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Kasais Rapid Education Risk Analysis Report

SEPTEMBER 17, 2018

ACCÈS, LECTURE, REDEVABILITÉ ET RÉTENTION! (ACCELERE!!) ACTIVITY I

DRAFT

CONTRACT NO. AID-660-C-15-00001

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Education Office

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ACRONYMS

ACCELERE! I/A !!	Accès, Lecture, Redevabilité et Rétention! Activity I
AVEC	<i>associations villageoises d'épargne et de crédit</i> (village savings and loans associations)
COPA	<i>Comité de Parents</i>
COGES	school-based management committees
CRS	<i>Centre de Rattrapage Scolaire</i>
CSA	conflict sensitivity analysis
CSO	civil society organization
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECCN	Education in Crisis and Conflict Network
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
FPE	free primary education
FY	fiscal year
IDP	internally displaced persons
IGA	income-generating activities
ML	<i>Mobilisateur de la Lecture</i> ; Reading Mobilisers
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC
RERA	Rapid Education Risk Assessment (<i>Analyse Rapide des Risques pour l'Education</i>)
SAF	Strategic Activities Fund
SEA	senior education advisor
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Rapid Education Risk Analysis (RERA) Chemonics team wishes to acknowledge the important contributions of all who have worked hard to improve the lives of those in the Kasai's province of the DRC. Natasha de Marcken, education team lead at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for her important contributions. Ashley Henderson, USAID, James Rogan, Exterion LLC, and the Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN) led the RERA training workshops. Nina Weisenhorn, USAID, led the team through the process, helping the team formulate appropriate research questions, refine the tools, and provided valuable feedback on the draft report. Becky Telford of the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) provided timely input into the tools. Mark Lynd of School-to-School also provided valuable feedback on the preliminary draft.

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One third of the *Accès, Lecture, Réention et Redevabilité*, or access, reading, retention, and accountability (ACCELERE! I/A! I) program's target schools are in Kasai Central province. At the program's outset in 2015, the two Kasai provinces had no political unrest. However, by the second and third project years, militia activity in that part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was at its peak, and the project struggled to respond appropriately. To better understand how A! I could use its limited resources to improve education in the Kasais during the conflict, the project conducted a Rapid Educational Risk Analysis, or RERA.

The RERA is a fast and “good enough” situation analysis of the interaction between education and the conflict that has recently arisen in Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental provinces. The Kasais RERA provides the USAID-funded A! I project with data to improve and sustain activities in these provinces. It is a qualitative situational analysis that uses secondary data review, a previous conflict sensitivity analysis (CSA) study, and key information/focus group discussions. The analysis focuses on areas of resilience within the conflict-affected school communities and answers the following research questions:

1. How do the national social and security environments relate to and interact with the education system in Kasai province?
2. What are the resilience factors that positively influence access to safe and quality education?
3. How can A! I strengthen these factors for an immediate impact?

A! I collected data from eight conflict-affected school communities in Kasai Central and eight conflict-affected school communities in Kasai Oriental from May 21 to May 31, 2018. The data collected found that 12 of the schools have a high degree of damage, and four have a medium degree of damage. Schools without damage were not included in the sample. A total of 507 respondents participated in the focus group discussions; of those, 40 percent were women.

EDUCATION IN CONTEXT

The DRC has experienced many local, provincial, and international conflicts for more than 20 years, resulting in the deaths of more than 5.4 million people and the displacement of another 2 million. Collectively, it is the deadliest conflict since the Second World War.¹ The majority of the deaths are attributable to secondary effects of the conflict, such as preventable diseases and malnutrition. DRC is currently ranked 176th of 188 countries on the Human Development Index, classifying it in the “low human development” category.² An estimated 13.1 million people, including 6.8 million women and girls and 7.9 million children,

¹ International Rescue Committee and the Burnet Institute. (2007). “Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Ongoing Crisis.” Retrieved from <https://www.rescue.org/report/mortality-democratic-republic-congo-ongoing-crisis>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

² United Nations Development Programme. (2015). “Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development.” Retrieved from http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2015_human_development_report_0.pdf. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

will need protection and humanitarian assistance in 2018, an increase of 50 percent compared with 2017.³

In the Kasais, repeated cycles of pillaging have left fields empty, farmers without seed, women unwilling to tend the fields for fear of rape, and disrupted transportation routes have exacerbated the already dire levels of poverty. Adding to existing agricultural disasters, the constant movement of people from home to bush, from village to village, and from town to city deteriorates the social bonds of a community. In 2015, the government of the DRC began to create new provinces; the *découpage* process, as it is called, resulted in the new Kasai Central province.⁴ This process cut off the Kasai Central from the former area of Kasai Occidental, which was more lucrative economically, resulting in a new province that has no industry and with a large population dependent on civil servant salaries for survival.

Total government spending on education increased from 9 percent of the national budget in 2010 to 16 percent in 2013,⁵ demonstrating the increasing importance the national government is placing on education. However, most costs for schooling — in the form of prohibitively high school fees — rest with the families, despite the implemented September 2010 national policy of Free Primary Education (FPE) school fees. Violence on the way to school and in school remains a key concern for students and families. Girls are often raped, and few resources or knowledge around the effects of trauma exist within the communities.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The RERA confirmed that the A!I activities that were part of the original project design and are currently being implemented continue to be appropriate and on course to assist school communities in the Kasai under these changing circumstances. This study was meant to provide information to better inform implementation of the A!I project and as such does not attribute causality or impact.

The findings presented below cannot be generalized for the DRC education system. The findings are specific to the 16 communities (six schools and two *centres de rattrapage scolaire* [CRS] per province) sampled and can be generally applied to the Kasais region.

VIOLENCE

- Violence permeated the discussion groups. The fabric of society, families, work, and schooling has been unraveled by the persistent conflict and the resulting rapes and pillaging. Scarcity of food resources is the result of armed combatants stealing food from the fields, raping the women working in the fields, and keeping markets closed because citizens fear violence.
- Families have been torn apart as men and children watch their wives and mothers being raped. Women are expelled from their homes after they are raped, leaving the children without a mother, and the family is considered to be “divorced” thereafter.

³ United Nations. (2018). “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” Retrieved from https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1746531_05012018_ev.pdf. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

⁴USAID (n.d) Country Specific Information: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Multi-Year Development FOOD Assistance Projects, Fiscal Years 2016-2020. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2016%20Final%20DRC%20CSI.pdf>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

⁵ World Bank Education Data.

- Violence within the schools — teachers beating all children as punishment, children imitating combatants on the playground, and male teachers raping female students at will — mark the schools as unsafe environments. Walking to and from school in their school uniforms can make girls and boys easy targets.

TRAUMA

- Although respondents were able to describe and point to behaviors that result from trauma, the concept of trauma itself required explanation. Respondents expressed great concern for some of the children and their unhealthy behaviors, such as violence and, in one instance, threatening death.

SCHOOLING

- Despite the severe destruction to the schools, most schools are still operating.
- Schools need a two-fold reparation: improvements to the physical structure and to internal furnishings such as desks and benches and supporting teachers by providing good training and establishing close relationships with parents.
- The most cited reason for non-attendance was lack of ability to pay school fees.

LEADERSHIP

- Traditional leadership within the Kasais is failing. The church helps by collecting donated funds to pay off the militia and for funerals. Community leaders struggle to maintain their positions within the rapidly changing environment. There is no single source of authority.
- Giving circles and other informal networks can be considered sources of community resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key recommendations are offered to Accelere! I, USAID, and the donor community. Additional recommendations can be found in the Recommendations section.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCELERE! I

1. *Address trauma through violence prevention and psychosocial supports:*
 - A! I should continue its psychosocial referral support activities that include working with school-related gender-based violence monitoring committees (*comités de genre et de surveillance des violences*) to identify and ensure that community members are aware of the referral services available to them for victims of violence. A! I should also continue its planned work with ministry counterparts (the Ministry of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and National Solidarity and the Ministry of Education) to build the capacity of teachers and educators to recognize and support students who are dealing with psychosocial issues.
 - A! I should also continue to train educators on and apply USAID's Doorways Safe-Schools Curriculum, specifically the modules dealing with violence and school-related gender-based violence, positive discipline, and code of conduct. This, coupled with A! I's facilitated establishment of the *comités de genre*, is an important contribution.
 - USAID, DFID, UNICEF, and other donors should support programming and interventions in social-emotional learning and other psychosocial support strategies. Funders should also identify and strengthen local civil society organizations (CSOs) and church networks to support these much-needed interventions.

