

Can global standards be practical and flexible? Lessons learnt from the INEE Minimum Standards application and analysis processes¹

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Education is critical for all children, but it is especially urgent for the tens of millions of children affected by emergencies. Crises can have a significant and damaging impact on education systems, infrastructure, and personnel, thereby denying children and youth the protection and transformative effects that quality education can bring. In conflict-affected settings like Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo, students, teachers and administrative staff are targeted for intimidation, recruitment and indoctrination by armed forces and groups. In natural disasters, supplies and equipment are often destroyed and as we have seen in the tragic earthquakes in China in August 2008 and in Pakistan in October 2008, school buildings may collapse on teachers and their students. Although education is a right enshrined in numerous human rights instruments, displaced communities are sometimes unable to access quality learning opportunities because service delivery does not match the immensity of the needs like in Darfur or because of political restrictions such as those that affect youth living in long-term camps on the Thai-Burma border.

Yet, in times of crisis, quality education sustains life by offering safe spaces for learning as well as providing the ability to identify and support affected individuals, particularly children and youth. Education mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters by giving a sense of normalcy, stability, structure and hope for the future. It can also save lives by providing physical protection from the dangers and exploitation of a crisis environment. When a child is in a safe learning

¹ This paper was presented on Panel 50. "Standards, Indicators, Guidelines and Quality Humanitarian Assistance – a Reality Check?" at the World Conference on Humanitarian Studies in Groningen, the Netherlands in January 2009.

environment, he or she is less likely to be sexually or economically exploited or exposed to other risks, such as recruitment into a fighting group. In addition, education can convey life-saving information to strengthen critical survival skills and coping mechanisms, such as how to avoid landmines, how to protect oneself against sexual abuse, how to prevent HIV/AIDS, and how to access health care and food distribution.

Education has historically been seen as part of longer-term development work rather than a necessary intervention in emergency response; the principal mandate of humanitarian relief organisations typically involves provision of food, shelter, water and sanitation and healthcare. However, attitudes and assumptions are now shifting, and increasingly education is being included in the planning and provision of humanitarian relief. This is critical because coordination and close collaboration between education and other emergency sectors is essential for an effective humanitarian response that addresses children's holistic needs. An inter-sectoral approach to education is even more vital in emergency contexts than in normal situations. For instance, education, protection, nutrition, health and psychosocial specialists must work together to establish child friendly, safe spaces where children learn, play, regain a sense of normalcy and access vital services.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) developed a set of Minimum Standards in order to codify these linkages and to be an immediate and effective tool to promote protection and coordination at the start of an emergency while laying a solid foundation for holistic, quality education and disaster preparedness during reconstruction.

INEE is a global, open network of members working together within a humanitarian and development framework to ensure all persons the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies and post-crisis recovery². Since its inception in 2000, INEE's membership has grown to over 3,200 practitioners,

² www.ineesite.org

students, teachers and staff from UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, donors, governments and universities and it has successfully created a vibrant and dynamic inter-agency forum that fosters collaborative resource development and knowledge sharing and informs policy through consensus-driven advocacy³.

One of INEE's eight core strategic objectives is to enhance global knowledge and capacity in order to support education in crisis and post-crisis settings, including through the deepened promotion, implementation and evaluation of the INEE Minimum Standards. A Working Group was constituted within INEE, first to oversee the development of the INEE Minimum Standards (2003-2005), and then to support their dissemination and application (2005-2009). The Working Group provides strategic oversight and leadership on INEE Minimum Standards activities, based on INEE members' feedback both on the content and format of the handbook but also their challenges, lessons learnt and good practices in the application of the standards.

INEE is dedicated to respond to the requests and feedback of its members in the field, including promotion and dissemination, capacity-building, and support to application. At the same time, recent developments in the humanitarian sector such as the IASC cluster approach and the movement towards strengthening linkages have called on the INEE Minimum Standards to play a role in global discussions as a quality reference framework for the education sector. The signature of the Sphere/INEE companionship agreement in October 2008 represents the most solid and promising achievement in this direction for INEE. Is this direction compatible or competing with the requests of education practitioners and humanitarian workers for more practical support?

Drawing on the experience of the INEE Minimum Standards, this paper examines the tensions and relations between standards as a global quality and accountability reference framework and standards as a concrete tool for practitioners and policy-makers. Building on the lessons learnt in the past five years, it refutes the criticism

³ INEE Strategic Plan 2008-2010

that global standards are incompatible with flexible use, local relevance, and accountability to beneficiaries. The paper provides a series of reflections and recommendations on how INEE can better meet the increased demand for support to successfully apply the INEE Minimum Standards in order to enhance their interventions in emergencies and post-crisis settings.

I. A global quality and accountability reference framework

A. Overview of the INEE Minimum Standards

Rationale

After the founding of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in 2000, awareness of the need for non-formal and formal education programs in emergency situations increased. Two issues in particular came to the fore: how to ensure a certain level of quality and accountability in emergency education; and how to 'mainstream' education as a priority humanitarian response. In March 2002, INEE members met to share common insights and challenges and chart the way forward for the network. Humanitarian agencies like CARE, IRC, Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), UNHCR and UNICEF, which have all carried out emergency education programs for children since the 1990s, shared lessons about the life-sustaining and life-saving nature of quality education. But they also shared their frustration with the lack of coordination of these efforts, limited funding, the absence of accepted good practice on which to base their interventions, and the need to link improved quality and accountability to advocacy.

In 2002, INEE began looking at the Sphere Project's example of how to accomplish these two objectives. The Sphere Project, launched in 1997 by a group of humanitarian NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, is based on two core beliefs: that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict, and that those affected by disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance. However, it is important to note

that the idea of the INEE Minimum Standards did not come from the standardization movement initiated by Sphere but from a real need expressed by dozens of education practitioners working in the harshest conditions, most of the time with very little guidance on what issues to consider in their programs, to improve the lives of those affected by crisis.

In order to promote education as a key pillar of emergency response as well as develop a tool for effective action to meet the education rights of affected populations, a Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies was constituted in 2003 within INEE to facilitate the development of global minimum standards for education in emergencies.

Development

In 2003, the Working Group began facilitating the development of standards, indicators and guidance notes that articulate a minimum level of educational quality and access in the emergency and early reconstruction phases. Over 2,250 individuals from more than 50 countries contributed to the development of the minimum standards. The minimum standards were built from the ground up. They were debated and agreed upon through a participatory process of: 1. on-line consultation inputs via the INEE listserv to gain initial feedback, drawing on member perspectives and first-hand experience. This was an essential component in the process to develop minimum standards to serve as a platform for defining good practice. 2. community-level, national, sub-regional and regional consultation to ensure that the standards reflect regional concerns and have a broad consultative basis and 3. a peer review process by a group comprising education, health, humanitarian and protection specialists from NGO and UN agencies and governments, as well as academic and research institutions. Information gathered from each step was used to inform the next phase of the process.

This model reflects lessons learned from the Sphere Project's management process and emphasizes broad, transparent, cost-effective and consultative decision-making.

One concrete way in which the INEE Minimum Standards process reflects the lessons learned from the Sphere Project is the inclusiveness of the initiative. While Sphere has been an NGO-led initiative, the Working Group is made up of both UN and NGO organisations. The Working Group made special efforts to ensure that representatives from a variety of levels, including households, schools and communities, local authorities, ministry officials, funding agencies and implementers, were actively involved throughout the consultative process in order to ensure relevance to and buy-in from all education stakeholders.

The handbook of *Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction* was launched at INEE's Second Global Inter-Agency Consultation on Education in Emergencies and Early Recovery, in Cape Town, South Africa, from 2–4 December 2004. The handbook was well received by delegates and the consultative process in developing the standards was judged to be as significant as the product itself.

Content

The INEE Minimum Standards constitute the first global tool to define a minimum level of educational quality in order to provide assistance that reflects and reinforces the right to life with dignity. The INEE Minimum Standards are founded on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Dakar Education for All (2000) framework, the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter. In addition to reflecting these international rights and commitments, the standards are an expression of consensus on good practices and lessons learned across the field of education and protection in emergencies and early reconstruction situations. They were developed by stakeholders from a variety of levels and have evolved out of emergency and early reconstruction environments around the world. As such, they are designed for use in emergency response, emergency preparedness and in humanitarian advocacy and are applicable in a wide range of situations, including natural disasters and armed conflicts.

The INEE Minimum Standards present a global framework for coordinated action to enhance the quality of educational preparedness and response, increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities, and ensure humanitarian accountability in providing these services. They provide good practices and concrete guidance to governments and humanitarian workers to enhance the resilience of education systems and can be used for sector planning. The minimum standards are represented in five categories:

- ***Minimum Standards Common to All Categories:*** focuses on the essential areas of community participation and utilizing local resources when applying the standards in this handbook, as well as ensuring that emergency education responses are based on an initial assessment that is followed by an appropriate response and continued monitoring and evaluation.
- ***Access and Learning Environment:*** focuses on partnerships to promote access to learning opportunities as well as inter-sectoral linkages with, for example, health, water and sanitation, food aid (nutrition) and shelter, to enhance security and physical, cognitive and psychological well-being.
- ***Teaching and Learning:*** focuses on critical elements that promote effective teaching and learning: 1) curriculum, 2) training, 3) instruction, and 4) assessment.
- ***Teachers and other Education Personnel:*** focuses on the administration and management of human resources in the field of education, including recruitment and selection, conditions of service, and supervision and support.
- ***Education Policy and Coordination:*** focuses on policy formulation and enactment, planning and implementation, and coordination.

Gender, HIV/AIDS, disability and vulnerability and children's rights are cross-cutting issues mainstreamed throughout the handbook.

All of the standards and indicators are qualitative in nature, which has led to some criticisms that the INEE Minimum Standards may be “too vague” and “not operational enough”. The qualitative nature is partly due to the fact that education is a sector that is overall less quantifiable than others, like health or nutrition for example.

It is much harder to determine a minimum number of hours per day a child aged seven years old should spend on studying mathematics than to establish the minimum nutritional requirements of an adult at 2,100 Kcals per person per day⁴. However, rather than being a weakness, the qualitative nature of the INEE Minimum Standard is the exact reason that enables their operationalization and contextualization in a way that is locally relevant and meets the needs of affected populations, which is examined in further details later in the paper.

B. The Sphere/INEE Companionship

In October 2008, the Sphere Project and INEE announced the signature of a “Companionship Agreement” between the Sphere Project, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* (the Sphere Handbook) and the *INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction* (INEE Minimum Standards). By this agreement, the Sphere Project acknowledges the quality of the INEE Minimum Standards, and of the broad consultative process that led to their development. As such, the Sphere Project recommends that the INEE Minimum Standards be used as companion and complementing standards to the Sphere *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response*.

What does the companionship entail? While The Sphere Project Handbook and the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook will remain stand-alone publications with their own recognizable identity, certain elements of the publication in the coming update process will clearly demonstrate the formal relationship. There will be an icon depicting education, compatible with those used in the Sphere Project Handbook, will be included on the cover of INEE Minimum Standards Handbook. The Sphere Project will use this same icon when promoting the relationship with the INEE Minimum Standards. Furthermore, a statement highlighting the formal relationship between The Sphere Project and INEE will be included on the front cover of the INEE Minimum

⁴ Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, 2004, p.138.

Standards Handbook: *“The Sphere Project recognizes the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction as Companion Standards to the Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response”*.

This companionship agreement is an important achievement toward one of the main objectives of the INEE Network itself -- that education services are integrated into all humanitarian response. Most importantly, it will improve humanitarian aid for communities and by services providers. Prejudices “for” or “against” standards aside, this is what we should keep in mind. In the update process for both Handbooks (2009/2010), guidance pertaining to the INEE Minimum Standards will be mainstreamed throughout the core chapters of the Sphere Project Handbook and vice-versa to include references wherever relevant during the next revision of both publications. There will also be a formalization of training linkages, whereby a module describing the other parties’ core messages and each set of standards will be included in all training events implemented by either the Sphere Project and/or INEE. Therefore, the use of the INEE Minimum Standards as a companion to the Sphere Handbook will help to ensure that crucial inter-sectoral linkages are made at the outset of an emergency - through multisectoral needs assessments, followed by joint planning and holistic response. The hope is that education will no longer be overlooked and that we will no longer see refugee camps whose designers forgot to select an adequate location for the school or whose engineers constructed latrines everywhere except in the schools which brings together hundreds of children everyday.

This is significant because in times of crisis, education is often prioritized by communities themselves (yet not always provided by humanitarian and donor organizations). Indeed, in countless assessments even during high-profile emergencies, recipients often identify schools as the priority intervention. In many cases, the demand by refugee leaders for children’s education often exceeds requests for food, water, medicine and even shelter. For instance, during the famine in

Afghanistan in the winter of 2001–2002, village leaders' requests for education were declined by aid groups in favor of food and other commodity distributions. Community leaders then asked that teachers be categorized as 'most vulnerable' for priority rationing of food parcels. Another example: in May 2000, during a survey of displaced camps in the Moluccas Islands in Indonesia, people repeatedly cited schools as their communities' primary need, despite the lack of clinics, latrines, wells and other relief commodities. And another example: many Chechens abruptly fled their homes in the early summer of 1999, when most children had only sandals on their feet. As winter approached, the IRC distributed a large consignment of children's boots in several displaced camps. During a follow-up visit to the camps when snow was on the ground, the IRC staff were perturbed to find children still barefoot or wearing sandals. Families readily produced the children's boots for inspection, but when asked why they were still in their original wrappers, the children explained that they were saving their new footwear for the first day of school⁵.

C. Participation in the Quality and Accountability Initiative

In recent years, several Quality and Accountability (Q&A) initiatives have developed tools and training materials but there is a lack of materials presenting this work in a clear and integrated manner. The Sphere Project hired a team of consultants to develop a paper on "Exploring ways to understand different Quality and Accountability Initiatives for enhanced humanitarian assistance" which is intended to present the theoretical basis of eight key Q&A initiatives, including the INEE Minimum Standards and the Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, and to provide a clear overview of the resources made available as well as practical examples of implementation. A set of modifiable training materials will also be produced, that can be used as relevant in INEE and Sphere trainings to demonstrate how the palette of Q&A tools can enhance humanitarian assistance.

⁵ These examples were provided by Gerald Martone, International Rescue Committee, September 2006.

In this endeavor, two challenges require attention: the need to maintain an adequate representation of the relatively complex picture of Q&A initiatives and the need to clarify what the joint initiative will look like in practice. Nonetheless, the Q&A initiative holds a good potential to highlight the importance of accountability to affected populations as well as to better equipping those responsible for implementing activities in emergencies and post-crisis recovery.

It is undeniable that the INEE Minimum Standards are the key quality and accountability reference framework for the education sector in emergencies, chronic crises, and early reconstruction. This has helped build recognition for the field of education in emergencies and is now contributing to broader discussions on the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance overall. But how operational is this framework? Can the INEE Minimum Standards not also be a practical tool for practitioners and policy-makers?

II. A key tool for education practitioners and policy-makers

The INEE Minimum Standards were primarily conceived as a tool for education, protection and humanitarian workers, who started applying them almost immediately after their launch at the end of 2004 - that is almost four years before the Sphere/INEE Companionship. It needs to be understood that when talking about “application” of the INEE Minimum Standards, we include both notions of utilization and institutionalization. Utilization is use of the INEE Minimum Standards by an individual or an organization to support education programs and/or policies. Utilization strategies may build upon awareness strategies or they may implement institutionalization strategies. Institutionalization is the institutional commitment to and systematic use of the INEE Minimum Standards by an organization. Institutionalization strategies are critical steps in ensuring the INEE Minimum Standards become part of the institutional collective organizational culture and

practice. Therefore, we are concerned with the utilization and institutionalization of the guidance in the handbook, not strict compliance with it.

A. Key findings from analysis

In 2005, the mandate of the Working Group on Minimum Standards was renewed, and its membership reconstituted, to support dissemination, training and capacity-building, and analysis and application activities. While the dissemination of and capacity-building on the INEE Minimum Standards have been documented in other internal and external documents⁶, the next section gives a more detailed overview of the analysis conducted since the launch of the handbook.

Research methodology

In October 2005, the INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards, with assistance from the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Creative Associates International, Inc. and a consultant, developed a standardized research and evaluation plan, encompassing qualitative and quantitative methodologies and including guidelines on research uses and questions and technical tools on context analysis, research conceptualization, data sources, data collection and data analysis⁷.

The principal research questions in evaluating the INEE Minimum Standards include:

- *Awareness*: are INEE members and/or clients of organizations aware of the standards? How did they learn about them?
- *Utilization*: Are the standards being used? How? What factors facilitate or inhibit their use? Are some standards used more, or used more intensively, than others? Why?

⁶ See INEE Promotion and Advocacy webpage: <http://www.ineesite.org/page.asp?pid=1064> and Training and Capacity-Building webpage: www.ineesite.org/training for a series of documents on these issues.

⁷ The Research Plan was prepared by Mitch Kirby, USAID, Lori Heninger, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Rudi Klaus, Academy for Educational Development, Margaret McLaughlin, Creative Associates, John Middleton, Consultant, Joanne Murphy, Creative Associates, Joan Sullivan-Owomoyela, Consultant and Carl Triplehorn, Save the Children US, with the involvement of the Application and Analysis subgroup of the INEE Working Group and the INEE Secretariat.

- *Institutionalization*: Have any standards been institutionalized in the policies or procedures of an organization?
- *Impact*: What is the impact of the Standards on educational access and quality? On the work of organizations delivering education services?

Tier One involved qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the INEE Minimum Standards, with baseline and endline measures. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and Creative Associates International Inc. and an independent consultant carried out evaluations of the standards, respectively in Darfur, in northern Uganda, in Pakistan⁸, and again in Northern Uganda.

Tier Two, which was led by a team of researchers from InterWorks, Columbia University and George Washington University and built upon Tier One methodology, involved the creation, distribution and analysis of an in-depth questionnaire on awareness, utilization, institutionalization⁹.

Tier Three involves the on-going self-evaluation of the INEE Minimum Standards by INEE members. The INEE Secretariat has received over 150 feedback forms in 2005-2008 from users of the standards.

This feedback and analysis has shown that the INEE MS are currently used in over 80 countries around the world for programme and policy planning, assessment, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as advocacy and preparedness. Users relate that the INEE Minimum Standards provide a common language, facilitating the development of shared visions between different stakeholders, including members of affected communities, humanitarian agency staff and governments. They are being used as a training and capacity-building tool: over 250 educational, protection and emergency trainers have been trained on the standards, and are training hundreds of others through a cascade training model. The standards

⁸ The first three evaluations have been documented in the Humanitarian Practice Network Paper "Standards put to the test: The Preliminary Implementation of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crisis and Early Reconstruction", December 2006

⁹ INEE Minimum Standards Questionnaire Report, 2007

are also being used to promote holistic thinking and response and to frame and foster inter- and intra-agency policy dialogue, coordination, advocacy and action for the provision of quality education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction.

Evaluation of the INEE Minimum Standards in Uganda

The most recent evaluation of the INEE Minimum Standards was carried out by an independent consultant in April 2008 and was followed-up by an in-country visit to implement some of the evaluation's recommendations in September 2008. This evaluation follow-up visit was a first in INEE's experience and yielded important lessons for the future of INEE Minimum Standards activities.

Over the last two decades in Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)'s practice of murder and kidnapping in the northern and eastern parts of the country has displaced 1.8 million people. Primary education in Uganda is free but the dropout rates are still high, with only 23 percent of children completing primary school. Education challenges include class sizes of up to one hundred teachers with limited resources and training, and lack of access of vulnerable children to education and other humanitarian services.

Since 2005, approximately 150 individuals in Uganda have been trained on the INEE Minimum Standards. These trainings have targeted staff at international organisations and local and national government education officials and local NGO representatives. Approximately eight hundred INEE Minimum Standards Handbooks have been distributed in Uganda. In mid 2006, a year and a half after the launch of the handbook, a small baseline study was conducted in Uganda, measuring the awareness, utilization, institutionalization, and impact of the INEE Minimum Standards. Two years later, this research study was undertaken in Kampala, Kitgum, Lira and Gulu to gain a better understanding of progress and identify lessons learned and recommendations.

Evaluation key findings: awareness, utilization and institutionalization

The evaluation revealed that approximately two-thirds of the 86 study participants

were aware of the existence of the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook. Those most likely to be aware of the standards were staff from international non-governmental organizations, UNICEF, and bilateral donors. 20% of study participants reported using the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook in their work. This is a substantial increase over the earlier baseline study. However, this figure represents only 30% of study participants who were aware of the existence of the handbook; furthermore, a third of the study participants who had participated in a 3-day training reported not using the handbook.

Some informants reported a positive impact on their organizations due to the use of the INEE Minimum Standards. For example, a staff member of an international NGO in Uganda wrote that the community participation standards have revolutionized their program: ‘Because community members participate in project design, implementation and monitoring, they are able to make a valuable contribution including local materials for construction, etc. The cost of running a project then becomes small. Our NGO spends less, for example, on constructing teachers’ houses because the community makes contributions. We are therefore able to help more schools’¹⁰. However, little evidence was found of the direct impact of the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook on the education sector in Uganda, which is understandable since programming guidance comes from a variety of sources.

The evaluation highlighted that the gap between awareness and utilization was explained in big part by misconceptions of the content and purpose of the INEE Minimum Standards. For instance, education practitioners and Ministry of Education officials thought that the INEE Minimum Standards may be competing with Uganda’s own national education standards. Another common challenge was around the operationalization of qualitative standards and indicators.

¹⁰ Source: evaluation questionnaire data.

Evaluation follow-up visit

The INEE Coordinator for Minimum Standards conducted a follow-up visit to Kampala, Kitgum and Pader in September 2008 in order to elicit these misconceptions and provide technical assistance, mentoring and coaching to INEE members to help overcome the challenges highlighted in the evaluation. Over 20 meetings and workshops were held with the Ministry of Education, donor agencies, local NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies and the education cluster in all three locations. Discussions were very concrete and based on an NGO's logframe, the education cluster's emergency preparedness and response plan, or the MoE's national standards, etc.

It was striking to see how sharing tools and experiences from others around the world, identifying needs and opportunities within humanitarian workers' activities and discussing the most strategic and concrete ways to use the INEE Minimum Standards was most helpful in "bringing their application home" for colleagues in Uganda. In addition, emphasizing that the INEE Minimum Standards are a tool to help achieve quality and accountability objectives rather than an end in themselves or a rigid framework often represented the "clicking moment" in understanding how the standards do have a great potential to support and enhance programmatic and policy work. Following consultative meetings and events, the INEE Minimum Standards were used to frame the education cluster's emergency preparedness and response plan; the Education District Officer in Kitgum endorsed them as a reference to ensure better coordination between the NGOs in his district; NRC included relevant indicators in their school monitoring and supervision forms; and the Ugandan Education Standards Agency expressed interest in using the INEE Minimum Standards in the next revision of the Ugandan standards to ensure a holistic plan for education.

The analysis activities of the INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards and the follow-up visit in Uganda demonstrated that it is both desirable and possible to promote and support the application of the INEE Minimum Standards. However, how

can this be done given the diversity of humanitarian contexts and actors? One way to start addressing this big issue is to build on the analysis conducted and the successful experiences documented to identify further strategies to support the application of the INEE Minimum Standards as is requested by INEE members around the world.

B. Key factors for successful application

Individual champions operationalizing the INEE Minimum Standards

Since their launch, the promotion and use of the INEE Minimum Standards was facilitated by key individuals who participated in the development process or who saw their great potential in supporting their education programs. They have operationalized the INEE Minimum Standards, i.e. used the handbook as a tool – entirely or partially depending on their needs - to support their work.

Contextualization Process in Afghanistan

After an initial training workshop on the INEE Minimum Standards organized by CARE USA in Afghanistan in May 2007, community-based education (CBE) providers decided to undertake a contextualization process in order to make the INEE Minimum Standards even more relevant, applicable and accessible to actors of the education system in Afghanistan. Sixteen CBE organisations agreed to form a working group, which met regularly to contextualise the INEE Minimum Standards relevant to community-based education in Afghanistan. The contextualised indicators will be used by CBE providers to guide their work in communities as well as by the Ministry of Education who will be able to use them to monitor the work of partner organisations.

Use of Sample Teacher's Code of Conduct in Somaliland

The sample teacher's code of conduct included in the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook on page 70 is considered by many as one of the most useful education tools. When the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) started its Alternative Approach to Basic Education (AABE) programme in Somaliland in 2005, no official code of

conduct for teachers or Ministry of Education staff existed. However, NRC considered that it was essential that teachers and other education personnel signed one in order to ensure a child-friendly learning environment and enhanced child protection. NRC staff therefore referred to the category within the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook on Teachers and Other Education Personnel, which provides guidance on teacher's codes of conduct. They used a similar outline, while adapting some of the content of the code to address local challenges. For instance NRC added a section on non-discriminatory and supportive relationships between colleagues, including towards the few female teachers in the Somali teaching force. The code of conduct was signed by all AABE teachers prior to starting teaching, the Ministry of Education and the NRC education manager.

Use of the INEE Minimum Standards as an institutional evaluation and learning tool

World Education in Thailand developed an internal reflection tool based on the INEE Minimum Standards. The tool included questions prompting staff to compare programs on the Thai/Burma border with the INEE Minimum Standards and then to discuss: what standards are being met? What standards are not being met? Why not – is it an oversight, a conscious decision, or are they challenges? How can the challenges be overcome? What additional standards do we need to prioritize for a holistic intervention that will respond to the needs and fulfill the rights of the community to access to quality education? The INEE Minimum Standards provided a new lens through which to look at programs and a common framework for reflection and discussion.

Institutionalization of the INEE Minimum Standards

Experience has shown that the INEE Minimum Standards have a greatest effect on education responses when they are institutionalized within an organization, rather than used on an ad hoc basis or by committed individuals lacking institutional support. For INEE, the term “institutionalization” refers to the process of systematically incorporating or embedding the INEE Minimum Standards within an organization’s policies, programs, procedures and/or practices. To support this, the

INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards developed six action checklists: for NGOs, UN agencies, donor organizations, government agencies, foundations and the education cluster. These institutionalization checklists articulate a variety of suggested actions that organizations can utilize when applying the standards internally and in bi- and multi-lateral work.

All fifteen organizations on the INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards have developed an institutionalization plan. In addition, many practitioners and policy-makers find the checklists useful and have asked for more tools like it.

C. Next steps to support application

As mentioned before, the INEE Working Group has received a lot of feedback in the past five years from INEE members on what they see should be the priorities for the future. These include updating the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook and providing increased support to application through:

- Continuing to developing case-studies documenting the experiences (challenges, lessons learnt, good practices) of INEE members
- Continuing to developing practical tools to support the utilization and institutionalization of the INEE Minimum Standards
- Conducting “application visits” on the model of the Uganda evaluation follow-up visit, focusing on sharing feedback and mentoring
- Focusing training and capacity-building activities on application issues

Given these priorities, Working Group membership will be opened in April 2009 to interested organizations who will need to submit membership applications. It will be essential to keep committed organizations with memory and experience of INEE Minimum Standards activities as well as to include new organizations bringing new expertise and a new perspective on planned activities. For instance, as disaster risk reduction will be mainstreamed in the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook, a new Working Group would highly benefit from the membership of organizations with

expertise and experience in this field. Similarly, as INEE members seek further guidance on how the INEE Minimum Standards can be used by donor agencies and national governments, having such constituencies represented on the Working Group will certainly facilitate and move the application process forward.

Conclusion

For some, the appellation of “standards” may conjure up ideas of normative frameworks and compliance “a la lettre”. However, the INEE Minimum Standards are a flexible document and represents both a quality reference framework and a concrete tool supporting the provision of safe, quality and relevant education in emergencies. This said, there is a need to deepen the work on both aspects. This will not be done in through separate silos and INEE will continue to ensure that its work with other Q&A initiatives and the humanitarian reform at the global level is connected with the practical application of the INEE Minimum Standards in the field. This is a challenge for many quality and accountability initiatives and will surely require further conceptual clarification and operational guidance that should be obtained from consultation and analysis.