANT SECTOR RESEARCH (EDUCATION, PROTECTION, MHPSS, ETC.)	32
RELEVANT SECTOR REPORTS	26
TOOLS AND TOOLKITS	6
GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS	6
POLICY BRIEFS AND ANALYSIS	12
ACADEMIC LITERATURE	93
TOTAL DOCUMENTS REVIEWED:	**215**

The literature review contributed most substantively to understandings about levels of agreement on processes, pathways, and terms amongst actors within the ecosystem at present. It informed the lines of discussion and questioning for all interviews, as well as the framework for the paper itself. This allowed feedback and perspective from partners to be situated within larger conversations happening in the EiD space, leading to more intentional reflection on how Porticus' work sits and interacts with the field as a whole.

Primary data collection and analysis

Primary data was collected from Porticus, partners, and external actors during key informant interviews (n=32). The interviews were semi-structured and guided by an interview protocol developed via literature review and in collaboration with Porticus. The initial round of interviews was conducted with the majority of AEoL grant partners as of November 2020 (n=10) and global and regional Porticus staff (n=5). Snowball sampling was then used to identify relevant external actors, with particular focus on assuring a diversity of actor type (i.e., donor, implementer, network), level (i.e., global, regional, national) , and location. Ultimately, we carried out 16 external actor interviews, yielding a total of 32 interviews.

Tables 4 and 5, below, offer interview counts by type and level. Throughout this report, quotes are attributed based on this typology. We note that each category includes a range of actors (e.g., donors include bilaterals, multilaterals, private, and foundation donors); in order to assure anonymity in the data shared, attributions are made at this general level.

Table 4. Key informant interview count by type

TYPE	PARTICIPANT COUNT
DONOR	10
IMPLEMENTER	5
RESEARCH INSTITUTION	5
UN AGENCY (INCLUDING WORLD BANK)	4
NETWORK / COALITION	6
SYSTEM	2
TOTAL	**32**

Table 5. Key informant interview count by level

LEVEL	PARTICIPANT COUNT
GLOBAL	23
REGIONAL	5
NATIONAL	4
TOTAL	**32**

In addition to interviews, feedback from AEoL partners during the inception stage of the programme were used as a source of primary data. This included workshops and written feedback provided on the programme theory of change (inclusive of assumptions, theories and preconditions required for the programme vision to be achieved) and the MEL framework.

All interviews were conducted by a member of the Tauwhirotanga team and were recorded and auto transcribed through Zoom. We conducted an initial review of all transcripts in order to generate themes and sub-themes for coding. An initial round of codes was developed, with subsequent codes added later as new themes emerged during data review and preliminary analysis. We developed an Excel database (with transcriptions broken up by question and response) and coded all responses. Multiple members of the team coded the same interviews in order to test for the validity of the themes and coding. Analysis and synthesis of data was conducted based upon this process. Additionally, a sense-making workshop was held with AEoL partners prior to the finalisation of the report, in order to solicit feedback.

Throughout this report, key quotes from the interviews have been included in full, with indication of the actor type and level as categorised above. The rich and fruitful discussions that comprised this research offer insight and nuance that felt most appropriate to represent the voices of those who shared them. In order to assure anonymity, only quotes which offer no identifying characteristics are included.

[9] Further, the literature review is an ongoing activity for the AEoL programme for its duration, and the continued learning it produces will contribute to future iterations and adaptations to the theory of change, the MEL framework, and long-term outcome rubrics focused on behaviour and mindset change of stakeholders, internal and external to the programme.

[10] This determination was made on the specific focus of work and location for the individual interviewed. For international organisations with multi-country focus, individuals were considered "global" unless the individual interviewed had a specific focus on region or country (e.g., regional staff for an INGO). For organisations that were located in a particular country with specific focus on programming in that country, such individuals were considered "national". This applied, too, to representatives of national systems.

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