



# Co-ordinating education during emergencies and reconstruction: challenges and responsibilities

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*To the memory of Giles Whitcomb,  
a truly kind friend and former research colleague,  
who shared his deep wisdom on humanitarianism, the United Nations  
and co-ordination challenges.*

*The humanitarian world has lost a fine friend and advocate.*

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## Foreword to the series

UNESCO is increasingly requested to provide an educational response in emergency and reconstruction settings. The organization is in the process of developing expertise in this field in order to be able to provide prompt and relevant assistance. It will offer guidance, practical tools and specific training for education policy-makers, officials and planners.

The fifth of the eleven objectives adopted by the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 explicitly focuses on the rights of children in emergencies. It stresses the importance of meeting "... the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability and conduct[ing] educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict". The *Dakar framework for action* (UNESCO, 2000: 9) calls for national Education for All (EFA) plans to include provision for education in emergency situations. Governments, particularly education ministries, have an important role to play in an area that has often been dominated by the actions of NGOs and United Nations agencies.

Moreover, the field of educational planning in emergencies and reconstruction is still young. It has to be organized into a manageable discipline, through further documentation and analysis, before training programmes can be designed. Accumulated institutional memories and knowledge in governments, agencies and NGOs on education in emergencies, are in danger of being lost due both to the dispersion and disappearance of documents, and to high staff turnover in both national and international contexts. Most of the expertise is still in the heads of practitioners and needs to be collected, since memories fade fast. Diverse experiences of educational reconstruction must now be more thoroughly documented and analysed before they disappear.

This task includes the publication in this series of four thematic policy analyses being conducted on the planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction. They are global in scope, covering: (a) co-ordination; (b) validation and certification of learners' attainments; (c) teacher management; and (d) integration of youth-at-risk. They have been initiated and sponsored by IIEP, in close collaboration with the Division of Educational Policies and Strategies in UNESCO Headquarters.

The objectives of the thematic policy studies are: (a) to contribute to the process of developing knowledge in the discipline of education in emergencies; (b) to provide focused input for future IIEP training programmes targeting government officials and others in education in emergencies; (c) to identify and collect dispersed documentation and to capture some of the undocumented memories of practitioners; and (d) to increase dissemination of information and analysis on education in emergencies.

IIEP's larger programme on education in emergencies and reconstruction involves not only these global thematic policy-related studies, but also a series of seven country specific analyses. They concern the restoration of the education system in countries as diverse as Burundi, Timor Leste, Kosovo, Palestine, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sudan. In addition, IIEP is producing a handbook for education authority officials and the agencies assisting them, and developing training materials for a similar audience. Through this programme, IIEP will make a modest but significant contribution to the discipline of education in emergencies and reconstruction. Its hope is to enrich the quality of the planning processes applied in this crucial field.

Gudmund Hernes  
Director, IIEP



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## List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GINIE	Global Information Networks in Education
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	internally displaced person
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEE	Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MOEYS	Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MSF	<i>Médecins sans Frontières</i>
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

## Executive summary

*Co-ordinating emergencies during emergencies and reconstruction: challenges and responsibilities* demonstrates why the co-ordination of humanitarian and post-conflict reconstruction activities is so difficult to accomplish in the education sector. The book also suggests ways to overcome barriers to effective co-ordination.

The study is divided into four parts:

1. Background to the study: key themes and contexts.
2. Key actors and co-ordination frameworks.
3. Field co-ordination perspectives.
4. Conclusion: The significance of co-ordinating education efforts.

### Background to the study

In establishing the implications of co-ordination, three contextual questions must be posed. First, what is the exact meaning of co-ordination? Second, what should the co-ordination of an education sector look like? Third, what are the specific co-ordination issues for education during emergencies and early reconstruction? Described as examples of co-ordination during peace-time, the cases of Mongolia and Cambodia suggest that responsibility for the co-ordination of the education sector is often shared among many parties, since national governments do not always demonstrate or exert the necessary capacity to co-ordinate the activities of foreign actors. The co-ordination discussion in this section revolves around the issue of power and its direct connection to wealth. The author describes the implications of the education challenge during wars, while highlighting the role of the fragmented state in relation to the international community.

### Key actors and co-ordination frameworks

This chapter reviews the roles and responsibilities that key players such as national or host governments, non-state actors, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and donors hold in the co-ordination of education during emergencies and early reconstruction periods. It also examines humanitarian co-ordination structures and the

problem of the education sector remaining largely on the sidelines of such activity. A brief review of some major humanitarian co-ordination organizations, networks and associations is presented, together with an overview of the international co-ordination mechanisms that advocate the establishment of education as a featured component of humanitarian work.

## Field co-ordination perspectives

In this chapter, the co-ordination concerns that tend to emerge at both community and national levels are discussed in relation to three cases: Afghanistan, southern Sudan, and Sierra Leone. Each case demonstrates particular dimensions of co-ordination and responsibility concerns. Afghanistan provides a particularly revealing example of co-ordination challenges during and following war. The example of southern Sudan illustrates the lack of co-ordination between local education systems in different geographic areas. The Sierra Leone case focuses on the complex challenge of co-ordinating appropriate salaries for teachers. This issue arises in every education situation during and after war.

