

Strengthening Ministry of Education Engagement and Leadership in Rapid Education in Emergency Response

Policy brief



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Educational Planning

**STRENGTHENING
EDUCATION IN
RAPID
RESPONSE**

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With the generous contribution from, and in partnership with, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), the Global Education Cluster together with UNICEF, Save the Children, UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), REACH, NORCAP, and Translators without Borders have worked to address barriers preventing girls and boys living in situations of humanitarian crisis from realizing their right to receive quality education. Specifically, the partners developed evidence, tools, and a training session to strengthen rapid education responses, including through Rapid Response Mechanisms, to ensure children's life-saving and life-sustaining education needs are addressed in the first phase of humanitarian response.

This policy brief was developed by IIEP-UNESCO.

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This publication is part of a series of case studies on [Madagascar](#) and [South Sudan](#) and practical guidance documents on these two countries.

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Abbreviations

CFSS	Child-Friendly Safe Space
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GEC	Global Education Cluster
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LEG	Local Education Group
MEAL	Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MoE	Ministry of Education
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RNA	Rapid Needs Assessments
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SMC	School Management Committee
TLM	Teaching/Learning Material
TLS	Temporary Learning Space

Background and rationale



Globally, in mid-2022 a record 306 million people needed humanitarian assistance and protection (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2022). The increasingly protracted nature of crises, coupled with worsening security and access to the affected people (ACAPS, 2021), have necessitated new approaches – to respond to immediate needs in complex environments and to ensure that responses ultimately help reduce humanitarian needs over the medium to long term (OCHA, 2017). These approaches include rapid response mechanisms (RRMs), a ‘programmatic and operational approach to respond to the acute needs of vulnerable populations’ (REACH, Global Education Cluster (GEC), and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), 2020). Such mechanisms are typically mobilized to respond to sudden-onset emergencies or deteriorating conditions in ongoing crises, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, and aim to provide immediate, life-saving assistance.

The RRM modality takes different shapes in different contexts, but is often multi-sectoral, and draws on the strengths of different partners to access vulnerable and hard-to-reach areas, assess needs, and provide an initial response that can be followed up by humanitarian and development partners in different sectors. While several RRM have provided rapid responses to address education needs (REACH, GEC 2020), modalities for the consistent inclusion of education in RRM and/or the development of RRM within the education sector are still being developed.

A widely recognized challenge inherent in the nature of RRM is linking initial responses to longer-term solutions and programming within a strengthened humanitarian-development nexus approach. While acknowledging that in many sudden-onset emergencies the capacity of ministries of education (MoEs) is limited, and often has to be complemented by humanitarian intervention, enhanced MoE engagement and leadership are needed, notably in preparedness and contingency planning and in providing for the sustainability of the response.

Against this backdrop, IIEP-UNESCO has analysed how and when MoEs may be more systematically engaged in preparedness planning and the initial stages of humanitarian interventions, to improve the resilience of education systems as well as the relevance, effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability of rapid education in emergencies (EiE) responses without compromising the ability to address the immediate needs of affected populations. This work is part of a wider ECHO-funded project on 'Strengthening rapid education responses in emergencies', led by the GEC, to improve access to safe and quality education for children and young people in the early phases of emergencies.

This policy brief draws on country consultations, focus group discussions with education stakeholders, and key documents integrated into the GEC's RRM toolkit, including the University of Sussex Synthesis Report 'Strengthening Rapid Education Responses in Acute Emergencies', to provide a set of practical recommendations to *enhance education authorities' engagement and leadership in RRM and rapid EiE response at national, subnational, and local levels*. More specifically, the recommendations outline how to

- i enhance *joint coordinated preparedness efforts between the MoE and humanitarian partners* as a precondition for effective rapid EiE responses;
- ii strengthen the role of MoEs *during EiE responses*; and
- iii foster an *enabling environment* for effective MoE engagement and leadership in preventing or mitigating, preparing for, and responding to sudden-onset emergencies.

