Education Data in Humanitarian Settings

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What are the data blind spots?

Inaccurate data sets and the misidentification of vulnerable groups often results from a misalignment of communication between humanitarian and development efforts. Due to climate change and increasing geopolitical tensions around the world humanitarian emergencies are becoming more frequent and so the lack of national data for education (blind spot) needs to be addressed. The key to improving resilience and education for these countries is to strengthen their education systems via the use of accurate, relevant and timely administrative data.

To highlight our issue of data blind spots in education, the case study of South Sudan is explored. The continued conflict and disruption within the country has worsened the humanitarian situation, contributing to data blind spots. It faces a lack of previously collected data, being only recently formed. Furthermore, large fluctuations in its GDP can be seen corresponding to various conflicts. As a result, data blind spots in education data are created, as there is a clear lack of funding. In sectors such as education, it lacks the infrastructure and systems required to collect this data.

Why should we fill the data blind spots?

It is said that "127 million primary and secondary school-age children and young people living in crisis-affected countries are out of school" (UNESCO, 2021). Education is an important part of encouraging development in these countries. It is highlighted as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under Goal 4 which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, n.d.). There are a number of indicators used to measure progress. However, little data is available on these indicators for South Sudan, even in comparison to other crisis affected countries. For South Sudan to reach the education targets set within the SDGs, major challenges remain.

How should we fill the data blind spots?

Currently some education data is collected in South Sudan, largely thanks to the work of organisations such as UNESCO and charities such as UNICEF. However, this is still basic and using outdated systems, with data collected using paper questionnaires. Whilst this is obviously better than nothing, it is a time consuming and ineffective method. Due to a lack of resources, without further funding and support, plans to improve the process cannot be implemented. Support and funding is needed to fill the data blind spot of education data in humanitarian settings. Particularly, in South Sudan, which as a relatively new country has suffered from the effects of prolonged conflict, economic factors, natural hazards and years of underinvestment in education. By improving educational infrastructure and resources, more effective data collection methods can be facilitated. Both by being more time and cost efficient, and collecting more detailed, consistent, reliable data. By improving the quality of the data it will help to improve the education system in South Sudan and aid future development, by allowing areas to be identified for more effective support and investment in the future**.**

UNESCO (2021) *Strengthening Education Data Systems in Emergencies and Crises* Available at: https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/information-systems

UN (n.d.) Sustainable Development Goals Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals