
Navigating global guidance

The accessibility and use of child protection and education in emergencies guidance - research brief

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Summary: what you absolutely need to know

The Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility develop, commission and disseminate technical guidance on various topics to support practitioners around the world. To ensure these efforts are effective, they requested Translators without Borders to consult practitioners in three humanitarian contexts on the accessibility and use of the guidance. The findings presented here are intended to support organizations commissioning new content, adapting existing content, or considering disseminating content, to ensure it is as accessible and useful as possible to practitioners in emergency contexts.

Research participants in Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique work in different conditions, but they flagged many similar constraints on their access to and use of guidance shared by the global clusters.

We identified two types of barrier to document accessibility: barriers to physical access and barriers to understanding. We found that intended users face both types of barrier with Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility resources.

Barriers to physical information access

A number of systemic issues can prevent intended users from physically accessing documents. Issues affecting physical access to Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility information include:

- Limited reading time owing to other work demands
- Poor internet access limiting search time as well as reading or viewing time
- Unreliable electricity supply
- A lack of awareness about what content is available and where to find it.

Barriers to understanding information

Other issues affect whether intended readers can find, understand and use the information in documents once they have physical access to them. Barriers to understanding that we found during the research include:

- A lack of guidance in the languages practitioners prefer (see the text box below)
- Use of unfamiliar sector terms and acronyms
- Ineffective document structures and formats
- A lack of localization, which makes guidance seem irrelevant to practitioners
- A "one-size-fits-all" approach to content development that fails to distinguish between different readers' needs.

In relation to the last point, participants described using guidance written for education or child protection practitioners to communicate concepts and practices to a wider and often less educated audience. They raised the need for tailored guidance that would make information accessible to a less-informed audience.

Key recommendations from participants and based on their feedback are broadly in line with points made in background interviews with global and national clusters, indicating some shared awareness.

Overcoming barriers to physical access

Systemic barriers to access are generally difficult for writers and publishers to influence. However, we see several opportunities to vary current dissemination strategies to address these barriers for audiences affected:

- Plan, budget, and agree responsibility for widespread dissemination of durable hard copies, and consider dividing longer documents into separately printed modules to be easier to share and carry.
- Prioritize dissemination of multiple hard copies to national and local practitioners and their institutions.
- Introduce new materials through in-person or online presentations to a wide audience.
- Develop audio or audiovisual versions to expand access to the content.
- Communicate clearly and widely where people can find tools and guidance.
- Help practitioners access the most relevant content and prioritize the use of limited reading time by emailing it directly and signposting topics and categories of content (urgent, practical guidance, background reading, reference, etc.).

Overcoming barriers to understanding

Writers and publishers have a direct influence over barriers to understanding. Consultations on specific guidance materials found that readers had problems understanding and navigating even those materials designed to be more user-friendly. Recommendations for improving this revolve around the general principles for plain-language communication. They include:

- Communicate in the languages of your audience: this includes using the variant of the language used locally, for instance Congolese not Kenyan or Tanzanian Swahili for DRC, and Mozambican not Brazilian Portuguese for Mozambique.
- Use familiar terms and sentence structures: avoid or explain technical terms, use simple sentence structures and words and concepts familiar to your intended audience, and don't distract from key messages with unnecessary detail.
- Provide simple illustrations and summaries to aid understanding and recall.
- Adapt content to be relevant for your audience's work: participants warmly welcome resources that reference relevant content like national legislation, and generally lack time to adapt global resources to their own needs.

Some of these recommendations require investment in new skills and resources. The research provides useful input from users to support decision making on the potential value of that investment.

Some recent materials shared by the global clusters take a number of these points on board, reflecting a growing awareness of plain language, multilingual communication and contextualization. Yet consultations on specific guidance materials found that readers had problems understanding and navigating even materials designed to be more user-friendly. Ultimately no amount of care in writing and design can beat co-creating or testing draft content with your audience.

Some of these recommendations have resource implications, to be considered alongside their potential benefits. National clusters make choices about which materials to localize and share based on their own assessment of relevance, in consultation with partners, and the resources available to them. This report doesn't seek to minimize the challenges involved in those decisions. Instead it aims to provide additional information from users themselves to support decision-making on the resources intended for them.

A note on disability inclusion

This study asked participants for their views on how inclusive existing materials are with regard to disability and what could be done to make them more inclusive. Their suggestions included developing more audio and audiovisual resources, using more inclusive illustrations, Braille and sign language interpreting, and commissioning a special or inclusive education specialist to review materials. However, this study was not designed to provide robust evidence on the underexplored issue of disability inclusion. We didn't ask participants whether they have experience of living with a disability, so we don't know how well informed these responses are. In the spirit of "nothing about us without us" we would therefore recommend that the Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility commission specific research to gather that evidence in order to improve access and value for people with disabilities.

Resources are still mainly available in a few international languages

Practitioners consulted for this study in all three focus countries frequently complained that technical guidance shared by the global clusters is not available in the languages most relevant for their contexts. These include Mozambican Portuguese, Congolese Swahili, Bangla, Myanmar (Burmese) and Rohingya. A quick review of the main online resource libraries for child protection and education in emergencies supports their assertion. The INEE, Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, and Save the Children resource libraries all contain content in a range of languages. The Save the Children library in particular contains numerous resources in non-UN languages such as Myanmar and Swahili. However, English-language resources are by far the most numerous, and recent resources are typically also available in Arabic, French, Spanish and sometimes Portuguese. This suggests that, despite welcome efforts to make sector resources more multilingual, language remains a significant barrier to accessing international guidance, particularly for practitioners who don't speak or aren't fully comfortable in the official UN languages.

Checklist for commissioning and adapting content

This plain-language checklist will support organizations commissioning new content, or adapting existing content, to ensure it is as accessible and useful as possible to practitioners in emergency contexts. When clusters are requested to disseminate resources, they can also use this checklist to verify that the resources are more likely to overcome the functional accessibility issues we identified.

The checklist draws on research participants' insights into the conditions in which they use the content. These include restricted reading time owing to other work demands, limited electricity, and poor internet access. Participants also described using materials written for education or child protection practitioners as a basis for communicating concepts and practices to a wider and often less educated audience. Content will therefore be most effective if it is developed with those constraints in mind.

The expectation is not that every new resource developed will meet every recommendation below. Each recommendation is intended to help better tailor education and child protection content to the needs of its intended audiences, and inevitably those needs vary. Use them as a reference to guide authors, editors, and designers. For more on applying plain-language principles, see:

https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Plain-Language_Write-Clearly.pdf

Make the content relevant

- Understand your audience's information needs, and prioritize addressing them. Then test your content with that audience, and adjust accordingly.
- State the purpose of the document and its peak message, and include those in the first or second paragraph.
- Write for a non-specialist audience, recognizing that practitioners may use materials to communicate with parents and others with a role in children's protection and education.
- Translate key content into local languages, and seek input from local sector practitioners to ensure translations are accurate, comprehensible and appropriate to the context.
- When including hyperlinks to other resources, ensure those resources are in a language your audience understands. Where your audience is likely to read hard copies, provide hard copies of essential supporting material too.
- Test draft material with representative readers for comprehension and appropriateness.
- Consider developing shorter modular materials to enable users to focus on the content that is most relevant to them.

Make the content findable

- Order the content to present the most important points early.
- Include design features that help readers to navigate the content and find the information they want. Consider typical reading patterns, including scanning.
- Provide an index to aid navigation within a printed or electronic document.

Make the content easy to understand

- Maximize reader comprehension by using words that are familiar to most readers in your intended audience. This will make your content accessible to a wider range of readers. It will also make it quicker to read, even for people who could potentially understand less common words.
- Aim for an average sentence length of 15-18 words, with a maximum of 25 words. Remove redundant words, split long sentences into shorter ones, use vertical lists, or use a combination of these features.
- Write predominantly in the active not the passive voice.
- Use simple sentence structures to minimize effort for the reader.
- Avoid the use of abbreviations where possible: spell them out in full, with a plain-language explanation where appropriate.
- Avoid technical terminology where possible, and explain in plain language where not.
- Consider including a short and well signposted glossary for key terms and essential abbreviations, with plain-language explanations.

Make the content legible

- Avoid dark backgrounds in text boxes and text over pictures, which can make the text harder to read. Maximize contrast, ideally black text on a white or yellow background, as recommended by organizations of people with visual impairments.
- Use a limited range of colors.
- Present text in a single column. Research participants found it harder to keep their place when reading text presented in multiple columns.
- Use bullet points and lists for ready reference.
- Consider including simple diagrams and other graphics to break up the text and aid rapid comprehension and recall of key concepts.
- Use a font size of 14 point or larger.

Mozambique

Key findings from the Mozambique country research are around issues of access, language, and awareness of guidance materials. Access issues are mostly related to internet connection, electricity and related costs. Twenty-eight percent of Mozambican staff prefer to receive hard copies. Those who have internet access request resources by email rather than having to search websites. The vast majority of respondents prefer resources in Mozambican Portuguese, followed by resources in local languages. Participants report difficulties understanding resources that are written in Brazilian Portuguese and that use technical terms. One third of participants had never used resources or guidance materials shared by the clusters before. They link this to poor connectivity and a lack of awareness of what resources exist or where to search for them. To improve the usability and suitability of materials, guidance and resources should be localized to reflect the Mozambican context. Respondents want resources as practical guidance, shorter, and with more graphics. The use of technical terms and complex language hampers comprehension.

Resources are currently largely:	Participants would prefer resources to be:
Written	In a range of formats, including audio and video
Text-heavy	Graphics, tables and illustrations
Long and academic	Short and practical, including indexes, do's and don'ts and 'must-know' lists that summarize the main messages
English and Brazilian Portuguese	Mozambican Portuguese (or failing that European Portuguese), local languages, and English
Using complicated language	Using plain language and short sentences
Using technical terminology	Using less technical terminology
Using abbreviations	Providing a glossary of abbreviations, spelling out abbreviations, or avoiding them altogether
Downloadable documents with large file sizes	Downloadable documents with small file sizes, and online resources
Using few generic images	Using more pictures and contextualizing with African faces and landscapes
In small fonts	In larger fonts
Generic, with an expectation that local practitioners will adapt them as needed	Adapted to the relevant context
Not explicitly linked to national guidelines and legislation	Referencing national legislation and standards so they are confident they can apply the guidance shared by clusters

Research participants were predominantly Mozambican nationals, so findings largely give a national staff perspective. Of those who indicated their sector, 62% were from the education sector and the remainder from the child protection sector. The majority of participants were from either Sofala or Maputo Province (including Maputo City), but practitioners from all over Mozambique completed the survey. For more details on participants' profiles, see the summary of survey findings in Annex 2 and the methodology overview in Annex 3.

Internet issues and lack of knowledge of where to look hamper physical access to guidance

One third of survey participants said they had never used any education and child protection resources provided by the Education in Emergencies Cluster or Child Protection Area of Responsibility before. This was echoed by focus group participants in both rural and urban areas. The main difficulties described were restricted access and availability of the materials, including not knowing the materials existed or where to find them, and the cost and unreliability of internet access. National staff who had used sector resources and guidance before identified the same access issues. In total, more than half of all Mozambican participants face difficulties accessing materials shared by the clusters, or have never tried in the first place.

Key informant interviews highlighted that internet access is particularly difficult in rural areas, where not just connectivity and cost but also electricity supply and access to a computer are challenges. But access to online resources can be challenging in urban areas too. Focus group participants in Maputo all had internet access on their phones, but none cited the internet as a means of accessing professional resources. Relying on personal internet connections via their mobile phones, national staff say they prefer materials with small file sizes and formats adapted to a low-resource context. This could also include content optimized for viewing on a mobile phone.

"I'm not used to the internet. Even at work in the school we don't use digital formats with pupils. We don't have the work conditions [for that]."

-Pedagogical director of a school in Beira

Education and child protection practitioners both described the same issues with accessing sector materials and lack of knowledge about the resources available. Nor did these issues vary by gender, age, or location of staff. Yet how participants access materials did differ between sectors. Education staff, teachers in particular, said they generally receive information via directives from the Ministry of Education and in hard copy. One participant even voiced concerns about using resources and guidance that had not been issued by the Ministry of Education and might contain information that had not been confirmed by the authorities, especially in relation to COVID-19. When education practitioners access materials shared by the clusters they do so predominantly through an internet search (63%), but they also obtain resources in meetings and from colleagues (both 37%). Focus group participants in Maputo reported that they had received the Framework for Reopening Schools from colleagues through social media (a WhatsApp group). Child protection staff reported more varied access to cluster materials. Their access is mostly in hard copy at the office (50%), but they also obtain materials from internet searches and sharing among colleagues (both 45%), through meetings (42%) and by email (41%).

Despite the access issues around internet connectivity for national staff, 72% prefer to receive cluster materials in electronic form. This tendency is slightly higher among education (72%) than child protection practitioners (63%). But not every electronic format is easily accessible to everyone. INGO staff are the largest group to receive materials by email, suggesting they have better email access than staff of national organizations, volunteers or government teachers and perhaps are more likely to be on cluster mailing lists. Yet email is currently the preferred means of access for 81% of education staff and 64% of child protection staff. Participants explained that they could more easily access and archive an email attachment and return to it whenever they needed. This finding might also be biased by the online nature of the survey, suggesting that all survey participants have access to the internet. One female survey participant aged 20–30 years in a rural area of Sofala Province said she obtained all cluster resources via internet search. She described her experience of searching for content online:

"It is not easy to find the material on the internet and the clusters don't share the link with other organizations to find the material. When you find the documents, most of those on the internet are available in English and it's difficult for us to understand some of the information."

Thirty-six percent of child protection participants and 19% of education participants favored an online database of resource materials. The findings suggest many national practitioners are not aware of existing websites and resource libraries like those maintained by the Global Education Cluster, INEE and Child Protection Area of Responsibility.

Asked how they would prefer to access cluster resources, several participants requested training and regular meetings to discuss guidance materials, ask questions, and exchange practical experiences. This demand seems to reflect some of the further challenges national staff encounter in accessing cluster materials, including a limited understanding of materials which use unfamiliar language and technical terminology.

Language and technical terms limit understanding and use

The second most common access constraint national staff cited was that materials are in a language they are not fully comfortable with or are otherwise difficult to understand. Survey participants suggested that most of the available materials were in Portuguese and English. Sixty-seven percent of those who identified the languages of sector materials they received specified Portuguese, and 51% specified English. Key informants and focus groups stressed that the use of Brazilian rather than Mozambican Portuguese made them harder to understand. The form of Portuguese used in Mozambique is closer to the European variant, and words for common concepts like “toilet” or “carer” differ markedly between the two. Women had more difficulties understanding the language used in materials shared by the clusters than men, in particular in the age groups 20-30 and 50-60.

Mozambican practitioners reported that materials shared were sometimes hard to understand because they use technical terms. Key informant interviews and comprehension testing in focus group discussions identified technical terms including “resilience” (resiliência), “disinvolvement” (desenvolvimento), “intervention” (intervenção), or “cognitive” (cognitivo) as confusing even in Portuguese. Men criticized the use of technical terms more often than women. At the same time, a higher proportion of men (55%) than women (35%) found materials shared by the clusters clear and helpful.

These issues make it harder for practitioners in both sectors to absorb new information in the guidance quickly. Of those participants who had accessed materials before, a majority (58%) said the materials are “okay to read”, 36% found them “very easy to read”, and 6% “not easy at all to read”. Still, 68% of these said they “often” or “sometimes” had to read material more than once to understand the writer’s meaning. This suggests that “okay to read” doesn’t mean guidance is necessarily clear. Overall a higher proportion of national child protection practitioners (54%) than national education practitioners (39%) find materials shared by the clusters clear and helpful.

Participants across all research methods (survey, interviews, and focus groups) called for materials to be translated into local languages as well as Portuguese. Sena, Ndau, Shangana and Makhuwa were the main languages requested. Key informants interviewed suggested translating materials into the 16 languages identified in Mozambique for bilingual education.

“Guidance is always in English and we need to discuss with those who do not speak English, thus you need to translate to Portuguese and again [into] local language sometimes.”

-Male child protection manager, 41-50 years, Sofala Province

One government official interviewed stressed the importance of accurately translating the content of resources for the local context. They noted that the Ministry of Education took responsibility for ensuring that accurate information was disseminated during the pandemic, for example, to avoid confusion.

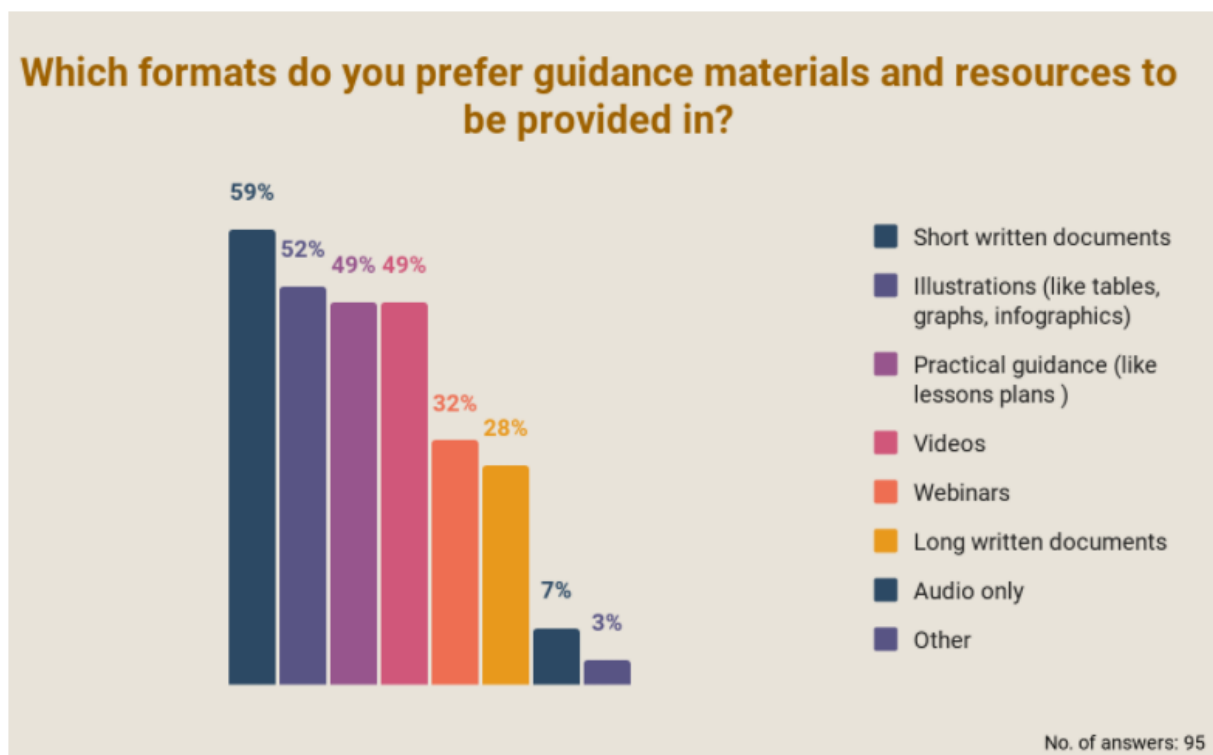
Efforts to test focus group participants’ comprehension in local languages partly failed because many did not speak the languages proposed. This highlights a situation where, perhaps because of national policies on teacher assignment, teachers in particular don’t always speak the local languages of the area where they work. This makes it particularly important for resources to be available in languages that parents and other community members can understand. Comparing recall rates among bilingual speakers in Sofala showed that

recall rates for text in Sena were much higher than for text in Portuguese. Sena speakers recalled 69% of the local language information and 38% of information given in Portuguese. The same test with Shangana speakers in urban Maputo found recall was better with information in Portuguese, which may suggest that local language resources are particularly relevant for local staff in rural areas.

Another type of language barrier to accessing resources was identified by a key informant from the education sector, who had difficulties understanding what was being said during cluster meetings that he suggested were held in English. This initial language barrier made it difficult for the key informant and his team to stay updated and receive information on existing materials in the first place.

Shorter, more practical documents and resources in a range of formats would be easier to use

Most of the materials accessed by respondents are written documents; 49% of survey participants typically receive long written documents and 48% shorter ones. This contrasts with a preference voiced by participants in all three research exercises for a more varied range of formats, including videos, webinars and posters. Non-text formats seem particularly suited to less literate audiences, including community members and some cluster members in rural areas. Participants highlighted that many speakers of local languages have not learned to read these languages and so find information easier to understand in video, audio or graphic form.



Survey respondents also called for non-text content such as tables, graphs and infographics, and more practical guidance like lesson plans. Focus group participants in both Maputo and Sofala requested more pictures or illustrations in all the texts reviewed. Key informants highlighted the value of flowcharts and other diagrams for providing a visual summary to help the reader retain new information. Where documents cover a large volume of information, key informants called for tools such as indexes and checklists to help the reader navigate to the content they need.

These requests were linked to ensuring the resources benefit the work of their intended audiences. Several participants mentioned that they are busy and don't always have time to read longer guidance in detail. One key informant highlighted that school teachers and directors in rural areas, who combine their school responsibilities with farming, cannot be expected to take general materials and adapt them to local realities. The speaker felt a clear summary of the main points would be more helpful for these groups than a long manual.

“Most materials are academic, long and not adapted to direct use by local actors or decision makers who do need short practical guidance, (1 or 2 pagers).”

-International EiE manager, Maputo

“Do summaries. Include boxes with key actions highlighted with bright colors. Put it in bullet points. Here you have many action points and ideas in a paragraph. People do not have time, electricity or other conditions to read long sentences. People are in emergency”

-School director, Beira

Applying plain-language principles is an established way of making written content more immediately understandable for the widest possible audience. The research sought to test this by asking focus group participants simple questions to gauge their recall of key points on either the original version of one document or a plain-language version. In this case the findings were inconclusive, with variable but relatively low scores across both versions and only 1% improvement of recall.

23% of survey respondents said their experience with guidance materials to date was that they were in formats that were not accessible to them, for instance only online. Key informants working for INGOs in Beira and Pemba preferred to receive hard copies because these were suitable for use in remote rural areas. Focus group discussions indicated that teachers in Sofala largely receive resources in hard copy, while child protection staff in the province receive them through email and websites.

The guidance is useful but not always inclusive or suited to the context

Sixty-nine percent of survey respondents said they had used guidance materials and resources provided by the GEC and CP AoR in their work. Only 8% said the materials were not relevant for their work. Fifty-two percent described the materials received as “clear and helpful”. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews praised the relevance, detail and value of the resources discussed. Participants described using various materials provided to develop checklists and manuals for local use and to deliver training.

“In general, the materials are good, very rich in terms of content with a clear and easy to understand language.”

-Child protection project manager, Maputo

However participants reviewing specific materials in both interviews and focus groups consistently raised concerns about what they felt was insufficient adaptation to the local context. They pointed to examples such as a lack of alignment with national policies on gender, pictures that did not reflect local realities, and hyperlinks to resources not available in the language of the document. Several key informants called for more involvement of local practitioners in the development and translation of new materials to ensure they are fully suited to the context they will be used in.

“I’m not sure if the document was produced in Mozambique. When you look at the picture on the cover it talks about another context, somewhere in Asia. That would make people not want to check the content. You know sometimes you need to be smart and value people and culture before they listen to you.” -Female teacher, Maputo

When asked specifically about how inclusive the materials were, most key informants felt they were gender-sensitive. However three key informants felt more effort was needed to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. Focus group participants suggested practical measures to cater better for people with a range of impairments. These included making some resources available in audio, Braille and print, and using more pictures and a larger font. A staff member of a disability organization also suggested that sign language interpreters could be made available to support people with hearing impairments at meetings.

Participants requested further information on specific topics

When asked if there were other topics they would like more information on, 70% of Mozambican participants regardless of sector answered yes. Their suggestions for other topics were:

- Education in emergencies
- Child protection (all forms of violence against children)
- Child rights
- Inclusiveness
- Case management
- Early marriage and early pregnancy
- GBV
- Disaster preparedness and prevention

Both child protection and education staff asked for resources on topics usually covered by the other sector. However, the majority of child protection and education staff asked for further resources and guidance on key issues for their own sector. This suggests a general demand for a wider distribution of existing resources and guidance materials. Other requested topics were: girls' menstrual hygiene, financial education, entrepreneurship, education, protection during COVID-19, distance learning, and the cluster system's "4 and 5 Ws".

Democratic Republic of Congo

Connectivity and download costs are also a challenge for accessing materials in DRC, particularly in rural areas, as is knowing where to find the right content. In a context of limited resources, overwork and information overload, participants want materials that are easy to navigate and given to them directly, either through their inbox or in hard copy, rather than having to look for them online. Professionals in both sectors use new materials to inform and train colleagues in their local area and to communicate with non-specialists such as carers and parents of students. For this reason as well as for ease of comprehension and reference, participants called for materials to be developed with a less literate, less specialist (secondary) audience in mind, and for translation into local languages.

Resources are currently largely:	Participants would prefer resources to be:
Short written documents	Short but using more graphics, tables and diagrams
In French	In French, Congolese Swahili, and other local languages
In complex language	In plain French, simply worded and presented to accommodate all literacy levels
Heavy on jargon and abbreviations	Explaining technical terms and abbreviations
Suitable for technical specialists	Suitable as a basis for communicating with non-specialists, including parents and foster carers
Too general and global	More in-depth and adapted to the contexts they work in
Hard to find on the internet	Shared more widely and directly
Long documents with several chapters	Short documents covering one aspect at a time (to allow for faster circulation among colleagues)

Not available in sufficient numbers in hard copy	Supplied in greater numbers and in durable hard copy of portable size (A5)
In small fonts	In larger fonts against a plain contrasting background
Using generic pictures	Using images and illustrations that have been checked against local sensitivities, with captions
Not explicitly linked to national guidelines and legislation	Referencing national legislation and standards so they are confident they can apply the guidance shared by clusters

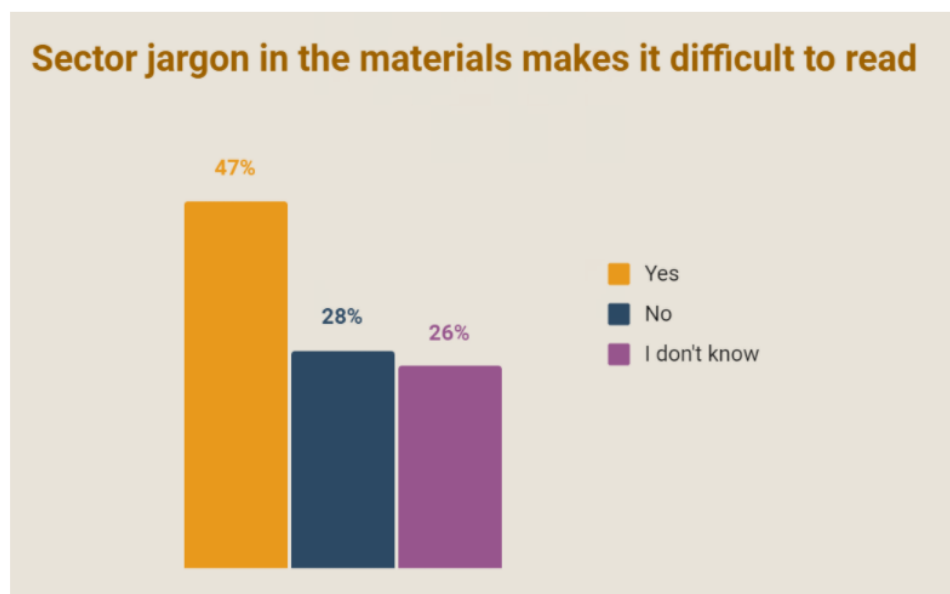
Participants in DRC were again predominantly men (70% across all activities), and spoke mostly Swahili at home, followed by French and local languages like Nande and Lingala. The majority of participants were national staff (95%) working in urban contexts (61%). Most of them worked in North Kivu (42%), followed by South Kivu (21%), Kinshasa (14%) and Kasai-Oriental (12%). Of those who indicated their sector of activity, 78% worked in child protection, 22% in education. Child protection participants were mainly volunteers, community outreach workers and national NGO staff, so their input may tell us more about making resources accessible to a wider audience. For more details on participants' profiles, see the summary of survey findings in Annex 2 and the methodology overview in Annex 3.

Language, structure and terminology affect comprehension and relay

Participants reported that resources currently available to them are predominantly in French and English. Several survey participants felt that most materials are in English. A majority of national staff preferred to receive materials in French, which is also the language of instruction in DRC. Swahili (the main lingua franca in North Kivu, where the research took place) was the second most preferred language (49% of survey respondents) followed by Lingala (14%). Focus group participants noticed that the practical guide on girl soldiers *Mwenendo wa Kufuata* is written in Kenyan Swahili, which is difficult to understand for speakers of Congolese Swahili.

"The structure of the document is good, but the Swahili needs to be adapted to the Swahili which is used in DRC, because there are certain concepts whose meaning is not at all clear."
 -Male teacher, Goma

Participants who mainly spoke Swahili at home more frequently reported difficulties accessing materials (60%) than those who mainly spoke French at home (40%).



Ten percent of survey respondents who described problems accessing resources shared by the clusters indicated that some resources are in English, or use difficult language and abbreviations and are not in user-friendly formats. Technical terms and abbreviations are a particular problem: 47% of respondents found that sector jargon made resources difficult to read, and 58% would prefer abbreviations to be spelled out in full. Young professionals aged between 20 and 30 were the main critics of excessive use of technical terms in resources. Reviewing specific documents, research participants highlighted various technical or semi-technical terms as hard to understand in French. These included *espace communautaire d'éveil*, *brigade scolaire*, *comptine*, *maltraitance*, and *premier secours psychologique*. Abbreviations were also frequently identified as problematic, including common humanitarian abbreviations like *EHA (WASH)* and abbreviations left in English, including "UXO".

Half of all participants said they generally had to read guidance materials more than once to understand the text, and a quarter of all participants did so sometimes. Some words in the resources reviewed that participants repeatedly highlighted as hard to understand were idiomatic or formal expressions in French and Swahili. Participants suggested using more commonly used words and including illustrations to aid comprehension. Testing of information recall found that participants in DRC recalled 51% of key messages on average when a document applied plain-language principles, compared with 37% when it did not. This trend was especially marked in Beni, where the use of plain language improved recall by 59%. This may indicate that plain language is particularly important outside the main urban centers, where literacy rates and exposure to technical terminology are likely lower.

Beyond their own comprehension, research participants noted the importance of materials being understandable for their interlocutors, who are often less familiar with specialist terminology and may be less educated. In the education sector these groups include students' parents, and in the child protection sector, foster carers. Key informants in both sectors stressed the importance of translating resources into local languages for rural areas in particular. Focus group participants also called for materials to be made available in all the national languages of DRC (French, Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba). Several participants, most of them from the child protection sector, also asked for materials to be translated into more marginalized local languages.

One informant in the child protection sector explained that as resources are so limited, one person trained in town will go back to their community to train other social workers. Two INGO workers noted that literacy levels can be lower even among teachers in these areas, and they recommended providing simple materials to accommodate all literacy levels.

"As much as I agree that humanitarian work is quite complex, we need to also try to de-complicate it by not having [...] large volumes of standard operating procedures and whatever. [We] need to be very conscious about the audience we're working with. Who is actually going to use this?"

-Male INGO worker, child protection

Access even to hard copies is a challenge for Congolese practitioners

Thirty-seven percent of Congolese survey participants had not accessed and used materials provided by the Education in Emergencies Cluster or Child Protection Area of Responsibility before. This trend was even stronger among focus group participants. Resources most cited by focus group participants were national laws and regulations. The main reasons given for not using materials provided by the clusters were problems accessing them (52%) and not knowing that resources existed in the first place (26%).

Of those national staff who had used materials provided by the clusters before, 43% had encountered difficulties accessing them. The most common access issues cited were internet and technological difficulties, including financial constraints like internet access costs, and a lack of hard copies. Key informants and focus group participants described similar problems. Access issues were most common among government teachers and volunteers.

Typically, the cost and instability of an internet connection mean most research participants in Beni, and education specialists in Goma, access materials in hard copy. Child protection specialists in the Goma focus groups have internet access but prefer to receive hard copies because they don't know where to find materials online.

"We have access to the internet, but we also don't know where to go on the site to find information related to our field of protection. Sometimes we have the impression that there are not enough documents on child protection on the internet. For instance, if our NGO partners could tell us the sites where we can find good information, that would really be very helpful." -Male government social worker, Goma

Two key informants working for national NGOs said they preferred to travel with hard copies in order to avoid the risk of their laptops being stolen. Key informants working for INGOs in both sectors noted that even if they could access resources online, they needed to print them off in order to share them with colleagues out of town, who are without internet access.

While agreeing this was the practical option, every group and almost all key informants noted that there are not enough hard copies available in their workplaces for everyone to refer to when needed. Staff of national child protection NGOs called for more hard copies to be made available for national organizations especially. Focus groups and key informants also noted that printed materials quickly become torn and damaged, and several participants recommended providing more durable hard copies, for instance with hard covers or laminated pages. The finding suggests printing and dissemination costs may need to be considered as a larger component of budget requirements for content development and adaptation or national cluster operations.

Email was the preferred means of access for 47% of survey respondents, followed by online access through links, websites and virtual platforms. In view of the other information received, however, this seems not to reflect the reality for many practitioners in both sectors.

Materials need introduction, not just dissemination

The challenges described accessing and using resources underline the importance of dissemination methods suited to the needs of each context.

Participants in all three research exercises noted a general shortage of resources compared with extensive needs. Focus group participants and key informants also said that heavy workloads leave them little time to search for, select or navigate many new resources. Two international key informants complained of a particular information overload during the pandemic:

"[During] the COVID time [materials have] just been coming one after the other [...]. So it's been difficult to see which ones are the most up to date [...]. [And] it's a bit confusing, like: where is the central repository of documents?"

-Male INGO worker, education sector

In view of these challenges, it is positive that key informants and survey respondents reported materials being shared not only by email, but also through meetings and training sessions. Some described the benefits of cluster meetings devoted to discussing a new resource and its application in members' work, with the document shared on a flash drive or cluster website. Others described relaying key points from technical guidance to colleagues at regular team meetings. One key informant suggested that even online training to introduce users to new materials can help to ensure they are used effectively and avoid information overload.

One key informant noted that they had less access to information now cluster meetings were online because of the pandemic. Previously, these meetings provided access to information that was hard to obtain online because of the cost and unreliability of an internet connection.

Content is relevant but sometimes needs updating and localizing

Research participants in DRC were more critical of the guidance materials received than participants in Mozambique. This is despite the fact that 70% of survey respondents found the available content relevant and 64% used it in their work. Child protection staff in both Beni and Goma, and teachers in Beni, had seen few or any of the materials shared in the focus groups. This may be because the national clusters had reason to prioritize sharing other resources. When introduced to the practical guide on promoting community acceptance of girls associated with armed groups in DR Congo, participants in Beni found it very useful. Those in Goma found the resource on communicating bad news to children relevant to their work.

Child protection practitioners in two focus groups in Goma suggested that the resources provided needed depth and contextualization in order to be of practical value:

"I can't say I don't use the guidance, only that I don't use it much, as the documents aren't up-to-date and so far don't go into the substance of child protection in any depth."

-National NGO staff, Child protection, Goma

Key informants and focus group participants called for global guidance to be localized in consultation with Congolese specialists to avoid this in future. Issues related to the use of both content and illustrations which they felt did not accurately reflect the realities of DRC.

Some criticisms were about materials not being updated to reflect changing circumstances, including measures linked to the pandemic such as social distancing. Child protection focus groups highlighted that they needed resources to help them adapt their own practices to the changing protection issues experienced in their own area of work. One key informant recommended reviewing and updating materials regularly. While this doubtless presents a challenge, several key informants were keen to be involved in updating and localizing guidance. The request for updated materials also needs to be seen in relation to participants' reported reliance on hard copies available in the office, especially in more rural areas. There may therefore be a significant delay before updated versions provided by the clusters reach practitioners.

Shorter, practical, less text-heavy materials are preferred

Survey responses indicated that short written documents are the most commonly accessed format of resource materials, followed by longer written documents and practical guidance. Short written documents are also the preferred format. However, respondents also expressed a preference for more visual content such as tables, graphs and infographics (51%), and 46% of respondents prefer to receive practical guidance.

Key informants and focus groups supported the call for more illustrations and diagrams and less text, to make the materials more user-friendly for overworked practitioners. Some suggested videos and other training resources would be helpful.

"Intersperse text with pictures and don't give us too much literature.

We don't often have a lot of time to read documents: give us modules."

-Female national NGO worker, Goma

Participants also indicated that format could be used to make the resources reviewed more accessible to people with disabilities. Over half of survey respondents found the resources gender-sensitive, but 34% felt that the resources did not cater for those who were visually or hearing-impaired. Focus group participants in Goma suggested increasing the font size as one solution. One focus group participant with a visual impairment struggled to read the materials shared without help from the research assistant.

Participants requested further information on specific topics

When asked if there were other topics they would like more information on, survey respondents listed the following:

- Early and forced marriage
- Protection of children at school (from physical and sexual violence)
- Protection for vulnerable children and children with disabilities
- Children with disabilities and their access to education
- Incident and impact reporting statistics
- Distance learning and education during Covid-19
- Education in emergency in rural areas and for vulnerable children
- Child adoption
- Learning/educational spaces, children rights (international and national)
- Reintegration of children into education (after Covid-19 or for example when they leave armed groups)
- Psychosocial support for children
- Management of school canteens
- How to help children get out of drug addiction or juvenile prostitution
- Girls' education
- Feminine hygiene management in schools and management of nurseries for babies whose mothers are still at school

Key informants also identified a need for resources on adolescent sexual health and disciplining children without the use of corporal punishment in schools.

Bangladesh

Access issues were not cited as prominently in Bangladesh as in the two other countries. Only 5% of participants had never accessed materials shared by the clusters before. What came up strongly were language issues and concerns around the contextualization of materials. Among both national staff from Cox's Bazar and Rohingya volunteers there was a very high demand for resources and guidance in languages other than English. Contextualization and the need for resources relevant to the context were highlighted here as in the other focus countries. There were also requests for more practical guidance, lesson plans and education materials specifically. A mixed dissemination approach was also suggested, including sharing via email, via colleagues, and in webinars, Dropbox/Google Drives, training and hard copies. However, the overwhelming demand from Rohingya volunteers was less about resources and guidance and more generally about access to formal education.

Resources are currently largely:	Participants would prefer resources to be:
Practical guidance	Practical guidance - such as lesson plans and short written documents
In English, with some Bangla and less Rohingya and Myanmar (Burmese)	In English, Bangla, Myanmar and (audio) Rohingya
In text form	In audio form in Rohingya for the camps
Simple and easy to understand	Providing a glossary with key definitions in Bangla to aid comprehension and translation
Text-heavy	Using graphics and diagrams to aid retention
Too general and global	Adapted to the religion and culture of the communities served

The scope of the research in Bangladesh was more limited than in the other contexts. Focus group discussions were not possible in Cox's Bazar or inside the Rohingya refugee camps, and only ten key informants and 80 survey respondents agreed to take part. To avoid the COVID-19 infection risks of focus group discussions, 20 Rohingya volunteers took part in individual resource review sessions in the Kutupalong, Jamtoli, and Balukhali 1 and 2 Camps.

In Bangladesh men account for 76% of the sample across all data collection exercises. This may reflect a wider gender imbalance in the Rohingya response, and is doubtless partly due to the largely remote engagement, since fewer women may have access to online communication. Most research participants across all activities (60%) were from the education sector, 29% worked in child protection, and 11% didn't indicate the sector they worked in. Volunteers in the camps taking part in the review of resources mostly worked in child protection. Bangla was the main language spoken at home (49%), followed by Chittagonian (24%) and Rohingya (22%), and 76% of all participants were national staff or volunteers. While in the other two countries participants were relatively evenly distributed across the different age groups, 79% of the participants in Bangladesh were aged 20-30 and 31-40.

For more details on participants' profiles, see the summary of survey findings in Annex 2 and the methodology overview in Annex 3.

National staff request more resources in Bangla, Rohingya, Burmese, and Chittagonian

Among Bangladeshi practitioners, language was the most often cited criterion for participants to decide if they would access a resource or not. Responses suggest English is by far the most common language of resource materials participants have access to, mentioned by 75% of participants. When asked which language they would prefer to receive cluster materials in, 73% of participants replied English together with a number of other languages. While 19% of participants had seen or received resources in Bangla before, 65% said they would prefer to receive materials in Bangla in the future. Nine percent of participants had received materials in Rohingya before, but 28% said they would prefer materials to be in Rohingya. Participants also requested more materials in Myanmar (Burmese, received by 15% and requested by 21%) and Chittagonian (requested by 15%, not received before).

There is a clear language divide between participants concerning the main language they speak at home. National staff from Cox's Bazar speak Bangla and English, whereas Rohingya volunteers in the camps speak Rohingya and Myanmar. Current language provision goes some way to meeting participants' different language requests, but still appears to leave substantial unmet demand. International and national NGO key informants confirmed in particular the need for more resources in Bangla, and in Myanmar text and Rohingya audio and video to improve outreach in the camps. Rohingya volunteers also requested audio materials in Rohingya to better serve the communities they work in. Both audio and video are suited to Rohingya as a chiefly oral language. While audio materials can help to bridge literacy gaps especially among Rohingya camp residents, volunteers raised concerns about the risk of excluding hearing-impaired members of the community through overreliance on audio materials.

Despite this explicit demand for resources in local languages, only 4% of the respondents said that the materials received were in a language that they don't read and understand fluently. Existing difficulties in comprehension seem to be more linked to technical terms and content.

Terminology and complexity make materials hard to understand at first reading

A majority of the respondents (63%) described the materials accessed as “okay to read”. However, 82% also indicated that they have to, or “sometimes” have to, read guidance materials more than once to understand the author’s meaning. This suggests that “okay” does not indicate full or ready understanding, and further effort is needed to ensure materials are more easily understood at the first reading.

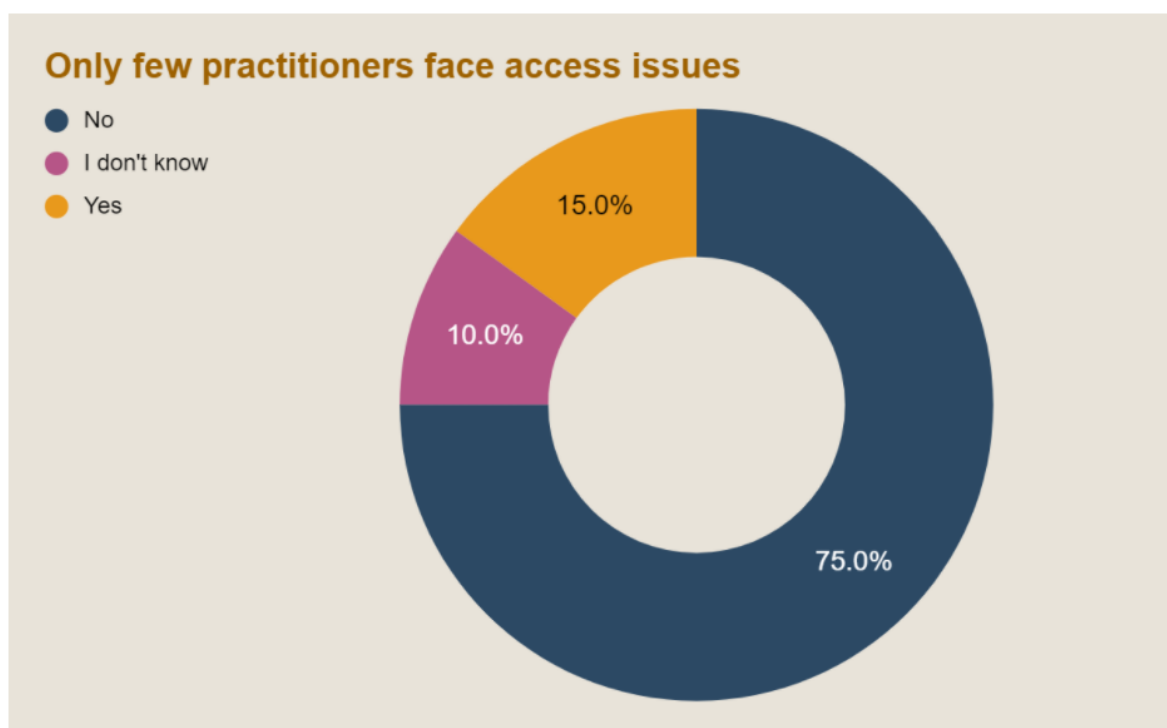
The use of unfamiliar words seems to be a key component: 19% indicated that guidance and resources use a lot of technical terms, abbreviations and difficult terminology. These included practitioners from both sectors, and staff of national and international NGOs as well as volunteers. But another 15% found materials generally complicated and hard to understand - all of them Rohingya volunteers and national NGO staff. A sizable portion of these groups appear to face particular challenges: 19% of national NGO respondents and 36% of volunteer respondents.

Similarly, Rohingya volunteers who took part in the review of resources had some problems understanding content in their preferred language. Most called for written materials to be provided in Myanmar (Burmese), although they use Rohingya at home. Yet a basic review of comprehension indicated that they had more difficulty understanding the Myanmar version of existing materials than the English version. In this small sample, longer sentences, some technical terms (“caseworker”) and abstract concepts, including western notions of emotions (“meaning of death”, “anxiety”) presented the most comprehension problems.

This suggests materials targeting Rohingya volunteers would benefit from oral presentation in Rohingya. This could take the form either of an audio or audiovisual Rohingya version of the text, or of an oral introduction to a written document in Myanmar or English. One key informant from an international education NGO also recommended a Bangla glossary to aid understanding and translation. The [TWB glossary for Bangladesh](#) in Bangla, Rohingya and Chittagonian may help meet that need.

Meetings and training are the preferred way to access resources

In contrast to findings from DRC and Mozambique, a clear majority (75%) of survey respondents said they did not have difficulty accessing materials. Training and meetings are the most commonly cited form of access (for 54%), followed by online searches (46%), hard copy (43%) and the education cluster’s online platforms (35%). These categories are broadly the same as respondents’ preferred means of accessing such resources, indicating that dissemination methods are generally meeting the needs of the target audience.



Although only a minority faced access problems, this may be a larger proportion of the total target audience, since the online survey skews results towards a more connected cohort. Rohingya volunteers and national NGO workers account for nine of the 12 survey respondents who did report access difficulties. The main challenges described were language barriers and knowing which resources exist and how to obtain them. Some cited camp restrictions; one said materials are “limited to international NGOs only”. Since volunteers and national NGOs are those most directly involved in service provision, overcoming these challenges has value for the quality of services for the community.

Rohingya volunteers were also the least likely to obtain materials through electronic means: 85% of volunteers in the survey receive them in hard copy. Since this was also the main group reporting problems accessing materials, ensuring a sufficient supply of hard copies remains important. The challenge here is linked to internet access, which key informants agreed was poor or unavailable in the camps, in contrast to both mobile and computer access in Cox’s Bazar. A number of key informants noted the need for hard copies of materials for use in the camps.

None of the 20 Rohingya volunteers who took part in the separate review of resources reported difficulties accessing materials. The reason for this disparity with the survey data is unclear, but may be linked to the fact that participants were identified through NGOs, and may therefore be better integrated within information relay circuits than some other volunteers. The overwhelmingly positive and uncritical answers in the individual review conversations might also be linked to cultural norms around the acceptability of criticism. Generally, Rohingya participants seemed to appreciate the existing materials, but were less concerned about the content and format of these than about the more pressing need for formal education.

Key informants indicated that organizations use a range of dissemination methods to improve outreach. Alongside email as the most common, these include audio and video, leaflets and meetings. Dropbox and messaging groups are used among those with mobile or computer internet access.

Accounts suggest the COVID-19 pandemic has hampered the relay of guidance and information by increasing the reliance on remote communication, which a national NGO worker said had been challenging. The study was unable to gather data on the impact of this change on local child protection and education service providers.

Resources are relevant but not always adapted to the context or the needs of potentially vulnerable groups

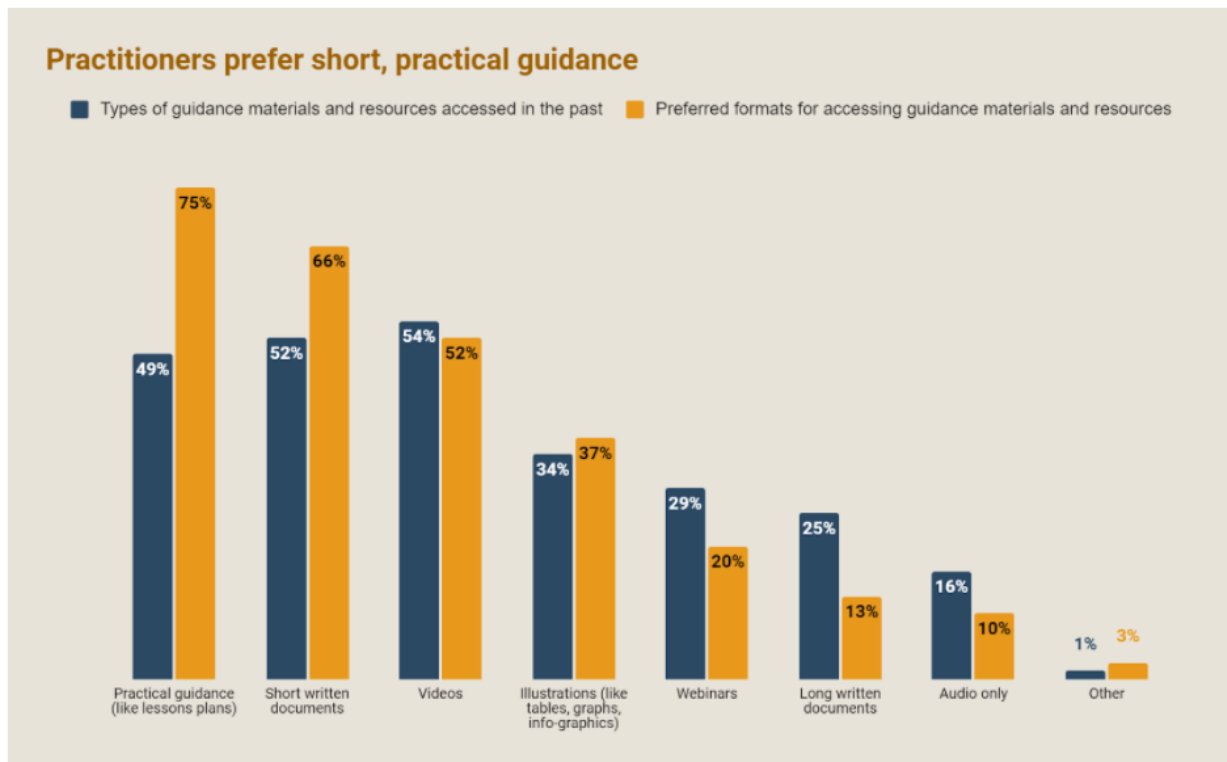
Participants in all exercises found the resources available relevant to their work: 76% of survey respondents found them relevant and 20% partially relevant. Fifty-five percent felt that the content of resources was clear and helpful. Only 13% of survey participants said the resources were not relevant for them, but it is significant that all of those were either Rohingya volunteers or national NGO staff.

Key informant insights and document reviews were also generally positive, although there were calls for more detailed exploration of some issues. One international NGO worker noted that colleagues have to adapt the content of child protection resources to the Rohingya refugee context. He called for this adaptation to be done globally for each of the major humanitarian emergencies to facilitate the work of responders.

Participants also expressed a need for more contextualization of resources. Format as well as content need to be appropriate to the context. A child protection specialist with a national NGO mentioned that they had had to stop using one children’s learning resource which contained music after some sections of the community complained that it was haram (forbidden by Islam).

A small majority of survey participants felt resources provided were not gender-sensitive; this finding was broadly the same across gender and sector. They were similarly split over how well the resources catered for the needs of people with disabilities: 42% yes, 43% no, and 15% didn’t know. Key informants provided few additional insights, except a recommendation to use audio resources to cater for those with a visual impairment. While the sample was small, the general impression was that participants had not perhaps given these issues much thought to date.

Short, practical, simple, illustrated content in varied formats is preferred



In the past survey respondents had mostly used practical guidance documents like lesson plans (54%). Asked what type of resources they would prefer to receive, 74% of participants mentioned practical guidance documents, suggesting that there is a demand for more resources of this kind. The findings are similar for short written documents. While 51% of participants had used these in the past, 65% preferred to receive information in this format in the future. A much preferred format was videos, which 29% of participants had received in the past, but 51% preferred to use in the future. The current use of illustrations like tables and infographics was in line with the respondents' preferences (36%). Formats that were currently used but that participants preferred to use less in the future included long written documents, webinars, and audio.

Key informants echoed these preferences, in particular for short documents, one participant suggesting brief summaries of longer resources could be helpful. Two key informants working for INGOs recommended using diagrams and graphics to make the content more memorable, and plain language and audio content and Rohingya language versions to increase understanding.

As Rohingya is chiefly a spoken language, audio formats are an easy way to relay information. But as participants' responses show, audio formats are viewed more critically and less often preferred. Participants did not give any explanations for this, except the risk of excluding people with hearing impairments. Participants across both sectors, and in particular education staff and teachers as well as NGO staff and social workers, instead requested videos. This suggests that there is a demand for more visual and pictorial materials beyond illustrations like tables and infographics.

Participants requested further specific guidance as well as equipment and clothing

Resources on formal education were top of the list of additional content requested by both survey respondents and Rohingya participants in the review of resources. This reflects a long-standing call for formal schooling, which is not authorized in the camps in Bangladesh, but was echoed in comments from survey respondents. Other requests from the review participants were life skills and technology and information, and from survey respondents, resources on children's rights and case management.

Survey respondents also requested content in the form of online training, resources for teachers, and illustrated storybooks. Resource review participants from Kutupalong camp requested training on the resources specifically for teachers. Beyond guidance and training, survey respondents in Cox’s Bazar identified physical equipment needs, specifically sports equipment and clothing kits, and disability provisions. Similarly, Rohingya volunteers requested practical items such as shoes, uniforms, bags, umbrellas and caps. This reflects the wider shortage of basic materials for teaching and learning activities in the camps.

Annex 1: Feedback on specific materials

Plain-language assessment report

This report sets out TWB’s assessment of two guidance documents shared by the Global Education Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility against plain-language principles.

We consider the extent to which five situations might apply to intended readers. If three or more of those situations apply, we assume that it’s important for the related document to meet plain language principles. The five situations are described with examples in Table 1.

Table 1: If three or more of these situations are likely to apply, we think plain language has particular value.

Reader’s situation	Example
Reader needs to adopt a specific behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A procedure • A poster explaining COVID-19 precautions
Reader response errors have significant consequences; accuracy is essential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A needs assessment survey • A registration form
Reader is unfamiliar with the content or the situation in which the reader uses it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation of a new policy or procedure • Instructions for participating in community consultation
Reader has a right to understand and respond to the content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sign that explains how to give feedback • A pamphlet that explains services to refugees
Reader is likely to be under high emotional stress, time stress, or both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation of entitlements to assistance • Instructions for taking medication

We reviewed six documents against the situations listed in Table 1. We concluded that it’s most important for two of those documents to be in plain language. Table 2 summarizes our review.

Table 2: Two documents met three or more of the criteria.

Document	Reader's likely situation					Plain language will be useful
	Essential behavior prompt?	Accuracy is essential	Unfamiliar content or situation?	Content relates to reader's rights?	High stress situation?	
Practical guide to foster community acceptance of girls associated with armed groups in DR Congo	✓		✓			✓
Early childhood development kit: a treasure box of activities. A facilitators guide			✓			✓
Key considerations to inform children that a loved one has is (sic) EVD infected or died		✓	✓		✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Safe back to school: a practitioner's guide	✓		✓		✓	✓ ✓ ✓
INEE minimum standards for education: preparedness, response and recovery	✓		✓			✓
INEE minimum standards reference tool	✓					✓

Based on this initial review, we assessed two documents against our plain language indicators:

- Key considerations to inform children that a loved one has is (sic) EVD infected or died
- Safe back to school: a practitioner’s guide

For each document, we conducted:

- A **quantitative** readability assessment that uses both commercial editing software and open source tools
- A **qualitative** assessment against a checklist of key plain-language elements suggested by the International Plain Language Federation

The results, shown in Tables 3 and 4, allow you to decide which actions you’d like to prioritize.

Table 3: Quantitative plain-language assessment results



	TWB recommendation	Key considerations to inform children that a loved one has is (sic) EVD infected or died	Safe back to school: a practitioner’s guide
Number of words	Minimum required for clarity	1486	11539
Average sentence length	Between 15 and 18	13.3	17.1
Proportion of sentences over 20 words	None	9%	33%
Average number of sentences per paragraph	Fewer than 6	3	2
Percentage of passive sentences	Less than 10 percent	15.1	13.8
Acrolinx clarity score (/100) <i>(commercial content management tool)</i>	More than 55	86	69
Acrolinx liveliness score (/100) <i>(measures how engaging the text is)</i>	Between 50 and 80	71	57
Flesch reading ease <i>(a standard readability formula available online)</i>	More than 60	66	36
Flesch-Kincaid grade level <i>(estimates the US grade level needed to understand the text)</i>	Less than 10	7	12

Table 4: Qualitative plain-language assessment results

We assessed your text against eleven key plain-language elements relating to structure, design, and content. This aspect of our assessment is more subjective than the readability assessment in Table 1.

	Element	Key considerations to inform children that a loved one has is (sic) EVD infected or died	Safe back to school: a practitioner’s guide
Structure	<i>The writer states a clear document purpose early in the text</i>	Yes	No
	<i>Paragraphs are ordered from most important to least important information</i>	Some inconsistent evidence of this	Extensive evidence of this
Design	<i>The document design helps the reader to navigate to the information they need</i>	Some inconsistent evidence of this	Extensive evidence of this
	<i>Headings are informative statements</i>	No evidence of this	Limited evidence of this
	<i>Visual aids such as graphics, tables, and images support the text</i>	No evidence of this	No evidence of this
	<i>Visual aids have informative captions</i>	Not assessed	Not assessed
Content	<i>Complex terms are explained</i>	Extensive evidence of this	Some inconsistent evidence of this
	<i>All content is relevant to the document purpose and stated or apparent peak message</i>	Extensive evidence of this	Extensive evidence of this
	<i>There are few abbreviations and acronyms</i>	Extensive evidence of this	Limited evidence of this
	<i>The text uses strong, single, base verbs</i>	Extensive evidence of this	Some inconsistent evidence of this
	<i>The text uses pronouns such as “you” and “we”</i>	Limited evidence of this	Limited evidence of this

Minimum standards for education in emergencies

Focus group participants and key informants in DRC and Mozambique reviewed and discussed an excerpt from [INEE Minimum Standards Handbook](#) and associated [reference tool](#) in French (DRC) and Portuguese (Mozambique). In DRC they also reviewed a [contextualized French version of the handbook](#) developed specifically for North Kivu.

To test the impact of applying plain-language principles to the document, TWB prepared a plain-English version of the introductory section, entitled 'What is Education in Emergencies?' (see below). We then translated the plain-language version into relevant languages. Focus group participants received either the original or the plain-language version as a basis for comprehension testing and review. The tables below summarize the conclusions from these exercises.

The content provides a valuable reference but readers find the global handbook hard to navigate.

Currently...	Our research suggests that...	So we recommend that document owners...
<p>The handbook, reference tool and contextualized handbook for North Kivu are relevant and useful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants generally found the content relevant for their work. Individual informants highlighted the value of information on the learning environment, physical and social wellbeing, protecting schools in conflict situations, monitoring, and community participation. • Several participants praised the structure, completeness and detail of the original handbook and its value as a reference. • Some participants found the global handbook too generic and of little use for their work. Participants in Mozambique wanted a handbook adapted to their context. • Participants in Mozambique wanted more content relevant to their work, including on case management, and a clearer definition of the roles of different actors. One participant in DRC wanted more on the specifics of public health emergencies, political crises, natural disasters, and differences between urban and rural contexts. • Participants in North Kivu valued the references to national laws and content tailored to the realities of eastern DRC in the contextualized version. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the work of contextualizing the global standards to make them more readily usable in specific contexts. • Ensure local practitioners are actively involved in tailoring the content to their needs and context.

<p>The global handbook is a dense body of text, unrelieved by text boxes, graphics or variations of formatting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers appreciate the bullet points and summaries in the North Kivu handbook and reference tool. • Participants in Mozambique noted that the reference tool makes the information more accessible and easier to relay to others. • In contrast, participants found the global handbook hard to navigate and lacking in practical information. • Some suggested including specific examples to make the content less abstract and easier to grasp. • As with other resources, they also found the font size too small for ease of reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use lists, summaries and graphics to break up the text and highlight critical information.
<p>The global handbook runs to 140 pages, the North Kivu version to 96 pages. A separate reference tool summarizes key action points and lists the topics of guidance notes included in the full document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several participants suggested the global handbook is too long, stressing that pressures of work, time and electricity supply would make it hard for them to read in full. • Some suggested the global handbook was ill adapted to use in emergencies, when what is needed is a clear, concise overview of key actions to take. The reference tool potentially addresses this need, but was not specifically reviewed with participants. • Some groups face particular challenges assimilating long documents. Some community-based participants felt such a long document would be too heavy to carry around. • Several suggested dividing the content into more digestible individual modules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize maximum comprehension and recall over completeness. • Present the key information in shorter modules.

Practitioners want guidance that uses concepts, terminology and language everyone can understand.

Currently...	Our research suggests that...	So we recommend that document owners...
<p>The global and localized versions of the text use humanitarian and technical terminology and abbreviations that are unfamiliar to readers not in regular contact with international coordination mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPIE practitioners and teachers alike are unfamiliar with some of the education terminology used. Examples include <i>espace communautaire d'éveil</i>, <i>brigade scolaire</i>, <i>comptine</i>, <i>maltraitance</i>. • Some readers of the North Kivu handbook were confused by humanitarian terminology. Examples include <i>cluster éducation</i>. • Even where a glossary and explanation are provided, some readers found the use of unfamiliar abbreviations confusing or distracting. Examples include UXO (an English acronym), MRM, ONU, CRC, UNMAC. • Typological errors add to the confusion, for instance when the abbreviation for <i>espace éducatif d'éveil</i> is given as ECE not EEE (p.53 of the North Kivu handbook). ECE is given elsewhere in the text as the abbreviation for <i>espace communautaire d'éveil</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the reach of the document, avoid or explain technical and humanitarian terminology. • Avoid abbreviations wherever possible.
<p>The global version is formally worded, using a lot of abstract nouns and long sentences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in DRC found the handbook passage on 'non-violent classroom management' particularly hard to understand. This highlights the difficulty of relaying new concepts in an abstract and written form. • Non-technical words and phrases identified as hard to understand in French indicate that even teachers in DRC can struggle with formal French. Examples include <i>malvoyant</i>, <i>prohibé</i>, <i>interventions des prestataires</i>, <i>brimade</i>, <i>gravité des abus</i>. Participants in DRC recommended using plainer language in the French version. • Participants in DRC and Bangladesh suggested graphics might also aid comprehension for non-native speakers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use more interactive and less text-heavy means such as meetings and training sessions or videos to introduce new concepts. • Apply plain language principles as standard to reach the widest audience. • Seek input from target audiences in Francophone countries on French texts. • Use graphics to aid comprehension.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall of key messages in Goma (DRC) and in Mozambique was not markedly better when participants read a plain-language excerpt from the handbook compared with those who read the original version. • However, participants in Beni recalled 65% of the plain language information and 41% of information from the original version - a 59% improvement with plain language. This suggests that writing in plain language can increase the chances that more information is understood, especially in more rural areas, where levels of education and exposure to technical terminology are typically more limited. 	
<p>The full handbook is available in French and Portuguese, and the North Kivu version and reference tool in French. None of these documents are currently available in other languages spoken in DRC or Mozambique.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education levels appear to be typically lower among child protection practitioners and in rural areas in both DRC and Mozambique. Participants from the child protection sector reported more problems understanding passages. • Participants called for the material to be made available in relevant national and local languages. In Mozambique they listed Emakwa, Ndau, Sena and Shangana. In DRC, they called for the national languages (Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba) and in some cases for Nande and Kinyarwanda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make key content available in local and national languages.

The standards aren't reaching many practitioners who need them.

Currently...	Our research suggests that...	So we recommend that document owners...
<p>The global and localized versions of the text use humanitarian and technical terminology and abbreviations that are unfamiliar to readers not in regular contact with international coordination mechanisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants want guidance and information of the kind provided, but most, including teachers, had not seen the resources before. • Readers' comments indicate that concepts such as the protection of schools in armed conflicts and non-violent classroom management are new. • There is demand for technical guidance from practitioners not directly participating in national and subnational coordination mechanisms. • Both education and community protection practitioners see the content of the handbook as relevant to their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make provision for wider dissemination beyond cluster membership to expand uptake.
<p>Access is especially difficult for some groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants face difficulty accessing the limited supply of reference materials currently available in their institutions in hard copy. Some need authorization to take materials to read. Many have to share one copy with the rest of the staff of their institution. • Members of the RECOPE community child protection network in DRC don't work from an office and lack a space to sit and read 140 pages. • Some participants called for hard copies to be provided directly to individual practitioners. Others suggested presenting the standards through training sessions to promote better understanding of the complex content. • A participant with a visual impairment called for the information to be made available in a more accessible format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access through explicit provision for dissemination of hard copies to complement online sharing. • Adapt the content for use as training materials, using contextually relevant examples, plain language and accessible formats (e.g. larger font size, audio and audiovisual versions). • Support local networks and institutions to deliver the training in local languages.

What is education in emergencies - plain-language version

To test the impact of applying plain-language principles, TWB prepared the following plain-English version of the [INEE Minimum Standards Handbook's](#) introductory section, entitled 'What is Education in Emergencies?' It is included here as an illustration of how these principles can be applied.

Education in emergencies saves lives.

If you support communities that are rebuilding after an emergency, this document will help you. It describes the minimum standards that governments and humanitarian organisations should aim for when they provide education in emergencies. We developed these standards to help you meet the requirements of the Education for All and UN Millennium Development Goals.

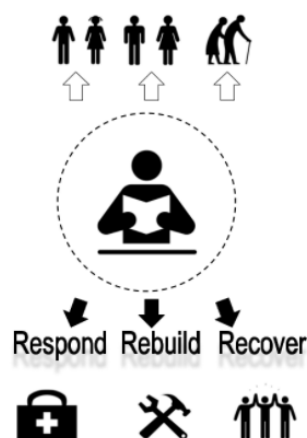
"Education in emergencies" is the learning opportunities and structures available to children, adolescents and adults affected by a large-scale humanitarian crisis or conflict.

Education is a human right. It transforms people's lives and improves equality. Yet emergencies can limit people's access to education and highlight problems with established systems. So education in emergencies is an essential part of response and recovery. Governments, communities, educators, and humanitarian organisations must work together to provide it.

Education in emergencies builds communities.

Education in emergencies gives learners the knowledge and understanding to improve their own lives. It offers them:

- Dignity
- Protection
- Physical safety
- Psychosocial security
- Skills to rebuild their community.



Individuals and entire communities benefit from education in emergencies

Education in emergencies is relevant to all humanitarian sectors.

In an emergency, education builds safety and resilience. Effective education:

- Raises awareness of hazards
- Highlights ways to reduce personal risk
- Promotes communication with communities
- Encourages children and youth to participate in future disaster prevention initiatives.

In the long term, education promotes social harmony and economic and political stability. When national authorities, communities and international organisations work together to create fairer educational systems and structures, all of society benefits.

Humanitarian and development organisations that provide education in emergencies should take a multisectoral approach. The education, protection, shelter, health, psychosocial sectors, including water, sanitation and hygiene sectors should coordinate to establish safe learning spaces. A coordinated approach is more likely to:

- Achieve desired educational outcomes
- Promote consistent messaging
- Improve access to services.

These minimum standards will help you to contribute to all those outcomes.

Safe Back to School - A Practitioners' Guide

Focus group participants and key informants in DRC and Mozambique, and individual informants in refugee camps in Bangladesh, reviewed and discussed [Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide](#). Participants in DRC and Mozambique reviewed the official French and Portuguese translations respectively. In Bangladesh participants reviewed the English original and an excerpt in Myanmar (Burmese) translated by TWB.

The tables below summarize the conclusions from these exercises. TWB also did a readability assessment of the Minimum Standards Handbook, conclusions of which are summarized in Annex: Plain-language assessment report.

The guide provides a mass of valuable information but practitioners find it hard to take in.

Currently...	Our research suggests that...	So we recommend that document owners...
Participants overwhelmingly found the content relevant and of practical use in their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants in DRC saw the guidance as relevant beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, in a context where schools frequently have to close and reopen in response to an evolving security situation. One suggested it could be useful in supporting survivors of gender-based violence to return to school.• Participants in all three countries saw the value of the practical guidance for teachers and school staff and managers, filling a gap in existing resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain the focus on practical action in any future versions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in Bangladesh found the focus on creating a positive learning environment of interest. • Participants in DRC found the information on the role of parents, young people and the wider community particularly interesting. 	
<p>There is demand for additional information and greater contextualization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were interested to have information on how the guidance applies to pre-school and community education settings. • A participant in Bangladesh felt it would be helpful to have the guidance organized by class level. • Participants in Mozambique were more critical of the applicability of content to their context. Some felt the content on gender should be aligned with national guidance, and that the guide could have drawn more on grassroots expertise. • One key informant in Mozambique felt that the guide was too generic, as local education practitioners did not have time to adapt it to their context as the text suggests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult practitioners in different contexts on their specific information needs for any future adaptation. • Consider supporting nationally led contextualization of the content where practitioners see a need.
<p>The guide is concise and tightly structured, presented in two columns. An introductory section sets out its structure. A series of color-coded checklists group key actions to take by category. This is followed by a two-page summary for school managers. Annexes provide more detailed guidance on aspects of the checklists. Colored text boxes highlight cross-cutting issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several participants suggested that the text contained so much detail that it was hard to grasp at first reading. They called for more summaries and bullet points to highlight the main points. As the guide does contain these features, this suggests not only the content but the structure was hard to grasp in a brief review. One education practitioner called for an index to aid navigation. • The accompanying Overview Action Tracker may also help readers understand the specific actions proposed. This was not reviewed during the exercises. • Some of the design features intended to aid navigation in fact made the information harder to take in for several participants. • Participants in DRC in particular found the changes of color and font size distracting, although some found the colorful text attractive to read. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the guide and accompanying resources in interactive sessions to help busy practitioners identify the sections most relevant to them and understand the structure. • Consider adding in some redundancies in navigational tools (e.g. an index as well as the current overview of structure in the introduction). • Format any subsequent version in a single column of text for ease of navigation. • Consider using fewer or more muted colors in future designs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several participants found that having the text spread across two columns made it harder to keep their place when reading. 	
<p>The guide is 11,500 words condensed into 26 pages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in all three countries highlighted accessibility issues with the current formatting. • Several participants in DRC and Mozambique found the font size too small and the text boxes with a colored background hard to read. • Participants in Bangladesh suggested an audio version in Rohingya would be helpful for teachers in the refugee camps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a larger font size (at least 14 point). • Format to maximize contrast (e.g. black text on a white or yellow background). • Consider audio and audiovisual versions to expand access.
<p>The guide contains few illustrations: a cover photo, a drawing in one technical annex, and a few icons.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in both DRC and Mozambique felt the text would be easier to understand and recall if it made use of illustrations. • One participant found the meaning of the icons used hard to understand. • Several participants were critical of the cover photo, which shows children writing on a dilapidated step or bench outdoors. They felt it did not provide an accurate or attractive image of what 'back to school' meant. The content of the image is not explained until the back page. • The drawing proposed in Technical Annex 1 to introduce the idea of different perspectives can be viewed as a bird or a rabbit. Several participants found it confusing; one noted the lack of a caption to help grasp the meaning quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider including images to illustrate key points, accepting that this will increase page length in the interests of improved immediate comprehension. • Consider including a caption explaining the cover photo. • Test photos and graphics with representative readers in different contexts at draft stage.
<p>The guide is currently available in Arabic, French, English, Portuguese and Spanish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in Mozambique noted that the Portuguese version uses Brazilian Portuguese, which is distinct from the Portuguese used in Mozambique. Some identified Brazilian Portuguese words they found hard to understand, or that they felt could confuse other readers. Examples include banheiros for 'toilets', where sanitarios would be used in Mozambique. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider translating the guide into Mozambican Portuguese for use in that context, and revise the existing translation to remove inappropriate foreign words. • Consider translating the guide into other local languages relevant to emergency contexts, and test the translations with the intended audience.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in Mozambique also highlighted some English words (such as 'advocacy') in the Portuguese text. They found it unhelpful that hyperlinks in the guide take them to resources that are only available in French and English. • Participants in DRC disagreed on how widely understandable the French guide would be, some seeing no comprehension issues and others suggesting it should be phrased in language that everyone can understand. • Participants in DRC and Mozambique felt it would be helpful to have the guide in local languages relevant to each area, specifically Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba. One key informant in DRC highlighted the challenges of translating some concepts into local languages, which will require local expertise and validation. 	
<p>The guide gives definitions of two concepts in the introduction, but otherwise uses abbreviations without explanation in several sections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants called for acronyms and abbreviations to be spelled out in full. Examples they found confusing were often common abbreviations from the humanitarian sector such as CCCM, MHPSS, WASH and their equivalents in other languages. • Comprehension problems mainly affected child protection rather than education practitioners. • One key informant in Mozambique suggested that government officials find terminology like 'child-friendly' schools patronizing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spell out abbreviations. • Test draft content with future users for comprehension and appropriateness when developing any future versions.
<p>The guide is a newly released resource, so participants either had not seen it before or had only just received it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants in all three countries proposed ways of making the guide widely accessible. Suggestions included developing training materials, including videos, to accompany the guide. • Participants in DRC and Mozambique stressed the need for hard copies, particularly in rural areas, and pointed out that hyperlinks to additional resources would not be useful where connectivity is poor. • Participants in Mozambique felt audio or audiovisual versions would be needed to share the content in rural areas, where literacy levels are typically lower. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and budget for hard copy dissemination of the guide and key supplementary materials where relevant. • Consider developing training and audio or audiovisual versions of the guide to expand access.

Breaking bad news to children

Focus group participants and key informants in DRC and Mozambique reviewed and discussed a short document developed by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility entitled “Breaking bad news to children: Key considerations to inform children that a loved one has is EVD infected or died”. Participants in Mozambique reviewed a Portuguese translation of the document provided by TWB. In DRC participants reviewed a multilingual version containing sections in French, Swahili and Lingala, also translated by TWB.

The tables below summarize the conclusions from these exercises. TWB also did a readability assessment of the Minimum Standards Handbook, conclusions of which are summarized in Annex: Plain-language assessment report.

Education and child protection practitioners welcome clear, brief, practical guidance on how to manage situations they face in their work.

Currently...	Our research suggests that...	So we recommend that document owners...
<p>Participants overwhelmingly find the content helpful and relevant to their work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child protection and education practitioners in the three countries surveyed found the content useful for their own work. None reported having seen it before. • The information was valued for helping people to prepare for a difficult task by anticipating the child’s possible reactions. • Participants in DRC felt it was particularly relevant for their work in a context of conflict, where children often face bereavement and trauma. • Participants in Mozambique found the specific focus on Ebola-related bad news not relevant to their context, but the guidance highly relevant to other similar situations. • There was interest in receiving more information on psychosocial first aid. (The document contains a hyperlink.) • There was interest in receiving information on how best to communicate other kinds of bad news to children, other than illness and death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the practical focus on this specific topic. • Adapt the guidance to specific country contexts in consultation with local practitioners. • Share the guidance widely with practitioners in both sectors.

<p>The document first outlines its objective. It then lists key background information, then gives numbered instructions for how to break bad news, and ends with bullet points of 'do's and don'ts'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readers appreciated the 'do's and don'ts' section for giving clarity on both the scope and the limits of their role. One suggested this should be a standard format for guidance to be used in emergencies. • Feedback described the document as clear, simple, straightforward, well written and informative. • No participant found the text too long; at under 1,500 words, the original probably meets the standard of the minimum length required for clarity. • The English version shared with TWB contained multiple typographical errors. While this did not appear to affect comprehension of the translated versions, it could cause confusion for readers of the original. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the 'do's and don'ts' section. • Maintain the brevity and clarity of structure and content of the original. • Proofread the guidance before further dissemination, translation or adaptation.
<p>The document scores well against commonly used measures of readability and liveliness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The document scored within recommended ranges for clarity, liveliness and reading ease. • The English original should be understandable to a reader educated to the equivalent of US grade 7. This is in line with TWB's recommendation of writing for a grade level of 10 or below. • The text falls outside TWB's recommended ranges for the proportion of passive sentences (15.1%) and sentences over 20 words (9%). Average sentence length is also slightly shorter than recommended, at 13.3 words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edit the guidance to break up sentences over 20 words and replace passive with active verbs.

Practitioners need guidance that explains new concepts in the languages and using the words they understand.

Currently...	Our research suggests that...	So we recommend that document owners...
<p>Many concepts discussed are new to participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group participants in all three countries highlighted some more technical terms as hard to understand. These included 'caseworker', 'psychological first aid' and 'catharsis'. • Some less technical but nonetheless abstract or unfamiliar concepts also presented difficulties. These included 'the concept of death', emotions like stress and anxiety, 'quarantine', '[children's] right to hear [news]', and 'comfort toys'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume terminology will be understood. Consult commonly used word lists and audience members on using widely understood words.
<p>The document is only available in English.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some participants suggested it would be useful to have the text in local languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate the guidance into other languages relevant locally, in consultation with local practitioners.
<p>Participants struggled to understand concepts communicated in formal French or Swahili.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some words that participants in DRC repeatedly highlighted as hard to understand were idiomatic or formal expressions in the French and Swahili translations provided by TWB. • These included <i>au compte-goutte</i> and <i>changer radicalement</i> in French (translating 'in little pieces' and 'change dramatically' in the original English). • In Swahili, they included translations for 'psychological', 'question' and 'news', which used the formal <i>kisaikolojiya</i> (not the more commonly used <i>kiakili</i>), <i>swali</i> (not <i>ulizo</i>) and <i>habari</i> (not <i>taarifa</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief translators to prefer commonly used words to more formal synonyms. • Check translations with audience members to ensure they will be widely understood. • For languages spoken in multiple countries, provide for separate translation into the form of the language spoken in each country where the guidance is to be used. Check comprehension and acceptability with local audiences in each case.

Annex 2: Survey results

Survey Results Mozambique

Accessibility and use of child protection and education in emergencies guidance

* Not all respondents answered every question; percentages given relate to the answers received.



80 respondents*



92% national staff



36% child protection



64% education



62% female - 38% male

What is your current role?



- Government teacher
- National NGO staff
- International NGO staff
- EIE coordinator/manager
- Other
- Volunteer
- NGO Child protection staff
- School principal
- Child protection coordinator/manager
- Social worker
- Private school teacher
- Government child protection officer
- NGO Teacher/Educator

Where do you currently work?

Maputo City and Maputo	43%
Sofala	38%
Cabo Delgado	8%
Manica	5%
Other	6%

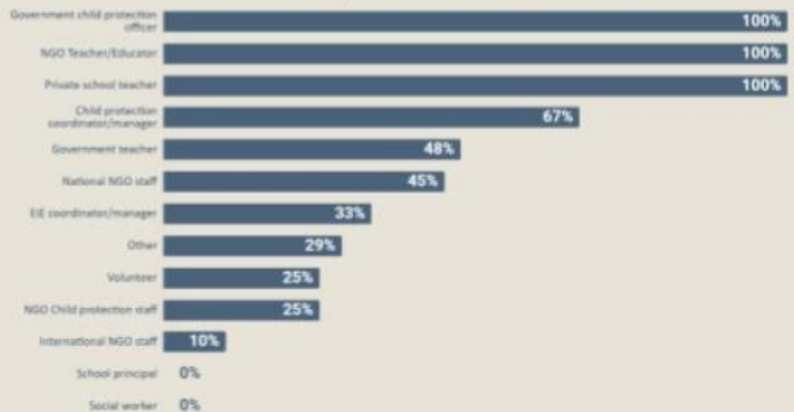


Access
31% have not accessed cluster materials before.

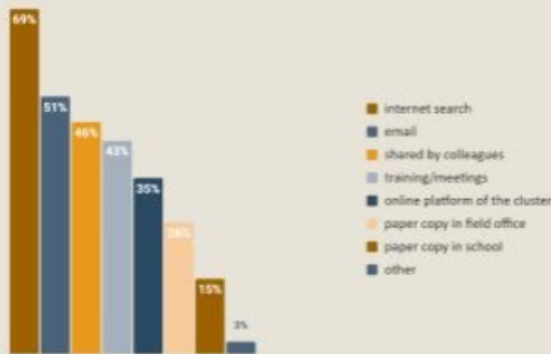


Access issues
34% of those who accessed cluster materials faced difficulties in doing so.

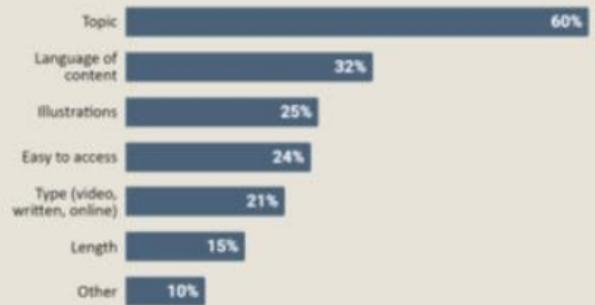
Respondents reporting access issues by role



How do you access resources?



What makes you decide to read a resource?



Ease of reading
54% say resources are "okay to read", 33% find resources "easy to read". 5% say "not easy at all to read", and 7% don't know.



Clarity of content
30% say they often have to read a resource more than once to understand its meaning. 45% say they do sometimes, 26% say they don't.



Sector jargon
35% say terms and sector jargon make resources difficult to understand. 37% don't think so, 28% don't know.

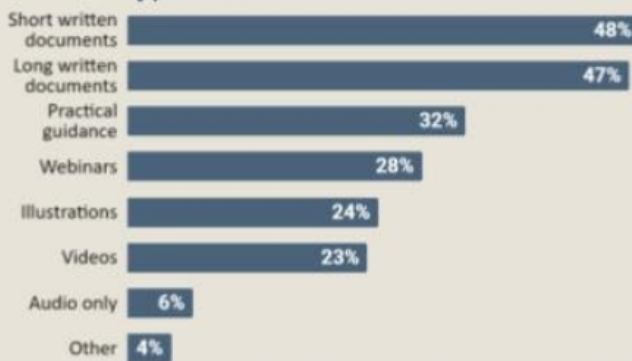


Acronyms
30% prefer acronyms to be spelled out fully. 66% like to have a glossary, 4% prefer acronyms not to be used at all.

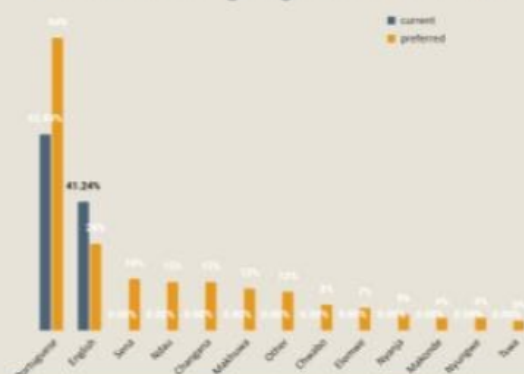


Relevance
76% find cluster materials relevant to their work. 22% think this is partially the case. 2% don't think so.

Preferred type of resource



Preferred languages of resources



22%

say resources are in a format they cannot access

8%

say resources are in a language they don't read or understand fully

4%

say resources don't offer the level of detail they need

49%

say resources are clear and helpful

62%

say resources are gender-sensitive

The full dataset is available here: [link to full dataset](#)

Survey Results - DRC

Accessibility and use of child protection and education in emergencies guidance

* Not all respondents answered every question; percentages given relate to the answers received.



148 respondents*



national staff



child protection



education



30% female - 70% male



Where do you currently work?

North Kivu	42%
South Kivu	21%
Kinshasa	14%
Kasai-Oriental	12%
Ituri	6%
Other provinces	6%

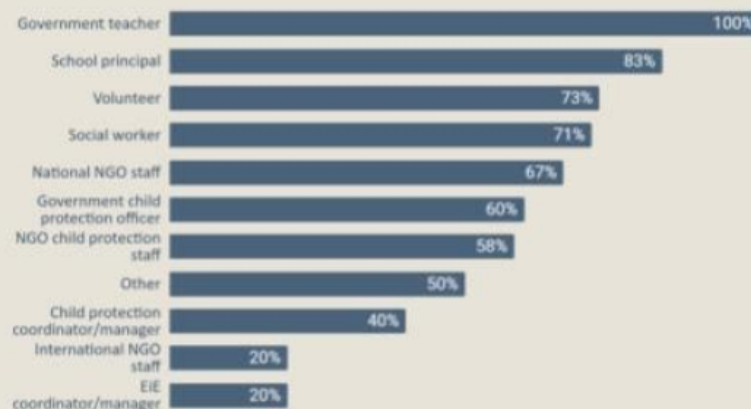


Access
36% have not accessed cluster materials before.



Access issues
44% of those who accessed cluster materials faced difficulties in doing so.

Respondents reporting access issues by role



#LanguageMatters

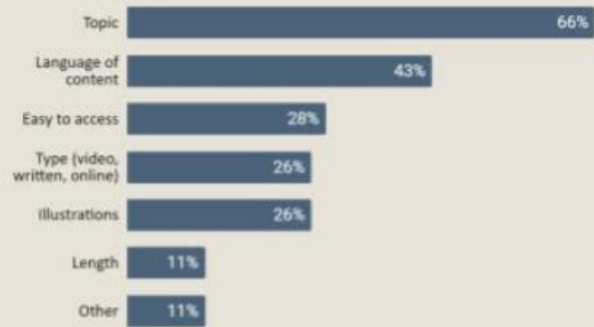


TRANSLATORS
WITHOUT BORDERS

How do you access resources?



What makes you decide to read a resource?



Ease of reading
57% say resources are "okay to read", but only 15% find resources "easy to read". 13% say "not easy at all to read", 15% don't know.



Clarity of content
51% say they often have to read a resource more than once to understand its meaning. 25% say they do sometimes, 24% say they don't.



Sector jargon
47% say terms and sector jargon make resources difficult to understand. 27% don't think so, 26% don't know.

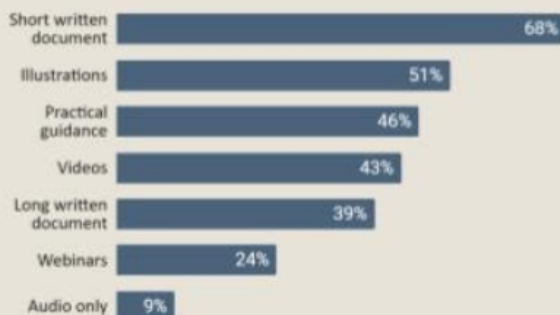


Acronyms
58% prefer acronyms to be spelled out fully. 38% like to have a glossary, 4% prefer acronyms not to be used at all.

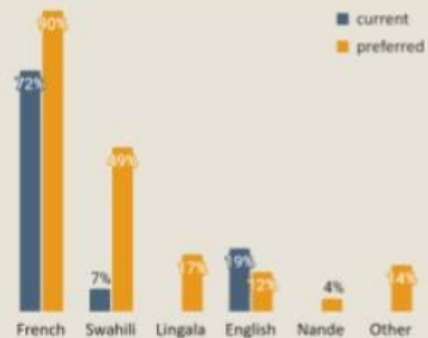


Relevance
70% find cluster materials relevant to their work. 21% think this is partially the case, 9% don't think so.

Preferred type of resource



Preferred languages of resources



20%

say resources are in a format they cannot access

13%

say resources are in a language they don't read or understand fully

12%

say resources don't offer the level of detail they need

39%

say resources are clear and helpful

61%

say resources are gender-sensitive

The full dataset is available here: [link to full dataset](#)

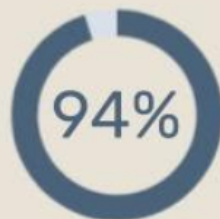
Survey Results Bangladesh

Accessibility and use of child protection and education in emergencies guidance

* Not all respondents answered every question; percentages given relate to the answers received.



80 respondents*



94%
national staff



36%
child protection



64%
education



20% female - 80% male

What is your current role?



Where do you currently work?

Chittagong	87.5%
Dhaka	7.5%
Khulna	3%
Mymensingh	1%
Sylhet	1%

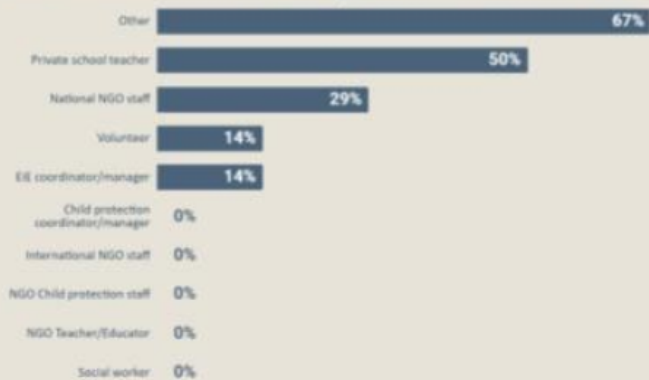


Access
5% have not accessed cluster materials before.

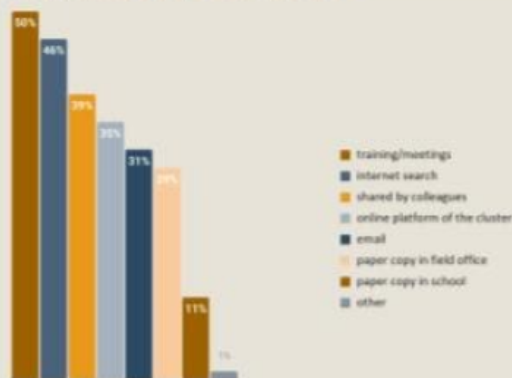


Access issues
12% of those who accessed cluster materials faced difficulties in doing so.

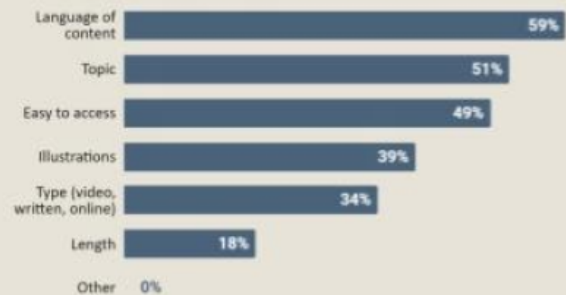
Respondents reporting access issues by role



How do you access resources?



What makes you decide to read a resource?



Ease of reading
54% say resources are "okay to read", but only 30% find resources "easy to read". 13% say "not easy at all to read", 3% don't know.



Clarity of content
50% say they often have to read a resource more than once to understand its meaning. 32% say they do sometimes, 18% say they don't.



Sector jargon
42% say terms and sector jargon make resources difficult to understand. 33% don't think so, 24% don't know.

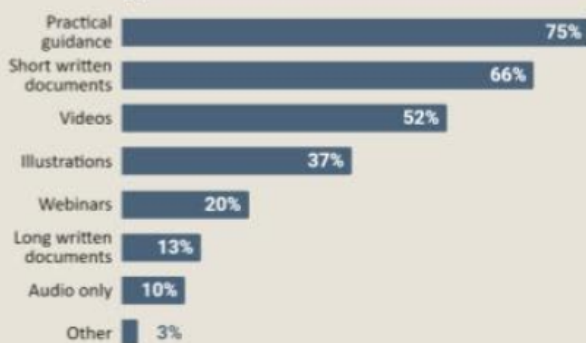


Acronyms
49% prefer acronyms to be spelled out fully. 42% like to have a glossary, 7% prefer acronyms not to be used at all.

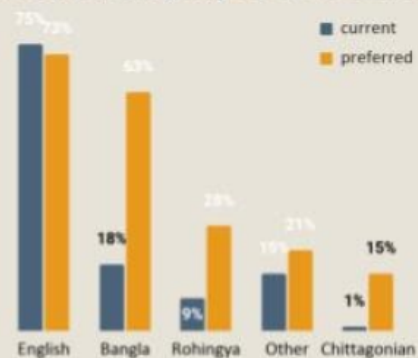


Relevance
70% find cluster materials relevant to their work. 21% think this is partially the case, 9% don't think so.

Preferred type of resource



Preferred languages of resources



4%

say resources are in a format they cannot access

4%

say resources are in a language they don't read or understand fully

15%

say resources don't offer the level of detail they need

68%

say resources are clear and helpful

45%

say resources are gender-sensitive

The full dataset is available here: [link to full dataset](#)

Annex 3: Methodology

Translators without Borders (TWB) and the Global Education Cluster (GEC) and Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) collaborated on a mixed methods study to better understand the accessibility and use of emergency guidance among national cluster members. The results of the study yielded practical recommendations for improving guidance, overcoming language barriers and improving communication with practitioners. This overview summarizes the methods and limitations of the study.

The project duration was from October 2019 to March 2021. Data collection took place from July to December 2020.

Geographic and linguistic reach

Research for this study was conducted in Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Mozambique. In-country research activities focused on one or two geographical areas in each country in which cluster members were active. Remote and online research activities had a national scope. In Bangladesh the research activities focused on the Rohingya refugee response in Chittagong and included activities in refugee camps in the Cox's Bazar area. An online survey was sent out nationwide and received answers from cluster members in Chittagong as well as other divisions. In the Democratic Republic of Congo research focused on North Kivu, in particular in Goma and Beni. The online survey in DRC was also sent out nationwide and generated participation from cluster members in all provinces, most notably from North Kivu, South Kivu, Kinshasa, Kasai-Oriental, and Ituri. Research activities in Mozambique focused on Sofala Province, in particular Beira and Buzi, and Maputo City. The online survey in Mozambique received replies from cluster members in all but one province (Gaza). The majority of participants were from Sofala Province, Maputo Province, Maputo City, and Cabo Delgado Province.

The three countries were selected on the basis of a) the GEC and CP AoR being active in these countries and b) the multilingual context and official languages spoken in each of them. Since guidance materials are available in English and to some degree in the major UN languages and beyond, it was important to choose research sites that allowed for testing available materials but also reflected the fact that these languages seldom correspond to the languages spoken as mother tongues by cluster members. Against this background Bangladesh was selected to test English guidance, DRC for French materials, and Mozambique for Portuguese resources. Emergency guidance in further languages, either translated by TWB for the purpose of this research or already existing in local languages, included Myanmar (Burmese) and Bangla for Bangladesh, Swahili, Nande and Lingala for DRC, and Shangana and Sena for Mozambique. The inclusion of these languages was determined by the geographical areas the research focused on in each country.

To ensure inclusiveness all study tools were translated into relevant local languages. Likewise, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted by researchers fluent in these languages. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in the language that participants felt comfortable conversing in. Where possible, and with participants' permission, we audio-recorded interviews and focus group discussions. We supplemented these recordings with research notes. The researchers then transcribed and translated this data into English and French.

Sample size and sampling strategy

Participation levels varied in each country depending on the availability of cluster members and their staff as well as the reach and accessibility of the online survey. Table 1 below gives an overview of the sample size by country and activity. The sample size of 500 reflects the total number of participants for all research activities. Since none of the focus group participants had participated in the online survey, they completed the survey on paper at the start of the focus group discussion. Their participation is therefore counted both in the focus group discussions and in the number of survey submissions. The actual number of individual research participants is 396.

Table 3: Quantitative plain-language assessment results

	Online and paper survey	Key informant interviews	Focus group discussions and guidance review	Total
Bangladesh	80	10	20	110
Democratic Republic of Congo	148	25	43	216
Mozambique	97	28	41	166
Global	--	8	--	8
Total	325	71	104	500 <hr/> 396

The research was built on a non-probabilistic purposive sampling strategy targeting specifically members of the education and child protection clusters, their staff and relevant government staff. These included cluster coordinators, Education in Emergencies (EiE) and Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) managers, EiE and CPiE NGO and INGO field staff, teachers, social workers, and volunteers.

After an initial introduction of the research project to the national clusters, TWB sent out an online survey by email to all cluster members via email lists held by cluster coordinators. Cluster members were encouraged to forward the survey to their staff for participation. Key informants for remote and face-to-face interviews and participants for focus group discussions and guidance review were identified and partly also approached with the help of cluster coordinators and cluster members. Key informant interviews included international staff, while focus group discussions largely included national staff.

The selection of key informants and participants for focus group discussions followed a stratified sampling strategy taking into account the cluster, type of organization, and position. The sampling aimed at ensuring equal participation of EiE and CPiE sector staff as well as of NGO, INGO and government staff and the different positions they hold. Where possible a gender balance was sought among interview participants and focus group discussants. However, levels of engagement of the different clusters and varying availability of key informants and focus group participants impacted on the final sample, as Table 2 illustrates.

Table 2: Stratified sample

		Women	Men	EiE	CPiE	NGO	INGO	Govt. staff
KIIs	Bangladesh	50%	50%	20%	80%	80%	20%	--
	DRC	24%	76%	36%	64%	28%	60%	12%
	Mozambique	46%	54%	68%	32%	11%	71%	18%
FGDs	Bangladesh	25%	75%	75%	25%	75%	15%	--
	DRC	28%	72%	23%	77%	60%	--	40%
	Mozambique	46%	54%	59%	41%	20%	24%	56%

Survey

To gain a broad understanding of the accessibility and use of emergency guidance across both sectors, an online survey was sent via email to EiE and CPiE cluster members in all three countries. The survey was deployed on KoBo Toolbox in Bangla, English, French, Lingala, Portuguese, Rohingya (Roman script), and Swahili. The completion rate was 98%. The non-probabilistic and non-representative convenience sampling was best suited to the remote nature of the survey and the overall qualitative research approach. To mitigate a connectivity bias and include cluster members without internet access, a hard copy of the survey was handed out to focus group participants in all three countries. The percentage of remote (online) replies for survey responses in Bangladesh is 62%, for DRC 71%, and for Mozambique 58%. Due to the relatively small sample size of the survey (Bangladesh 80, DRC 148, Mozambique 98) the results are not generalizable or representative and must be understood as indicative.

Key informant interviews

To gain further insight into the relevance and dissemination of emergency guidance we conducted 71 semi-structured interviews with key informants from both clusters. These included 63 EiE and CPiE cluster members, among these cluster coordinators as well as NGO and INGO staff, teachers, and volunteers for whom emergency guidance is designed. Another eight interviews had been conducted with peer reviewers of emergency guidance. The selection of key informants was based on a purposive sampling approach and ensured as even as possible representation of national and international staff from different organizations and in different positions.

In the interviews we discussed the accessibility, dissemination, and use of resources provided by the GEC and CP AoR and some locally produced resources. We also asked key informants to evaluate the format, design, language and terminology of a particular guidance material that had been shared with them before. For the evaluation the joint GEC and CP AoR resource "Safe Back to School: a Practitioner's Guide" was selected since this resource had been newly released, had been developed through inclusive methods, and was of current relevance. Interviews with peer reviewers focused on their assessment of how resources can be made more accessible, and on challenges experienced in the peer review process.

Focus group discussions and guidance review

To arrive at a deeper understanding of the use and accessibility of guidance materials among national staff we designed focus group discussions that also included a review and evaluation of some existing guidance materials. In DRC we conducted eight focus group discussions in Beni and Goma with a total of 43 participants, and in Mozambique we conducted eight focus group discussions in Maputo, Beira and Buzi with 41 participants. To reduce infection risk in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not conduct focus group discussions in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh. Instead we adapted our methodology to individual resource reviews with 20 Rohingya volunteer teachers in Kutupalong, Jamtoli, Bukhali 1 and Bukhali 2 Camps. The selection of focus group discussants was based on a purposive sampling approach and ensured as even as possible representation of national staff from different organizations and in different positions.

Participants reviewed the same global guidance materials in different languages in all three countries. In each country they also reviewed a resource provided by the national cluster. Participants discussed a range of different aspects relating to the language, format and content of each resource, as Table 3 outlines in more detail.

Table 3: Aspects under review

Language	Language, technical terms, sector jargon, foreign language terms, plain language, acronyms, style
Format	Length of documents, illustrations (pictures, tables), summaries and lists, font size, design, color, text flow (headings, paragraphs)
Content	Clarity of content, relevance, level of detail, length of sentences, ease of reading, applicability

The resources selected for review were chosen as a sample presenting a range of characteristics linked to accessibility. They included both very long and fairly short resources, text-heavy and highly illustrated materials, global and local guidance, and guidance available in dominant languages as well as local languages. Due to the length of some guidance, participants sometimes only referred to specific chapters for a more nuanced review and discussion. Not all English-language resources were available in French and Portuguese. Where necessary, TWB translated relevant parts of a particular resource for the purposes of the research. When resources in local languages existed these were included, as was the case for a resource in Swahili in DRC, and an education tool in Myanmar (Burmese) in Bangladesh. Global resources had been chosen in consultation with the GEC and CP AoR steering committee, for the selection of local resources the national clusters had been consulted. Table 4 below gives an overview of the resources reviewed during focus group discussions. In practice the interviews and discussions didn't yield substantive feedback on all resources, so the report summarizes those comments that were received.

Table 3: Aspects under review

	Bangladesh	DR Congo	Mozambique
"Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide" - GEC, CP AoR, 2020	X	X	X
"Framework for Reopening Schools" - Unesco, Unicef, the World Bank, WFP, 2020	X	X	X
"Minimum Standards in Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery" - INEE, 2012 Edition		X	X
"Minimum Standards reference Tool" - INEE		X	X
"Breaking bad news to children: key considerations to inform children that a loved one has is EVD infected or died" - CP AoR	X	X	X
"Facilitator's Guide. Early Childhood Development Kit" - Unicef			X
"SOP Annex IX - Child Support Matrix"			X
"RDC Nord Kivu. Normes minimales de l'éducation en situations d'urgence" (DRC North Kivu. Minimum Standards in Education in Emergencies) - GEC, INEE, Unicef, Save the Children, 2015		X	
"Practical guide: Promoting community acceptance of girls associated with armed groups in DR Congo" Swahili version - Child Soldiers International, 2017		X	
"Strategies for Continuous Assessment" Myanmar language version - Save the Children, 2018	X		

Comprehension and recall testing part I - plain language

To test the impact of plain language, TWB developed a plain-language version of the introductory section of the INEE Minimum Standards, entitled "What is Education in Emergencies?" We then translated the plain-English version into relevant languages. Focus group participants received either the original or the plain-language version as a basis for comprehension testing and review.

We tested comprehension and recall of key messages with 42 people in Mozambique and another 43 people in DR Congo. Due to the limitations on research in the refugee camps the test couldn't be performed in Bangladesh. The groups were split: some people received the original content and some received the translated plain-language content. Participants were each given three questions, and asked to recall key messages from the text in response to open-ended questions. We compared their correct results against the total possible correct answers for each question to assign a score for each question. We then averaged those scores among each group to better understand whether plain-language source material helped to improve the comprehension and recall of translated text.

The original document is quite a dense passage of text, containing a lot of abstract nouns and statements of principle unrelieved by text boxes, graphics or variations of formatting. Sentences are long and list out examples of benefits, risks, and forms education in emergencies can take. This is typically a form of communication that demands an effort of concentration from the reader, especially in a second or third language. The risk of confusion, incomprehension or non-retention of information may be higher.

TWB's plain-language edit (attached in Annex 1) was less than half the length (315 words compared to the original 650). It used informative subheadings and bulleted lists to direct the reader's attention to key information and conclusions, and graphics and text boxes to break up the text and aid comprehension. The TWB version also applied an "inverted pyramid" structure, giving the most important information first and presenting the remaining information in order of importance.

Comprehension and recall testing part II - local languages

We conducted a second test to compare comprehension and recall levels between dominant languages (English, French, Portuguese) and local languages (Shangana, Sena, Swahili, Nande, Lingala). For this test we used the "Breaking bad news to children" resource provided by the CP AoR. We translated the English version into French, Portuguese, Shangana, Sena, Swahili, Nande, and Lingala. The version we handed out to participants contained parts in the dominant language as well as parts in relevant local languages.

Again, 41 people in Mozambique and 43 people in DRC took this test. The test couldn't be conducted with Rohingya volunteer teachers in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Each participant received the same version of the text and was then asked to recall key messages from the text in response to open-ended questions. We compared their correct results to questions on parts in local language to parts in dominant languages as well as against the total possible correct answers for each question to understand whether local language source material helped to improve comprehension and recall.

Limitations

The outbreak of COVID-19 necessitated a substantial re-design of the study. The lead researcher was unable to travel to the countries to oversee the research, and an online survey and phone interviews partially replaced more direct methods. These remote methods restricted interaction with research participants in the three countries, who were also facing more pressing demands to address the consequences of the pandemic. These factors resulted in lower than intended participation in the survey, interviews, and focus group discussions, in Bangladesh in particular. The remote format of surveys and key informant interviews also skewed the sample towards participants with better internet access, and towards men. While face-to-face focus group discussions attempted to address this bias, the data almost certainly understates the difficulty cluster members face in accessing online materials.

The COVID-19 outbreak also delayed the start of data collection. Despite considerable efforts on the part of the clusters and TWB, the research encountered further delays obtaining the necessary local authorizations to undertake research. This reduced both the time available for data collection, and the number and diversity of groups involved in the research. Specifically, the research team was only able to speak to a limited number of government staff in Mozambique, as well as national NGOs in the child protection sector. This resulted in a more education sector-focused sample for both interviews and focus group discussions. In DRC, there was more participation by child protection sector staff and fewer teachers. This was due to the timing of the research as the government had called for schools to re-open in November 2020, so many teachers were busy with preparations. For Bangladesh the late start of fieldwork (December 2020) limited the number of participants we could speak with.

The comprehension and recall testing used an experimental method, conducted by research assistants with only remote support from the lead researcher. It yielded inconsistent results in all locations except Beni, DRC, and did not enable a distinction to be made between comprehension and recall. TWB is revising the process for future use on this basis.

Dataset

Access the full dataset for the online survey for Bangladesh, DR Congo, and Mozambique [here](#).

Annex 4: Peer reviewer interview summary

Eight peer reviewers of content were interviewed about the peer-review process and reflections on possible improvements to the Safe Back to School guide. Six work with the global clusters, one with a national and one with an international NGO. All were involved in developing materials at the national or global level.

Interviewees identified challenges for the peer review process:

- National NGOs can face technology challenges for effective participation, particularly in the use of different online platforms.
- The way materials are developed and peer-reviewed varies depending on the cluster or organization leading the process, and sometimes on the individual document.
- The process needs to maintain a balance between ensuring materials provide a consistent global reference, and ensuring they are relevant to national contexts.

Their recommendations on improving the Safe Back to School guide and other documents shared by the clusters echoed points made in the country-level data collection:

- Avoid acronyms, which can be difficult to understand, particularly when used in another language.
- Use tick-boxes and bullet points, and apply plain language principles to make resources more user-friendly.
- Improve the contextualization of resources by involving local NGOs in developing global resources, and a network of language experts that know the relevant contexts.
- Build capacity for gender- and disability-inclusiveness by providing examples of inclusive materials.



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Translators without Borders believes that everyone has the right to give and receive information in a language and format they understand. We work with nonprofit partners and a global community of language professionals to build local language translation capacity, and raise awareness of language barriers.

Originally founded in 1993 in France (as Traducteurs sans Frontières), TWB translates millions of words of lifesaving and life-changing information every year. For more information on our work, visit translatorswithoutborders.org/ or contact info@translatorswithoutborders.org.