

Learning Outcomes Measurement at ECW

background note for ExCom presentation 26-27 February 2020

Introduction:

In recent years the discourse around education development effectiveness has shifted from a focus on access to quality and making sure children are learning. Half of the ten SDG4 targets relate to learning and skills development¹ and major education donors and implementers have shifted their strategic direction to primarily focus on increasing relevant learning. At the same time learning assessments in development-humanitarian contexts are changing and increasingly incorporate non-academic and transferable socio-emotional competencies to reflect evolving labor markets and social demands.

When it comes to crisis-affected countries, progress on improving the quality of education and learning outcome data is limited. The data gap on learning in crisis settings is significantly worse compared to non-crisis settings. Of the 75 Million children affected by conflict or crisis², almost half (37 Million) in primary and lower secondary levels are out-of-school³, therefore experiencing a much higher likelihood to be excluded in existing national (EMIS, examinations, EGRA/EGMA), regional (SACMEQ, PASEC, SEA-PLM) or global school-based measurements. Also, citizen-led studies like ASER and UWEZO that are designed to be house-hold based do not, by default, include those out-of-school or represent refugees or IDPs proportionally.

This results in our needing to better understand what creates quality education in each EiE context and thereby knowing what works and does not work to improve learning outcomes. Lack of sufficient data considerably hampers evidence-based planning, budgeting, and resource mobilization efforts towards those affected by conflict. It also affects the cost-effectiveness of our work.

Purpose of the session:

ECW would like to contribute to improving this situation. The session on measuring learning outcomes in EiE serves the purpose of a) informing ExCom members on the current initiatives and actions ECW is taking regarding the measurement of holistic learning outcomes, and b) requesting feedback, suggestions for improvement, and initiating discussions with other ongoing initiatives to further collaborate and/or align.

Further to this, ECW will present its upcoming collaboration with the latest ExCom member Porticus (<https://www.porticus.com/en/home/>).

¹ SDG targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7, and their corresponding indicators, are all related to learning outcomes.

² ODI (2016). *A Common platform for education in emergencies and protracted crisis*. London.
<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10498.pdf>

³ UNESCO-UIS (2016). <http://uis.unesco.org/en/news/263-million-children-and-youth-are-out-school>



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The presentation:

In addition to presenting ECW's rationale focusing on learning outcome measurement in EiE and protracted settings, the presentation highlights several principles of ECW's approach towards doing so. These principles shall guide ECW's efforts in systematically gathering and using learning data towards improved programming.

The key principles of ECW's approach are elaborated below:

- A. **Tailored:** ECW does not aim to standardize its measurement. Our objective as a fund is to not conduct the same type of measurement across the countries, programs or partners we collaborate with. We do not believe in one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, we aim to tailor the measurement towards the needs of the context (formal/non-formal education, age groups, in-school/out-school, academic/SEL) and purpose of the programs. Our aim is to make the measurements useful for the projects and countries we are supporting, not to aggregate on a global level.
- B. **Formative:** ECW's overall objective is to improve the effectiveness of our programming and we need to better understand what pointers make children affected by conflict learn and therefore what are the interventions with highest Value for Money.
- C. **Collaborate:** ECW aims to collaborate and strengthen existing partners' approaches and tools. We do not promote one approach or tool from one partner organization over the other, and do not intend to develop our own. Each partner applies its own tool. ECW can advise and support if capacity is low.
- D. **Holistic:** Given that children affected by conflict and crisis are often emotionally and psychologically affected, ECW promotes holistic measurements including both socio-emotional learning and academic literacy and numeracy testing.
- E. **Align:** By default, and when possible, ECW aims to align with national (host) governments policy and methodologies, as well as all with other initiatives on a regional and/or global level.

From these, and other principles, ECW presents its current and planned initiatives, and those it will take, regarding learning outcome measurement. These initiatives relate to multi-year and first emergency programs as well as innovative projects as part of its acceleration facility.

Furthermore, the presentation will highlight ECW's forthcoming collaboration with Porticus whereby a 3-year project is under development to learn and document how existing holistic learning outcome measurements are to be tailored to EiE settings. The national purpose of this exercise is to systematically learn from and improve implementation approaches towards quality education and learning for children in or affected by conflict, enabling to build systemic institutional capacity in 3 MYRP partner countries.

Other initiatives and pooled funding

Several other funds, donors and networks of organizations are also working on measuring learning outcomes. ECW aims to align and create synergies with ongoing initiatives as much as relevant and



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possible. For example, the INEE Quality and Equitable Learning Outcomes (QELO) work stream, by working together with the 3EA initiative⁴, commissioned several mapping studies of holistic learning outcome measurements tools useful in EiE. These efforts resulted in a measurement library⁵. UNESCO-IIEP has set-up a learning portal⁶ with useful reference documents for national assessment studies. The GPE-KIX⁷ is working on learning outcome measurement in more developed settings, and discussions with the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML)⁸ are relevant to explore further on how the yet to-be collected data can be used to feed into SDG4 measurement closing the gap on data for EiE. DFID is setting-up its new six-year Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) project to which a partnership could be sought. Also, several learning passport initiatives are under development by both UNICEF and UNESCO focusing on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and certification.

The above are examples, and we are confident there are more. ECW invites ExCom members to advise and connect with these or other initiatives as to explore more collaboration and alignment.

During the session, ECW is also willing to explore the interest and opportunity for donors to contribute to taking our work on holistic learning outcome measurement in EiE and protracted crisis further. This could expand the scope, speed and impact of ECWs work on learning outcome measurement in EiE and could be targeted towards closing the gap on SDG4 for EiE contexts. Additional funds for this purpose could be earmarked through the ECW Multi-donor pooled trust fund for use through the AF, as the AF may be the window best placed for such initiatives.

In addition to above, DFID and USAID will share their views on learning outcome measurements in EiE and protracted crisis during this session.

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⁴ <https://inee.org/measurement-library/3ea-measurement-consortium>

⁵ <https://inee.org/measurement-library>

⁶ <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/monitor-learning>

⁷ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/strengthening-learning-assessment-systems-knowledge-and-innovation-exchange-kix-discussion-paper>

⁸ <http://gaml.uis.unesco.org/>