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EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES:
USAID EDUCATION SECTOR GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

JANUARY 2019

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDANCE

USAID has designed this education sector guidance document to provide a practical tool for USAID missions and operating units to more effectively include, engage, protect and partner with indigenous peoples in education sector programming. Consideration of indigenous peoples' development priorities and education needs through the engagement, consultation and inclusion of indigenous peoples in program design, implementation and assessment processes can help to mitigate adverse impacts on communities and lead to better outcomes. Well-structured communication, engagement and consultation processes are vital to advance education program objectives while taking into account indigenous peoples' expertise, needs and interests.

This education sector guidance document is based upon desktop research on international standards and implementation experiences, as well as interviews with USAID development professionals working in the sector. This guidance complements and is informed by USAID's Indigenous Peoples Programming Guidance [Policy], the USAID Education Policy and the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education. It is intended to be integrated with other USAID planning and programming tools, including Inclusive Development Analysis, Environmental Assessment, Stakeholder Engagement and dialogue mechanisms set forth in the Indigenous Peoples Consultation Handbook.[1]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND EDUCATION SECTOR PROGRAMMING

USAID recognizes education as a foundational driver of development, fundamental to achieving self-reliance. Education creates pathways to better health, economic growth, a sustainable environment and peaceful, democratic societies. In partnership with national education systems and local actors, USAID seeks to improve learning outcomes and provide the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples, with access to safe, relevant and quality education that promotes social well-being.

Indigenous peoples are among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in nearly every country where they reside. The 370 million indigenous peoples who reside in over 90 countries represent approximately 5 percent of the global population, but account for about 15 percent of the world's extreme poor, consistently falling at the bottom tier of well-being rating systems, including those pertaining to access to education, educational attainment and academic performance.

Indigenous peoples lack equal access to education. National laws in countries where indigenous peoples reside may not recognize indigenous peoples. Even when recognized, indigenous peoples frequently face negative stereotyping, discrimination and exclusion. Discrimination at schools contributes to poor performance and higher dropout rates. In sub-Saharan Africa, girls of every age group are more likely to be excluded from education than boys. School-related gender-based violence negatively affects educational outcomes for all children and girls are more likely to be absent from school as a result of sexual violence. Poverty and crisis pose additional pressures on all marginalized population groups, including indigenous children, to drop out. Some pressures, such as early and forced marriage, are disproportionately harmful to the educational opportunities of indigenous girls.

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[1] USAID Indigenous Peoples Programming Guidance (Policy) and Consultation Handbook are in draft form as of January 2019.

Indigenous peoples often live in remote regions and depend on their lands and natural resources for their sustenance. Their cultural identity, spiritual practices and governance systems are also tied to their traditional knowledge and relationship with the ecosystems they inhabit. Yet education systems in developing countries are frequently unwilling or unable to offer programs that respect indigenous peoples' diverse cultures. Few teachers speak indigenous languages and schools often lack basic materials. Indigenous children face more obstacles to learning, including a higher likelihood to suffer from hunger, enduring long travel distances to school, obligations to help feed family or care for siblings, a lack of familiarity with the language of instruction and learning content that has little relevance to their cultures and lives.

To help meet these challenges, the United States has expressed a commitment to "design quality education programs that are inclusive and culturally sensitive, promote the reduction of discrimination and inequality, and are accessible in local languages, particularly for indigenous communities and ethnic minorities." As part of its education programming, USAID aims to foster innovative educational approaches to better fit the cultural practices of indigenous peoples by employing language of instruction that students and their families use and understand, and recognize that teaching in indigenous languages not only enhances cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue but also improves prospects for achieving quality education for all.