## Conclusion: the significance of co-ordinating education efforts

The final chapter sets forward ideas for enhancing co-ordination and suggests the ways in which the roles and responsibilities of various institutions can contribute to the co-ordination of the education sector. In his conclusion, the author highlights the rising trend of national or *de facto* government education authorities asserting their co-ordination and leadership roles. While this new development may represent the only way to ensure that an education system is truly co-ordinated, it is essential that government education authorities develop appropriate emergency educational priorities and plans, so as to be prepared for co-ordination of the education sector in times of crisis.

## Prologue

In Liberia in the late 1990s, when refugees were returning to their homes from nearby countries, a foreign visitor noted how school officials were recording attendance in three different ways. They typically submitted high attendance figures to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) as a way to increase their allotment of food from the WFP's school feeding programme. Low attendance figures were given to local government officials; this would allow schools to pay lower taxes to the state (taxes being linked to student attendance). The third attendance figure was precise, and went to the international NGO working in their region. This information, the foreigner reported, helped the NGO support schools. But the accurate information never made its way either to the Liberian Government or WFP. In fact, "there was no centralized place for school data" in Liberia.

During this same period, in Freetown – the capital of neighbouring Sierra Leone – the government had largely failed to assert its co-ordination role over large, experienced, well-equipped, and active international organizations. It actually had little chance to do so. The government suffered from a general lack of funding and expertise: it is difficult if not nearly impossible to collect taxes from citizens during conflicts, and many of the better qualified and experienced civil servants worked for international humanitarian organizations. There, they were generally paid far better and with much greater regularity. Working with foreigners also held a degree of *cachet* that government work could not provide.

The paucity of support and personnel were only the beginning of the government's problems. What made it worse was that funding was indeed rolling into Sierra Leone for education, health, food, water, infrastructure and many other concerns – just not, for the most part, through government hands. Even though Sierra Leone's government had been widely hailed as representative and democratic following elections in 1996, it none the less lacked the ability to co-ordinate services that would naturally fall into the realm of government responsibility during peace-time. Most of the major international donors were not about to funnel humanitarian funding through government institutions when, in their view, lifesaving measures were required. To them, it made no sense. "We fund the [international] NGOs",

officials from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office<sup>1</sup> (ECHO) related, because they are "the big guys, the professionals. [They] get things done" (cited in Sommers, 2000: 30). The government had also developed a poor reputation for public service. One international official recalled that, just before and during the early civil war years: "You could hardly find anyone working for the government who was sitting in their office. It was so frustrating. Capacity building was literally impossible." Suspicions of corruption within the government appeared to be widespread as well.

Accordingly, international NGOs and some United Nations agencies charged into the countryside with funding, supplies, expertise, and humanitarian mandates to serve people in dire need. Sierra Leonean Government officials who were interviewed in turn felt left in the dust. For the most part, they were – a health ministry official noted how he could only visit clinics and hospitals if he were given a ride by a United Nations or NGO official in one of their four-wheel drive vehicles.

A number of international humanitarian officials interviewed in Freetown late in 1998 made reference to a solitary Sierra Leonean Government official who was praised for his capability, reliability, professionalism and integrity. Although he was overwhelmed with responsibilities, it appeared that some humanitarian organizations sought to work through this lone official to minimize or avoid working with government ministries that were responsible for the particular sectors they worked in (such as health, local government, or education). The decision to focus on a particular government official was made by international agency officials, not the Sierra Leonean Government. One international NGO official described this phenomenon in the following way (Sommers, 2000: 28):

"The 'good' people [in the government] are earmarked as points of entry [by international agencies]. Then everybody goes to them with everything, and soon they can't do anything properly. It's a potential vicious cycle, and [soon] their [government] peers will call them a 'donor baby' – beholden to foreign interests [and] not a true patriot."

1. Formerly known as the European Community Humanitarian Office.

When international officials characterize their national government counterparts as inefficient or worse, the possibility that they may be contributing to the problem may not be part of their analysis.

In terms of co-ordination, humanitarian and early post-conflict epochs in a country's experience stand as asterisks. The familiar ground of peacetime development has washed away, replaced by new actors with new mandates and tendencies. From the outset of this new phase, disconnections between locals and internationals are often apparent. The typical international humanitarian official might be described as young, single, well paid (particularly when compared to local salaries), well-equipped, and forever in a rush. Their government counterparts might be considered older, overburdened by family and other concerns, seriously under-resourced and underpaid (sometimes not paid at all), and unable to move quickly even when they want to. From the outset, it is a bad match; a clash of cultures, backgrounds, expectations and degrees of patience. Their interactions may also eventually generate stereotypes about members of the opposite group: local officials viewing the internationals as disrespectful upstarts, and international officials considering the locals as uncommitted and perhaps corrupt. Both sides might agree on only one thing: that the other side does not really appreciate the problems caused by conflict.

While co-ordination is essentially a method or rationale for getting institutions to work together, it is clearly not synonymous with togetherness. Undercurrents of suspicion and distrust between individuals and institutional actors can affect important relationships and give rise to enduring misunderstandings and perplexing challenges. Sometimes co-ordination works, but in other situations, humanitarian or post-war actions might best be described as distinctly uncoordinated. In this monograph, co-ordination for education during both emergencies and early reconstruction periods will be examined both where it does and does not exist, and where it works well and seems to be stuck. It will also review the anticipated and actual responsibilities of those involved with the provision of education during the confounding and uniquely challenging circumstances caused by armed conflict.





