Snapshot of School Management and Effectiveness (SSME) Survey in Deir Ezzor, Syria

May 2019
Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

The prolonged Syrian crisis has precipitated mass displacement, economic collapse, and an education crisis that has reversed years of educational achievement in Syria, leaving an estimated 1.75 million Syrian children out of school.

The Deir Ezzor governorate, located in northeast Syria, is demographically bifurcated into western and eastern areas, largely along lines of tribal affiliations. Upon liberation from ISIS, formal schools started to re-open in non-Regime areas of Western Deir Ezzor (DZ) in early 2018. In early 2019, schools re-opened in the last ISIS stronghold, Baghouz town in Eastern DZ, which was liberated on March 23, 2019. After five years of school closures, schools in Eastern and Western DZ lack basic resources to meet the diverse needs of displaced students still suffering from the traumatic effects of the war and limited schooling.

The Chemonics Injaz project, funded by the US Department of State’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), conducted this Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness (SSME) in February 2019 to identify urgent needs of primary and secondary schools in the Deir Ezzor governorate. The SSME study will provide donors and implementers with reliable data on the current status of education in the Deir Ezzor governorate to support the design of high-impact and context-relevant programmes.

The survey targeted all schools currently operating in six subdistricts of Deir Ezzor governorate (Abu Jazrat, Abu Khashub, Busayrah, Jarwan, Jezrat, and Kasrah), as reported by the respective local council that manages education. Of 368 schools identified, the field team found 360 functioning and eight schools that were closed, inaccessible, or re-purposed for IDP gatherings or military use by the Syrian Defense Forces (SDF). Reflecting the actual composition of schools, the majority of schools surveyed were primary (87 percent), 12 percent were mixed primary and intermediate, and less than 1 percent were intermediate only (grades 7-9). There were no high schools with upper secondary classes, grades 10 or higher.

The assessment methodology consisted of quantitative surveys and observation tools developed based on international best practices and validated SSME instruments from previous studies in Syria, including an SSME study on the Raqqa Governorate conducted by the Injaz project in October 2018. The five SSME tools included a school observation survey, classroom inventory, principal questionnaire, teacher questionnaire, and student questionnaire. These instruments examined various facets of school management and teaching practice, such as school type, facilities, access, school schedule, personnel, management, teaching methodology, assessment, and parental support amongst other relevant themes.

Key Findings

Most formal schools in Deir Ezzor have basic structures and resources to offer classes up to grade 5. Amongst the 360 schools surveyed, the majority of schools covered the early primary grades one to four (86 percent), while slightly over half covered upper primary (53 percent), and less than 10 percent taught intermediate levels (8 percent). This is likely due to the short timeframe that schools have been open (less than two years) and the fact that schools are beginning to establish cohorts of students. As noted above, areas of DZ have been liberated later than areas in Raqqa Governorate, so DZ children are likely entering school later than their peers in Raqqa, many of whom returned to school in 2017. Enrolment rates, however, are higher in DZ compared to Raqqa.

The average school enrolment rate in DZ was 325 students versus 278 students on average in Raqqa primary schools. Gender ratios also differed between the two governorates. Raqqa had near gender parity (51% boys to 49% girls), while DZ enrolled more boys (59% to 41% girls). Deir Ezzor had an average of 11 teachers per school compared to 9 in Raqqa. Yet, there were notable differences per region. Eastern DZ had twice as many teachers as Western DZ (16 versus 8, respectively). While Raqqa has achieved gender parity in recruitment of teachers, DZ teacher composition is 64 percent male with significant regional differences — males comprised three quarters of teachers in Western DZ compared to less than half (44%) in Eastern DZ. Unfortunately, a higher
percentage of female teachers in Eastern DZ does not translate into a higher percentage of girls’ enrolment in this region.

Gender disparities were also reflected in leadership roles. Over 80 percent of DZ principals were male, with a distribution of two thirds in Western DZ and one third in Eastern DZ. Raqqa had similar ratios with three quarters of principals being male and one quarter female.

Similar to Raqqa, DZ schools are enrolling below school capacity, largely due to not all facilities and classrooms being restored and equipped with the necessary resources for expanding school coverage. Teachers utilise an average of nine out of eleven available classrooms. Stakeholders cited the key reasons for utilisation are low enrolment, shortage of teachers, lack of storage space, and the need for renovations.

The majority of schools have a playground, while one quarter of schools in Western DZ do not. Half of schools had potable water and a full school wall. Sixty percent of schools had heating during the 2018-2019 winter, thanks to prior Injaz interventions. However, none of the schools had electricity, and 83 percent lacked a functioning toilet.

While school personnel and students generally feel safe at school, potential hazards in the school building and environment could pose a threat if not addressed. The most life-threatening issues are landmines and unfenced schools near busy roads and wells, as well as exposed walls that may have hidden explosives, a common practice of retreating ISIS fighters.

In terms of infrastructure, most schools have not been damaged in a shelling or airstrike, yet 90 percent need repairs. Three quarters of schools need broken windows replaced, and one third need ceilings, roofs, or walls repaired. A new school perimeter wall is urgently needed in 20 percent of schools. Furthermore, 70 percent of classrooms in Eastern DZ do not have enough seats for students. Students were sitting on the ground in 23 schools and standing in five schools. These factors not only impact teaching and learning, but also enrolment and attendance. Therefore, infrastructure repairs, facilities, and classroom furniture are needed to expand enrolment and grade coverage. School principals stated the most important need is clean drinking water and toilets for students, followed by textbooks and teacher training.

Regarding the school schedule, most schools operate one shift that runs from 8 a.m. to noon or 1 p.m., and 11 percent of schools have two shifts. Students have roughly 22 minutes of recess, which is below recommended international standards and does not appear to be impacted by the number of shifts. Absenteeism is an issue for 45 percent of students in Eastern DZ and 37 percent in Western DZ, largely caused by poor weather conditions (heavy rains, impassable roads, and flooding).