The targeted audience are *MoEs at national and subnational levels, humanitarian partners, and coordination entities* in which MoEs may play a leading or co-leading coordination role, depending on context. The recommendations are applicable to MoEs when they are not party to conflict, and in situations where education authorities are looking for opportunities to enhance capacities to engage in rapid EiE responses. Key recommendations for humanitarian actors put forward ways in which they can more effectively engage the MoE in preparedness planning and throughout the duration of a rapid response to an emergency.

The key actions proposed throughout the phases and areas discussed below draw on the findings of two country case studies in Madagascar and South Sudan on MoE engagement in emergency situations, and provide evidence- and experience-based considerations rather than prescriptions for action or normative propositions. Given the importance of local dynamics and considerations in humanitarian responses, these recommendations should be contextualized at national, subnational, and local levels to address specific challenges limiting the engagement of MoEs.

For MoEs to play a more effective role in the planning and implementation of rapid EiE responses, it is critical that education authorities at all levels be better prepared to respond to emergencies that affect the education sector. This section outlines entry points to *strengthen joint preparedness efforts between MoEs and humanitarian partners as a prerequisite to an effective rapid EiE response.*

2.1 Joint preparedness planning

For the rapid response to be effective and timely, preparedness efforts must be efficiently and jointly planned by MoEs and humanitarian partners. *Planning of preparedness* efforts may include:

- i** cooperation and collaboration with other key ministries or the national agency for disaster management (where one exists), to promote the integration of EiE into multi-sectoral rapid response efforts and coordination between the EiE response and other multi-sectoral RRM, and to support subnational and local levels to work jointly with other line ministries at subnational level, and with teachers, school principals and staff, parents, and parent-teacher associations (PTAs), to engage in the preparation of contingency plans at subnational and local levels and improve coordination;
- ii** ensuring that other services to ensure protective, safe, and inclusive education are also part of education preparedness and contingency plans;
- iii** conducting advocacy targeting higher-level national government authorities for education to be included in national preparedness/contingency plans, as a life-saving service given its role in improving protection, addressing malnutrition or healthcare issues including through the provision of safe spaces, school feeding programmes, or school-based health services;
- iv** ensuring the setting up, operationalization and use of an early warning system,¹ grounded at grassroots level;
- v** engaging local-level leaders in contributing to the formulation and design of preparedness strategies.

¹ Such early warning systems would alert schools, teachers, and learners in case of a looming disaster or other types of crisis, through various communication channels, to take appropriate anticipatory actions.

2.2 Preparing for rapid needs assessments

As part of rapid EiE preparedness efforts, MoEs and partners should *jointly plan for the effective deployment of rapid education needs assessments*. Such assessments should include measures to:

- i** jointly develop a common needs assessment framework and key indicators as part of the preparedness plans of MoE and humanitarian actors;
 - strengthen community participation in the design, implementation, and dissemination of needs assessments, ensuring all language communities are included;
 - agree on priority education questions and indicators for inclusion in joint assessments;
- ii** define clear roles and responsibilities for conducting joint assessments and ensure the human, financial, and logistical resources associated with these roles;
- iii** ensure rapid EiE data collection tools/checklists are cascaded and contextualized at local level, including translation into relevant languages, and support uptake at subnational level;
- iv** provide EiE data literacy capacity-building for MoE staff at subnational level;
- v** work with local/school communities to jointly review and rate risks in vulnerable areas (those most likely to be affected by crisis, including areas likely to receive displaced populations) and build on existing risk analyses where relevant, to complement rapid needs assessment data and inform the elaboration of preparedness plans.



2.3 Planning for implementation

Through coordination entities (e.g. education cluster, EiE working group), MoEs and partners should also *jointly prepare for the effective and rapid deployment of relevant activities*, as outlined in the [RRM Preparedness Checklist](#).