2. *Continue to tackle school fees.* A!I should continue to support school fees by directly subsidizing targeted vulnerable children through its grants program in selected formal and non-formal schools. A!I's governance component should continue its planned community-based work in increasing transparency and accountability around how school fees are established and applied. A!I should continue its larger policy work in this arena.
3. *Build upon existing resources.* A!I should continue to support community savings plans, agricultural fields, and small livestock generating activities through the A!I grants component.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID, DFID, AND OTHER DONORS

1. *Address trauma through psychosocial support.* Psychosocial trauma within the Kasai's population is significant, yet there is very little support for those who experience it. Even though the militia-related violence appears to be subsiding, the affected communities remain deeply traumatized by the recent violence inflicted upon them and the local populations. USAID, DFID, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other donors should support programming and interventions in social-emotional learning and other psychosocial support strategies. Funders should also identify and strengthen local CSOs and church networks to support these much-needed interventions.
2. *Support rapid funding for school construction and rehabilitation efforts.* Funders should establish rapid funding and construction mechanisms to quickly rebuild schools and/or rehabilitate existing ones. Rehabilitation efforts should also include school fences and latrines for girls. When requesting community support in the rehabilitation of schools, funders and implementing partners should ensure that a "do no harm" approach is applied, given some indirect evidence on the use of child labor to re-construct schools.
3. *Advocate strategically and continually at the highest level of government to promote respect for free primary education and the timely payment of teachers.* Donors should continue to advocate for a higher level of government support to promote a living wage for teachers.
4. *Strengthen local leaders and civil society organizations for greater ownership.*
 - CSOs, *Comités de Parents* (COPAs), and school-based management committees (COGES) have an important role to play in leading the community's return to normalcy. Empowering local CSOs and COGES to apply for and use small grants can enable communities to see these bodies as leaders in reconstruction and as paths toward lessening everyday violence. A!I's school improvement plans support schools in this regard.
 - Future funding should consider enhancing local knowledge-base and experience on how to help leaders understand the extent and implications of widespread trauma, including their own; provide mechanisms through which religious networks and the government can contribute to community stabilization; and strengthen the rule of law within the local community.

ACCELERE! I OVERVIEW

USAID, in collaboration with DFID, has committed to implementing a primary education initiative to improve equitable access to education and learning outcomes for both girls and boys in the DRC. This initiative, entitled ACCELERE! I, aims to support the government of the DRC's commitment to free universal basic education and improved learning outcomes, as articulated in the government's Interim Education Plan (*Plan Intérimaire de l'éducation*), the Education Sector Strategy, and other reform efforts in the sector.

As one component of this joint program, Activity I of ACCELERE! I is led by Chemonics International under the Improving Reading, Equity, and Accountability in the DRC contract with USAID (AID-660-C-15-00001), awarded a performance period of May 2015 to May 2020 and a total estimated cost of \$133.9 million. The consortium's institutional partners include FHI 360, Cambridge Education, and School-to-School International. In addition, the project has established a relationship with SIL LEAD for targeted activities in local language material development.

ACCELERE! I's purpose is to improve educational outcomes for boys and girls in select education provinces in the DRC. A! I supports education service delivery in public primary schools (including *écoles conventionnées* run by religious networks) in 26 education sub-divisions across six provinces: Haut-Katanga, Lualaba, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental, Equateur, and Sud-Ubangi. Activity I will support informal alternative/accelerated learning programs, including CRSs in these 26 sub-divisions, in targeted areas of Nord- and Sud-Kivu provinces, and in vocational training centers (*centres d'apprentissage professionnel*) in target areas of the Kivus and conflict-affected zones in Haut-Katanga and Lualaba. A! I also works to ensure that girls and boys benefit equally from project activities and that all assistance is conflict-sensitive and disability-inclusive.

ACCELERE! I will help strengthen partnerships between government at the national and decentralized levels, between communities and schools, and between the public and private sectors.

RERA PURPOSE

One-third of ACCELERE! I's target schools are located in Kasai Central and Kasai Oriental provinces. At the outset of the A! I program in 2015, the Kasai provinces had no political unrest. However, by the second and third project years, militia activity was at its peak, and the project struggled to respond appropriately. To better understand how A! I could use limited resources to improve education in the Kasais during the conflict, the project conducted a RERA, a situational conflict analysis that integrates a rapid education sector assessment with elements of conflict analysis, disaster risk assessment, and resilience analysis. This RERA provides USAID, DFID, and the A! I program with a fast and "good enough" situation analysis of the education system in the Kasai provinces and how it interacts with multiple risks surrounding the ongoing and increasingly threatening conflict situation that has emerged in the province.

Because this is a mid-program RERA, conducted in response to unforeseen impacts of conflict in the Kasais on educational programming, ACCELERE! I does not propose using the findings of this analysis to add significant new interventions, but instead to adjust activities so

that they take into account the security needs of students, teachers, families, and school communities affected by the Kasais crisis at this moment.

METHODOLOGY

The RERA is a qualitative study that used focus group discussion and key informant interviews in 12 schools within Kasai Oriental and Kasai Central and four CRSs. The purpose was to understand respondents' experiences of the conflict in affected schools and communities and to identify opportunities for support through the A!I project. The RERA was tailored to the unique context of the two targeted Kasai provinces to pursue more primary data collection and focused on multiple risk categories— violence, gender-based violence, displacement, trauma, and lack of community-based leadership — and their interactions with the education sector, including schools, education staff, learners, families, and school communities.

The RERA in the Kasais consisted of a desk review of secondary data, followed by data collection. Data collection was a mixture of focus group discussions and key informant interviews at the school community level (USAID ECCN Participant Manual, 2017). A!I used grounded theory as the method of analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The RERA sought to enhance existing knowledge about the education system in the Kasais and how it interacts with the ongoing conflict, civil unrest, trends of violence, gender- and sexual-based violence, trauma, and displacement. It was carried out based on the conviction that to understand how an educational system is functioning, the entire fluid risk environment must be examined.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does the national social and security environment relate to and interact with the education system in the two targeted Kasai provinces?
2. What are the resilience factors that positively influence access to safe and quality education?
3. How can A!I strengthen these factors for an immediate impact?

The RERA also focused on these areas as follows:

- Understand in which ways the resilience already within the community can be strengthened
- Understand where the areas of community cohesiveness are and how to strengthen them
- Understand how displacement is affecting education
- Understand the safety risks around and in schools
- Understand the feasibility and usefulness of teacher training in psychosocial adaptive education

As the RERA for the two Kasai provinces looks at ways in which the community can be strengthened with donor-led support, the RERA Team adopted the USAID definition of resilience:

USAID defines resilience as the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth. (USAID ECCN Participant Manual, 2017)

The team also used this definition of resilience:

Resilience is an integrating concept that allows multiple risks, shocks and stresses and their impacts on ecosystems and vulnerable people to be considered together in the context of development programming. Resilience also highlights slow drivers of change that influence systems and the potential for non-linearity and transformation processes. It focuses attention on a set of institutional, community and individual capacities and particularly on learning, innovation and adaptation. Strengthening resilience can be associated with windows of opportunities for change, often opening after a disturbance (Mitchell, 2012)

Because there are few external studies on resilience that strictly focus on the Kasais, the research for the literature review comes mostly from the CSA report for 2017. The CSA study provides multiple recommendations to consider. Some of the recommendations stem from areas that are already strong. For example, the CSA FY 2017 study reports that there is a range of teacher training manuals already approved by the Ministry of Education, including Peace Education, Psychosocial Support, and Healing Classrooms. The report states that in focus groups with teachers in Haut-Katanga province who welcomed conflict-affected internally-displaced children into their classrooms, the teachers revealed that they did not understand that conflict-affected children could have additional needs aside from their increased economic vulnerability. The act of welcoming children in the conflict-affected area into schools and that there are already approved materials could be built upon to strengthen resilience (see recommendations below).