The findings of principal and teacher surveys indicate that most schools are not deliberately employing inclusive teaching practices or research-based methods. Over 90 percent of school principals state that they include children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. It is important to note, however, that the study did not assess the percentage of students with disabilities inside or outside of schools or the extent of inclusive teaching practices as it was outside the scope of the study. Some teachers conduct diagnostic and functional disability assessments, but less than half are modifying instruction based on students’ needs. Under 10 percent of teachers have received any in-service training (3%), coaching (8%), or teaching guides (7%) in new evidence-based teaching practices for curriculum subjects. Teachers and principals often requested training in modern teaching techniques to make up for the time lapse during the conflict. Training in inclusive education practices and evidence-based approaches for early grade reading and math are recommended.
Although they are on site, less than half of school principals conduct daily classroom visits. Education supervisors visit half of the schools in the eastern region and 11 percent in the western region once per term. During visits, most education supervisors do not observe classes or provide teaching advice. Thus, capacity building, professional development, and coaching is much needed to improve the quality of instruction.

Teachers and principals attempt to monitor students’ learning, mostly through summative assessments. Over three quarters of schools in Eastern DZ perform summative assessments, compared to slightly over half in Western DZ. Less than half of teachers in both regions perform formative assessments. Thus, there is no standardised assessment system, tool, or training that applies to all schools.

The majority of teachers have basic teaching supplies, yet most lack a teacher’s guide, which is integral to implementing a standardised curriculum. When asked about recommendations for improvement, many teachers requested teaching aids (e.g., posters, alphabet letters, numbers, and geometric shapes) as well as new teacher guides, student textbooks, and a library.

In schools with textbooks, the majority of students have core Math and Arabic textbooks, but this finding represents 35 percent of the total school population (126 schools of 360). Hence, 234 schools do not have any textbooks. In their proposed recommendations, teachers and principals stressed the need for textbooks and notebooks. Moreover, libraries and supplementary reading materials are practically non-existent, with access limited to two schools out of 360 surveyed.

Finally, there is some parental involvement (e.g., providing school supplies, helping with homework, reading to children outside of school), but the majority of principals felt disappointed with the level of support received from parent-teacher councils and parents in general. More engagement is needed to improve school management and the quality of education.

**Recommendations**

The urgent needs and priorities of formal schools must be addressed in order to meet the minimum standards of education and improve educational access and outcomes. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) states that the learning environment should be free from sources of harm to learners, teachers, and other education personnel. To comply with this standard and help restore the education sector to its pre-conflict state, the most urgent priority should be to perform school repairs for anything that poses a security risk and/or health hazard (e.g., broken windows, exposed interior/exterior walls, ceilings, or roofs, and destroyed or damaged school perimeter walls, particularly for those in danger zones) and provide proper hygiene facilities (clean water and functioning toilets for 83 percent of schools). Notifying authorities of suspected landmines or explosives in the walls is an urgent matter that should be immediately addressed in at least three schools. In addition to meeting these basic requirements for a safe and conducive learning environment, desks, textbooks, and libraries are desperately needed to facilitate learning inside and outside of the classroom and could be supplied in a short timeframe. Furthermore, it is worrisome that all schools received heaters and fuel from the Injaz project shortly prior to the SSME assessment, yet only 60 percent of classrooms had heating on the day visited. The Injaz team is looking into this discrepancy between activity data and the information collected during the SSME assessment.

Given the gender disparities in Deir Ezzor, especially Eastern DZ, DFID could support a gender assessment to better understand the possible barriers to female enrolment and employment within the formal education sector in DZ.

Depending on the evolving operating environment, future education programming could focus on quality education improvements. Such interventions would include the provision of teacher guides and relevant teaching aids, improving teacher professional development, developing a governorate-level teacher and student assessment system, and increasing parental engagement in school-based management and education activities.
A. Syrian Educational Context

Up until the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Syrian school-age children were amongst the most educated in the Middle East, with Syria having achieved near universal primary education enrolment and a secondary school completion rate of 74 percent. However, enrolment and completion rates in the three governorates of Deir Ezzor, Raqqa, and Hassakeh have lagged behind those in all other governorates. Having endured seven years of conflict, Syria now suffers from a devastated economy, a large displaced population, and a depleted education system. Many schools during the conflict were damaged, destroyed, converted to army barracks, or closed. As a result, an estimated 1.75 million school-aged children are currently out of school.

Today, one in three schools are not functioning. Schools in operation lack basic necessities for teaching and learning – adequate teaching staff, infrastructure, hygiene facilities, and education materials. Furthermore, countless children suffered traumatic events during the war, hampering their ability to learn. The protracted effects of the war, combined with funding shortfalls and lack of capacity and resources, has become known as “Syria’s $10 billion hidden education crisis”, as schools are left without the means to meet the overwhelming needs of students (e.g., infrastructure improvements, child protection, psychosocial support, remedial education, accommodations for learners with disabilities, etc.).

One of the key challenges confronting donors and implementers is lack of accurate data on the status of schools in each governorate to design effective and responsive programmes. In 2018, Chemonics conducted a mapping of education assessments in northeastern Syria and found that reports often generalised findings across the three governorates of Deir Ezzor, Raqqa, and Hassakeh. There was little relevant and accurate information about Deir Ezzor to inform programme design.

Following the liberation from ISIS in northeast Syria, schools re-opened in Spring 2017 in Raqqa and in early 2018 in Deir Ezzor. Some schools opened as late as early 2019 in Eastern Deir Ezzor, such as in the last ISIS stronghold, Baghuz town, which was liberated on March 23, 2019. Deir Ezzor is demographically bifurcated into western and eastern areas, largely along lines of tribal affiliations. With less than a year of operation in both Eastern and Western DZ, schools lack basic resources to meet the diverse needs of displaced students still suffering from the traumatic effects of the war and limited schooling.

Considering the unique situation of Raqqa and Deir Ezzor governorates in terms of the level of damage to the education infrastructure, the pressing needs, and former ISIS occupation, an education assessment is required in each governorate to understand the urgent needs of schools and education stakeholders. Chemonics completed the education assessment in Raqqa Governorate in October 2018 and administered the same instruments in Deir Ezzor formal schools in early 2019.

2 Ibid.
5 Some findings conflicted with the Injaz team’s reports of the situation on the ground based on consultations with council representatives. The dynamic situation in conflict-affected contexts requires continuous follow-up assessments.
B. Objectives of Assessment

With funding from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and access to formal schools granted by Partner J and its education committee, the goal of the Snapshot of School Management and Effectiveness (SSME) study is to understand the current status of education in Deir Ezzor and identify pressing needs to design context-relevant, high-priority interventions to restore the education sector.

This needs assessment will inform DFID, the US Department of State (DOS), and other stakeholders and implementers about potential opportunities for immediate high-impact short-term interventions as well as longer-term interventions.

The Chemonics Injaz project, currently operating in northeast Syria, provides remedial education and psychosocial programming to internally displaced and local children through NGO-supported child centres, which also provide psychosocial support at a number of formal schools. The project also supplies classroom furniture, heating, and limited school rehabilitation. The results of this SSME study will help Injaz design complementary interventions that can further support formal schools to improve access and quality of education.

C. Target Population and Sampling

C1. Target Population

The study targeted 368 schools, inclusive of primary, intermediate, and secondary levels. The schools were identified by Partner J. The education committee provided Injaz with a list of all schools in their respective geographic areas, and all schools from the population were selected for data collection. However, during the fieldwork, the team found eight schools on the list that were inaccessible due to the following reasons: one school was outside of SDF control in the Syrian-Iraqi border area; another school was closed; two schools were re-purposed for informal IDP gatherings; and four schools were converted into military checkpoints for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Thus, the final number of schools reached was 360.

The total number of schools surveyed by level is shown in Exhibit 1. As illustrated below, the majority of schools visited were primary schools, while 12 percent of schools had both primary and intermediate levels. Less than 1 percent of schools were intermediate level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary (Grades 1-6)</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Primary and Intermediate (Grades 1-9)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate (Grades 7-9)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The SSME assessment took place in six subdistricts of Deir Ezzor (DZ) Governorate. As illustrated in Exhibit 2, more than sixty percent of surveyed schools were located in Western DZ, within five subdistricts. There was one subdistrict located in Eastern DZ (Busayrah) comprising 38 percent of surveyed schools. The distribution of schools for the survey reflects the actual distribution of schools within the DZ governorate.

**Exhibit 2: Distribution of Schools by Subdistrict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Subdistrict</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deir Ezzor (DZ)</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Abu Jazrat</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Abu Khashab</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Busayrah</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Kasrah</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Jarwan</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Jezrat</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>360</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assessment covered schools in three of seven districts:
1. Al Jazrat (includes subdistricts Al Jazrat and Abu Khashab)
2. Al Kasrah (includes Kasrah subdistrict)
3. Busayrah district (includes Busayrah subdistrict)
The assessment excluded four of seven districts for the following reasons:
1. Al Sowar excluded due to high security risks
2. Al Sha’itaat excluded due to high security risks
3. Hajeen excluded due to high security risks including ongoing fighting between the SDF and ISIS
4. Deir Ezzor City excluded as it is under Regime control

C2. School-Level Sampling Methodology
In each school visited, survey teams interviewed the principal, one teacher, and four students (two males and two females). The final sample size is shown in Exhibit 3.

**Exhibit 3: Final Count of Principals, Teachers, and Students Interviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>1,440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To ensure a representative sample of teachers and students from each grade, field teams covered three grades per school and rotated the grade levels so that all primary grades were covered. For instance, field teams assessed teachers and students in grades 1-3 in the first school, grades 2-4 in the second school, and grades 3-5 in the third school.

Teams also rotated the grades selected in each school so that one teacher from each grade and two students from two separate grades were interviewed (See Exhibit 4). In the first primary school visited (School 1), enumerators interviewed one teacher from grade 1, two students from grade 2 (a boy and girl), and two students from grade 3 (a boy and girl). In the second school (School 2), teams interviewed one teacher from grade 2, two students from grade 3, and two students from grade 4. Teams continued dropping the lowest grade and adding one grade level in each subsequent school.

**Exhibit 4: School Sampling Procedure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>School 1</th>
<th>School 2</th>
<th>School 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Students (1 boy, 1 girl)</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Students (1 boy, 1 girl)</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following the same selection process as in primary schools, teams in intermediate schools interviewed the principal, one teacher, and four students, rotating the grades for each teacher and student selected. In the first intermediate school, teams interviewed the teacher from grade 7, two students from grade 8 (a boy and girl), and two from grade 9. At the second intermediate school, teams interviewed the teacher from grade 8, two students from grade 9, and two from grade 7, and so forth.

While the field teams attempted to follow this protocol in each school visited, they often found that grades covered in each school varied. Consequently, teams may have oversampled some grades depending on the actual grades taught. (See “Grades Taught” category in the Results section).
D. Assessment Methodology
The Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness (SSME) tool was developed by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) in 2007 and is an internationally recognised set of instruments that has been applied in numerous developing countries. In 2017, the Chemonics Injaz team adapted an Arabic version of the SSME tool used in Iraq to suit the western Syrian context for an education study. In 2018, the SSME tool was further adapted to the context of northeast Syria for a SSME study in Raqqa Governorate. For the Deir Ezzor Study, we used the same tools used in Raqqa Governorate since the context is similar. Per DFID’s request, the Chemonics Injaz team adopted a number of questions from the World Management Survey for inclusion in the SSMEs conducted in Raqqa and Deir Ezzor governorates.

D1. Description of SSME Tools
The SSME provides a multifaceted picture of school management and teaching practice. The SSME toolkit is comprised of five instruments:

1. School observation survey
2. Classroom inventory
3. Principal questionnaire
4. Teacher questionnaire
5. Student questionnaire

The school observation survey examines the school infrastructure and environment, including the school type, the existing facilities, availability of classrooms, and conditions of the school buildings and grounds. The classroom inventory collects information on the availability of classroom resources (furniture, materials, teaching resources) and student attendance. The principal and teacher surveys collect information related to management, staff gender, teaching practices, teacher assessment and professional development, student assessment, teaching and learning materials, disability and inclusion, parental involvement, and school safety. The brief student questionnaire collects basic information on factors that may influence performance (age, kindergarten attendance, parental support and involvement in education). The ultimate objective of the SSME is to identify gaps in resources, structures, teaching approaches, and context that may hinder access to quality education and positive learning outcomes.

D2. Instrument Adaptation and Piloting
For the Deir Ezzor SSME study, we applied the same tools as used in the 2018 SSME study in the Raqqa Governorate without modification or piloting since the contexts, target groups, and languages are similar.
E. Enumerator Recruitment and Training

E1. Recruitment of Enumerators
RMTeam’s field enumerators were locally recruited and highly trained experts. With proven experience conducting surveys in Syria and existing relationships with local actors (see textbox), enumerators were well-versed in the methods and had in-depth contextual knowledge of the complicated and unstable Syrian environment. RMTeam International, the survey management contractor, recruited 30 enumerators (21 males and 9 females) from the local area to cover the 368 identified schools.

One enumerator was selected to serve as team leader based on their technical experience and strong relationships with community actors. The team leader had physical access to any location in the governorate and was provided with details of all schools surveyed.

E2. Training Methodology
RMTeam’s capacity building and training officer (CBTO) designed the enumerator training modules, which included a combination of theory and practice. The CBTO delivered the modules through two training sessions, conducted remotely. The first focused on evaluation theory and concepts, while the second was on the practical administration of the tools and protocols.

The first general training took place from January 19 to 20, 2019. The purpose of this training module was to introduce enumerators to humanitarian principals and standards, ethical considerations during data collection (e.g., informed consent of participants, confidentiality, gender sensitivity, child protection, etc.), and the main characteristics of high-quality data, amongst other related topics.

The practical training session was conducted from January 21 to 23, 2019. This training focused on the evaluation objectives, instruments, protocol for data collection, and fieldwork plan. Although most enumerators were already familiar with the software, the CBTO delivered a training session on the BlueData software. Due to intermittent internet connectivity, the trainers sent recordings via WhatsApp of the highlights of the training, including summaries of the key topics, descriptions of the data collection instruments, and instructions for administering each tool.

E3. Assessor Accuracy Measurement (AAM)
Applying international best practices, the trainer conducted Assessor Accuracy Measurement (AAM) testing to measure the extent to which enumerators were recording responses in a consistent manner during the interviews with the same respondent. The AAM was used for the teacher, student, and principal questionnaires. In order to pass the training, enumerators' responses should be 90 percent consistent with the trainers' responses. The results of the first AAM test showed that 12 of the 15 teams scored 90 percent or higher. The three teams that initially failed to meet the standard were re-trained and re-tested on February 5, 2019, during which all enumerators met, passed, or exceeded the 90 percent threshold.

F. Data Collection Fieldwork

F1. Preparation
In preparation for fieldwork, RMTeam developed a Memorandums of Understanding (MOU). A signed MOU represents Partner J and its education committee’s support and approval of the assessment, which is important for obtaining access to the schools and ensuring compliance with the assessment. In addition to the MOUs, RMTeam developed work clearance papers for each field team, confirming that the field team is working for the contractor and has been assigned for this specific task. Both documents were instrumental in gaining access to the schools and successfully completing the SSME assessment. In
addition, a detailed fieldwork plan that assigned teams to the schools was developed and shared with the enumerators to guide fieldwork.

F2. Team Composition

The data collection team was comprised of a project manager, field coordinators in each district, an operations manager, security and capacity building officers, and enumerators. Apart from the enumerators, the team members were all RMTeam International staff. The composition and organisation of the assessment team is provided in Exhibit 5 below.

Exhibit 5: Composition of the Field Team

F3. Data Collection

Fieldwork was undertaken from February 10 to 25, for a total of 15 days. Field coordinators oversaw data collection remotely while team leaders were on site providing guidance and technical support. The project manager and capacity building and training officer also examined different aspects of the data quality and monitored progress.

To ensure better management of the teams in this remote management context, the operations manager and field coordinators created WhatsApp chat rooms for each location. The chat rooms facilitated communication and ensured learning amongst the assessment team members.

Daily checks and monitoring ensured the data collected was accurate and reliable. Using BlueData software for data collection also increased the quality of the data by reducing errors and gaps. Furthermore, the software provided high security for data collected through hidden features, passwords, and additional measures.
F4. Challenges and Recommendations

The data collection team identified several challenges and lessons learned that should be considered when planning future assessments. In terms of logistics, heavy rains, poor internet connectivity, and lack of public transportation, all were beyond the control of the team and caused some delays with reaching target schools. Rather than using public transportation or motorbikes, enumerators hired private vehicles with drivers.

Secondly, one school listed by the education council was not in an SDF-held area. Al Mistariha school in the Abu Jazrat subdistrict is reportedly located near the Syrian-Iraqi border, and therefore the enumerators did not assess this school. Chemonics takes personal security seriously and would not require nor approve RMTeam enumerators to assess schools in regime-held areas.

In some cases, lack of trust amongst principals and teachers toward international NGOs and local NGOs caused difficulties. One principal initially refused to do the interview even though the team presented the signed MOU and work clearance. The team leader intervened and successfully persuaded the principal to participate. In a few other schools, teachers and principals reluctantly participated.

In terms of lessons learned, sharing the assessment plan and timeline with the education committee and its five offices in advance of data collection assisted with coordination.

Despite the challenges noted above, overall fieldwork went smoothly, and the teams reached 360 of the total 368 schools targeted. This number represents the entire population of schools currently operating in the Deir Ezzor subdistricts. Teams were able to assess all principals, teachers, and students targeted in the schools that were open, functioning, and accessible. In total, the team surveyed 360 school principals, 360 teachers, and 1,440 students.

G. Data Analysis

To analyse the mass amount of data collected, we grouped questions from the five instruments into the following themes related to school management and teaching quality:

1. School Type
2. School Infrastructure
3. School Access
4. School Schedule and Classroom Attendance
5. School Personnel
6. School Management
7. Teaching Practices
8. Teacher Assessment
9. Student Assessment
10. Teaching and Learning Materials
11. Disability and Inclusion
12. Student Characteristics
13. Parental Support and Involvement
14. School Safety

The data for each theme and sub-topic was triangulated and consolidated to provide a snapshot of the overall condition of schools. The results were disaggregated to reflect differences between Eastern and Western DZ. The results should be interpreted as the current situation of schools. Where possible, we analysed the results against the INEE minimum standards for education in conflict settings.
H. SSME Results

H1. School Type
The entire SSME assessment took place in 360 schools managed by the education committee’s five offices. Of the census, 224 schools (62 percent) were located in Western DZ and 136 (38 percent) were in Eastern DZ. An overwhelming majority of the schools surveyed (93 percent) were formal schools that offered classes in a school building. Meanwhile, non-formal schools, comprising only 8 percent of the school population, held classes in temporary spaces, such as a private home or community building.

Exhibit 6: School Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Formal</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades Taught. Syria has a 12-year education system, comprised of nine years of basic education (grades 1-9) and three years of secondary education (grades 10-12). Basic education is compulsory and is divided into two cycles. The first cycle runs from grades 1-6 (primary school), and the second cycle covers grades 7-9 (intermediate school). Secondary education, although not mandatory, is also free of charge and offered through general secondary schools, vocational schools, or religious high schools.

Schools in Deir Ezzor taught grades K-9. Overall, there was a much higher proportion of schools covering the first cycle of basic education (over 50 percent) compared to schools that offered the second cycle. Over 70 percent of schools offered grades 1-5. Few schools, especially in Eastern DZ, taught kindergarten or intermediate grades, 7-9.

Exhibit 7: Grades Taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Grades of School Management and Effectiveness (SSME) Survey in Deir Ezzor, Syria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### H2. School Infrastructure

**School facilities.** According to INEE minimum standards, school facilities should promote the safety and well-being of learners, teachers, and other education personnel and are linked to health, nutrition, psychosocial, and protection services. The facilities included in this study are listed in Exhibit 8 and are essential to creating a safe school.

Enumerators conducted school observations in 360 schools to identify whether the facilities listed in Exhibit 8 were present. The majority of schools (84%) had a playground. Half of schools visited had a full school wall and potable water. In one third of schools, the most common source of potable water was a rain barrel or tank.

There were some notable differences in the types of facilities observed in Eastern and Western DZ. Nearly all schools had a playground in Eastern DZ compared to three quarters in Western DZ. While about 80 percent of schools had a full school wall in Eastern DZ, less than one third did in the West. Access to mobile phones and toilets was higher in Eastern DZ compared to Western DZ.

#### Exhibit 8: Percentage of Schools with Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full school wall</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potable water</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal has mobile phone</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilets</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial school wall</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notices posted</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functioning electricity</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>1.4% (2 schools)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of schools without each type of school facility is shown in Exhibit 9. None of the schools had electricity. This is likely due to fallen electricity cables during the conflict that have not yet been repaired. With the exception of two schools, none had a library. Astoundingly, over 80 percent of schools do not have a toilet that is connected to a water main, due to a poor or damaged sewage system.
Amongst schools with toilets, there is an average of one that is functioning\(^7\), which could contribute to low enrolment. Overall, 72 percent of school principals do not have a mobile phone, which is not surprising given the limited cell service in SDF-held areas. Finally, the majority of schools have no administrative notices posted, possibly for security reasons.

As noted above, there were great disparities within Eastern and Western DZ with regards to percentage of schools with mobile phones, school walls, and playgrounds. One in four schools in Western DZ does not have a playground.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilities</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No electricity</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No library</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No notices posted</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No toilet or no functioning toilet</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No telephone</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No potable water</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No school wall</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No playground</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Classrooms.** The results in Figure 1 illustrate that not all existing classrooms are being used for teaching. Schools have an average of 11 classrooms, but only nine are being used for classes. The key reasons for under-utilisation of classrooms are 1) low enrolment, 2) shortage of teachers to teach additional grades, 3) classrooms being used as a warehouse/storage facility, and 4) need for repair. In a few schools, displaced persons were occupying the additional classrooms. While schools in Eastern DZ had nearly twice as many classrooms as schools in the West, the ratio for use was similar in both regions.

\(^7\) As defined in the school observation tool, a functioning toilet is one that can be used. If it is a flush toilet, this means the flush is working properly.
**Classroom furniture.** Using the classroom inventory tool, enumerators collected data on the type of furniture in the classroom, including whether the classrooms had windows, heating this past winter, and a sufficient number of seats for students.

The majority of classrooms have windows, but many are broken or missing glass. Of the 279 schools that have windows, 157 (56%) have plastic sheeting.

Over half of the schools visited had heating during the 2018-2019 winter (60 percent/215 schools), with about a 10 percent difference between Eastern and Western regions. This information does not correspond with Injaz data on an activity to provide all accessible schools with heating. According to Injaz activity documentation, including photos of delivery of heaters and fuel at each school, 388 schools had received heaters and fuel by January 31, 2019. The number of schools benefitting from Injaz heating assistance is greater than the number of schools identified by Partner J, which formed the basis for RM Team’s data collection. Of the 388 schools that benefitted from heating assistance, Injaz targeted 190 schools for ‘winterisation’, defined as the installation of windows and doors. By mid-February when SSME data collection commenced, Injaz estimates that 80 percent of targeted classrooms had received winterisation support, and 20 percent had not yet been winterised. One possible explanation for the reporting of 40 percent of schools without heating by February 10, 2019 could be that principals did not turn on heating until classroom winterisation was completed. However, this possible explanation does not fully explain why 40 percent of schools reported not having heat. The Injaz project is following up with local government authorities to investigate this discrepancy.

There were a sufficient number of seats (one seat per pupil) in about half of the schools visited; however, there was great disparity between the two regions. While two thirds of schools in Western DZ had enough seats with many pupils sitting at one desk, less than one third of students in Eastern DZ had a seat. Most students in Eastern DZ shared a desk or sat on desks or other makeshift seats.

In 23 schools visited, students were sitting on the ground, and in five schools, pupils were standing.
Figure 2: Classroom Furniture

School conditions and repairs needed. Nearly 90 percent of schools in Deir Ezzor need repairs. Over three quarters of schools need broken windows replaced, and about one third need the ceiling, roof, or walls repaired. In Eastern DZ, 85 percent of schools need windows and 40 percent need their ceiling, roof, or walls renovated. Meanwhile, about 20 percent of Western DZ schools need schoolyards, perimeter walls, and school building walls repaired.

Exhibit 10: School Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broken glass windows</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceiling or roof damaged</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walls damaged</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School perimeter wall demolished</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS or extremist slogans painted on school walls</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schoolyard demolished</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs damaged</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walls demolished</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (no toilets, doors, windows, locks, school fence, water tank, or in need of buildings)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stairs demolished or missing</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One in five schools visited reported damage from a shelling or airstrike. Amongst these schools, 16 percent reported major damage, 3 percent reported minor damage (which did not impact the school schedule), and 1 percent reported minor damage that did impact the school schedule.

*Figure 3: Schools Damaged by Shelling or Airstrike*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ceiling or roof demolished</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H3. School Access**

According to INEE guidelines\(^8\) and other international conventions\(^9\), all children have a right to quality and relevant education opportunities, including in emergency and conflict settings. In these settings, it is important that there are no barriers to enrolment (e.g., requiring documentation for admissions) that could result in discrimination of vulnerable groups or internally displaced persons.

**Admissions and placement criteria.** In Deir Ezzor, there are only two factors used for admissions criteria – a placement test and age. Nearly half of the schools surveyed (40%) used both sources, while about 28 percent used only age and 17 percent used only a placement test. A placement test is considered fair and neutral if it is objective and used as a diagnostic assessment for placement. Age is also a non-discriminatory practice if it is self-reported and no documentation is required, given emergency-affected populations will not likely have these documents. Age, however, may not be the best determinant for placement in DZ since many students have missed four or more years of schooling and

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\(^8\) INEE (2012). *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.* Available at: https://toolkit.ineesite.org/inee_minimum_standards

\(^9\) These include the World Declaration on Education for All, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26, Millennium Development Goals. More information on the global campaign for education can be found at https://www.campaignforeducation.org/en/what-we-do/policy-and-advocacy/archive/about-education-for-all/
will likely need to repeat grades or receive remedial education to catch up to their expected grade level. A diagnostic test is a more accurate tool for placement in this context.

**School enrolment by gender.** Using the school observation form, enumerators collected enrolment data for 340 schools (135 in Eastern DZ and 205 in Western DZ). The average school enrolment rate was 325 students, with a gender ratio of 59 percent boys to 41 percent girls. The results in Exhibit 11 indicate that a significantly higher proportion of boys were enrolled compared to girls in both regions. These results align with the ratio of male to female teachers (64% male to 36% female). Thus, girls’ access to education may be restricted due to gender, cultural or economic barriers, or may be a legacy of the recent ISIS occupation.

**Exhibit 11: School Enrolment by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Enrolment by Gender</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Classroom attendance.** Based on results of classrooms observed, there was an average of 31 students per classroom. The gender distribution was 58 percent boys and 42 percent girls, with no differences by region.

**Exhibit 12: Boys and Girls Present in Classroom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys and Girls Present in Classroom</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H4. School Schedule and Student Attendance**

In this section, we examined the number of shifts, the school schedule, average number of teaching hours, time dedicated to play and breaks, attendance, and reasons for any school closures. The data was collected through the principal survey, student questionnaire, and school observation guides.

**Number of school shifts.** As illustrated in Figure 4, most schools operate one shift. Results were similar for Eastern and Western DZ.

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10 The reasons for lack of school enrollment data is that 15 schools did not have enrollment records and five schools refused to answer.
School schedule. Schools typically run from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 1 p.m. Nearly all schools open at 8 a.m., while 70 percent close between 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. and 14 percent close between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Teaching hours. The number of teaching hours ranged from less than 15 to 35+ hours per week. In most schools, teachers teach between 15 to 29 hours per week.

Breaks. The UN Conventions on the Right of the Child Article 31 and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) assert recess is a crucial and necessary component of a child’s development. The AAP recommends 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise per day, which should be scheduled in regular intervals to maximise cognitive benefits.

Overall, students had an average of 22 minutes of recess in Deir Ezzor primary schools. Interestingly, there was no clear pattern in differences of time dedicated to recess regardless of shift. In the eastern region, students had an average of 19 minutes of break for Shift 1 and 15 minutes for Shift 2. Meanwhile, in the western region, students averaged 15 minutes in Shift 1 and 24 minutes in Shift 2. Thus, students in both shifts are falling below the recommended time. Research shows that the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical benefits of recess may not be fully realised when time is diminished.

Absenteeism. According to students interviewed, 38 percent of the students were absent the previous week. A significantly higher percentage of students in Eastern DZ were absent (45 percent) versus Western DZ (37 percent). The two main reasons students were absent in both regions were because of illness or bad weather conditions (e.g., heavy rains, flooding).

Tardiness. On average, 9 percent of students were tardy within the last week, and the results were similar for each district. The main reasons were because they were ill or woke up late.

School closures. Schools that have temporarily closed for one or more days are illustrated in Figure 5. Overall, the majority of schools (88%) have not closed for any day during the school year. In the few

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schools that have closed due to heavy rain and flooding, the average number of days was four, with no significant differences by region.

Figure 5: Percentage of Schools That Have Temporarily Closed

H5. School Personnel
Principals had an average of 2.5 years of experience (3 years in Eastern DZ and 2 in Western DZ), which is more than the length of time schools have been re-opened. An overwhelming majority of principals were male, averaging 83 percent versus 17 percent for female principals. Eastern DZ had 12 more female principals than Western DZ (37 versus 25). Meanwhile, Western DZ had nearly twice as many male principals (199 versus 99 in Eastern DZ).

Exhibit 13: Principals’ Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Eastern DZ</th>
<th>Western DZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was an average of 11 teachers per school, with notable differences per region (16 teachers in Eastern DZ and 8 in Western DZ). Two thirds of teachers were male and one third were female, with great disparity across regions. Three quarters of Western DZ teachers were male compared to less than half (44%) in Eastern DZ. Conversely, one quarter of teachers were female in Western DZ and slightly over half (56%) were female in Eastern DZ. Unfortunately, a higher percentage of female teachers in Eastern DZ does not translate into a higher percentage of girls’ enrolment in this region.
H6. School Management
To assess school management, we asked principals whether schools had a vision statement, targets for Arabic and math learning outcomes, registration records, and school improvement plans.

Overall, 60 percent of school principals stated they have a vision statement of what they would like to achieve in the next five to ten years. Vision statements were shared orally and were general in nature. Forty-one percent stated the vision centred on establishing a generation of students that have a love for education, and another 41 percent said their vision focused on improving the quality of education and teaching. Less than 20 percent said the vision statement was to develop a literate student.

Over 90 percent of principals believe their staff, teachers, and community are familiar with the vision statement, which is most often communicated through parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings or community-based media. It is important to note that these results are self-reported.

*Figure 6: Do Schools Have a Vision Statement?*

According to principals interviewed, 19 percent have targets for Arabic or numeracy subjects that were established by the school or education committee.

Regarding the administrative aspects of school management, 90 percent of all schools (324 out of 360) have pupil registration records and 26 percent maintain them on a monthly basis while 22 percent maintain them once a term. This may be related to how often they admit students or how often they submit data to the education committee. Enrolment registration records were not available in 40 percent of schools.
About 60 percent of schools have plans to improve or expand the school. Amongst those with plans, 83 percent include a professional development plan for teachers or school staff as part of the goals and activities. However, teacher training is extremely limited.

**H7. Teaching Practices**

The INEE minimum standards for teaching and learning call for learner-centred, participatory, and inclusive instruction. In this section, we examined the teaching and learning processes to determine to what extent schools used inclusive, evidence-based teaching methods, such as assessing students’ learning and functional abilities, differentiating instruction to the specific needs of learners, and applying research-based teaching methodologies to ensure delivery of high-quality instruction.

According to principals and teachers interviewed, 49 percent of schools attempt to identify student needs and learning abilities to ensure that all students can master the learning objectives. Most schools use a diagnostic learning assessment, while some assess for functional disabilities (Figure 7).

*Figure 7: Diagnostic Assessments*

![Diagnostic Assessments](image)

While very few teachers and principals reported that teachers modify instruction based on students’ needs, most could provide examples of methods used to account for students’ learning differences. Nearly 40 percent of teachers group students according to ability, about one quarter use audio aids for hearing-impaired students, and 14 percent provide remedial instruction to address weaknesses. These results indicate that they may not have understood the question since these techniques do represent differentiated instruction and accommodation of students with special needs.

Per three quarters of principals and teachers surveyed, most schools do not encourage research-based teaching methods. In fact, only 4.5 percent of teachers and principals in Western DZ and 2.4 percent in Eastern DZ answered yes to this question. According to teachers in schools that use new teaching practices, 3 percent of teachers have received in-service training, 7 percent have received new teacher guides, 8 percent have received coaching in the classroom and 6 percent have received supplementary materials. The results disaggregated by region showed that more teachers in Western DZ received these types of support versus teachers in Eastern DZ and the difference was significant (Figure 8). New
teaching practices are often shared across teachers and schools through school-based trainings led by a trained teacher or principal. District-level training or cluster-based training with a group of schools is less common.

Figure 8: How Schools Promote Research-Based Teaching Methods (Teacher Survey)

To assess whether schools used learner-centred and participatory strategies, we asked principals how schools ensured that students are engaged in their own learning. Overall, about half of principals stated that teachers use prior knowledge by connecting lessons to students’ real-life experiences. However, nearly twice as many principals stated this in Western DZ (63%) versus Eastern DZ (34%). Other examples of student engagement included presenting lessons in multiple formats (43%), teaching self-regulation skills (27%) or building on students’ interests (27%). Giving students choices on topics or books was reported in 16 percent of schools.

Figure 9: How Teachers Engage Students in Their Own Learning as Reported by Principals
H8. Teacher Assessment
Principals were asked how often they and education supervisors conducted classroom observations to assess instruction. As indicated in Figure 10, over half of principals in the western region visited classes daily compared to less than one third in the eastern region. One third of principals in both regions visited classes once per week. Meanwhile, education supervisors visited half of the schools in the eastern region and 11 percent in the western region once per term. During visits, 36 percent of education supervisors observe classes and 19 percent provide teaching advice, while 39 percent check lesson plans. Most education supervisors (61 percent) check pupil attendance records. In terms of monitoring students’ performance, 22 percent check pupils’ progress records and 10 percent check recent student assessments and evaluations. These results are according to principals’ reporting of activities typically conducted by education supervisors. One quarter of all teachers (and one third in Eastern DZ) have never received a visit from an education supervisor.
H9. Student Assessment

To identify forms of student assessment, we asked principals and teachers how they monitor the academic progress of students. Appropriate methods for monitoring learning outcomes include diagnostic assessment, continuous or formative assessment, and summative assessment.

Over half of the principals monitor students’ learning through end-of-term evaluations (summative assessments). About half of principals evaluate pupils orally, one quarter review teacher progress reports, and one quarter conduct classroom observations.

The principal assessment methods in Figure 12 show great regional variation. The most significant differences were for end-of-term evaluations, in which 78 percent of principals in the eastern region relied on this method versus 53 percent in Western DZ, and for oral evaluations, 32 percent in Eastern DZ versus 59 percent in Eastern DZ.
Teachers use numerous forms of student assessment to inform teaching pedagogy. Nearly half of teachers surveyed conducted summative assessments, while slightly less than half (44 percent) used formative and diagnostic assessments. In Eastern DZ, most teachers use summative assessments, less than half use formative assessments, and about one quarter use diagnostic assessments. Meanwhile, in Western DZ, over half of teachers use diagnostic assessments and less than half (43 percent) use formative and summative assessments. Thus, there does not appear to be a standardised system within the DZ governorate.
H10. Teaching and Learning Materials
We assessed the types of instructional materials and teaching resources provided to teachers, and the average number of students who had access to textbooks and supplementary learning materials. The data were collected through principal surveys and classroom observations, during which enumerators recorded the types of instructional tools and resources observed in the classroom. For the student materials, enumerators asked pupils to hold their textbooks and exercise books in the air so they could count the exact number of pupils with these materials.

According to principals surveyed, the majority of teachers have been provided with teaching aids, half of teachers have received textbooks, and about one quarter have teaching guides (see Figure 14). A significantly higher proportion of teachers in Western DZ have received textbooks and teaching guides versus Eastern DZ.

Figure 14: Instructional Tools and Resources According to HT

Based on the classroom inventory, the majority of teachers in both regions have the basic instructional supplies (blackboard/whiteboard, chalk or markers, pencil/pen). Yet less than half have a notebook, math textbook, or language textbook as a reference tool.
The results in Exhibit 15 illustrate the average number of students with textbooks, exercise books, and writing utensils based on results of the classroom inventory. The average class size observed was 31 students. Students in all schools had the basic school supplies (pencils and notebooks) averaging 20 pens/pencils per class and 8 math/language exercise books. Math and Arabic textbooks were observed in 126 schools, meaning 234 schools do not have textbooks. The mean number of students with Arabic and math textbooks was 24.

