

K4D Impact Stories #2

K4D strengthening cross-sector learning for education and FCAS

It is [estimated that 80% of the world's poorest people will live in fragile and conflict-affected states \(FCAS\) by 2030](#). The [UK government committed to ensuring that it spends a significant portion of Official Development Assistance \(ODA\) in FCAS](#) and that it uses this to address the underlying causes of conflict and fragility and build stability. There is increasing interest in how education programming can not only work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts but work on fragility and conflict to promote stability.

The Education in FCAS Learning Journey aimed to bring together departments and groups from different areas of focus. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) team members from both Education and Conflict teams joined the learning journey as a means to share evidence and expose linkages on good practice across their departments.

Consultation with participants indicates engagement here provided a valuable vehicle for critical cross-department learning, equipping advisors with evidence, ideas and lessons for how education programmes can be delivered in ways that support stability, whilst laying the groundwork for a path forward for future strategic engagement.

The opportunity

Education can promote stability and at the same time exacerbate conflict. Evidence indicates that education holds tremendous potential to act as a means to promote positive social transformations. It can also be used as a tool to promote ideologies and values that aggravate conflict, especially under conditions of pre-existing tension. While there has been some experience of programming to work across these links, [this is an underdeveloped sector of work within the UK government](#). Consultation with advisors has highlighted the importance of bringing Conflict and Education advisors together to share lessons and evidence and plan together.

K4D's contribution

The Education in FCAS Learning Journey worked with advisors within Education, Conflict as well as others across UK Government to provide evidence, case studies and joint discussions as to how education

programmes can be delivered in ways that support stability. Key objectives included:

- > Facilitating an open dialogue on ideas, evidence and lessons learned across departments;
- > Identifying links between education, fragility and conflict through the collation and sharing of research; and
- > Equipping Education, Conflict and other FCDO advisors with evidence and ideas for how to better support stability.

[Grounded in an initial helpdesk report](#), this Learning Journey began with in-country group discussions facilitated online to surface some of the key issues faced by advisors when planning education provisions in conflict settings. From these discussions, key themes were identified, which led to four online panel events that explored these in more depth. These covered: relationships with the state in conflict-affected regions, curriculum design and development, education and social cohesion and countering violence and extremism. Events

were well attended across departments and valued for the insight they provided, building on a theoretical base supported by those with significant experience in the field. One team member highlighted the useful insights they gained from listening to the perspectives of academics, while another felt that the Learning Journey provided them with a valuable opportunity to reconnect with old research contacts and establish new links between departments.

Additional outputs included readouts and recordings from each webinar, a series of Helpdesk Reports and Case studies, and a final **Emerging Issues Report**. Two specific areas of technical assistance were provided at the request of country staff. One involved additional research into girls' education in South Sudan. The second worked with two local consultants to look at Peace Schools in West Pokot, North Western Kenya, and the increasing fundamentalism in North Eastern Kenya. Both studies were shared with FCDO in a final online event involving advisors from both areas.

These reports and country case studies were highlighted as being particularly useful in supporting participants' contextual and theoretical understanding of the topic as well as serving as a means to both validate and update previously held ideas. One participant reported that learning products enabled them to think critically and identify further areas in which to engage as an in-country Conflict advisor. Overall, Learning Journey engagement was well recognised as a useful vehicle to expose a range of participants to an enriching body of evidence as well as provide an opportunity for critical cross-department engagement to explore the application of learning.

Impact

Facilitating dialogue and learning across departments

A core approach of the Learning Journey was the pairing of advisors from different cadres at country level to reflect and incorporate interdisciplinary approaches. This approach provided valuable in-country peer learning and served to extend the learning between country pairings and central offices.

“What we saw happen was more organic conversations between education and conflict advisors, which is difficult to measure but shouldn't be underestimated. Of course they work together, but the facilitation of conversations where people have key questions, to build up some resources together and come together to discuss it – I think this was a key outcome.”

Consultations with in-country advisors support this finding. Specifically, one Education team member in South Sudan highlighted the value of this approach,

“I felt it was unique... it really gave me the perspective that you can't do programming in isolation.”

noting previous engagement on the topic had been limited to siloed efforts.

“To be honest, we had not been working very closely with the Conflict advisor back then, but during the Learning Journey we worked very closely together, we prepared presentations together, it was great. I felt it was unique, something that I didn't really think could happen... I think it really gave me the perspective that you can't do programming in isolation, without knowledge of conflict...we learned how to work as a team because we realised we needed each other.”

Collating and sharing evidence on the impact of education on fragility and conflict

There is an increasing body of evidence examining the intersection of education programming and its potential to create impact not only within fragile and conflict-affected contexts, but also as a means to actively promote stability. A core aim of The Education in FCAS Learning Journey was the collation and sharing of evidence with examples of best practice and identification of challenges and risks to implementation.

Interviews with participants indicate engagement here provided them with a deeper understanding of the links between education and stability, and the potential benefit to prioritising Education programmes. Country Case Studies and the report on Girls Education and Conflict were repeatedly noted for their contributions to providing a stronger evidence base on which to draw when considering the linkages between education and conflict. One in-country Education team member highlighted engagement with the Learning Journey made strengthened theirs and partners' ability to be reflective on their role,

“The findings were shared with all implementing partners, and, to be honest, they were really happy. The thing is we all know we are doing a good job, but this Learning Journey provided awareness that programme implementation needs to be conflict sensitive, there is a need to look at whether an intervention is fuelling conflict or contributing to long-term stability.”

Equipping advisors and providing evidence and ideas that promote ongoing stability

The Education in FCAS Learning Journey was well recognised amongst participants as a valuable vehicle that provided the time and space to make sense of vast amounts of data that could feed into the development of business cases and programmes. Interviews indicate a strong application of learning. For example, one Conflict Advisor reported they were able to raise better questions with implementing partners during review processes as a result of engaging with the Learning Journey. Another participant reported the use of one of the country case studies to inform their regional strategy and that it also “formed the anchor for informing the design of [their] new stability and cross border programme”. In fact, reports indicate that Learning Journey engagement was able to inform the design of several education programmes including those in Jordan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In South Sudan, the Education team member here recounted how lessons gained through engagement with the Learning Journey continue to impact their day-to-day decision-making processes.

“There is a need to have these Learning Journeys. It equips advisors on their roles and provides opportunities to reflect on issues such as governance and how we set up committees, boards of governors or on trainings we can provide to the governing of schools.”

Paving the way for future strategic engagement

Internal changes, including the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) with the Department for International Development (DFID) to form FCDO, have meant that the establishment of an embedded strategic link between Education and Conflict teams has yet to be firmly locked into place. Significant to this objective, evidence indicates The Education in FCAS Learning Journey alongside its supporting products have provided an important vehicle through which a diverse range of stakeholders has been able to bridge sector divides to enrich their knowledge base, explore experiences and ultimately utilise learning to inform Education programming. Participants interviewed report confidence that these efforts serve as a valuable set of groundworks from which future strategic engagement can be built.

FURTHER READING

- > [Education and Stability Learning Journey: Lessons Learned and Emerging Issues](#)
Juliet Millican
March 2021
- > [Education and Stability: Synopsis Paper](#)
Juliet Millican
December 2019
- > [Alan Smith: An introduction to Education, Stability Building and the 4Rs Framework](#)
Alan Smith
November 2019
- > [Tejendra Pherali: Applying the 4Rs Framework in practice](#)
Tejendra Pherali
November 2019

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K4D

Knowledge, evidence
and learning for
development