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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. 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, schools and school districts, 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, numeracy, the education needs of orphans and vulnerable children, and gender disparities; and they can measure school and district management capacity. There is also potential for them to highlight education needs as perceived by the business sector; or to reveal useful applications for information and communication technology (ICT).



What types of services are available?

- School-based surveys
- Rapid school-based assessments for sector analysis
- National and subnational household surveys (including community-based surveys)
- 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
- 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 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.

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Education household surveys linked to Demographic and Health Surveys (DHSs) provide a wealth of cross-sectoral data on the sampled households. The linked surveys offer substantial costs savings to USAID Missions by using the same subcontractor; interviewers, equipment, and sampling frame.

2009 Nigeria Education Survey (NEDS)

A 19-month EdData II household education survey is now under way in Nigeria. USAID, the British Department for International Development, RTI International, the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Education, regional ministries of education, the National Population Commission of Nigeria, and nongovernmental organizations are collaborating on this effort, which is a follow-on to both a 2004 EdData I survey and a 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. The 2009 NEDS household-based information on schooling will be used to

- assess the accuracy of enrollment data collected via ongoing school censuses at the state level;
- learn beneficiaries' perspectives on whether the significant reforms and investments made recently by the federal and state governments are targeting the key constraints to access and quality;
- compare levels of access and quality across Nigeria's states; and
- analyze trends in equitable access and quality over time.

Capacity building

One goal of EdData II is to build capacity within host countries in areas such as education survey design and administration, data monitoring and quality assurance, analysis, and reporting. EdData II has designed and led a training course focused on education survey data collection and analysis under a pilot effort in Kenya. Additional applications of this course are scheduled for Liberia as well as for online use.

Assessment instruments

Since 2006, EdData II has been engaged in promoting methodological developments in assessments that are easy to use, have a scientific underpinning, and have a "common-sense" meaning to parents. As a result, 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 other donors.

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 an instrument that paints a multifaceted picture of school management practice. The resulting data are designed to let school, district, provincial, or national administrators or donors learn what is going on in their schools and classrooms and to answer the question, "Why is it that some schools succeed while others do not?" Management data collected by



the SSME include pedagogical approach; time on task; interactions among students, teachers, administrators, district officials, and parents; record keeping; discipline; availability and condition of school infrastructure; availability of pedagogical materials; and safety. Data are collected via direct classroom and school observation; student assessment; and interviews with parents, teachers, principals, and parents. By collecting information on just the most crucial school effectiveness factors and by applying innovative and simple data-collection methodologies, the SSME is able to provide a rich data set at low cost. In fact, the SSME is designed such that a single assessor can assess a school in just one day. The SSME has been successfully piloted in Jamaica and Peru. From the resulting data, it was possible to discriminate between schools and between management behaviors. Although the basic SSME methodology can be applied in any school system, the SSME is designed to be adapted to reflect the issues and the structures unique to each country.

The **Education Management Assessment (EMA)** is used to identify 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 technical support, by level.

An **Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA)** is under development to measure the extent to which schoolchildren in early primary grades are learning math skills. The instrument is a simple one that teachers or local officials can apply to determine a child’s understanding of essential foundational math skills. A meeting of math assessment experts was convened in mid-January 2009 in Washington, DC, to review EGMA, to share information on various mathematics assessment instruments and protocols currently being applied to assess students in



the early grades, and to obtain feedback and suggestions. The meeting found positive consensus regarding the aim, components, and protocols of EGMA. A pilot application took place in Kenya in June 2009, and revisions and refinements are continuing.

Applied research to improve reading

While EGRA started out as a measurement tool, many countries have shown an interest in discovering whether EGRA might be a cost-effective, staged means of improving learning outcomes. As part of their investigation of using it as a springboard to improving reading, they have redesigned their teacher training around reading. That is, the tool is being used to establish a reading baseline, but with an eye toward improving student reading skills by instructing teachers on ways to apply EGRA research findings to help guide their teaching.



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. The EdData II activity can be—and has been—used to leverage additional funding from donors such as the World Bank, the British Department for International Development, and others.

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.

USAID's EdData II project is led by RTI International.

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 COTR 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.