CHALLENGES/ KEY ISSUES

Education laws, policies and institutional practices may neglect, ignore or fail to accommodate unique indigenous education needs

- National education sector plans that seek to expand access to classroom learning, improve quality of education and enhance education governance systems largely neglect the unique needs of indigenous students, parents and communities. A 2009 United Nations study on indigenous peoples' right to education found that indigenous peoples frequently reported they lacked control over educational initiatives targeted toward their children. The report noted that indigenous parents or community leaders, particularly women, are generally not consulted when these programs and services are designed and implemented. Without proper engagement or consultation with indigenous peoples, national education systems often fail to adapt curricula to account for indigenous peoples' challenges in this sector.

- Education system structures generally lack experience and capacity to identify and employ locally-owned solutions to educational challenges in indigenous communities. As a result, educational programs in indigenous communities are not delivered by indigenous teachers, are not conducted in indigenous languages and do not consider or offer learning related to indigenous history, traditional knowledge or culture.

- Most countries do not have disaggregated data that can accurately account for and describe indigenous peoples' education. Where data are available, they indicate that indigenous peoples lag behind the general population in educational quality and achievements. Data show that indigenous children, especially girls, enroll in and complete their education at a much lower level than other population groups.

Failure to develop curricula relevant to indigenous children poses special challenges for their identities and connections to their communities

- For many indigenous peoples, formal education does not reflect their distinctive cultures, languages and knowledge systems. Often, national languages will replace indigenous languages as the classroom language. A school child's learning a national language at the expense of a native language poses a risk of losing an important aspect of their identity, while also inhibiting their engagement with the dominant national society.

- Indigenous students do not see themselves, their histories or their concerns reflected in textbooks and instructional media. They frequently find that the education they are offered by the state focuses on individual achievement and competition rather than communal ways of life and cooperation. The skills taught in school may not be connected to the types of survival and work skills needed in indigenous economies. Indigenous students often return to their communities with a formal education that is unsuitable for their needs. Indigenous communities are also affected when young members must seek employment elsewhere, leading to a cycle of social fragmentation and brain drain.

- Development assistance institutions have helped foster innovative and culturally appropriate education programming in indigenous communities consistent with Article 6 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) World Declaration on Education for All, which affirms that successful learning arises from healthy and culturally appropriate environments where learning is connected to other aspects of a student's life and well-being. Nonetheless, USAID's education sector professionals have also noted discrete experiences where education system partners avoided implementation of activities designed to address exclusive educational needs of indigenous peoples.

Barriers to education may be both distinct to indigenous groups and include those encountered by other marginalized groups

- As noted in the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education, poverty and crisis threaten the educational opportunities of marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples, including risk of child, early and forced marriage; child trafficking; child labor; and recruitment by extremist groups. Individuals and organizations exploiting vulnerable children and youth often force them to drop out of school or prohibit them from attending in the first place. Indigenous peoples often have higher rates of child labor.

- Indigenous learning may be adversely affected by other factors including: arriving to school tired (due to travel from remote locations, or outside or family employment requirements), malnourished or in poor health. In transit and upon arrival, indigenous students may find themselves in an unsafe environment due to discrimination or violence.

- School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is a significant obstacle to learning for indigenous students and other marginalized populations, and especially girls. The extent and forms of school-related violence that girls and boys experience differ. Evidence suggests that girls are at greater risk of sexual violence, verbal abuse and harassment, and boys are at greater risk of

physical violence. Studies show that children and youth who have experienced violence are less likely to remain in school.[2]

- In many parts of the world, students may be beaten by teachers or staff, or face other violent reprisals while in school. A baseline study in Nicaragua found that one in three students reported that teachers or others in the school beat pupils.

- Additional obstacles include the stigmatization of identity, discrimination in schools, language barriers between students and teachers and inadequate access to education that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.

- With regard to indigenous peoples with disabilities, the lack of appropriate services can also contribute to higher rates of institutionalization, removal from family and separation from culture, traditions, community and society.

Gender differences further restrict learning opportunities for indigenous girls

- Research shows that girls face unique barriers to remaining and succeeding in school, including poverty, discrimination, the burden of household chores, pressure to marry, teen pregnancy, gender-based violence and traditional attitudes about the roles of girls and women.