## Introduction

Why is the act of co-ordinating humanitarian and post-conflict reconstruction activities so difficult? In principle, it should be simple and straightforward: the work by different actors in sectors such as education should fit together and complement each other. It does not make sense for them to overlap or leave gaps in service. Working as a team to address the collective needs of people recovering from tragedy and disaster seems the appropriate, logical and humanitarian thing to do.

But co-ordinating education, or any other humanitarian and post-conflict sector, is never easy to accomplish and sometimes unsuccessful. In the poor, war-torn countries where most humanitarian catastrophes take place, education work largely depends on contributions from wealthy donor nations. These powerful actors have the potential to enforce co-ordination, but they may also have significant philosophical and policy constraints that limit their ability to do so.

Conflicts between United Nations agencies can begin long before they arrive on the scene, since their mandates overlap. Exactly which organization should become the lead United Nations agency for education during a crisis? Should it be UNESCO, whose mandate is education? How about the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), whose mandate is child protection? Why not the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), whose mandate is to eradicate poverty? What of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whose mandate is to protect and assist refugees? The conflict over United Nations mandates has never been resolved, and can be the starting-point for unhelpful, and seemingly avoidable, power struggles.

Similarly, tensions between international NGOs are common. Often the prize for implementing education during an emergency goes to the first NGO on the scene, which may not necessarily be the NGO with the best qualifications and capacity to carry out the job. It is also assumed that, once the United Nations lead agency for education for a particular context is sorted out, the lead agency will co-ordinate all NGOs working in education. But often international NGOs have other ideas. NGOs may have their own funding streams and mandates, and may compete for a high public relations profile with other NGOs and United Nations agencies.

Every international agency on the scene – from donor governments to United Nations agencies to NGOs – knows that positive media attention enhances fund-raising opportunities. Sheer competition for accolades and funds can severely undermine efforts to co-ordinate from the outset.

Turf battles involving huge international institutions can demonstrate the African adage that: “When elephants fight, the grass suffers.” In terms of co-ordination, war-affected, displaced, disempowered, and traumatized communities are unquestionably the grass. Even though affected communities are nearly always in the first line of emergency educators, they seldom receive direct funding for education beyond community donations (Sommers, 1999). Rarely do education systems arising during emergencies even approximate a decentralized format. Whichever large agency ends up being responsible for education tends to assume management responsibilities. And while relations between war-affected communities and agencies supporting education may grow to be excellent, the power relations are usually quite clear. In general, communities are not ultimately in charge of the schooling of their own children. The terminology that pervades humanitarian work confirms this relationship: People receiving assistance from humanitarian agencies are normally labelled beneficiaries or recipients, not partners.

Strangely, of all the actors that may be involved in education during emergency or post-war reconstruction periods, it is the role of the national government that is most uncertain, from the central government down to the regional/provincial and district/local levels. In peace-time situations, governments are formally responsible for education within their own countries. But during wars, national governments may be under siege, struggling for legitimacy and sheer survival. Often such governments garner reputations for corruption or low capacity, or both.

Either way, humanitarian organizations may view co-ordination with governments as unnecessary, at least in the short term. Working or co-ordinating with governments threatens to slow down humanitarian work: while humanitarian action is generally thought to be swift, government work tends to be methodical. In addition, governments hosting refugees may be unsure or reluctant of their refugee education role. And when wars die down and people begin to return home, the national government may be far too weak to co-ordinate education activities effectively. It is thus not surprising that resentments and misunderstandings can thrive and

negatively impact relations between internationals and nationals. Such difficulties often contain, in some way or another, issues about respect for national sovereignty and commitments to building local capacity and civil society within the debate – in addition to, almost inevitably, funding concerns.

This monograph will address this co-ordination conundrum, with particular reference to the education sector. It will document lessons that can be learned from experience about co-ordinating education in emergencies and post-conflict reconstruction. It will also use the optic of co-ordination to describe the roles and responsibilities of key actors. Since the lessons documented here are partly designed to contribute to a guidebook and training materials targeted primarily for education officials from governments either threatened by, engulfed by, or emerging from conflict, special attention will be paid to the role of national government units or ministries responsible for the education of conflict-affected populations. A second objective will be to identify measures needed to increase the effectiveness of international action in this field.

## Methods and constraints

The limits of writing this study are considerable because little about co-ordinating education in humanitarian and post-conflict situations has been written down. Not only is there no general work on co-ordinating the education sector during emergencies and reconstruction. There has also been scant attention paid to co-ordination activities in this field in articles, documents, or reports. Part of the problem arises from the fact that the education sector, as will shortly be described, is rarely accorded a particularly high priority during humanitarian situations (even when it involves a vast proportion of children in educational programming). But there are other reasons as well. Education in refugee camps is thought to be fairly pro forma (even when it is not), making it appear unnecessary to consistently document co-ordination arrangements. In addition, curriculum and accreditation issues for displaced persons, which often require careful co-ordination between the ministries of education and aid agencies, may be put off for the day when peace appears to be on the horizon. That day may turn out to be years or even decades away.