TEAM COMPOSITION

The RERA team consisted of an intentional mixture of A!l program technical staff, A!l home office-based senior management, RERA-trained Chemonics staff, USAID senior RERA advisors, and carefully selected enumerators from within our local team to represent those most closely attuned to the community-level context. This mixture of staff was intended to provide the team with senior-level research and education expertise, RERA specific expertise, and staff intimately familiar with the situation in the Kasais. The 2018 ACCELERE!l RERA Team included:

- RERA Advisor Nina Weisenhorn
- Education and Risk/Conflict Team Lead Dr. Jordene Hale
- Education Advisor and Trainer Sonia Arias
- Field Research Coordinator and Lead Trainer Freddy Kabala
- Kasai Education and CRS Specialists Kabibi Dioma Akonga and Cherif Sango (Provincial Team Leads)
- RERA Advisor and Trainer Madeleine Dale
- Desk Research and Data Analysts Laura Harrington, Nadine Hejazin, and Keira Crawford
- Gender and Social Inclusion Expert Madho Lwango
- Enumerators
 - Kasai Oriental
 - Alain Kasanda Yoka
 - Didier Dilenga Dilenga
 - Jules Badibanga Nsambuka

- Emery Ngandu Kalengayi
 - Kasai Central
 - Patrice Bijimine Badibake
 - Louis Kande Lukengu
 - André Kabasubabo Kazadi
 - Pierre Tshibuabua Kamuena
- Security Expert T. Paul McHaffey

SAMPLE SELECTION CRITERIA AND SELECTION

As a rapid “good enough” tool, the RERA does not require a representative sample (USAID ECCN Participant Manual, 2017) but instead uses purposive sampling that relies on the research team’s expert judgment to select locations that have a variety of characteristics (e.g., rural/urban, strongly affected/moderately affected) and widely select informants who have diverse perspectives. Purposive sampling does not allow for generalizability of the entire population; it provides a useful picture of a range of perspectives within a given context to understand general trends. Because of the inherent risk of operating in the Kasais, the team used convenience sampling that allowed for the enumerators’ safety. A!I’s primary consideration for school site selection was safety. The team then selected schools based on the following criteria:

- Directly affected (physical violence to the school building, teachers, or students)
- Internally displaced persons (IDP) population: high displacement and low displacement
- School closed
- Urban/rural percentages
- CRS (non-formal schools): 10 percent to 20 percent, as is represented in the A!I schools
- Variety of tribal affinities

The team relied on A!I’s Security Director to determine the safety of the sites selected. A!I selected 14 schools, but because of timing and logistical limitations, only six in Kasai Central (four formal schools and two CRSs), six in Kasai Oriental (four formal schools and two CRSs), or a total of 12 could be sampled.

DATA COLLECTION, TOOLS, AND ENUMERATOR TRAINING

A team of home-office staff and USAID staff used the baseline questions from the RERA Toolkit and revised them to answer the specific research questions for the Kasais RERA and sent tools to the field office for translation into French and Ciluba. During the enumerator training, the enumerators further refined the questions to suit the context.

The tools for each focus group discussion had two parts. The first part had pre-coded quantitative slots for possible responses to a question. For example, a question about safety around the school might have “bathrooms,” “school yard,” or “classroom” as possible codes. We did not differentiate between rape and physical violence for many of the questions, because in the discussion, rape is subsumed under the physical violence category. Rape was listed as a code for questions that specifically addressed women’s safety; physical violence was used in all other questions. Eight data enumerators (four from each Kasai province) were drawn from A!I’s “Reading Mobilisers” (MLs; project school support staff and data collectors), following the guidelines provided in the RERA Toolkit (USAID ECCN Participant Manual, 2017). All selected enumerators had experience with data collection for qualitative and quantitative studies, familiarity with the project, and deep familiarity with the

target schools for data collection. The MLs received an intensive five-day training on the RERA, qualitative data collection concepts, best practices, and coding. Freddy Kabala, Access Team Leader; Sonia Arias, Director of A! I; and Madeline Dale, a RERA-trained evaluator; conducted the training.

The objectives of the training were for all participants to be able to:

- Explain the RERA.
- Demonstrate the RERA's importance in the context of the Kasai's conflict and the A! I program.
- Review and use all RERA tools.
- Use the appropriate methodology to administer the interview questions to different target groups using the tips for qualitative data collection included in the training.
- Apply the appropriate coding system to the RERA study data.

The first two days of the RERA training consisted of an overview of the RERA and its objectives, a deep dive into the RERA's application within the scope and context of the Kasai conflict and the A! I project specifically, a session on the RERA methodology, and an introduction of the tools the RERA team created and tailored for the DRC].

The third day was dedicated to vetting and deeply contextualizing the research questions and further refining answer codes together with the enumerators. During this session, each interview question was further revised to specifically target the unknown variables in the communities in which we were to collect data, drawing on our enumerators' deep knowledge of existing risk dynamics, threats, and trends. Enumerators also reviewed the interview questions' phrasing and framing for each target group in a locally contextualized way so as to ensure respondents' understanding. The final two days of training were spent focusing on qualitative data collection methods and best practices, note-taking, coding, and knowing when a question had reached a point of saturation.

A! I conducted piloting in one formal government school in Miketa in Kasai Oriental. Miketa's primary school is 12 km from Miabi and was destroyed by the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the rebellion. This represented an accessible school with comparable impacts to the schools that were part of the A! I RERA sample. During the pilot, enumerators were able to interview all target groups: students, teachers, parents, community leaders, and out-of-school children.

Data collection took place during one week in each Kasai province (Oriental and Central). Four teams of two enumerators each (two teams per province) collected data. Each team of two visited one school per day. The enumerator team met daily after completing data collection to discuss the findings and finalize and clean up notes. When communications made it possible, the Washington, DC team joined the field team for debriefing. See the next page for Exhibit I, which gives a full list of the schools A! I visited to collect data.

EXHIBIT I. CHART OF SCHOOLS VISITED

CHART OF SCHOOLS VISITED													
PROVINCE	NAME OF SCHOOL	LEVEL OF DAMAGE (MEDIUM OR HIGH)	DATE OF DATA COLLECTION	AUTHORITIES		PARENTS		TEACHERS		STUDENTS		OUT-OF-SCHOOL	
				# male	# female	# male	# female	# male	# female	# male	# female	# male	# female
Kasaï Oriental	EP Cijiba Central	Medium	May 21, 2018	7		3	5	4		4	4		
	EP Bena Cimungu	High	May 21, 2018	8	1	5	5	6		4	5	4	4
	EP Bakwa Mpunga	High	May 22, 2018	6		3	5	6		4	4	4	4
	EP Masanka	Medium	May 22, 2018	4		3	5	3	1	2	3	4	4
	CRS Miabi	High	May 23, 2018	7		1	5	3	3	3	5		
	CRS R Banniere	High	May 23, 2018	3			8	2	1	4	4	2	6
	EP Luse Katanda	High	May 24, 2018	1		6		7	1				
	EP Lutulu	Medium	May 24, 2018	2		5	3	3	3				
Kasaï Central	EP Ngalabetu	High	May 28, 2018	2	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	9	5
	EP Bikuku	High	May 28, 2018	5	1	0	7	1	4	3	5	5	1
	EP Mukoleshi	Medium	May 29, 2018	2	3	2	2	2	4	4	5	3	3
	EP Mgr Shungu	High	May 29, 2018	7		3	3	6		4	5	5	5
	EP Kamulumba	High	May 30, 2018	6	2	7	1	9	1	4	4	4	4
	EP Tshuila	High	May 30, 2018	4		4	2	4	1	4	4	4	4
	CRS Disanka I	High	May 31, 2018	5		2	5	8	1	6	2	3	2
	CRS Dinanga	High	May 31, 2018	4		5	5	5	1	4	4	2	6
Total				73	11	53	65	73	23	54	58	49	48

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

The RERA Team adhered to the following principles when facilitating the focus group discussions and the key informant interviews:

1. Participation was voluntary. If any participant felt uncomfortable during the meeting, he or she had the right to leave or to pass on any question. There was no consequence for leaving or for passing on a question.
2. To protect participants, the facilitator stressed that the meeting objective was to solicit representative input rather than personal input.
3. Consensus was not an objective of the discussions. When disagreement or divergence emerged, it was simply noted.
4. The identity of the attendees was treated as confidential, and anything said remained confidential.
5. Every response was respected, and no comments or judgments were made. There were no right or wrong answers.
6. Non-verbal cues or gestures were also captured by enumerators.
7. One person spoke at a time.
8. Everyone had the right to talk. The facilitator could ask someone who was talking a lot to step back and give others a chance to talk and likewise could ask a person who wasn't talking if he or she had anything to share.
9. Breaks were allowed as required.
10. Before closing, ample time was offered for questions. (USAID ECCN, 2016)

To further protect the anonymity of the participants, MLs did not record any names.

