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Minimum educational standards for education in emergencies

Allison Anderson Pillsbury
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Minimum educational standards for Education in emergencies

Education in Emergencies

During times of crisis, access to a vital resource—education—is denied to millions of children and adolescents. According to recent research conducted in just ten out of almost 30 countries currently affected by or emerging from conflict, more than 27 million children and youth, including refugees and internally displaced persons, do not have access to formal education.¹ In 2000, UNHCR was only able to provide educational assistance to 1.1 million of the 5 million refugee children and adolescents within its purview.²

Wars and natural disasters deny generations the knowledge and opportunities that an education can provide. Education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction is a necessity that can be both *life-sustaining* and *life-saving*. It sustains life by offering structure, stability and hope for the future during a time of crisis, particularly for children and adolescents. Quality education with psychosocial support and appropriate teacher training can also help heal bad experiences, build skills and support conflict resolution and peace building. Education in emergencies saves lives by directly protecting against exploitation and harm and serves as an effective mechanism for delivering key survival messages, such as for landmine safety or HIV/AIDS prevention. Furthermore, crises can present opportunities for increased educational access for vulnerable groups who may normally be excluded, such as girls.

Surprisingly, despite all of the benefits that quality education in emergency situations can provide, it is often not seen as a priority during acute and prolonged crises or even early reconstruction periods. It is more often seen as a long-term development activity, which means that humanitarian and development agencies and governments are often unwilling or unable to support needed education activities and programs. The result is that education falls through the cracks. Children and adults without access to formal and non-formal education opportunities are vulnerable to a future of poverty and violence and lack the complex skills needed to contribute to their society's peaceful reconstruction and development. Quality education is, and must be recognized as, one of the key pillars of humanitarian assistance and early reconstruction efforts, along with food and water, shelter and health care.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies: Expanding Quality and Access through Networking, Standard Setting and Coordination

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) works to make the right to education, as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a reality by bringing together development and humanitarian agencies, national government and UN officials, education experts and practitioners, donors, and affected populations to improve coordination and implementation of education programs. Currently the global education and humanitarian communities, governments and representatives of civil society are working to expand access to quality education opportunities for those affected by crises through INEE's process to develop global minimum standards for education in emergencies. Through the development and implementation of minimum standards, INEE members and partners, including community members, will improve the design, coordination, management, monitoring and evaluation of programs and policies affecting education in emergencies and early reconstruction, therefore improving and increasing access to quality education opportunities.

¹ Global Survey on Education in Emergencies, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2004.

² *The Education Imperative*, Academy for Educational Development and The Women's Commission, 2003.

Education is primarily the responsibility of governments. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, governments are often unable to fulfill their roles during wars and disasters. Minimum standards for education in emergencies will act as a common starting point for the international community and others by providing guidance and tools on how to reach a minimum level of educational quality. The minimum standards aim to:

- Provide guidance on how to reach a minimum level of educational quality and access in crisis and early reconstruction situations
- Enhance accountability and predictability among humanitarian and development actors
- Improve coordination among partners, including education authorities, by articulating a common starting point for action and follow-through
- Contribute to strengthening the resilience of education ministries
- Serve as a capacity-building and training tool to enhance the effectiveness of education assessment, analysis, program preparedness, planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Give government, development and humanitarian workers tools that they need to address the Education For All and UN Millennium Development Goals
- Provide a strong advocacy tool with which to promote education as a core element of humanitarian assistance to humanitarian organizations, governments, donors and populations affected by crisis

Furthermore, the consultative process of developing standards is strengthening the education and humanitarian communities by linking people affected by crisis, practitioners, donors policy-makers and academics through discussions on good practice, resources and policy.

Critics assert that setting common global standards may diminish the input of local communities and may not be appropriate to all situations and communities. However, INEE has designed the consultative process to ensure that thousands of practitioners and community members, including children and youth, around the world are actively involved so that the standards reflect regional and community concerns. The standards are developed out of consensus on educational practice around the world, and they will reflect the basic human and child rights articulated in global rights documents.

