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EDDATA II: EDUCATION DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING

WHAT IS EDDATA II AND WHY IS IT NEEDED?

In much of the developing world, a lack of reliable data hinders realistic education policy and decision making. Without good measurements of access, learning, and management factors, local and national stakeholders base their policies on vague or erroneous ideas about the needs of their students and schools. Similarly, international donors lack sound data and many times must make program decisions based on this incomplete and unreliable information.

EdData II, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), provides survey expertise to help national and local governments as well as the donor community to assess education status and to design methods for improvement. Project advisors collaborate with USAID Missions, other donors, and stakeholders to find innovative and cost-effective ways to gather and analyze education data. They can then jointly establish relevant benchmarks that help governments, teachers, and parents or guardians provide meaningful education for their children.

The project offers diverse services such as school-based, household, and national surveys. Rapid assessments can examine student-focused issues such as literacy, the education needs of orphans and vulnerable children, and gender disparities. They can also measure school and district management capacity, highlight education needs as perceived by the business sector, and reveal potentially useful applications for information and communications technology (ICT).

WHAT TYPES OF SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE?

- National and subnational household surveys (including community-based surveys)
- School-based surveys
- Rapid school-based assessments for sector analysis
- Special-purpose surveys to address issues such as special learning needs, early childhood, out-of-school youth, orphans and vulnerable children, or adult literacy
- Development and testing of survey-based, school-level data-gathering protocols for district management



- Household-based rapid-assessment instruments to measure literacy and numeracy of in-school and out-of-school children
- Web-based systems connected to samples of schools designed to collect real-time responses on policy issues as they arise
- Surveys on school-to-work transition and education relevance as well as labor-force preparedness
- Computer-assisted interviewing to increase the accuracy and timeliness of data.

Data from assessments such as these are combined and used to identify both the quality of learning taking place in schools and the factors (at school and at home) that are impacting learning. Once these factors are known, stakeholders and policy makers can use them to guide their efforts to improve learning.

ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Several instruments have been developed under EdData II to capture essential, reliable, and valid education data, while limiting study complexity and cost. They have been piloted in multiple countries, with funding from both USAID and the World Bank.

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The **Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)** is an oral assessment requiring about 15 minutes per child. It is a simple diagnostic of individual student progress in reading. The EGRA instrument typically is adapted for use in a particular country and language. Once results are obtained and areas for improvement are identified, EdData II research-based instructional approaches can help remedy student learning in those critical areas. For example, district personnel can identify schools with particular needs and develop instructional approaches for improving foundation skills; teachers may be taught to monitor students' oral reading fluency and to help them improve fluency or comprehension.

The **Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness (SSME)** is used to observe management practices in schools. It allows measurement of school management and governance factors that are strongly associated with school effectiveness and learning achievement. A single person can gather data in one school during a one-day visit, and just enough schools are sampled to give donors and governments a fast, inexpensive, yet reliable and statistically valid scan of school management at a given level of interest. SSME can be used for sector assessment, for program design, or to capture distinctions between provinces or districts.

The **Education Management Assessment (EMA)** is used to find out what management skills educators have and what management-related training they feel they need. Such information is required at both the national and subnational levels (e.g., provinces, districts, schools) in countries wishing to decentralize and improve education at the same time. This type of survey can cover all education system units, from the provincial level down to the school level. Enumerators ask participants to assess their strengths and weaknesses in particular skills, and to rate their own performance on "objective" indicators. For example, the instrument rates capacity in curriculum planning and management, teacher support, and operation of education management information systems, and asks how long it takes districts to provide schools with curriculum-related advice. The results show the government which capacities are most lacking across all districts or schools, and therefore require the most support, by level.

In these illustrations of additional potential EdData II services, maintaining a core of data would allow comparisons among countries and over time.

Investigate clusters of education-related problems.

A country could use EdData II to look into a set of problems affecting it. For example, there may be a problem with dropout, even in basic schooling. Schools may be experiencing youth violence or disaffection at unusually early ages. The country may have fared badly in an international learning assessment comparison and not know why. EdData II could help assess the problems as a whole.

Clarify citizens' perceptions and concerns. A casual survey by the media may unearth parental or business sector dissatisfaction with the schooling system, particularly as it affects a country's expected areas of growth or export. It also may reveal parental preferences that the education system previously had not taken into consideration, such as teaching of English, computer skills, and life skills (e.g., coping with sexual pressures). An in-depth, scientific survey combining information from households and schools may help the country ascertain what lies behind these concerns, and develop ideas for how to deal with them.

Assess progress toward intervention goals. An important project may have as its explicit goals in a given country (1) to improve certain achievement characteristics in children and (2) to increase parental participation in schools. Other donors' projects may have exactly the same concerns. But such programs typically are implemented by numerous nongovernmental organizations and contractors under separate contracts, none of which includes serious data gathering. EdData II could complete baseline and periodic re-surveys to ascertain whether the goals are being met.

WHO CAN REQUEST SERVICES, AND HOW?

Task orders can be requested by operating units of USAID, including the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade/Office of Education (EGAT/ED), other Bureaus, the Office of Women in Development, and Missions worldwide. Such requests for in-country technical assistance are driven by demand from stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education. Financial input from donors other than USAID frequently is arranged as a way to finance EdData II tasks in part or in their entirety.

USAID's EdData II project is led by RTI International; subcontractors are DevTech Systems and the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

The project Web site is www.eddataglobal.org.

RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

Requesters are invited to contact one of the following persons to express interest in EdData II:

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Requesters may be asked to submit a prospective task order requirement or statement of work to the CTO to ensure compliance with the Statement of Objectives of the EdData II blanket purchase agreement. The USAID contract number for EdData II is EHC-E-00-04-00004-00.