LIMITATIONS

This study, as with all RERAs, sacrifices thoroughness for a short turnaround time. AII identified the following limitations:

- Limited sample size: As with all RERAs, the sample size was limited to enable a more rapid analysis. Because ongoing conflict and limited available transportation given the short time period, not all proposed sites could be reached.
- Enumerators: Reliance on project staff rather than independent enumerators had positives and negatives. Positively, the project staff knew the schools and the communities well. Negatively, the enumerators spent significant time explaining to participants that they would not receive direct in-kind contributions after the interviews (other projects had seemingly set this precedent). Additionally, all enumerators were male, possibly silencing some of the female focus group discussions. Although some of the enumerators were well versed in data collection, for others, it was only their second or third time; thus, some enumerators relied on declaring many answers as having been saturated by the fourth day of interviews.
- Cross-Atlantic teaming: Because of poor communications, the home-office and field-office teams were not able to debrief every evening. Because not all of the analysts spoke Ciluba, enumerators wrote their notes in French and may have missed some of the nuances of Ciluba.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

This section provides a short overview of the country context first, followed by a more in-depth contextual overview of the Kasais. For a more detailed assessment, please refer to the CSA project.

The DRC has had a variety of local, provincial, and international conflicts for more than 20 years, resulting in the death of more than 5.4 million people and the displacement of more than 2 million people. It is the deadliest conflict since the Second World War.⁶ The majority of the deaths are due to secondary effects of the conflict, such as preventable diseases and malnutrition. DRC is currently ranked 176 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index, classifying in the “low human development” category.⁷

The country is rich in natural resources. More than 1,100 minerals and precious metals have been identified, including coltan, copper, and diamonds, yet it remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with approximately 63 percent of its population living below the poverty line. The per capita income as of 2014 was \$380 a year, which is roughly equivalent to the annual cost of sending two children to school for a year.⁸

The DRC is currently suffering a profound humanitarian crisis. National elections that should have been held in November 2016 have been delayed. Security forces have repressed protests against an extension of the current president; they have fired tear gas and live bullets at peaceful protesters and arrested and prevented opposition leaders from moving freely or re-entering the country. The United Nations Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) reports that as recently as January 21, 2018, national security forces violently dispersed anti-government demonstrations in Kinshasa using live ammunition and tear gas, which resulted in six deaths, 49 people wounded, and more than 94 arrests.⁹ Across the country, deep divisions between political and civil society actors continue to characterize the political climate as the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. As Mark Lowcock, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said in his remarks to the media in Kinshasa, DRC, on March 13, 2018:

The crisis has its origins in politics and economics. Tensions created by the jostling for positions ahead of the political transition which must be completed by the end of

⁶ International Rescue Committee and the Burnet Institute. (2007). “Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Ongoing Crisis.” Retrieved from <https://www.rescue.org/report/mortality-democratic-republic-congo-ongoing-crisis>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

⁷ United Nations Development Programme. (2015). “Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development.” Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2015-work-human-development>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

⁸ World Bank. (2016; 2012). “Democratic Republic of Congo Overview.” Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>. “World Bank Development Indicators” (2012). Retrieved from <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/world-development-indicators>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

⁹ DW Akademie. (2018). “Anti-Joseph Kabila protests turn deadly in Democratic Republic of Congo.” Retrieved from <http://www.dw.com/en/anti-joseph-kabila-protests-turn-deadly-in-democratic-republic-of-congo/a-42243325>; MONUSCO. (2018). “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1746531_05012018_ev.pdf (Accessed March 4, 2019).

the year and economic stress, including spiraling inflation and the budget deficit, which are inflicting great hardship on people all over the country. Humanitarian needs have doubled since last year, 13.1 million people need humanitarian assistance. Four and a half million people have been forced to flee their homes because of fighting across the whole country. More than 4.6 million Congolese children are acutely malnourished, including 2.2 million cases of severe acute malnutrition. We've seen mushrooming epidemics including the worst outbreak of cholera in 15 years.

An estimated 13.1 million people, including 6.8 million women and girls and 7.9 million children, will need protection and humanitarian assistance in 2018, an increase of 50 percent from 2017.¹⁰

EDUCATION

Total government spending on education increased from 9 percent of the national budget in 2010 to 16 percent in 2013,¹¹ demonstrating the increasing importance the national government is placing on education. In September 2010, the national government launched the FPE policy, which, this 2017-2018 school year, continues to apply to grades one through five, eliminating official central government fees related to primary school enrollment and attendance for those grades. Despite the institution of this policy, school fees remain prohibitively high, because the central government only has authority over one fee, the *minerval*, and the Ministry of Education established other fees at the decentralized levels.¹² In addition, individual schools institute fees to help cover the cost of materials, operation, and payment of teachers who are not paid by the government. These fees are highly formalized and are not illegal, despite the proposed policy for free education. Currently, the education sector depends on these fees to function and pay their staff; careful planning is necessary to mitigate funding deficits and other risks.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Once children in the DRC reach 9 to 10 years of age,¹³ they are considered overage and are ineligible to start primary school. The accelerated and additional learning opportunities available in the remedial learning centers (CRSs) and the professional learning centers (*Centres d'Apprentissage Professionnel*) face the same challenges as the primary schools in terms of payment of teachers and fee structures. Therefore, access to these learning opportunities is also limited to those who can afford the school fees. Although enrollment in primary education has increased in recent years, the large number of children who have been unable to access education and the large number of children who have dropped out have resulted in a large youth population who lack basic reading, writing, and vocational skills that would improve their opportunities to make a living and provide for their families.

¹⁰ United Nations. (2018). Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Retrieved from https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1746531_05012018_ev.pdf. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

¹¹ World Bank Education Data.

¹² See "The School Fees Landscape in the DRC Report," prepared by ACCELERE Activity 2, for a complete description of the school fee structure and issues surrounding the move toward the free education policy.

¹³ In some areas of intervention, including Kasai Central, this age is as low as 8 years old.

GENDER

There remains a gender imbalance in access to education in DRC. In much of the country, when a family is unable to afford to send all their children to school, preference is given to educating boys. The factors contributing to this preference include early marriage for girls, the use of girls to watch over their younger siblings when their parents are working and/or are in the field, and the perception that a boy's education will have a bigger impact on the family. Although this preference may be changing in some areas, completion rates show that only 57.1 percent of girls who begin primary school successfully pass the exit exam in comparison with 63.8 percent of boys.¹⁴

In addition to the gender imbalance in access to education, there is also widespread gender-based violence throughout the country. There are documented cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas perpetrated by both the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) and armed groups (334 cases in 2014: 332 girls, two boys).¹⁵ In 2015, the United Nations (UN) verified 254 child victims of sexual violence, with armed groups responsible for the majority of the incidents.¹⁶ However, gender-based violence is not only perpetrated by armed men in DRC; it is commonplace in communities across the country, including in schools. There is a common practice of sexual abuse and “sexually transmitted grades” recorded throughout DRC, including in Equateur, Kasai Central, North Kivu, and South Kivu;¹⁷ typically, a female student must grant sexual favors to her male teacher to receive a good grade or to pass an exam.

