# Education Equity Research Initiative

## Work Stream 3: Conflict and Fragility

The goal of the *Education Equity Research Initiative* is to inform policy and programming on the effective ways of strengthening equity in and through education systems.

## Overview

The Education Equity Research Initiative consists of a set of interrelated research work streams, including: 1) Measurement and Metrics, 2) Learning and Retention, 3) Conflict and Fragility, and 4) Finance and Resource Allocation. A Working Group associated with each work stream is charged with implementing a research agenda that advances knowledge and strengthens tools and frameworks related to its aspect of educational equity.

*Conflict and Fragility.* The unique set of challenges and contextual factors that are common to fragile environments – the breakdown of social cohesion, deep resource constraints, and severe lack of human and institutional resources – raise the level of complexity in achieving educational equity in these types of settings. A growing literature indicates that educational inequality may have direct effects on the likelihood of violent conflict (Bartusevicius 2014; Besançon 2005; Brown 2011; Østby, 2007, 2008; Omoeva & Buckner 2015), and that conflict further exacerbates inequality, creating a vicious cycle (Bisogno and Chong, 2002; Buvinic et al, 2013; Kirk, 2007). Whether inequality contributes to conflict and fragility or is exacerbated by it, the role of education is ever more important in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Education has long served as the cornerstone of nation-building, shaping national narratives (uniting or divisive as they might be) and providing a platform for the formation of national human capital (Anderson 1983; Brown 2011; Reimers 2006; Darden 2006). If inequality in education at large is a key element in conflict, it follows that educational **equity**[1] in fragile contexts strengthens social cohesion and contributes to sustained peaceful development. There is a greater need for research evidence on how effective *existing* approaches and policies are in strengthening equity in education, and how equity in education helps strengthen peace and social cohesion.

## Key Objective

The Equity in Conflict and Fragility Working Group will explore the connections between education inequality and conflict/fragility, on the one hand, and the potential of educational equity for strengthening peace and stability, on the other. This work stream will also explore effective solutions related to learning and retention particular to these contexts.

## Framing Questions

The Conflict and Fragility work stream will consider the related questions of:

- What dimensions of education inequity are particularly relevant in areas of conflict and fragility?
    - What methods and tools can/should be used to measure these dimensions of inequity (related to Measures and Metrics working group)?
    - What are the specific challenges related to measuring inequity in areas of conflict and fragility and how can these challenges be addressed?

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[1] Inequality is defined as a disparity in educational resources and outcomes, resulting from systematic bias due to a characteristic shared by a group of individuals (referred to as a *dimension* of inequality), such as, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, poverty, or disability. Equity is defined as a set of policies, programs, or interventions designed to meet the diverse needs of disadvantaged subgroups and level the playing field in achieving strong education outcomes.

- What are the structural and institutional drivers of inequity within education systems in conflict and crisis-affected environments, and what are the effective approaches for reducing them?
    - What are the drivers of inequity that are specifically associated with local government and institutions?
    - Does the work of humanitarian relief and aid donors and implementing partners exacerbate or mitigate drivers of inequity?

- What approaches and strategies are effective for identifying disadvantaged groups in conflict- and crisis-affected contexts and strengthening their educational outcomes?

- What are the unique challenges to gathering and using data related to inequity in education in contexts of conflict and fragility, and how can these challenges be surmounted?
    - What are the challenges related to risk and security for collecting data necessary for understanding drivers of inequity and progress towards equitable education?
    - What are the ethical and political challenges of collecting and using data related to education inequity?

## Deliverables

To address these framing questions, the conflict and fragility working group will work in the coming 12 months on the following deliverables:

- ***Landscape review of research on equity in education in areas of conflict and fragility:*** The landscape review will combine a review of the literature with interviews with research experts in this area. The landscape review will provide both, a baseline of current research on equity in education in the context of conflict and fragility, as well as inform the working groups research agenda moving forward.

- ***Context Analysis and M&E Tools:*** In collaboration with the measurement and metrics working group, this working group will work to identify existing measurement tools and/or develop new tools for both context analysis and M&E purposes. Specifically, we will identify indicators and related measuring tools that can help identify dimensions and causes of inequity in conflict and fragility contexts, as well as indicators and tools that can help education programs measure progress towards education equity.

- ***Research Guidance:*** The working group will develop a guidance document on conducting research related to equity in areas of conflict and fragility. The guidance document will identify the challenges related to conducting this type of research (framing question #4), as well as what some strategies to address these challenges.

Next steps for the working group are as follows:

1. Conduct the landscape review of research on equity in education in the context of conflict and fragility. The landscape review will be conducted through a two-prong approach: review of the literature and interviews with experts in the field.
    a. The Conflict and Fragility Working Group will consolidate existing evidence from the research literature and evaluation studies.

b. Working Group members will map out current efforts being pursued by Research Initiative partners and others. This process will be used to both, collect resources in this area, as well as to identify experts in the field for the interview process.
c. Interviews will be conducted with identified experts.

2. The Conflict and Fragility Working Group will work with the Metric and Measurement group to a) identify dimensions of education inequity are particularly prevalent in context of conflict and fragility, and (b) how to define and measure these dimensions, given the challenges of working in these contexts.

3. The Working Group will provide regular updates to the Steering Committee and share resources and evidence with the full membership of the Education Equity Research Initiative.

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