But possibly most important, co-ordination about education and other social sectors tends to be organic and evolving, revolving around, perhaps,

a series of meetings, documents and contracts concerning the roles, responsibilities, priorities and service gaps of involved institutions. Participating in activities aimed at enhancing co-ordination, moreover, may be optional. In addition, over time, the key players may change, and those who are excluded from or choose not to contribute to the work of building and maintaining co-ordinated action may become nearly as significant as those who participate.

Given that the subject of this study has proven so elusive, several complementary research methods have been applied to the task. The first surfaces from a recognition that, while this endeavour has been envisioned as a desk study, specific documentation on the subject-matter is thin, and usually integrated within larger discussions. Accordingly, the document gathering, review and synthesis and analysis processes have had to be supplemented with telephone interviews. The interviews have generally incorporated both views of general themes and concerns as well as descriptions and analyses of specific co-ordination cases. Considering the difficulties of communication in many parts of the war-torn world, the ratio of interviews with officials based outside of and within emergency and post-conflict situations remains unbalanced in favour of those based in safer and more stable areas of the world. There is one primary reason for this: communication links are far better. In an attempt to help address this unavoidable deficiency, the author has also referred to interviews, where relevant, recorded during previous field research in emergency and reconstruction contexts over the past decade. Some of these interviews were originally carried out in preparation for an earlier monograph on humanitarian co-ordination (Sommers, 2000).

This monograph will introduce important contextual themes and issues in *Chapter 1*.

*Chapter 2* reviews the roles and responsibilities that key players tend to assume in the co-ordination of education during emergencies and early reconstruction periods. It also briefly examines humanitarian co-ordination structures, and how the education sector remains largely on the sidelines of such activity.

*Chapter 3* shifts the perspective to field co-ordination. It first looks at co-ordination concerns that tend to emerge at both the community and national levels. It then looks at aspects of three field co-ordination cases:

Afghanistan, southern Sudan, and Sierra Leone. Even when taken together, these case descriptions cannot possibly provide a comprehensive picture of co-ordination in the field. Instead, each will be used to illuminate particular dimensions of the broad and varied co-ordination and responsibility challenge.

*Chapter 4* will introduce concluding themes and ideas for enhancing co-ordination and briefly suggest how the roles and responsibilities of various institutions involved in education during emergencies and reconstruction might be usefully clarified.



## Chapter 1

# Background to the study: key themes and contexts

The starting-point for this consideration of co-ordination and responsibility for education will be to consider three contextual questions:

First, what exactly does co-ordination mean?

Second, what is co-ordination for an education sector supposed to look like? Assuming that the concept of ‘reconstruction’, as applied in this text, refers to reconstructing an education system to resemble, to some degree at least, its pre-conflict predecessor, it is useful to gain a sense of co-ordination for education systems in developing countries that have not recently been plagued by war. Since no generic model exists, two cases of functioning education systems during peace-time will be reviewed.

Finally, what implications can be drawn from the two peace-time examples, and what kinds of co-ordination issues should we be aware of when considering education during emergencies and early reconstruction?

It is hoped that reviewing the meanings of co-ordination, and examining both the educational development and humanitarian contexts, will provide a foundation for reviewing ideas about key co-ordination actors during humanitarian crises in *Chapter 2* and then examining illuminating co-ordination cases in *Chapter 3*.

### Definitions and implications

Definitions of co-ordination will be drawn from the fairly voluminous literature on co-ordination in humanitarian contexts. Drawing from this literature not only is relevant to the emergency and reconstruction context of this work. It also provides an immediate indication of how difficult and fractious the co-ordination endeavour can be. Simply put, definitions of humanitarian co-ordination are uncoordinated and conflicted. Instead of an agreed-upon definition, or perhaps a small handful of definitions from

which to choose, there is instead “a plethora” (Reindorp and Wiles, 2001: 5). The overabundance of ways to delineate a single field of endeavour stands as a clear indication that co-ordinating humanitarian actors (or, perhaps, humanitarian actors co-ordinating themselves), is rarely easy: If it is not clear to those involved just what co-ordination means, it will be even more difficult to co-ordinate the work they do.

With this in mind, the starting-point for defining co-ordination here will be two English-language dictionaries. Definitions in one dictionary suggest that co-ordination implies equality and harmony among those involved. In *Webster's II New College Dictionary* (1999: 248), the noun ‘co-ordinate’ is defined as “one that is equal in rank, importance, or degree”. This definition presents an immediate problem, because different sorts of actors – wealthy and influential donor governments versus beleaguered national governments, for instance – are, in terms of power, capacity and influence, decidedly unequal. Moreover, assuming that some sort of harmony might exist between, for example, United Nations agencies and international NGOs competing for the same donor funds and media attention, is hardly a recipe for successful co-ordination.