In terms of *planning for Temporary Learning Spaces (TLS) and Teaching/Learning Materials (TLM)*, MoE and partners' joint actions might include:

- i** advocating to donors for a result/contingency line in all proposals, allowing MoEs/partners to pre-position adequate supplies and respond rapidly;
- ii** pre-determining essential supplies needed for rapid provision and set-up of TLS and other means to provide continuing education services;
- iii** establishing and maintaining real-time maps and inventories of pre-positioned supplies;
- iv** pre-determining the composition of teaching and learning kits, ensuring these are contextualized and procurement localized as much as possible, keeping in mind local supply chain constraints;
- v** localizing, adapting, and translating guidelines teacher training and curriculum materials to be used in conjunction with each pre-packaged kit;
- vi** reviewing and updating relevant agreements with local suppliers;
- vii** ensuring agreements for storage, rapid deployment, and transport of TLS and TLM as part of rapid EiE response.

MoEs should also coordinate with other relevant line ministries to explore the opportunity of joint warehousing and ensure they are able to provide warehousing for pre-positioned supplies at local level, to facilitate rapid deployment of the stock.

In terms of planning for *mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)*, MoEs' and partners' joint actions could include:

- i** determining what emergency curriculum and types of supplementary packages and materials are available and appropriate for likely emergency scenarios;
- ii** collaborating with the child protection sector to ensure a standard package is available for MHPSS;
- iii** identifying, localizing, and adapting materials for likely emergency themes;
- iv** pre-training teachers and school administrators to ensure a roster of trained professionals on MHPSS;
- v** ensuring a rapid training package in accessible formats and languages is available to teachers and other facilitators;
- vi** ensuring close coordination with other relevant ministries including, for instance, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Services.



MoEs and partners should also plan for joint actions to provide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which could include:

- i ensuring the inclusion of SEL in preparedness, familiarization with key indicators, and providing teachers/facilitators with core training and resources;
- ii conducting advocacy with schools, teachers, and caregivers on the importance of SEL.

Finally, in terms of planning for *teacher support and mobilization* during the acute phase of the emergency, MoEs' and partners' joint actions could include:

- i establishing a specific policy on teacher compensation during emergencies, in line with MoE policy on teacher compensation;
- ii developing a teacher mobilization and rapid minimum training plan;
- iii ensuring pre-crisis training is provided on a scale and frequency that ensures rapid readiness of teachers and facilitators. In multilingual contexts, it would be important to provide interpretation at training to ensure teachers with marginalized first languages are fully prepared.

2.4 Coordination and communication

To alleviate ambiguities around roles and responsibilities, and to ensure humanitarian principles are adhered to, MoEs and partners should *jointly enhance sector and intersectoral coordination mechanisms and communication flows* before *rapid-onset emergencies* and clarify the roles and responsibilities of education actors, to be better prepared in the event of a crisis. More specifically, MoEs and partners should:

- i jointly draft and disseminate Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outlining the roles and responsibilities of the MoE at national and subnational levels, and of humanitarian partners during the onset of emergencies;
- ii conduct and regularly update EiE-related capacity assessments among education staff at subnational level to identify potential gaps across key functions of the MoE, to contribute to implementing rapid EiE responses;
- iii conduct surveys on the understanding of EiE standards by MoE staff at subnational level, to assess the uptake of EiE-related training and inform future targeted capacity-building efforts.

In addition, MoEs should endeavour to:

- i draft clear ToRs (terms of reference) for MoE staff tasked with rapid EiE responsibilities, to improve their accountability for these interventions;
- ii improve awareness-raising across all MoE departments concerned on their responsibility to assist MoE EiE focal point(s) with relevant technical expertise and coordinated support during a rapid-onset emergency.

Humanitarian partners' specific actions to strengthen MoEs' role in coordination could include:

- i promoting the deployment of dedicated MoE staff at national and subnational levels to focus on EiE-related functions and advocate against MoE staff 'double hatting' (taking on EiE-related responsibilities in addition to regular functions) as much as feasible;
- ii ensuring MoEs understand and use the 5W or partner presence mapping conducted by the Education Cluster more systematically, to know which partners can be tapped into during a rapid-onset emergency;
- iii ensuring better links with the Local Education Group (LEG) (e.g. cluster coordinators could sit in on these meetings, and LEG members not engaged in humanitarian action could sit in on both cluster and Humanitarian Country Team [HCT] meetings) to foster information-sharing and coordination on rapid EiE across development and humanitarian partners.

2.5 Resource allocation

Finally, MoEs and partners should *jointly reinforce advocacy for resource mobilization efforts, to ensure the timely allocation of adequate resources for rapid EiE preparedness planning*. MoEs and partners' actions in this regard, in line with the RRM Preparedness Checklist, could include:

- i** determining likely funding needs for the first three months of potential emergency scenarios based on contingency and preparedness planning, including supplies and human resources;
- ii** maintaining and strengthening relations with key donors at country level, keeping them informed about preparedness efforts, and jointly developing donor mapping to identify available resources in each location and for each type of crisis in the event of a rapid-onset emergency;
- iii** developing MoE capacities for resource mobilization, including training on writing proposals and advocacy strategies in relation to rapid EiE response.

In addition, MoEs should consider:

- i** dedicating part of their national budget to pre-positioning school supplies, which could be mobilized during a rapid-onset emergency.

How to strengthen MoEs' role during rapid responses

This section outlines entry points to *strengthen the role of MoEs during rapid EiE responses* and how such engagement can be leveraged to improve the effectiveness of rapid responses. More specifically, it looks at the role of MoEs in:

- i providing access in hard-to-reach affected areas;
- ii conducting rapid needs assessments (RNAs);
- iii planning and implementing rapid EiE responses;
- iv ensuring rapid EiE coordination;
- v supporting financing and budget implementation during the acute phase of the emergency.

3.1

Access to hard-to-reach crisis-affected areas

Central to the implementation of RNA and rapid EiE response is the issue of access. MoEs should endeavour to *enable access by humanitarian partners to hard-to-reach areas and reduce contextual impediments to rapid response*, including by removing unnecessary restrictions to specific geographic areas, providing pre-approval or rapid approval processes, seeking permissions, or negotiating roadblocks, as well as improving security for humanitarian partners. This should be done in close liaison with national and local authorities, as well as with local communities.

3.2

Rapid needs assessments and linkages with longer-term data systems

Rapid needs assessments and EiE-related data collection are central to providing education in emergency situations. However, there is often a lack of involvement of MoEs in humanitarian data collection processes and RNAs. In some settings, weak coordination of RNAs with MoE-led EiE-related data collection processes has created inefficiencies. The table below outlines possible entry points to *strengthen MoEs' engagement during rapid needs assessments, as well as key considerations to plan for continuity during the initial assessment phase*.

Engaging MoEs during rapid needs assessments

MoE-specific actions (subnational education authorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Closely coordinate with humanitarian actors on data collection and analysis. ■ Collect data and information from schools on the impact of the crisis on students, education personnel, and infrastructure. ■ Share data with partners and report to higher-level authorities through appropriate coordination mechanisms.
Partner-specific actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Closely coordinate with MoE data collection, processing, sharing and analysis, of the education component of the multi-sectoral RNA, and share findings with other sectors/clusters and MoEs at national and subnational levels through the coordination entities. ■ Facilitate MoEs' active participation in initial RNAs and monitoring (where/when appropriate).
Joint MoE/partner actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participate in multi-sectoral initial RNAs. If needed, deploy an assessment team to double-check the data on the ground.

Planning for continuity during the initial assessment phase

MoE-specific actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Triangulate rapid EiE-related data with institutional information system data (including the Education Management Information System [EMIS]), to compare with pre-crisis disparities on a set of clearly pre-defined indicators and contribute to the mobilization of adequate resources. ■ Use updated contingency plan(s) to inform the elaboration of annual operational plans and thereby ensure rapid EiE response components are mainstreamed into MoE planning processes.
Joint MoE/partner actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Facilitate the integration of rapid EiE data into the EMIS (e.g. a specific module in the EMIS that could be activated quickly for a specific crisis-affected location and could provide dynamic and available data in a continuous flow).

3.3 Rapid response implementation and alignment with education policy frameworks

Enhancing the role of MoEs in the planning and actual implementation of rapid EiE responses, focused on education activities that can be implemented for up to a six-month window to meet the acute and immediate education needs of vulnerable children in hard-to-reach areas, requires drawing on the pivotal role played by subnational-level education authorities and local authorities on the front line of the humanitarian response and aware of the specificities of local contexts. To leverage the role of subnational-level MoEs to deploy rapid EiE packages, their participation should be ensured early on in the process, from carrying out the rapid initial needs assessments. Throughout the implementation of the rapid EiE response, it is critical to plan for continuity as early as possible, in order to bridge the gap between emergency and longer-term programming, including improved learning outcomes and enhanced resilience.

Capitalizing on the pivotal role of subnational-level education authorities and local authorities to deploy standard rapid EiE packages

Subnational-level MoE-specific actions, supported by partners

- *In close liaison with local authorities*, ensure education spaces are accessible and safe, to ensure the provision of inclusive non-formal education and protection.
- *Closely collaborate with humanitarian partners* to define priority locations for rapid response implementation, with a particular focus on the most marginalized populations.
- Leverage the role of *local education offices*, PTAs, and school management committees (SMCs) as important players in emergency response at local level, notably to verify risk factors, identify local resources, and assess learning conditions.
- *Liaise with humanitarian partners* to ensure the deployment of pre-positioned supplies, and that TLS/child-friendly safe spaces (CFSSs) meet national MoE standards.
- *In close coordination with humanitarian partners*, ensure alternate and continuous education: provide non-formal education and alternate learning opportunities (distance education, radio broadcast, TV, etc.) when physical access is not possible, with a focus on the most marginalized groups.
- Work closely and in consultation with *affected communities* to contextualize rapid response and ensure better relevance and greater potential for scalability and sustainability of interventions.

Partner-specific actions in close coordination with subnational education authorities

- Provide safe, protective, and quality learning spaces: deploy pre-positioned supplies, provide, TLS/CFSS that meet national MoE standards.
- Provide relevant support to subnational education authorities to facilitate coordination and information-sharing in and from hard-to-reach areas.
- Disseminate life-saving messages, ensure child safeguarding, and provide SEL and MHPSS.
- Ensure alternate and continuous education opportunities: provide non-formal education and alternate learning opportunities in areas without physical access, focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- Advocate with education authorities for education to be considered life-saving, for schools occupied as shelters or for military purposes to be vacated, and for all education spaces to be safe and accessible.

Planning for continuity as early as possible and throughout the implementation of rapid EiE responses: bridging the gap between emergency and longer-term programming, including improved learning outcomes and enhanced resilience

MoE-specific actions, supported by partners

- Ensure available local resources/materials are used for rapid EiE responses when feasible and host community needs are taken into consideration in the response.
- Start preparing for back-to-school campaigns, as relevant, as early as possible.
- Based on assessments, plan for school relocation, repair, or reconstruction.
- Plan for additional pre-positioning of supplies for further expected or enduring crises.
- Start planning for the transition from temporary and non-formal education to the reintegration of all students into the formal education system as soon as possible. For displaced children who were enrolled in the formal system, plan for their integration into the formal system in their new location.



3.4 Coordination

In order to enhance MoEs' engagement during rapid EiE response, it is key to strengthen their roles in RRM coordination and EiE coordination through existing *coordination mechanisms during the acute phase of the crisis, both within MoE departments and across administrative levels, as well as between MoEs, other ministries, and humanitarian partners.*

Leveraging MoEs' coordination role during the rapid response

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| MoE-specific actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Where possible, maintain a convening and co-coordinating role of rapid EiE responses in the national and subnational clusters, and ensure intersectoral coordination from the initial phases of the response by coordinating with other multi-sectoral RRM and liaising closely with relevant ministries, including Ministries of Health, Water, and Sanitation, Ministry of Interior, and the department or body in charge of disaster management/humanitarian affairs, notably to strengthen referral pathways and avoid the use of schools as shelters. |
|----------------------|--|