Global Consultative Process to Develop Minimum Standards

In March 2002, INEE hosted the Education in Emergencies: Experts' Workshop on Appropriate Humanitarian Response. With broad representation from the NGO community in Africa, Central Asia, Europe and North America, as well as representation from key UN agencies, experts and practitioners made a unanimous decision to support the development of global minimum standards as a priority for ensuring access, quality and accountability in education in emergencies.

Within INEE, the Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (WGMSEE) was constituted and had its first meeting in February 2003. The WGMSEE consists of 13 organizations with expertise in education in crisis and early reconstruction situations: CARE Canada, CARE USA, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council and the Norway United Nations Association, Save the Children UK, Save the Children USA, Refugee Education Trust, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and World Education. The WGMSEE hired a Focal Point for the standards process, who is hosted by the International Rescue Committee in New York City. Funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency helped to initiate and provide funding for the Focal Point. Since then, the WGMSEE has received core funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, the International Rescue Committee, the International Save the Children Alliance, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR.

From 2003 onwards, the WGMSEE and the Focal Point are facilitating a broad base of stakeholders to develop standards that articulate a minimum level of educational access and service to be attained in emergencies through to early reconstruction. The main components to the standards development process are inputs via the INEE list-serve; regional sub-regional and national consultations covering Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Europe; and a peer review process. Information gathered from each step will be used to inform the next phase of the process. This model reflects lessons learned from the Sphere Project and emphasizes transparent, cost-effective and consultative decision-making.

Participants in this consultative process include representatives from affected populations, including students, teachers and other education personnel; NGO, government and UN representatives with experience in education; donors and academics. They will develop standards, indicators and guidance notes that reflect their own experiences, good practice and rights that are already articulated in major international instruments. The standards will apply to a variety of affected populations, from refugees to internally displaced and host country populations.

Prior to the regional consultations, participants coordinated local, national, and sub-regional consultations to gather input and information from a broad range of community members and field-based practitioners and experts. To date, INEE's WGMSEE has facilitated two regional consultations: one in Africa and one in Asia.

The Africa Collective Consultation on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies was held in Nairobi, Kenya from January 21-23, hosted by Care Canada and Norwegian Church Aid and supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). In advance of this regional consultation, consultation delegates and other INEE members held 29 local consultations, bringing over 525 voices from 14 different countries in Africa, in 22 different cities, towns and refugee camps, into the process. The 525 plus participants represented over 55 humanitarian organizations, including:

- Hundreds of representatives from over 50 international and local NGOs
- Hundreds of representatives from local communities, including teachers and other education personnel from over 60 schools and students from over 17 schools (primary, secondary and university) across Africa, as well as community representatives, PTA members, religious and traditional leaders and refugee women
- Dozens of Ministry of Education officials, who participated in 12 local consultations
- Dozens of United Nations representatives from UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and UNESCO offices across Africa

The Asia Collective Consultation on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies was held from April 21-23 in Kathmandu, Nepal, hosted by the International Save the Children Alliance and supported by UNESCO, Save the Children Norway and the International Save the Children Alliance. The delegates at this regional consultation and other INEE members in the region held 43 national and local consultations leading up to the Consultation. Approximately 650 participants were involved in these 43 local and national consultations in Asia. One consultation was also held in Europe by a delegate, and thus a total of 44 local and national consultations fed directly into the Asia regional consultation. The consultations, which produced over 200 standards, were held in 25 different cities, villages and refugee camps in 10 different countries in Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The 650 participants represent over 75 humanitarian organizations and other groups, including:

- Hundreds of representatives from international, national and local NGOs

- Hundreds of representatives from local communities, including teachers, other education personnel, teacher trainers and students (primary, secondary and university); young people who are out of school across Asia; and community representatives such as community education committee members, board of education representatives, youth, refugees, IDPs, religious and traditional leaders and women
- Dozens of Ministry of Education, District Education and local government and officials
- Dozens of United Nations representatives from UNICEF, WFP, WHO and UNESCO offices across Asia
- Military representatives

The delegates representing affected populations, governments, NGOs and UN agencies at the Asia and Africa Collective Consultation on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies built upon the standards, indicators and guidance notes developed at the national and local consultations in their regions to develop a set of regional standards at the collective consultations in Nairobi and Kathmandu. The three days of each of the Collective Consultations were filled with rich, intense and thoughtful discussion on the following categories: appraisal, analysis and response planning; community participation; access and equity; learning environment; learning content, methodology and resources; teachers and other education personnel; and education policy and coordination.

Two other regional consultations are the Latin America and Caribbean Collective Consultation on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, which will be held in Panama City, Panama from May 5-7 and hosted by UNICEF; and the Middle East, North Africa and Europe Collective Consultation on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, which will be held in Amman, Jordan from May 19-21, 2004 and co-hosted by UNESCO and UNHCR.

BOX: Setting Standards for Quality from the Ground Up

The following are examples of similar minimum standards with accompanying indicators and guidance notes, which were developed at the Asia and Africa regional consultations on the category of LEARNING ENVIRONMENT and the topic of Safety and Security. During the peer review process, experts will look across the four sets of regional standards to see where the global overlap is regarding consensus on good practice.

ASIA CONSULTATION

Learning Environment Standard: Safety and Security

The learning environment is safe, secure and promotes protection for all stakeholders.

Key Indicators

- Access routes to the learning environment are safe and secure for all.
- The learning environment is in close proximity to the population it serves (see guidance note 1).
- The learning site is situated away from risk of natural hazards (such as floods, landslides, etc.) (see guidance note 1).
- Systems are in place to ensure that the learning environment is free from arms, ammunitions, landmines, UXOs, armed personnel, crossfire locations, drugs and political/military threats (see guidance note 3).
- Systems are in place to ensure that the learning environment is free from gender-based violence, discrimination, exploitation, physical violence, kidnapping, abduction, trafficking and other similar threats.

- Training programs to promote safety, security and protection, procedures are developed and implemented.
- Monitoring mechanisms are established to ensure safety, security and protection (see guidance note 5).
- Communities, teachers, parents, education providers are involved in establishing systems and setting policies for ensuring learners are not exploited or abused.

Guidance Notes

1. Stakeholders refer to learners, education service providers, parents, and community members.
2. Proximity should be defined according to local/national standards.
3. If the learning site is used as a temporary shelter or by security forces, still need to make sure that students/learners can access learning in another site.
4. All stakeholders should be instructed/educated on the practical and contextual safety, security preparedness and protection related issues.
5. Community and all stakeholders are involved in planning and decision-making to ensure learning environments are safe zones.
6. Monitoring should be done through a participatory process.

AFRICA CONSULTATION

Learning Environment and Resources standard: Safety, security and protection

The learning environment is safe, accessible, and secure and promotes protection.

Key Indicators

- The school environment is clear of landmines/UXOs weapons and armed personnel
- The community maintains the learning environment in a user-friendly state
- Parents and teachers serve as protectors of the learning community and resources.
- The learning environment is designated by visible boundaries.
- The learning community undertakes sustained sensitization and training programmes on life skills to ensure protection and safety (see guidance notes 2, 3 and 4).

Guidance Notes

1. This standard should be viewed in conjunction with the standards on *Access, Learning Methodology and Community Participation*.
2. The 'learning community' includes everyone involved in the learning environment. This is not just the children or students but all learners (formal and non-formal education), teachers and other personnel who may work in or utilize the site (e.g. security). It is an inclusive term that does not discriminate among the various categories.
3. 'Safety' and 'protection' encompass physical safety, including
 - no arms or armed personnel in school vicinity,
 - secure from insurgents and kidnappers (inside the community, not isolated)
 - grounds cleared of potential dangers; rocks, tree stumps etc.,
 - safe from harassment (both social and sexual)
 and psychological safety where the learner feels comfortable and secure in the learning environment so that full participatory learning can take place.

4. 'Life skills' refers to programmes on peace education (including conflict resolution and Human Rights education), sexual and gender based violence, landmine awareness, HIV/AIDS and environmental education.