- Indigenous girls face gender-based violence, intra-household violence and high rates of adolescent childbearing. Safety issues are also a deterrent to girls' and women's access to education. Rural indigenous children who travel from remote villages to school are at risk of violence, which discourages indigenous parents from supporting girls' pursuits of higher levels of education. In some indigenous cultures, young women may be discouraged, forbidden or shunned for leaving their homes and communities to seek education.

Educational policies have been and continue to be used to systematically dismantle indigenous culture and force displacement and assimilation

- In many parts of the world, education targeted at indigenous peoples is not only inappropriate to their needs, but it also threatens their existence. Historically and in contemporary practice, education policies and systems have been employed to systemically discriminate against indigenous peoples and assimilate them into the broader society by undermining their ability to practice and transmit their culture, languages and identity. Initiatives to deprive indigenous peoples of their culture are often linked to efforts at displacement from lands, territories and natural resources.

- The assimilationist model of education has accelerated the disappearance of indigenous cultures and languages. Today around the globe, many indigenous peoples are subjected to education policies that are detrimental. Boarding schools separate indigenous children from their homes, forbid them to speak their languages, prohibit customary garments and adornments and deny students the practice of their traditional forms of spirituality. These educational practices disrupt traditional learning processes, where indigenous elders otherwise pass down knowledge, values and their histories to new generations so they become stewards of lands, traditional knowledge and resources.

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[2] See also the UN Girls' Education Initiative Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

The following examples demonstrate how USAID integrates indigenous considerations into education programming:

TABLE 1. COMMUNITY ACTION FOR READING AND SECURITY (CARS) - NICARAGUA[3]

Program Overview: The purpose of CARS is to improve early grade reading outcomes and citizen security in five municipalities in the indigenous and Creole areas of Nicaragua (the Northern Autonomous Caribbean Coast Region [RACCN] and Southern Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region [RACCS]). Although most of the population in Nicaragua are Spanish speakers, these regions are notably characterized by their multi-cultural and multi-lingual diversity, a broadly dispersed population, and high rates of poverty. The area has three major population groups, the English-speaking Afro-Caribbean Kriols; various indigenous communities including the Misquitos, Ramas, Garifunas and Ulwas; and the numerically dominant (and growing) Spanish-speaking mestizo population.

Theory of Change	Objectives	Activities	Implementation Challenges
• Available data suggest that education and crime indicators in these municipalities are notably worse than national averages. • Research in Latin American countries suggests that reducing gender-based violence in culturally diverse communities is crucial to overall violence reduction. The causes and consequences are complex and context-specific. Field visits and observation of local communities and schools are essential for cataloguing local feedback and actions for	• CARS seeks to improve reading and educational outcomes while integrating ethnically, culturally and linguistically diversified communities through joint planning and local development efforts. • The design and implementation seek to respond to inequality in gender roles that affects family structures and community participation. Educational and recreational activities are executed with the intention of ensuring greater balance across participating indigenous	Activities include: (1) formal and non-formal reading programs; (2) community engagement; (3) local capacity development; and (4) knowledge generation and management. Specific tasks including developing region-specific educational materials for teachers in English, Miskitu and Spanish; working closely with communities to provide these cultural and linguistic materials; and aligning all materials with the national curriculum, including stories written by youth about resisting drugs and violence, and stories written by	• Teachers and facilitators noted some delays in receiving materials at the beginning of the school year. • There were some language mismatches between the materials provided and students' indigenous languages, and instances in which donated equipment and materials required electronic access that their schools did not have. • Educators also expressed a need for more frequent coaching and follow-up visits from CARS staff than received thus far, as well as a desire to see the new teaching techniques in action (over and above exposure to the techniques during training). These factors likely constrained teachers from fully implementing the educational approach and activities presented in the initial CARS training. Gender-related contextual restraints include: • Machismo is cited as the underlying factor in the prevalence of gender-based violence, intra-household violence and high rates of adolescent childbearing.