Planning for continuity throughout the coordination of rapid EiE responses

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|--|---|
| Joint MoE/partner actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure coordination with and engagement of local communities throughout rapid EiE response, strengthen community structures' capacities, such as parent-teacher-student associations, and ensure their inclusion in EiE response design and implementation processes. |
| Coordination entities-specific actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure coordination with Local Education Groups to start planning for the transition from rapid EiE to recovery efforts. |

3.5 Resource mobilization

Gaps and imbalances in financial resources during rapid responses tend to limit MoEs' leadership and thereby favour partner-led interventions that may undermine MoE leadership and oversight. MoEs' role should be leveraged and strengthened to contribute to *rapid resource mobilization efforts during rapid-onset emergencies*, including through domestic sources, and to enhance *effective and timely budget implementation during rapid response*.

Fostering resource mobilization and financing during rapid response

MoE-specific actions

- Ensure contingency funds are made available to relevant decentralized levels of MoEs.
- Contribute to fundraising through appeals to the Ministry of Finance and other internal structures for dedicated increased funding for education response within the broader emergency response.

Coordinating entities-specific actions

- Use rapid needs assessments and updated contingency plans to fundraise additional resources in priority areas.
- Ensure education is integrated into appeals and other proposals in collaboration with OCHA.
- Request rapid seed funding from pooled funding mechanisms.
- Request MoE contingency budget to be made available, and jointly identify and advocate with MoE for funding for the coming months, to ensure scalability of rapid response efforts.

Enhancing effective and timely budget implementation during rapid response

MoE-specific actions

- Activate 'crisis procedures' to allow for the swifter disbursement of funds and for less bureaucratic procurement procedures.
- Consider redesigning funding flows from national to sublevels, to enable rapidly deployable funds.

Fostering an *enabling environment* for effective MoE engagement and leadership

To facilitate the implementation of the actions outlined in the above sections, and to enhance the effectiveness of preparedness measures, an enabling environment must exist. The following section describes *key enablers and/or prerequisites that MoEs at national level and subnational levels, as well as humanitarian partners, should consider putting in place to strengthen rapid EiE responses and to improve their sustainability*. Ultimately, these enablers will help education actors to *bridge the gap between emergency and longer-term programming* and will contribute to making rapid EiE responses more effective and accountable to affected populations from the onset of crises.

4.1

Policy and planning: adoption of a crisis-sensitive planning approach

A key enabler for effective rapid responses is *crisis-sensitive planning*. It strengthens preparedness measures, limiting vulnerability to hazards; prevention and mitigation, limiting the impact of crises; and recovery, by having systems in place to deliver services that meet people's needs in a timely manner and adapt to local contexts.

To move away from token and ad hoc engagement and ensure stronger engagement and leadership in rapid EiE responses, MoEs should foster a coherent policy environment where crisis preparedness, prevention, and response are institutionalized. First of all, MoEs should ensure education is integrated into government preparedness efforts, contingency planning, or disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, to ensure the maintenance of key basic services across all circumstances. Moreover, MoEs should conduct analyses of the vulnerabilities of the education system, including vulnerabilities to natural hazards, climate change, and conflict, and use these analyses to inform the *mainstreaming of emergency preparedness and response into all education policies and planning processes* (education sector plans, annual operational plans, education-related policies and strategies) and ensure these are underpinned by humanitarian principles. MoEs should adapt their *operational tools and procedures* to make them flexible in case of emergencies, and also rehabilitate their *educational facilities and infrastructure* (through the use of disaster- and climate-resilient design and materials). Likewise, there may be a need to adapt the *curriculum* and the *governance* of the national education system. The latter may involve, as relevant, the establishment of a *unit dedicated to EiE*, supported by highly qualified staff and reinforced accountability mechanisms. These policies, procedures, and processes should be cascaded down to subnational levels. In addition, national governments should consider requiring that *any rapid cross-sector response intervention includes education*.