VIOLENT CONFLICT

Violent conflict, particularly in (but not exclusive to) Eastern DRC, has been characterized by attacks against schools and the recruitment and abduction of children to become child soldiers, laborers, and sexual slaves. This situation most specifically affects the provinces of Haut-Katanga, North Kivu, South Kivu, and pockets of Kasai Central. In 2015, the UN confirmed 22 school attacks and 12 schools used for military purposes by both FARDC and armed groups, affecting the educations of more than 31,000 children. However, these incidents are typically underreported, and it can be assumed that the actual number of schools attacked is higher than this. Attacks include complete destruction of schools, looting, and burning of school materials. The UN also reported 488 new documented cases of recruitment of children (462 boys, 26 girls) by armed groups; 89 percent of these cases occurred in North Kivu,¹⁸ more than twice the number of documented cases in 2014 (241 cases).¹⁹ The abduction of 195 children, an 80 percent increase from 2014, was reported, with 68 of these cases being verified and 40 percent of the children still missing. Additionally, there is documentation of 80 children killed and 56 children maimed during violent attacks in 2015.²⁰

¹⁴ DRC Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education. (2014). “Mise en Oeuvre du Plan Intermédiaire de l'Éducation – Rapport de Suivi NI.”

¹⁵ United Nations. (2015). “Children and armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General.” A/69/926–S/2015/409.

¹⁶ United Nations. (2016). “Children and armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General.” A/70/836–S/2016/360.

¹⁷ Search for Common Ground. (2012). “Education and Conflict.” Also mentioned by interviewees.

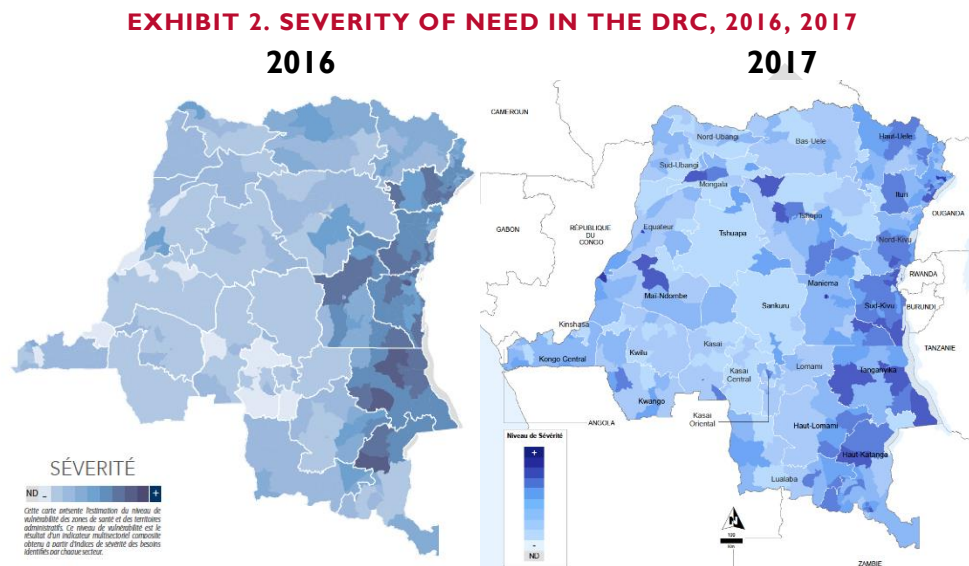
¹⁸ United Nations. (2016). “Children and armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General.” A/70/836–S/2016/360.

¹⁹ United Nations. (2015). “Children and armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General.” A/69/926–S/2015/409..

²⁰ United Nations. (2016). “Children and armed conflict – Report of the Secretary-General.” A/70/836–S/2016/360.

VULNERABILITY

People in need of humanitarian assistance increased in the number and extended across provinces. As the maps in Exhibit 2 below show, the Eastern province of DRC continues to be the most vulnerable area of the country, including the targeted North Kivu, South Kivu, and Haut-Katanga provinces. However, there has been a significant increase in vulnerability across many provinces, including Kasai Central and Kasai Occidental.



This map represents an estimation of the vulnerability levels of health zones and administrative territories. The level of vulnerability is the result of a multisectoral composite indicator obtained from the severity index of needs identified by each sector. Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.²¹

²¹ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2016.) *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2017*. Retrieved from https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/rca_ocha_2017_hno_narrative_detaillee.pdf. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

FINDINGS

The following section presents a combined summary of the most salient quantitative and qualitative findings and is organized according to our three main research questions.

In analyzing the data, we found no significant difference between the two Kasais or between formal and non-formal schools (CRS).

Each larger research question is divided into topics; the codes are from the Grounded Theory method (Charmaz, 2006). Under each heading is the relevant background/desk review, followed by statements taken from the focus group discussions, and finally a summary of the conclusions. The findings are referenced by the name of the school in which the focus group discussion was held. For example: Bikuku, 2018 refers to a comment or quote made by a participant in a focus group discussion conducted in the Bikuku school. When the finding is not attributed to a single source, it is because it was a common finding shared by several focus groups.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW DOES THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN THE KASAÏS RELATE TO AND INTERACT WITH THE BROADER POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE PROVINCE?

In 2017, CARE estimated that 1.2 million people in the Kasai provinces are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, 2.8 million people do not have enough food to eat. People are being displaced at a rate never before seen in DRC history, with 1.4 million people displaced at the height of the Kasai conflict, including 800,000 women.²²

The conflict in the neighboring province of Kasai Central influences the security situation in Kasai Oriental. Although much of the violent conflict remains in Kasai Central, spillover into Kasai Oriental has resulted in displacement and death. The UN discovered several mass grave sites in the first half of 2017 in Kasai Oriental. In addition, the population fled certain areas of the province while at the same time receiving IDPs from neighboring provinces.

AI's most recent report on security in the Kasais indicates that the overall security situation has calmed somewhat since October 2017 in the Kasais, with the return home of many IDPs and 40,000 refugees from Angola. Because of the high degree of vulnerability of IDPs and refugees, we are likely to see an increase in reported crimes against them in the short term. Overall, this is symptomatic of a normalization of the province.

OCHA has highlighted an inter-ethnic conflict in Kakenge, Territoire Mwaka, Kasai as the cause of the uptick in reported violence throughout February 2018. This conflict is attributed to a power struggle between local tribal leaders and has led to 89 percent of the population displaced internally (166,000 of a population of 187,000). The UN has recognized significant gaps in protection and education in the area.

²² CARE International. (November 2017.) "Crisis in Kasai Democratic Republic of Congo Fact Sheet." Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DRCKasaiFactsheetFINAL30NOV2017.pdf>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

Part of the causal explanation for the conflict lies in the restructuring of provinces.²³ The *découpage* process, which resulted in the new Kasai Central province, cut off Kasai Central from the former area of Kasai Occidental, which had been more lucrative economically, resulting in a new province that has no industry and with a large population dependent on civil servants' salaries for survival. Many of the people in the province feel like they have been left with very little to survive on. Additionally, teachers originally from Kasai Central who were working in other areas of the former province have been forced to return to Kasai Central, because the locations where they worked now prefer to hire those native to the area. Some people are not pleased with the way the *découpage* process established the borders of Kasai Oriental; there is a group of people in Lomami that has signed a petition to rejoin Kasai Oriental, and others in Sankuru would also like to rejoin Kasai Oriental.²⁴

Education is unquestionably under attack in the Kasais. Despite DRC signing the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) last year, the Kasais has an estimated 850,000 children without access to essential services, including basic education and health care. 639 primary and secondary schools have been damaged or destroyed in attacks or by ongoing conflict, and more than 150,000 primary school-aged children are out of school²⁵. UNICEF estimates that in the five provinces hit hardest by the crisis — Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Sankuru, and Lomami — 440,000 children were prevented from finishing the school year because of insecurity; 1 in every 10 primary school children in these provinces have had their education interrupted²⁶. Some schools have remained closed for more than 100 days, and the fear of violence means that even if schools are open and operable, parents are reluctant to send their children to school.²⁷ Schools in Greater Kasai province have been occupied by military forces or are being used as emergency shelters for displaced families. Even in schools that have not been directly affected, many children and teachers are unwilling to attend classes because of the fear of violence or attacks.²⁸

VIOLENCE IN AND OUT OF SCHOOLS

It is a common occurrence in Kasai Central for schools to be burned to the ground. They are not targeted specifically, but when conflict results in a village being burned down, the village school is burned down as well. In May 2016, seven schools in Dibaya (including four primary schools) were either entirely burned down or destroyed. A school was burned around the Demba I education subdivision. As of June 2017, 639 schools in the Kasai Central province had been destroyed by attacks and 150,000 children of primary school age

²³ USAID. (n.d). "Country Specific Information: Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Multi-Year Development FOOD Assistance Projects, Fiscal Years 2016-2020." Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2016%20Final%20DRC%20CSI.pdf>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

²⁴ Key Informant Interviews.

²⁵ UNICEF Press Release. (2017). "DR Congo: Children's access to education under threat from the ongoing violence in Kasai province." Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/media_100838.html. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

²⁶ UNICEF Press Release. (2017). "DR Congo: Children's access to education under threat from the ongoing violence in Kasai province." Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/media/media_100838.html. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

²⁷ United Nations Children Fund. (September 15, 2017). "DR Congo: Children's Access to Education Under Threat from Ongoing Violence in Kasais Province." Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/dr-congo-children-s-access-education-under-threat-ongoing-violence>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

²⁸ Watt, Evan; Theirworld; Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. (June 12, 2017). "150,000 children out of school as violence rocks DR Congo province.". Retrieved from <http://theirworld.org/news/150k-children-out-of-school-in-kasai-drc>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

had been denied access to education.²⁹ In FY 2018, 94 schools in Kasai Central and four schools in Kasai Oriental were directly affected by the violence (defined as burnt, destroyed, or attacked).

Child protection continues to be an issue, with MONUSCO reporting a 34 percent increase in grave violations against children, including widespread child soldier recruitment in the Kasai province (339 reported cases by the Kamuina Nsapu); at least 650 children, including 177 girls, escaping or separating from armed groups between September and November alone; and the killings and maiming of 97 children in Kasai and Kivus, more than half of these perpetrated by state agents.³⁰

Focus group discussion findings indicated that violence permeates all focus group discussions, and rape is the most commonly ticked specific code. Violence — whether rape, sexual harassment, or corporal punishment — is a constant fear in day-to-day life in the Kasais. The fear of rape keeps women and girls out of the fields and the markets, which in turn reinforces food insecurity, famine, and illness. Families are torn apart because of the stigma of rape committed by government soldiers and militias. The secondary effects of violence and trauma and the effects they have on children’s ability to learn and the teachers’ difficulty in teaching feature prominently in focus group discussions:

“The military raped lots of women in the open and their children saw. Now there are divorces in the communities.”

— LUTULU. 2018

- Militia and soldiers target school children in uniform.
- Because of the danger, parents, students, and community leaders suggest that students travel to and from school in groups, but many acknowledge that the best they can do for their children is to pray.
- Teachers openly question whether corporal punishment is considered violence.
- Quantitatively, when asked about the major problems faced by the community, the majority of responses from parents are physical violence; however, none of the teacher or authorities’ groups mention physical violence as a concern (in the focus group discussions).
- “The teachers hit the kids and give them the homework as a type of punishment.” (Tshulia K. C., 2018)
- The community requested that teachers avoid beating children
- “The soldiers started many cases of violence. Following this, the children became very violent.” (Masanka K. O., 2018). Several informants discussed how violent the children themselves have become, stating that even the games the children create imitate the violence of the militia and military.
- When asked what the response would be if an act of violence was committed against their child or a child in general, most quantitative responses are worried and unhappy. Very few responded with “anger.”

²⁹ OCHA. (2017). “Complex Emergency in the Kasai Province, DR Congo, Situation Report No. 8.” Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/complex-emergency-kasai-region-dr-congo-situation-report-no-8-22>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

In questions that asked participants to describe types of violence in and around schools and how to improve security, students' quantitative answers listed forced labor as the second highest cause of violence after corporal punishment. Some authorities, when discussing violence, pointed out that children should not be working (i.e., should not be doing forced labor).

- *“Parents should rebuild schools instead of children (building the schools).” (Kamalumba K. C., 2018)*
- *“Do not kick students out of school during school hours; parents or community members should work in the fields, not the children.” (Kamalumba K. C., 2018)*

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

It is common in some rural areas for teachers to demand that students do manual work in their homes or fields, with some days reserved for female students — usually, when teachers rape students. Parents in Kasai Central said they do not usually have proof of it happening until a girl becomes pregnant, but they suspect that when girls are in the homes of male teachers without other adults around that sexual abuse happens. This practice creates conflict between female students and their male teachers and between students' parents and school directors. This practice also sometimes prevents girls from wanting to go to school because they are afraid of what will happen to them. Although systems are in place to fire teachers who commit this type of abuse, it is not unusual for a teacher to be relocated instead of being removed from service as the Ministry of Education requires.

From September to November 2017, there were 254 documented victims of conflict-related sexual violence between September and November alone, including 149 women and 66 children. More than 18 percent of these attacks occurred in the Kasais, where armed groups like the Bana Mura militia were responsible for 75 percent of incidents and state agents like FARDC were responsible for the remaining 25 percent. Holistic service provision for sexual violence survivors is still incredibly limited and inaccessible.³¹

One of the team's questions for the RERA was, “Tell me about the special risks for girls (in and around school).” The Kasai team rejected the question as unnecessary, because when they speak about risk in and around school for children, it is culturally assumed that risks for girls are always higher than for boys. With knowing that the risk for women and girls is much higher as a baseline, it is important to consider the specific ways in which women and girls are targeted. In the previous section, we mentioned that girls are targeted in the markets; in schools; and traveling to the field, school, and town. Focus group discussion findings indicated:

³¹ United Nations, (2018). “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” Retrieved from <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/report-secretary-general-united-nations-organization-stabilization-mission-democratic-republic-19>. (Accessed March 4, 2019).

- When asked who they would talk to if an instance of violence occurred on the way to school, many students suggested that they would talk to their fathers because their mothers are still in the fields. Women remain in the fields where it is perceived to be safer.
- Several respondents discussed early marriage. Early marriage is either a parental imperative (i.e., girls are forced to marry) or is forced (through rape and capture) by the militia and military.
- When asked how the conflict has exacerbated violence against girls in schools, all the student groups and most of the other groups cited rape.
- Rape of students by teachers within the school was the most common answer to the question, “In which ways are the education system making the conflict worse?” by parents, students, and authorities. Teachers do not cite rape as a safety issue.
- Because of cultural taboos, women and girls who are raped are often ostracized by their families, leaving them with no home.

A group of bandits in the bush continue to assault girls and mothers sexually. The group blocks the routes and violates all the young girls.

— LUTULU, 2018

FOOD INSECURITY

The role of the conflict on food insecurity cannot be minimized. An additional 7.7 million people, including 2 million children, face famine or risk of critical food security³² — a 30 percent increase from the year before.³³ An estimated 400,000 children in Greater Kasai are at risk of severe acute malnutrition, medical care has become increasingly hard to find in large areas of the Kasai provinces, and living conditions have deteriorated dramatically. On August 1, 2017, UNICEF Executive Director declared the Kasai Crisis as a Level 3 Corporate Emergency.³⁴

Focus group discussions revealed that women are not going to the fields to plant because of safety issues. Militia has stolen farming tools and eaten the available foods. Women are not going to the market to sell what little is available because of the risk of violence. These findings concur with a recent report from USDA predicts that the DRC will see no improvement in food security with “over 75% of their populations still food insecure in 2018” (Cornish, 2018).

TRAUMA

The concept of trauma requires some translation across cultures. Most of the respondents were unfamiliar with the idea of “trauma,” but once the enumerators explained the concept, they were able to identify behaviors.

- Parents reported that some children no longer speak, others cry for no apparent reason, children are afraid to go to school, and some isolate themselves and do not

One teacher reported that a student said, “If you punish me, I will kill you.”

— MOKULISHI, 2018

play with others. Teachers report that children have difficulty paying attention and have become more violent.

- Questions regarding trauma were difficult to convey during focus group discussions. When asked how trauma was being treated, all types of respondents replied that nothing was done or that they pray for the children. Some groups, particularly authorities, acknowledge the need for psychotherapy.