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[3] This project is being implemented on an ongoing basis as of January 2019.

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Theory of Change	Objectives	Activities	Implementation Challenges
reflection, analysis and program modifications.	groups in both community participation and access to resources.	children about pride in their culture and dreams for the future of their community.	• Gender-based violence is frequent, including assault and rape, incest, sex with minors, prostitution and trafficking of young girls and intra-familial violence.
			• Domestic violence usually is not reported and seen as an internal family issue.
			• The differences across ethnic and social groups tend to be cited as variations of degree rather than as different sets of norms. For example, informants state that women tend to be more powerful in Afro-descendant groups (Kriols and Garifunas), making independent decisions and holding leadership positions. Machismo is strongest in the mestizo and indigenous communities. Among the Misquito, for example, young women are often forbidden to leave their homes and communities.

TABLE 2. LIFELONG LEARNING PROJECT (LLP) - GUATEMALA[4]

Program Overview: The LLP program aims to improve education quality and increase access to education for underserved populations, particularly indigenous children and out-of-school youth.

Theory of Change	Activities	Successes	Implementation Challenges	Lessons Learned
• There is a lack of access to bilingual education in Guatemala. For decades, the country has sought to address the need for intercultural, bilingual education as roughly half of the population speaks a language other than Spanish. • The country remains highly polarized due to post-conflict attitudes and significant and persistent differences (cultural, economic and political), including polarization with respect to education. • Opposing viewpoints center around the interest to preserve and strengthen indigenous languages spoken, versus those who believe Spanish should be the national language of instruction.	• The Learning to Read project provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Education to increase teacher effectiveness, improve classroom learning environments and foster effective first and second language literacy acquisition (Mayan languages and Spanish language). • The program also extends alternative basic education and workforce training opportunities to out-of-school youth and increases their civic engagement.	• The program has observed trends in indigenous out-of-school youth who express that they are becoming aware of and requesting respect for their rights. This reinforces their sense of responsibilities to themselves, their families and their communities.	• There is a need to better adapt participation and organizational methods that reflect the vision and existing modes in indigenous communities. This would help obtain more buy-in and sustainability.	• Ensure that indigenous cultural values are sufficiently included in educational design and implementation; • Integrate existing community values and practices and use them as a platform for growth, which may allow LLP to promote prevention of crime, violence and illegal activity in a culturally relevant way; • Increase involvement and ensure future sustainability by integrating the vision, culture and perceptions of indigenous peoples into all curricula, including sexual and reproductive health curricula; • Include indigenous parents and communities in youth activities, like workshops in indigenous languages that incorporate indigenous cultures, traditions and stories; and • Establish links with indigenous institutions and organizations that have experience in adult involvement and change of behavior and attitudes.

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[4] This project is being implemented on an ongoing basis as of January 2019.

BEST PRACTICES

These Education Sector Guidelines should be applied in conjunction with USAID's Indigenous Peoples Programming Guidance [Policy] and other USAID planning and programming tools. These include Inclusive Development Analysis, Environmental Assessment, and dialogue mechanisms set forth in the Indigenous Peoples Consultation Handbook and Stakeholder Engagement which facilitate a collaborative framework for comprehensively engaging indigenous communities in the assessment, design, implementation and evaluation of USAID-supported strategies, programs and projects that affect their lands, lives and livelihoods. These tools provide guidance on the necessary engagement of indigenous peoples in each phase of the education program cycle, as well as safeguard mechanisms to mitigate risks of adverse impacts that may arise as education projects are implemented.

Improve stakeholder engagement to include indigenous peoples and develop learning environments that fit with cultural practices

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

USAID's Stakeholder Engagement Guidance identifies the following as best practices:
- Make information accessible and understandable by using mechanisms that reach interested and affected participants and include cultural, religious and linguistic considerations;
- Ensure the process is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders; accountable to vulnerable groups and considerate of gender; and
- Maintain transparency by providing stakeholders timely updates on changes, project progress and how their feedback may have been incorporated into the project development process.