MoEs should consider leading, in coordination with humanitarian coordination partners, the development of *costed multi-hazard contingency plans* at national level, which would guide EiE responses, including rapid responses, and ensure the transition from rapid EiE to longer-term recovery and sustainability. For instance, teacher training and temporary school construction should be guided by MoEs' long-term standards and targets. Such contingency plans should be contextualized to subnational realities through consultations with communities, including the most marginalized groups, and should facilitate local ownership. More specifically, MoEs and partners should *include communities from the beginning of rapid responses*, including local leaders and institutions, PTAs, and SMCs. To do so, MoEs and partners should strengthen community participation in the design, implementation, and dissemination of needs assessments, and ensure all language communities are included.

To improve emergency preparedness and response at school level, MoEs should require schools to *include, in school improvement plans, disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures, and, in school grants, a budget line for school-level emergency preparedness and rapid response.*

Efforts to institutionalize emergency preparedness and response should complement the mobilization of dedicated funding for EiE and a robust policy of skills development for emergency preparedness and response. Concerning the latter, *the capacities of local level education experts, school administrators, and teachers* should be strengthened on emergency preparedness and rapid EiE response, including on issues related to early warning and the preparation of contingency plans, with a view to fostering a culture of preparedness across all levels of the MoE, and to strengthening resilience down to school level. Teacher provision should also ensure the availability of female teachers, including in remote and/or hard-to-reach areas. *Capacity development initiatives must address the issue of frequent staff turnover and include strategies for organizing turnover and ensuring the transfer of skills related to rapid EiE*, with particular attention to subnational education offices in remote areas.

Finally, governments should allow for an increased delegation of decision-making power to subnational levels, including local authorities on the front line of the humanitarian response. It is indeed necessary to *strengthen decentralization processes for a more effective, contextual, and faster implementation of responses* to local needs. MoEs should notably deepen the involvement of subnational levels in policy design, strategic planning, and decision-making, and ensure they are adequately supported to contextualize and implement policies and plans in relation to emergency response and risk management from the earliest stages of a crisis.

4.2 Improved data capacities

To really understand the scope of a crisis, as well as communities' differentiated education needs, stakeholders need access to, and must make use of, reliable data. And, to ensure resources are directed swiftly and effectively during the rapid phase, the timeliness and security of these data is crucial.

Overall, partners should strengthen the capacities of MoEs at national and subnational levels to *collect and use timely EiE data for making informed decisions*, through the provision of regular training to staff at all stages of the EiE-related data life cycle, including on how to engage in and contribute to rapid needs assessments in collaboration with humanitarian partners. Training should be supplemented by peer-to-peer learning. MoEs could consider establishing a roster of trained data collectors who can be rapidly deployed in hard-to-reach areas. As stated above, partners could also provide subnational education offices with the necessary equipment (including satellite phones, information, and communication technology [ICT] equipment, as well as relevant means of transportation) to collect and disseminate data from hard-to-reach areas. Governments could also invest more in alternative and/or renewable energy sources to ensure that power shortages are not an obstacle to the collection and reporting of data in the affected areas and hence to the deployment of a rapid EiE response that is planned based on real needs in the most remote areas.

To help MoEs to take a more active role in rapid EiE responses, partners should support their EMIS departments to integrate data collection, use, and management processes, notably to ensure the data collected as part of rapid EiE assessments are consolidated at all levels and feed into the national EMIS. More generally, partners should consider providing support to the MoE to *make the EMIS crisis-sensitive, and to harmonize the collection and production of EiE-related data*, by supporting the revision and harmonization of EiE data collection tools/checklists, indicators, and processes, including for rapid EiE, which can be cascaded and contextualized at subnational levels. The MoE should also be supported on the development of further key performance indicators related to EiE. MoEs and partners should also use strengthened monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL), integrated into the EMIS, to monitor transitions from informal to formal education and strengthen lessons learned. MoEs should consider strengthening cooperation with national statistical authorities to ensure better integration of data, including EiE-related data.