SCHOOL FEES AND ENDEMIC POVERTY

To questions about the barriers to education, respondents uniformly replied, “School fees!” They did not answer conflict, militias, or violence as might have been expected. Instead, respondents consistently pointed to the inability to pay school fees and to poverty. School fees are a major impediment to education in many parts of the world and all over the DRC; however, poverty in the Kasai provinces has been greatly exacerbated by the conflict.

- Most of the focus group discussions, when asked about barriers to education (including focus groups for out-of-school children), cited school fees as the top barrier to school attendance.
- Poverty was also often cited as a barrier to access:
 - Parents cannot afford to educate all their children. In families with many children, their poverty forces barriers to access.
 - The increased rate of poverty after the death of parents is a barrier. For example, one of the authorities’ brother died, and the brother’s children no longer go to school.
- Many reasons, like . . . lack of uniform.
- “Hunger, a child who has not eaten cannot run long distances to study.” (Nagalabetu, 2018)

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE RESILIENCE FACTORS THAT POSITIVELY INFLUENCE ACCESS TO SAFE AND QUALITY EDUCATION?

The RERA reveals areas of resilience that AII may use to build future programming. The RERA team views resilience in its simplest terms as the areas of strength that the community has maintained despite the conflict. The previous question addressed areas in which the conflict in Kasai creates specific difficulty, and the difficulties of living in conflict are detailed. This section looks at areas within the conflict in two Kasai provinces that have withstood these difficulties.

SCHOOLING

Despite the horrific violence, teachers are still teaching, children are still going to school, and parents are still allowing their children to leave the compound. Schooling is a normalizing activity that centers a community. The commitment to continuing schooling is a powerful reminder of the central force that schools and the act of schooling have in daily community building (Anderson-Levitt, 2003).

- One woman in a parents’ focus group discussion mentioned that she has noticed how much schools have helped with the reunification of people in their village and those in Nganga.
- Many of the interviewees were reluctant to discuss access to education for IDPs or outside ethnic groups, and some schools are reluctant or deny access to education for “outsiders.” What is significant is that not all schools are denying access. One authority said, “We accepted the displaced children because they are Congolese in their national territory” (Bakwa-Mpunga, 2018). A teacher, who is also an IDP, stated

that the displaced children were integrated into the school without a problem in participation.

SCHOOL CONDITIONS

Although many schools have been severely damaged, respondents focused on available solutions. By focusing on available solutions, the focus group's discussants demonstrated their resilience. They did not ask for or expect an overhaul of the educational system but instead expressed that fences, good benches, latrines, and teaching and learning materials would transform a "bad school" into a "good school." For some of the authorities, perhaps because they knew they were talking to a potential donor, no schools are in good condition.

- As specific points of resilience, despite the constant references to teachers raping students, many respondents did see a good school as one in which the teachers collaborate with parents.
- Perhaps because focus group discussions were held inside the school, it is not surprising that all the out-of-school children responded that they would like to return to school.

LEADERSHIP

Several questions indirectly asked about leadership in the community. Respondents reported that the church does not take an active part aside from a collection of money and that it is difficult for the administrative authorities to maintain their positions as leaders within the conflict environment. Many of the discussants suggested the roles and responsibilities of leaders, but leaders themselves complained about the lack of infrastructure and resources to do their work and/or address the problems created by militia violence. This was further corroborated in an interview with the *Bureau Gestionnaire* of Kasai Central. No single group or role was seen as the "place to go" for advice or assistance.

- Authorities said the movement of people is their biggest difficulty.
- Caritas and other NGOs are named as providing help and hope. One respondent described NGOs as responsible for calling people to come out of the bush, but other discussants denied NGOs any role in aiding or leadership.
- The church collects money to pay off the militia and mobilize funds for burials.
- When asked who they would tell of an incident on the way to school, students responded that they would talk to their parents. Parents, students, and teachers also suggested talking to the village head/chief, neighbors, president of the COPA, and school directors. Teachers put the responsibility onto the school director.
- When authorities were asked about additional steps the community might take to increase the security of the schools, most authorities pushed the responsibility onto others: parents, teachers, school directors. In one instance, the authorities suggested that the school should simply close to ensure the safety of the children.
- Parents, on the other hand, stated that the state needs to take care of the teachers and to construct good buildings.

SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Many respondents cite “giving circles” (*ristourines*) and community savings groups (*épargnes communes/caisses d’épargne/AVECs*) intended for a specific person or cause as a community strength. Respondents also made additional suggestions on how the community could better support itself, thereby indicating areas of potential resilience.

- “The teachers have an organization where at the end of each month, they put money together to give to one person and this helps establish order.” (Cijiba K. C., 2018)
- The church is seen as a source of fundraising for those in need. The church gathers funds for burials and other emergencies but is not seen as a place to run to or as an organization of significant leadership. One church has been active in gathering money to prevent harassment from the military.
- Although the church does not serve a place of leadership in a physical capacity, the church and religious beliefs are a source of spiritual solace to the community. Mass continues to be a place of “alliance” (Lutulu, 2018). One of the top codes for the question, “How do you protect your children on their way to school?” is “Prayer.”
- Many cited the radio as a source of optimism; NGOs are responsible for radio programming.
- Non-formal groups set up for specific purposes are often mentioned. Some of the groups include:
 - Parent committees set up to keep track of a group of schoolchildren’s safety (Nagalabetu).
 - A group of parents worked together to construct each other’s homes and houses for those in need.
- Meetings called by the village chief were cited by authorities and the village market was also cited as a place that contributes to communal cohesion and resilience.
- When asked, “What are the sources for community cohesion?” most responses used quantitative codes that were community fields.
- Respondents suggested roles for specific leaders such as having community and religious leaders hold dialogues on the goal of reconstructing peace in the village. Others suggested having community leaders mobilize the villagers to start going back to the markets.

For some, all the schools are good because they are there to teach their children, whereas those who say that most schools are good are still focusing on these considerations: good buildings, good benches, good teachers, and good trainings.

— BIKUKU, 2018

The church manages the community fields. In case of problems – like a death – they mobilize, pool money and contribute.

— BAKWA-MPUNGA, 2018

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the above findings and seek to answer the third research question:

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: HOW CAN OUR PROGRAM STRENGTHEN THESE FACTORS FOR AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT?

Recommendations are presented in terms of those that can be implemented by A!I, to inform its FY 2019 Work Plan and to inform USAID, DFID, and other donors on future funding and priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A!I

1. *Address trauma through violence prevention and psychosocial support.* The trauma that the conflict has inflicted upon communities in the Kasais cannot be underestimated, whether it is violence against women and girls in the form of rape or children having to witness the murder of their parents and family members firsthand. It is well documented that a child's ability to learn and concentrate is greatly hampered if the child has experienced trauma (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Kasais communities are not familiar with the concept of trauma as one that needs specialized help. In the comments, respondents described trauma but did not isolate trauma as a special concern. A!I should continue its psychosocial referral support activities and further focus them on the Kasais. A!I should also continue to train on and apply USAID's Doorways Safe-Schools Curriculum, specifically the modules dealing with Violence and School-Related Gender-Based Violence, Positive Discipline, and Code of Conduct. This, coupled with A!I's facilitated establishment of *comités de genre*, is also an important contribution.
2. *Continue to tackle school fees.* School fees are a significant barrier for children. A!I should continue to support school fees through its direct subsidization of targeted vulnerable children through its grants program in formal and non-formal schools. A!I's governance component should continue its community-based work in increasing transparency and accountability around how school fees are established and applied.
3. *Build upon existing resilience.* A!I should support existing AVECs to strengthen agricultural (i.e., joint community agricultural fields) and small livestock income generating activities (IGAs) through A!I's existing grants component. Community savings plans already exist and are viewed favorably by the community. A!I's grants component has already started to successfully support AVECs and IGAs through local CSOs. The RERA further corroborates the need to continue with these activities.
4. **Continue to apply CSA recommendations.** Other CSA recommendations include:
 - *Favoritism.* Some teachers indicated that school directors were favoring some teachers over others when selecting them to participate in A!I workshops, thereby causing friction within the school community. A!I should revisit CSA recommendations and establish mechanisms to eliminate favoritism in the teacher selection process.
 - *Equitable access.* Train education personnel on increasing protections for both learners and education personnel in and out of school. Train peer educators to raise

awareness and teach their peers about peaceful cohabitation, children's rights, child protection, and exploitation and abuse.