### Exhibit 15: Student Learning Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Materials</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Western</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean per class</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pens/Pencils</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Textbook</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic Textbook</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math Exercise Book</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Exercise Book</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 60 percent of classrooms with textbooks, each student had their own textbook; in 10 percent of classrooms, students shared a textbook with one other student; and in 30 percent of classrooms, three or more students shared a textbook. There were significant regional differences in the percentage of students with a one-to-one student textbook ratio (63% in Western DZ and 35% in Eastern DZ). This may
be due to selective targeting by the Deir Ezzor council, who distributed UNICEF-donated Self Learning (SLP) textbooks to schools that the council received in December 2018.

Access to supplementary materials is extremely limited. Only two schools had libraries, and there were no other reading materials available in 97 percent of classrooms observed.

**H11. Disability and Inclusion**

Our main interest for this topic was to identify whether children with disabilities are included in mainstream or special needs classrooms. None of the schools visited had special needs classrooms. Amongst all schools surveyed, 93 percent reported having children with disabilities and including them in mainstream classrooms, which aligns with international best practices.

In mainstream schools, inclusive teaching practices included assessing for functional abilities (in 25 percent of schools), modifying instruction as needed (8 percent of teachers reporting), and providing audio aids or remedial lessons (in 23 percent of schools).

Despite these results, a follow-up disability household survey or assessment would be needed to verify the actual number of children with disabilities in and out of school.

**H12. Student Characteristics**

Using the student survey, we collected data on factors known to be associated with student achievement. These included student age, kindergarten attendance, and whether students had a meal before or during school. According to the results, the average age in both districts was 9 years old, and the majority of students (90 percent) have not attended kindergarten.

Most students (84 percent) have a meal before going to school. Forty percent of students surveyed eat a meal during the school day – usually a snack (30 percent) or breakfast (10 percent) that they brought from home or purchased from the school canteen. Based on the results, there does not appear to be a school feeding programme.

**H13. Parental Support and Involvement**

Through interviews with principals and students, we obtained information regarding the extent and type of parental involvement in education. Over half of the principals interviewed (60 percent) stated that parents are involved in supporting their children’s education, but they are not generally satisfied with the level of support provided. Less than half of parents (42%) provide their children with school supplies, one third help them with homework, and one fifth read to their children. Parents volunteer in only one percent of schools and the parent-teacher councils are generally not very active.
According to students interviewed, the majority of their parents (84 percent) know when they receive a good mark in school. Less than half of parents (38%) congratulate or praise their child and one quarter do nothing.

H14. School Safety
The main components of this theme were the general perception of safety amongst principals, teachers, and students, and potential security hazards within and around the school.

Contrary to what might be expected given the conflict in Syria, the majority of principals, teachers, and students feel safe at school. Over 90 percent of principals and teachers reported feeling safe. No teacher or student has ever reported feeling unsafe to the principal or teacher in 98 percent of schools.

However, there are potential safety hazards in 61 schools that could pose a threat to students and school personnel if not addressed. The most common threat is lack of a fence or school wall, particularly for schools near busy roads or a well. School principals and teachers fear students will be hit by a car or fall into the well. Secondly, in schools formerly occupied by ISIS, students are exposed to remnants of destroyed walls and buildings. Thirdly, schools need renovations to damaged windows, doors, walls, roofs, and staircases. Some schools have unsafe and unsanitary bathroom facilities, due to broken and non-functioning toilets. Finally – the most serious threat, landmines are suspected in at least three schools with holes or tunnels in the walls.

I. Recommendations
Immediate short-term needs
In the short-term, the urgent needs identified in the study that correspond with the INEE minimum standards of education for school safety and school facilities should be addressed. The INEE states that the learning environment should be free from sources of harm to learners, teachers, and other education
personnel.\textsuperscript{13} To comply with this standard, the first priority is to perform school repairs for anything that could pose safety hazards (e.g., broken windows, exposed interior/exterior walls, ceilings, or roofs, and destroyed or damaged school perimeter walls, particularly for those in danger zones). Additionally, notifying authorities of suspected landmines or explosives in the walls is an urgent matter that should be immediately addressed in at least three\textsuperscript{14} schools.

Secondly, 83 percent of schools (277) need toilets, while the other 17 percent need more than one functioning toilet. Note that Sphere guidelines\textsuperscript{15} recommend one toilet for every 30 girls and one toilet for every 60 boys. Thirdly, while the Injaz project has distributed heaters and fuel to all open schools in Deir Ezzor governorate during the fall and winter of 2018/2019, 40 percent of schools report not having heating. The Injaz team is looking into this discrepancy between activity data and the information collected during the SSME assessment. Heating will be needed before the start of each winter to retain students and prevent illness/absenteeism; thus, a longer-term strategy should be developed in collaboration with the local council and its education committees to ensure schools’ heating needs are met and that assistance is accurately reported.

Basic learning materials, particularly textbooks in 65 percent of schools and desks for 45 percent of schools, should be provided to schools to meet the minimum education standards. In addition to these basic requirements for a safe and conducive learning environment, libraries and supplementary materials are desperately needed across all schools to facilitate learning inside and outside of the classroom.

Given the gender disparities in Deir Ezzor, especially Eastern DZ, DFID could support a gender assessment to better understand the possible barriers to female enrolment and employment within the formal education sector in DZ.

Long-term needs

Should the operating environment in the long term be conducive to donors investing in development, the focus of interventions should shift from provision of basic education services to improving the quality of education. Types of interventions would include improving the quality of instruction, providing teacher professional development, monitoring learning outcomes through standardised assessment tools, and increasing parental participation. Teachers and school principals often requested training in modern teaching approaches and a standardised curriculum supported with teacher guides and relevant teaching aids. As noted above, teaching guides are a pressing need for 70 percent of teachers, but it will take some time to develop and disseminate the materials. Furthermore, schools will need assistance with establishing benchmarks and targets for literacy and numeracy, against which they can measure progress and learning outcomes. Given less than half of schools are using some form of assessment, a standardised assessment system should be developed in order to collect data on student achievement within districts and at the governorate level. As the majority of school principals in the early grades are male, education committee offices should provide incentives to attract more female applicants. Finally, increasing parent engagement in parent-teacher councils, in monitoring student performance, and in supporting school activities should be a component of any future development project focused on education.


\textsuperscript{14} Suggest verifying this number with RMTeam since in Raqqa the number reported was greater than reported for the safety hazards question.

\textsuperscript{15} INEE. (2010). \textit{Minimum Standards for Handbook}. p. 71