- USAID's Education Policy seeks to tailor investments in education programming to the local context. The Policy emphasizes that "understanding sub-national and local issues can lead to more focused activities and identify disparities and inequalities, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations, including rural and remote populations or indigenous peoples."

- USAID has made the inclusion of stakeholders in decision making processes a common practice for project design, implementation and evaluation, as well as for environmental and social impact assessment. USAID guidance states that indigenous "stakeholder engagement should proceed with an understanding of the indigenous peoples' context including their governance institutions; practices; customary rights to self-determination; their spiritual and cultural heritage; their historical discrimination; their unique, and at times, vulnerable status; their recognition under international law, as well as any special legal status under national legislation/policy."

- USAID operating units and implementing partners need to determine whether a group is indigenous in order to fully understand their rights before engaging them as project stakeholders. Where information is inconsistent or uncertain, USAID's Indigenous Peoples Programming Guidance recommends consulting with the USAID Advisor for Indigenous Peoples Issues.

- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) recognizes that indigenous peoples:

  - "Have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning" (Article 14); and

- "Have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information" (Article 15).

- Developing educational programming with respect to cultural traditions should be done through stakeholder engagement and based upon the principle of Free, Prior, Informed Consent (FPIC). Stakeholder engagement is a process for participation and input, while FPIC should lead to an agreement. Consultation processes provide important opportunities for indigenous peoples to contribute local and traditional knowledge, promote the use of appropriate technologies, consider the interrelationship among environmental, cultural and social elements and reduce potential for conflict.

- Consistent with these principles, UNESCO urges education systems to facilitate the integration of indigenous traditional knowledge into curricula and teaching practices when indigenous peoples express their desire to do so. This should be done through a FPIC process with the knowledge holders. UNESCO guidelines call for the use of inclusive curricula and teaching materials. These guidelines encourage education systems to respond creatively to requests from indigenous communities for education that brings indigenous language and knowledge into school curricula and also supports learning that strengthens intergenerational transmission of local and indigenous knowledge. Such approaches may involve fielding learning in traditional territories, which reaffirms the status and recognizes the value of indigenous elders as knowledge holders.

- The U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education supports the design of quality education programs that are inclusive and culturally sensitive, promote the reduction of discrimination and inequality and are accessible in local languages, particularly for indigenous communities and ethnic minorities. Best practices in the development of such programs call for engaging local leaders and local language speakers to ensure effective language programs and culturally appropriate teaching methods.

  - USAID supported Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed (READ) to improve the reading and writing skills of grade school children in seven of the most widely spoken languages in Ethiopia.

  - To advance culturally appropriate education programs, education sector programs should disaggregate data indicators for indigenous peoples.

Examine Gender, Children with Disabilities and LGBTI Considerations

- The USAID Education Policy calls for investment and advocacy that reinforce laws, policies and procedures that "promote equitable access to quality education, the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities, and gender equality in education at the regional, national, and local levels." Additionally, USAID missions and operating units should integrate LGBTI considerations into education development programming to advance nondiscrimination and protections for LGBTI people.

- Engagement with indigenous peoples should be culturally sensitive and account for gender roles and generational relationships within indigenous communities and groups. In traditional indigenous cultures where norms may limit the participation of women, cultural sensitivity must be balanced by the principle of gender equality. In these instances, it is essential to design engagement approaches that provide for the meaningful participation of women within the specific cultural context.

- The engagement of indigenous peoples in education program design and implementation can be most effective when indigenous peoples are given opportunities to participate in a manner that recognizes and encourages their cultural knowledge and practices. Gender sensitive approaches are also vital, as indigenous women often play important roles in the transmission of culture, particularly with respect to transmitting indigenous languages.