Since gaining harmony among competitive and distinctly unequal actors is bound to be challenging, another set of definitions, from a second dictionary, will be considered here as well. The *Cambridge international dictionary of English* (1995: 303) contains suggestions that co-ordination is not necessarily about harmony or equality at all. Here, the verb ‘to co-ordinate’ implies a measure of coercion: “to make (various different things) work effectively as a whole”. Making different things work together implies a power relationship: some actor is in charge, and that actor has the ability to get, or force, others to work together. It is notable that among the sentences used to exemplify this kind of action is “A number of major charities are co-ordinating their efforts to send out food to the areas worst affected by the famine” (*Cambridge international dictionary of English*, 1995: 303). Regarding the noun, ‘co-ordination’, the following sentence is used to illuminate its meaning: “There’s absolutely no co-ordination between the different groups”, which is taken to mean both “They are not working together” and “Nobody knows what anyone else is doing”. Taken together, the ideas of co-ordinating and co-ordination derived from the *Cambridge international dictionary of English* generally involve one entity charged with getting others to work together in a transparent way.



The differentiation between the conflicting dictionary definitions – one suggesting harmony and equality, the other implying a bit of coercion or enforcement – is reflected in the two primary ways that Donini (1996: 14) envisions co-ordination. In his view, “co-ordination by consensus” entails leadership by orchestration, which is “achieved without any direct assertion of authority by the co-ordinator” in charge. “Co-ordination by command”, on the other hand, calls for “strong leadership” that is “accompanied by some sort of authority, whether carrot or stick.” Donini includes a third co-ordination situation, “co-ordination by default”, in which there is an “absence of a formal co-ordination entity”, which results in “the most rudimentary exchange of information and division of labour among the actors”. Donini’s vision of three kinds of co-ordination is useful in part because it considers how co-ordination is realized. Will there be a powerful actor or set of actors directing and enforcing co-ordination, or will there instead be a co-ordinator with a softer, more suggestive touch? Alternatively, will co-ordination be a low priority activity with minimal significance?

Definitions of humanitarian co-ordination tend to be both technical and expansive. One definition, which Reindorp and Wiles (2001: 5) consider “one of the definitions used repeatedly in past studies” that “stood out as one that could prove useful to the UN”, is the following:

“Co-ordination is the systematic use of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include strategic planning, gathering data and managing information, mobilizing resources and ensuring accountability, orchestrating a functional division of labour, negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities and providing leadership” (Minear *et al.*, 1992: 3).

Three implications entailed in this definition and its context are useful to note, as they will surface as themes in subsequent discussions in this monograph. First, the definition lays out six specific duties or aspects of co-ordination. The expanse is broad, and largely has to do with management and supervisory chores. It may be rare when co-ordination contains every aspect suggested here. For example, one mobilization of resources effort, the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), also known as the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal, tends to assemble information and calls for support from United Nations agencies, and may not include non-United Nations agencies in the process.

Second, the reference of Reindorp and Wiles to the utility of a co-ordination definition for the United Nations, and exemplified by the CAP being a largely United Nations focused activity, calls attention to the prominence of United Nations agencies in co-ordination work. Most co-ordination committees, task forces, etc., are dominated by United Nations agencies. Some non-United Nations actors may not feel obligated to participate in, or may choose to distance themselves from United Nations-led co-ordination efforts.

Third, working with the national government ('host political authorities') is defined as a *component* of co-ordination. This is significant because the definition makes clear that the national government is not necessarily a participant and certainly not a leader in co-ordinated humanitarian action. Instead, they are conceived as a co-ordination responsibility: those who co-ordinate are obliged, under this definition, to maintain a 'serviceable framework' with government. This separation between humanitarian actors and the government of the country where humanitarian work takes place – the host country effectively becoming a kind of playing field for humanitarian action – continually surfaces as a point of debate. A country's sovereignty may be challenged as a result of humanitarian actions, and it is not something that is easily resolved. As Brown (2003: 21) has observed: "When a state cannot provide for the security of its citizens international humanitarian assistance becomes essential." At the same time, the presence of humanitarian operations within its territory may not sit well with the national government. The role of national governments in co-ordinated action, in short, is frequently contested.

Some other themes arising from this consideration of humanitarian co-ordination are worth noting. Minear (2002: 19) mentions several broad concerns, most prominent among them the fact that "co-ordination is easier to advocate than to achieve" because "the political economy of the humanitarian enterprise – that is, the perceived institutional needs of donors and operational agencies and the power-based dynamics of their interaction – work against it". Minear considers this inherent weakness in humanitarian work – that it is so difficult for the work to be co-ordinated – to be "the soft underbelly of the humanitarian enterprise" (Minear, 2002: 20). It is a serious weakness, and Minear (2002: 22) lists a number of dimensions to this problem. The first is power: Who has the power to pull "the entire

operation together”? The second is that co-ordination threatens individual agency profiles, which are critical to agency reputations – and fund-raising abilities. As a result, “Co-ordination is perceived as reducing the profile of individual aid groups” (Minear, 2002: 26). The third is cost: “Co-ordination is an expensive proposition.” Even badly co-ordinated humanitarian work requires a sequence of regular meetings (and the drafting of guiding documents), often taking place at many levels in the field, in agency headquarters, and in large gatherings in European or North American capitals. This makes it expensive in terms of time, travel, and providing support. At the same time, it is hard to raise money for co-ordination work. As Minear notes (2002: 27, 29), “Rare is the public appeal that requests funds to help underwrite the co-ordination machinery.” Fourth is the failure to “devise effective co-ordination structures” because of a “lack of consensus about how they should be designed.” While this problem may have been “most pronounced within the United Nations” (Minear, 2002: 29), Minear also notes (2002: 31) that “government donors and NGOs are no more willing than United Nations agencies to accept direction.” Disputes within the United Nations system have left the Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which is tasked to co-ordinate humanitarian action for the United Nations, with a high status within the United Nations but limited staff, budget and authority (2002: 29). Fifth is the problem of leadership. It is common to hear from international humanitarian officials that effective leaders are the key to successful co-ordination work. And yet, “experience ... confirms that the leadership of individuals, however indispensable, requires institutional support in order to realize its full potential” (Minear, 2002: 32). Without the buy-in of the actors involved, strong leaders will ultimately be unable to co-ordinate humanitarian actions.

If co-ordination seems so impossible to obtain, with the entire endeavour fraught with inherent difficulties, why should it be sought? Van Brabant (1999: 13) suggests a potentially useful approach: lower your expectations. He argues that co-ordination is an ‘ongoing activity’ and a ‘process’, not a ‘blue-print’. The need to be flexible is determined not only by the need to respond to the fluid, changing nature of conflicts and their aftermath. In addition, “striving for consensus among a large number of agencies” is unrealistic, particularly since most “have no clear policies”. It is more realistic and appropriate to envision co-ordination as a process that “seeks to create a ‘critical mass’ of leading agencies, whose improved

analysis and increased effectiveness makes them more influential in the debates and decisions about interventions” (Van Brabant, 1999: 13). Van Brabant’s focus, as is common in the humanitarian co-ordination literature, is on leading international agencies that tend to dominate humanitarian work. In this sense, co-ordination is not often envisioned as a particularly inclusive activity, but an activity dominated by the most powerful actors.

Much of the literature on humanitarian co-ordination, and many of the comments provided by humanitarian agency officials during interviews, contain a strong implied feeling that co-ordination is a good thing. As Minear (2002: 19) notes: “Everyone associated with the humanitarian enterprise touts the value of co-ordination.” Co-ordination promises to yield cost-effectiveness, coherence and improved efficiency in the delivery of services. It implies action without replication, overlaps or gaps, or avoidable differences in the quality or nature of provision. Even if co-ordination seems to be nearly impossible to achieve, it certainly appears to be a goal well worth reaching for: the image of everyone getting along and working collectively towards mutual goals seems a good one. If we work together, we can achieve more and do it better, right?

Perhaps; it may be useful, however, to reflect on what co-ordination is not about. For one thing, in most cases co-ordination has nothing to do with achieving equity among providers. On the contrary: the competitive environment that encases humanitarian and reconstruction work can impact on who receives the most prominent and far-reaching roles and responsibilities. Operational capacity, including the ability to arrive on the scene early in a humanitarian crisis, can have a considerable impact on who ends up dominating activities in sectors such as education. For example, an international NGO or United Nations agency may take over work in a particular sector because it had moved swiftly to assert its ‘claim’ over it. In such situations, where powerful actors may be allowed to dominate, co-ordination can help institutionalize that domination. Government ministries and national NGOs, or even international agencies that may have had the experience and presence prior to war or disaster, may have no chance to assume their former role.

The extent to which co-ordination is about control and even dominance surfaced during interviews with veteran humanitarian officials. To one, co-ordination was really about “who has the ability to hand out favours and provide control.” The idea of asserting one’s stamp over a particular

activity was taken up by another official. The official's assessment began with a critique of co-ordination during periods of peace-time development:

“I'm opposed to co-ordination during development because it consolidates power in the hands of the givers, which are all external agencies, and undermines the local government or other actors. With no co-ordination, there's redundancy and waste, but then, nature is redundant and wasteful, yet efficient, too. Streamlining assistance puts power in the hands of the givers, and since the purpose of development is to help people gain power over their own lives, then co-ordination is anti-developmental.”

This critique essentially turns on its head the argument that supports co-ordination because it improves the efficiency of service delivery. If such work is carried out by outsiders, the critique implies, then it ultimately undermines local empowerment efforts.

However, in times of war, the same official viewed co-ordinated action by humanitarian actors as serving an important purpose: keeping aid out of the hands of those involved in the conflict, or the 'warlords'. “Warlords will control unco-ordinated humanitarian assistance”, the official explained. “Without co-ordination, the warlords manipulate competition between agencies”, using assistance to reward supporters while keeping it away from enemies and thus “reinforcing their political and military agendas”. In the view of this official, the purpose of co-ordination during conflicts has little to do with enhancing efficiency or cost-effectiveness. It is all about coherence. Humanitarians need to co-ordinate their actions to achieve three objectives: prevent making communities more vulnerable; ensure that humanitarians are not serving the political and military agendas of the warring parties; and save lives.

## Lessons from peace-time contexts?

What is the frame of reference for co-ordination in the education sector during humanitarian crises and early in the post-war reconstruction phase? Does it resemble co-ordination during peace-time? The short answer is: not really, since during situations without war and chaos, education is normally led by the ministry of education in a particular country. Emergency situations, on the other hand, tend to shift much of the responsibility for education to international agencies.

At the same time, a consistently critical factor in both war-affected and reasonably secure peace-time situations in developing countries is the role of international agencies in education sector action. It is this relationship that will be considered here.

How does the ministry of education manage funding and activities from international actors? To what extent are such contributions controlled and co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education? These questions challenge all developing country ministries. Here, examples from two countries will be briefly considered.

The first is Mongolia. Buluut Nanzadorj paints a picture of international donor agencies leading the education ministry by the hand into a post-socialist world. In a sense, it could hardly have been otherwise. Once heavily dependent on financial and economic aid from the former Soviet Union, Mongolia was forced to transition to a market economy and depend on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), its loans, and its structural adjustment policies even before the USSR collapsed in 1989. The changes taking place in Mongolia were part of a larger trend beginning in 1991, in which “all countries of the former Soviet Union and Mongolia have had to copy Western approaches in the organization and management of their education systems” (Nanzadorj, 2001: 72). In addition to the IMF, the governments of these countries also received loans from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Among the skills that governments from these post-USSR countries had to learn was how to document projects, particularly for the IMF and the ADB (Nanzadorj, 2001: 73).

Nanzadorj (2001: 77) states that the dramatic reforms instituted by the shift to a market economy and “the IMF-led structural adjustment programmes ... had a ‘shock therapy’ nature and caused severe and prolonged recession and austerity at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s”. Investments in education have steadily declined in real terms. None the less, Mongolia, which “was the first former centrally planned economy in the region to start education development projects with foreign donors”, has “served as a testing ground for such innovations as tuition and user fees, student loans and private education” (Nanzadorj, 2001: 15, 78). The predominant donor in the education sector is the ADB.

Historically poor and dependent, emerging from a socialist world, the Mongolian government has had to negotiate its way ahead with the assistance of its donors (some also serve as its creditors), and largely according to their strategies and policies, structural adjustment policies in particular. It is thus difficult to characterize the Ministry of Education's relations with its donor/creditors as 'co-ordinating' their work. Nanzadorj suggests that relations were collaborative. Still, given the drastic changes wrought by market-based governance, including "the obvious shortage of real public funds for provision of education according to past patterns [which] was made worse with the necessity to spend more than before on new reforms and innovations" (Nanzadorj, 2001: 72), it is clear that the donor/creditors had considerable power over educational policy and practice in post-socialist Mongolia. The government's education ministry had much to learn in order to survive in the new, competitive, market-oriented world.<sup>2</sup> Although the Government of Mongolia may still have been responsible for education following the fall of the U.S.S.R (during the Soviet-influenced era, "education, as other social sectors, was a state monopoly" (Nanzadorj, 2001: 72)), it was hardly able to call the shots without foreign assistance and guidance. Illustrative of this is the following characterization of the ADB in Mongolia, which "has taken a lead role in several key sectors" including education, and has "provided assistance to strengthen the Government's capability to prioritize and co-ordinate projects proposed for external assistance" (ADB, 1999: 11).

Are developing country governments, even those operating during peace-time, able to co-ordinate the activities of foreign actors? One education expert with considerable experience in both emergency and development contexts did not think so. The expert commented that "Even in developing country contexts, there is no effort [by the national government] to control or co-ordinate NGOs doing work in education. Sometimes, they don't even know what the NGOs are doing." This viewpoint places the responsibility for the lack of co-ordination in national education sectors squarely on the shoulders of the developing country government, not the international actors working in education. It is a different perspective than one that surfaces from the Mongolia case; this suggests that the national government's role is dependent on its foreign supporters.

2. One of the many changes that took place during the 1990s was the reduction in the number of ministries from 50 to 11. In 2001, Nanzadorj (2001: 78) observed that "The current name of the Ministry in charge of the education sector is the Ministry of Science, Technology, Education and Culture."

As in Mongolia, the case of Cambodia suggests that the responsibility for co-ordination is likely shared among many parties. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS) is weak and government investment in education is low. The Ministry's ability to control and co-ordinate the actions of schools has been minimal, mainly due to poor communications and the large proportion of the education budget being supplied by communities and international agencies. The combination is scarcely a blueprint for effectively developing a well co-ordinated education system.

Duy Pheng and his colleagues' description of the financial and budgetary side of the education situation in Cambodia suggest a grim state of affairs for education. Only 8.3 per cent of the 1998 national budget was earmarked for education (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 23), or less than 1 per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is an astonishingly low figure. In Mongolia in the same year, for example, government investment in education equalled about 6.2 per cent of the nation's GDP (Nanzaddorj, 2001: 27). The actual disbursement of government funds for education was probably even less, since "actual expenditure is very often lower than the budgeted amounts" (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 26). With such limited government investment, most of the non-salary costs for education, particularly in primary schools, are contributed by community-led 'parents associations' and 'school supporting committees' (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 22). A survey of 85 primary schools by Bray (1999) estimated that the share of community contributions at "60 per cent of resource inputs to Cambodian primary schools against a government contribution of less than 15 per cent and external agency support of about 18 per cent" (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 27).