Strengthening Regional Networks and Action on Education in Emergencies

Apart from developing minimum standards and strengthening contacts and networks at the regional consultations, a feeling of ownership for and commitment to moving the process forward has emerged after each regional consultation thus far. At the Africa Consultation, the Inspector General for Education from Guinea called on governments, donors, and UN agencies to work together to ensure that during crisis, early reconstruction and normal times, "Peace, Human Rights, Civic and Conflict Resolution Education is included in all forms of curricula to end the cycles of violence that disrupt communities and their future." At the collective consultation in Asia, delegates shared their plans for follow-up to the consultation, including:

- The representatives from India will be holding a national meeting to share the results and plan follow-up with the government and other local, national and international actors involved in implementing the standards.
- One of the representatives from Sri Lanka has involved the government in the process from the outset, and will be meeting to share the results and strategize on future actions for internally displaced communities upon her return.
- The representatives from Nepal, coordinated by UNICEF Nepal, will be working together with the government representatives who attended the consultation to discuss ways to use the standards developed at the consultation to help ensure access to quality educational opportunities for students within insecure areas of Nepal.
- The Chairperson of Sphere India stated that Sphere India, the national coalition of humanitarian agencies in India, which includes government, INGOs, UN agencies and national NGO networks, is extremely happy to work with INEE to initiate the implementation and institutionalization process of the minimum standards for education in emergencies in India.

After the four regional consultations are concluded, a peer review group, representing a variety of perspectives on issues of access to and quality of education, regional analyses and cross-cutting themes (gender, protection, etc) and made up of education, humanitarian and child protection specialists from NGO and UN agencies, and governments, as well as academic and research institutions, will be engaged during June – August 2004. This review process will take place via e-mail and a peer facilitator will hold a 'virtual consultation' with the peer review experts, leading the group to comment with authority on each content area covered by the standards developed at the four regional consultations. The outcome of this peer review facilitation process will be a honed set of global standards.

Standards Implementation and Continuing to Build Quality through Global Networking

The final standards will be launched at INEE's Second Global Inter-Agency Consultation on Education in Emergencies and Early Recovery, December 2-4, 2004 in Cape Town, South Africa. This launch will be accompanied by broad and sustained outreach and awareness raising initiatives about the standards and the protection that education in emergencies can afford to communities in crisis. A third phase of this initiative in 2005 will focus on the promotion, implementation and institutionalization of the standards around the world.

To continue contributing to the delivery of quality education during crisis, INEE will maintain and support new initiatives among its members. INEE is concerned with ensuring that governments, communities, organizations and agencies have the capacity to ensure quality education during times of

crisis and are prepared to react to emergencies before they happen. Currently INEE maintains a web site, www.ineesite.org, moderates a global list-serve, and disseminates information to over 600 individual members and over 150 organizational members and partners. Members share information on good practices, curricula, educational materials and supplies, teachers, and policy and discuss emerging issues and challenges in the field. They also contribute to the functioning and accomplishments of INEE by convening and participating in Task Teams and Working Groups. INEE's future initiatives to ensure increased access to quality education will include supporting the development of further baseline data on the numbers of children and youth left out of school in emergencies and improving monitoring and evaluation of education during times of crisis and early reconstruction, particularly by using the Minimum Standards.

INEE is an open network of UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, donors, practitioners, researchers and community members working together to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction. The network is responsible for gathering and disseminating best practices in education in emergencies and ensuring a regular exchange of information among its members and partners. INEE is led by a Steering Group composed of representatives from CARE International, the International Save the Children Alliance, the International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank.

Join INEE and share resources and information by visiting www.ineesite.org. INEE is open to all interested individuals and organizations that implement, support, advocate and study education in emergencies. You can find out more about INEE by contacting the INEE Coordinator at coordinator@ineesite.org.

To learn more about the Minimum Standards Process, contact the INEE Focal Point, Allison Anderson Pillsbury, at Allison@theirc.org. All results from the Minimum Standards Process are posted at: www.ineesite.org/standards/default.asp