Partners should consider MoEs as a key owners/actors in data collection and management processes, and engage education authorities at all levels in data collection and analysis, from the rapid assessment stages. To strengthen this perception, MoEs should not only ensure that financial *resources are dedicated to conducting rapid EiE assessments*, but also strengthen the quality of data from MoE sources. For instance, prior to emergencies, MoEs could establish *data validation bodies within subnational education offices* that would have the capacity to cross-check EiE-related data collected and disseminate them to other levels of the MoE and to partners. Finally, MoEs should also consider establishing *data backup systems to prevent risks of losing data and information during a rapid-onset emergency*.

Lastly, MoEs and partners should consider establishing *data-sharing protocols*, mindful of protection and security concerns, which would provide a trustworthy framework for systematic EiE-related data-sharing between partners and MoEs.

4.3 Enhanced coordination and communication

Effective planning and implementation of rapid responses depend on strong coordination. Such coordination is especially important in contexts where resources are particularly constrained and where it is therefore vital to ensure available resources are used efficiently.

MoEs should capitalize more on coordination mechanisms offered through the education cluster meetings or EiE working groups to *promote coherence between rapid education responses and government priorities*, in particular by promoting the alignment of partner initiatives with MoEs' annual work plans, to further optimize the use of the limited resources available for rapid EiE, and to create synergies among the different interventions. Partners should be encouraged to intervene within the framework of the education cluster or EiE working group co-led by MoEs, to avoid duplication and promote better coverage of all affected localities in terms of rapid response following rapid-onset emergencies.

Working across different levels and sectors is vital for effective rapid EiE responses. As such, specific provisions for intersectoral coordination, from national to subnational level, and more specifically on coordination with existing multi-sectoral RRM, should be integrated into subnational multi-hazard contingency/preparedness plans. These plans should outline coordination mechanisms between MoEs and partners at subnational level and between different line ministries at subnational level, as well as across MoE departments. Improved intersectoral coordination would, for instance, obviate the use of classrooms as shelters by affected populations.

In parallel, partners should consider scaling up support to MoEs to take on their primary duty-bearer roles in terms of providing education during crises, including rapid EiE responses. In particular, *the capacities of subnational education clusters should be strengthened to effectively coordinate rapid EiE interventions*, and support should be provided to subnational MoE staff.

4.4

Strengthened financing and budget implementation

Preparing for and implementing rapid responses, especially in hard-to-reach and insecure areas, requires significant funding. Given the importance of the availability of financial resources to facilitate an MoE's role in rapid response efforts and to operationalize existing rapid EiE arrangements, governments should increase resources available to MoEs for rapid EiE. More specifically, MoEs should create a *dedicated budget line for rapid EiE, including preparedness at national and subnational levels*. This would require advocacy to the Ministry of Finance and other ministries, including the prime minister or president's office for sector and joint sector budgets for emergency response. MoEs could also consider requiring that EiE grant funding from donors include a minimum percentage allocated to rapid responses.

With a view to strengthening *resource mobilization for rapid EiE*, MoEs and partners should target advocacy towards higher-level authorities and the OCHA to ensure education is considered *life-saving* and life-sustaining, and its protective capacity recognized, so that education is itself prioritized in rapid responses. MoEs should also consider investing in consistent and rigorous rapid education needs assessments to build the case for additional funding, and putting in place a coordinated effective early warning system across all levels, linked with jointly developed and costed multi-hazard contingency plans. These would constitute powerful resource mobilization tools to advocate with higher-level government authorities on the importance of prioritizing education in rapid responses.

To improve budget implementation and ensure resources, from national to school level, are disbursed more swiftly in response to rapidly identified needs, *MoEs should put in place contingency financing mechanisms and ensure the decentralization of powers and budgets*. They should also advocate for the simplification of procurement procedures during emergencies.

Finally, MoEs should consider encouraging the mobilization of local resources combined with community-based approaches, as well as advocating for the use of local resources for EiE and rapid EiE.

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