- *Community engagement.* Raise awareness of parents and communities on increasing protections for learners in and out of school. Raise awareness in communities on the role of the COPA and its responsibilities and on the importance of COPA members representing their communities.
- *External threats.* Advocate strategically and continually at the highest level of government to promote respect for free primary education and the payment of teachers.
- *Internal threats.* Develop risk reduction plans with community engagement in each of the targeted schools to mitigate both external and internal risks to child protection. Institute a complaint mechanism to allow parents and communities to alert the project of misuse of funds, fraud, and so on. Build capacities of COPAs and COGES on their roles, financial management, and conflict resolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID, DFID, AND OTHER DONORS

1. *Address trauma through psychosocial support.* Psychosocial trauma within the Kasais population is significant, yet there is very little support. Even though militia-related violence seems to be subsiding, the affected communities remain deeply traumatized by the recent violence inflicted upon them and local populations. USAID, DFID, UNICEF, and other donors should support programming and interventions in social-emotional learning and other psychosocial support strategies. Funders should also identify and strengthen local CSOs' and church networks' capacities to support these much-needed interventions.
2. *Support rapid funding for school construction and rehabilitation efforts.* Militia activity in the Kasais has led to significant school destruction. Rapid funding and construction mechanisms should be put in place to quickly rebuild schools. Rehabilitation efforts should also include school fences and latrines for girls. When requesting community support, funders and implementing partners should ensure that a "do no harm" approach is applied, because there is some indirect evidence of the use of child labor to reconstruct schools.
3. *Advocate strategically and continually at the highest level of government to promote respect for free primary education and the payment of teachers.* One of the clearest findings was the communities' respect and desire for education. As donor organizations and leaders within civil society, we should continue to advocate for a higher level of government support to promote a living wage for teachers.
4. *Strengthen local leaders and civil society organizations for greater ownership.* The RERA findings suggest that local civic leaders and religious leaders have failed to unify their communities. Certainly, they have done all that they are able to do and wish to do more. A/I can help them by enhancing their knowledge base on how to help leaders understand the extent and implications of widespread trauma, including their own; providing mechanisms through which religious networks and the government can be seen as contributing to community stabilization; and strengthening the rule of law within communities. CSOs and COPAs/COGES also have an important role to play in leading the community's return to normalcy. Empowering local CSOs and COGES to apply for and use small grants can enable communities to see these bodies as

leaders of reconstruction and a path toward lessening the violence in communities' everyday lives.

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ANNEX I. RERA SCOPE OF WORK

TEAM COMPOSITION

The Accelerate! RERA team will be identified as the scope of work (SOW) is developed. It is anticipated that the RERA team will have the following members with the following qualifications:

- RERA Advisor Nina Weisenhorn, USAID. Fluent in French, experienced in conducting the RERA, familiar with DRC.
- Education and Risk/Conflict Team Lead Dr. Jordene Hale, Chemonics. Experienced in conflict environments, skilled in analyzing qualitative data, and RERA-trained.
- Education Specialist Sonia Arias, Chemonics. Fluent in French, immersed in DRC.
- Kasais Education and CRS Specialist Freddy Kabala, AI!, Chemonics
- Research Coordinator Madeleine Dale, Chemonics. Experienced in research design, data collection, and statistical analysis.
- Desk Research and Data Analyst: Laura Harrington, Chemonics. Fluent in French, experienced in research design and analysis.
- Gender and Inclusion Expert Madho Lwango, AI!, Chemonics
- Translators/Transcriptionists Nadine Hejazin, Keira Crawford, Chemonics.
- Enumerators and MLs, all DRC citizens with regional expertise. AI!, Chemonics.
 - Kasai Oriental:
 - Alain Kasanda Yoka
 - Didier Dilenga Dilenga
 - Jules Badibanga Nsambuka
 - Emery Ngandu Kalengayi
 - Kasai Central:
 - Patrice Bijimine Badibake
 - Louis Kande Lukengu
 - André Kabasubabo Kazadi
 - Pierre Tshibuabua Kamuena
- Security Expert: T. Paul McHaffey AI!, Chemonics

FACILITATION OF SESSIONS

The RERA team adhered to the following principles when facilitating the focus group discussions and the key informant interviews:

1. Participation was voluntary. If any participant felt uncomfortable during the meeting, he or she had the right to leave or to pass on any question. There was no consequence for leaving or for passing on a question.
2. To protect participants, the facilitator stressed that the meeting objective was to solicit representative input, rather than personal input.
3. Consensus was not an objective of the discussions. When disagreement or divergence emerged, it was simply noted.
4. The identity of the attendees was treated as confidential, and anything said remained confidential.
5. Every response was respected, and no comment nor judgment was made. There were no right or wrong answers.
6. One person spoke at a time.

7. Everyone had the right to talk. The facilitator could ask someone who was talking a lot to step back and give others a chance to talk, and likewise could ask a person who wasn't talking if he or she had anything to share.
8. Breaks were allowed as required.
9. Before closing, ample time was offered for questions. (USAID ECCN, 2016)

RERA TIMELINE

Timeline	Activity	Details
January-March	Design SOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult USAID • Draft SOW • Revise and submit final SOW • Gather team
April	Desk Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesize previous research • Draft data collection plan
April-May	RERA Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather feedback and questions on plan from relevant stakeholders, including government officials and other donors • Data collection tools submitted • Institutional Review Board • Develop enumerator training course • Review safety plan with USAID Regional Security Officer
April-May	Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete primary data collection • Translate and transcribe data • Data review and cleaning
June	Analyze data and share preliminary finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis • Draft findings and recommendations
July-August	Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present for feedback • Finalize report

DELIVERABLES

1. Finalized SOW
2. Finalized research questions and tools
3. Draft report with preliminary analysis
4. Summary report of partner feedback on draft report
5. Final report
6. Final presentation or workshop/webinar as determined in consultation with USAID. Final presentation will be an initial action plan of recommendations that A!I will follow.

ANNEX 2. ADDITIONAL COUNTRY AND ACTIVITY CONTEXT

A!I IN THE KASAÏS

The ongoing conflict decreases access to primary education and threatens the quality of education as millions of people have been displaced, basic social services have been disrupted, and people in the Kasais are living in fear. The consequences of the conflict that have directly affected A!I programming include:

- Deaths of members of the education community, including but not limited to teachers and pupils.
- Destruction of several schools in conflict zones.
- Occupation of schools by either the militia or security forces.
- Mass displacement of populations.
- Increased vulnerability of parents becoming unable to take care of their children.

A!I is currently implementing in 11 educational sub-divisions in the Kasais. Specifically, the sub-divisions targeted through A!I are Kasai Central: Kananga 1, Kananga 2, Demba 1, Dimbelenge 2, Dibaya 1, and Kazumba Sud Kasai Oriental: Mbuji-Mayi 1, Mbuji-Mayi 2, Mbuji-Mayi 3, Katanda, and Miabi. With respect to the number of schools, teachers, and students, A!I targets the following schools in the Kasais:

		Kasai Oriental	Kasai Central	Total Kasais	Total A!I Target
Schools	At start of Y3 work plan	313	1,081	1,394	3,075
	As of June 30, 2018	281	1,034	1,315	2,718
	Percentage of Total A!I Target	10%	35%	45%	45%
	Percentage of Total A!I Target as of June 30, 2018	9%	34%	43%	43%
Teachers	At start of Y3 work plan	1,915	4,346	6,261	16,883
	As of June 30, 2018	1,762	5,601	7,363	16,305
	Percentage of Total A!I Target	11%	26%	37%	37%
	Percentage of Total A!I Target as of June 30, 2018	11%	33%	44%	44%
Students	At start of Y3 work plan	159,100	221,100	380,200	863,200
	As of June 30, 2018	109,712	257,238	366,950	785,563
	Percentage of Total A!I Target	18%	26%	44%	44%
	Percentage of Total A!I Target as of June 30, 2018	13%	30%	43%	43%

ANNEX 3. RERA TOOLKIT

https://eccnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/RERAToolKit_508.pdf

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