- Indigenous peoples and organizations worked to develop specific procedural recommendations for each stage in the engagement process. These best practices for engagement with indigenous peoples were published by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as "the Akwé: Kon Voluntary Guidelines."

AKWÉ: KON VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

These guidelines set forth ten steps when developing an impact assessment of a project affecting indigenous and local communities:

1. Notification and public consultation of the proposed development (project) by the proponent.

2. Identification of indigenous and local communities and relevant stakeholders likely to be affected.

3. Establishment of effective mechanisms for indigenous and local community participation, including vulnerable groups (women, elderly, etc.).

4. Establishment of an agreed process for recording the views and concerns of the affected groups.

5. Establishment of a process whereby local and indigenous communities may have the option to accept or oppose the project.

6. Identification and provision of sufficient human, financial, technical and legal resources for effective indigenous and local community participation in all phases of impact assessment procedures.

7. Establishment of an environmental management or monitoring plan, including contingency plans regarding possible adverse cultural, environmental and social impacts resulting the project.

8. Identification of actors responsible for liability, redress, insurance and compensation.

9. Conclusion, as appropriate, of agreement or action plans on mutually agreed terms between the proponent of the project and the affected indigenous and local communities for the implementation of measures to prevent or mitigate any negative impacts.

10. Establishment of a review and appeals process.

Encourage Education System Partners to Employ Appropriate Safeguards and Avoid Adverse Impacts

- The UNDRIP calls upon countries to consult and cooperate with indigenous peoples to obtain FPIC before approving any project that would affect indigenous lands, territories or other

resources, and to provide mechanisms for redressing any adverse impacts resulting from such projects. An international standard for engagement with indigenous peoples, the Declaration has been incorporated into World Bank and International Finance Corporation safeguards addressing indigenous peoples' rights. A consultation process consistent with FPIC is required when indigenous peoples are present in or have a collective attachment to the project area and there is (1) risk of adverse impacts on the human rights, means of subsistence and/or culture of indigenous peoples; (2) potential for adverse impacts on land, natural resources and sacred sites (whether the land is under traditional ownership title or based on customary use and occupation); or (3) a threat that might result in the need to relocate from those lands.

- The Declaration further recognizes that indigenous peoples and individuals should not be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture (Article 8). Under the Declaration, states are responsible for providing mechanisms to prevent any action which has the aim or effect of depriving indigenous peoples of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities.

- Careful analysis should be taken to ensure compliance with USAID and other safeguard mechanisms designed to mitigate impacts and compensate for damages. Support for actions prohibited by the Declaration should be avoided. These include actions that could deprive indigenous peoples of their cultural integrity, cultural values or ethnic identities; intend or effect to dispossess indigenous peoples of their lands, territories or resources; cause forced population transfer; cause forced assimilation or integration; or develop propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against indigenous peoples. Additionally, unintended gender-related consequences of the activity must be documented, and efforts must be made to put a viable solution into place.

- Importantly, as demonstrated in the 2017 ruling by the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights in the case of the Ogiek of Kenya, even where indigenous peoples may not be formally recognized by national law, they still have the rights to special protections based on their status. These rights are also inextricably linked to their traditional territories and resources, the boundaries of which may not be delineated and may be actively disputed.

- USAID missions and operating units should utilize a due diligence process to ensure education sector programming does not adversely impact indigenous culture or deprive indigenous peoples of their cultural values or ethnic identities. Expert guidance, whether provided by professional staff within the USAID mission, external consultants or through consultation with the USAID Advisor on Indigenous Peoples Affairs, saves time, reduces costs and mitigates risk of harm.

By employing effective engagement, consultation and risk mitigation practices, USAID Missions and Operating Units ensure that project partners, grantees, contractors and subcontractors meet their responsibilities to indigenous peoples in education sector program implementation. Additional resources for engaging, empowering and safeguarding indigenous peoples include:

- UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples
- The Challenge of Indigenous Education: Practice and Perspectives (UNESCO)
- The International Association for Impact Assessment's SIA guidance