Here, it must be said that co-ordinating responsibilities and roles in Cambodia would seem to be fairly straightforward, given that the government seeks to address "teacher salaries and examination expenses" while parents and communities are left to "cover all [school-level] operational and maintenance costs" (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 14). This would appear to leave donors and international education agencies to negotiate at least three possible roles for themselves: supporting government and parent/community capacities, strengthening linkages between them, and helping to address remaining gaps in the education system.

Instead, it is the way that international institutions contribute to Cambodia's education system that most poignantly illuminates the



Cambodian Government's challenge to co-ordinate education sector action. Pheng and his colleagues are critical of the nature of international assistance. "The visible effect of donor intervention", the authors state, "is seen mostly in the volume of consultants' contracts" (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 14). "In most cases, donors themselves are the administrators of ... aid projects and entrust their consultants or certain organizations with the management and execution of the project" (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 23). In other words, the contributions of the ADB, the World Bank, and bilateral donors, in addition to United Nations organizations (UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and UNFPA), and international NGOs, tend to be project-based, feature the contributions of hired consultants, and operate largely outside the sphere of government oversight and co-ordination (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 23).

The thorny problem of apparently significant amounts of foreign assistance to Cambodia's education sector being earmarked to consultants (most of whom are foreigners) was also highlighted by a veteran international education expert based in Cambodia. The Cambodian Government "is beginning to say 'you don't use our money to hire some foreign consultant without going through us.'" Increasingly, MOEYS officials "are putting strong pressure on donors to hire Cambodian consultants." There have been two general responses to this newly assertive government action, the expert argued. "The pessimists [in the international community] say 'The Ministry is trying to line their own pockets by getting their friends consulting jobs.'" On the other hand, "The optimists [also in the international community] say 'The ministry is doing it to genuinely build their own capacity.'"

The siphoning of development wealth to international and local elites is a widespread developing country problem. As Uvin notes, "It has often been said – and I largely concur – that the prime impact of development projects is to create jobs for the lucky few who manage to obtain them" (1998: 143).<sup>3</sup> Yet the squabble over whether donor-funded consultants should be Cambodians or foreigners is also instructive of how a weak education ministry and powerful donors co-ordinate their work – or do not. The international education expert asserts that MOEYS officials "don't

3. Uvin (1998: 143) also states, with reference to Rwanda, that "The development enterprise directly and actively contributes to inequality and humiliation. The material advantages accorded to a small group of people and the lifestyles of foreigners living in Rwanda contribute to greater economic inequality and the devaluation of the life of the majority."

have a plan to present and control donor activities.” At the same time, while ministry officials want to co-ordinate donor action, “they are so dependent on donor money that they’re hesitant to be assertive with them.” All of the projects that international agencies support and/or participate in are supposed to be approved by the MOEYS. But Pheng *et al.* (2001: 36) list a number of problems that limits or prevents proper government oversight and co-ordination: “there is no system and no capacity for financial monitoring” within the ministry; “the administrative bookkeeping system” is insufficient; and the centralized budget management system does not ably prioritize activities. A problem contributing to the limited capacity of the MOEYS to manage the education system arises from its relations with the Ministry of Finance that earmarks all funds to MOEYS: “There is a lack of flexibility in budget implementation as even minor re-allocations require authorization of the Ministry of Finance” (Pheng *et al.*, 2001: 14). Similarly difficult relations between the two ministries also existed in Mongolia (Nanzaddorj, 2001).

Yet another challenge – limited technical capacity in MOEYS personnel – is partly due to war and demographics. Cambodia’s long and tragic period of civil war and resistance left between 2 and 3 million people dead between 1970 and 1993 (Deng, 1993: 95). The most intense period of death and destruction was 1975-1978, when the Khmer Rouge ruled and carried out, among other things, truly extensive mass executions. As a result, the expert asserted, “There’s an entire generation missing in Cambodia between the ages of 37 and 55. They don’t exist. They’re dead, and it’s exactly the middle management level [which this generation could have filled] that the ministry really needs.”

If co-ordination of and responsibility for the education sector in peacetime developing countries can provide a framework or set of lessons that can be applied to wartime contexts, the cases of Mongolia and Cambodia mainly suggest that similar difficulties persist, although perhaps at lesser levels. Given the educational needs before them, government financial and technical capacities may well be threadbare. Both the Mongolian and Cambodian governments rely on foreign donors for funding and technical support. The Mongolian case strongly suggests that effective government/donor collaboration is possible, even if foreign actors dominate the reform agenda.

The same cannot yet be said for Cambodia. So near to war and loss itself, Cambodia presents a situation much closer to the wartime and immediate post-war contexts that will be examined in *Chapter 3*. The ability of MOEYS to lead the education sector, co-ordinate all actors within it, and effect reforms is nominal. While it is attempting to rein in donor action, developing an action plan for all education actors to follow is not its strength. In fact, it may be a definite weakness. As an international education expert has observed, “The Cambodian attitude is to implement first and then plan. They take the money, and then figure out how to use it. They don’t say, ‘Here’s what we want to do, and here’s our budget.’” In such a situation, it is probably unreasonable to expect donors to follow the Ministry’s lead. At the same time, the extent to which donor and Ministry activities even mesh, to say nothing of being co-ordinated, appears to be an open question. And it is probable that the impact of employing many foreign consultants is a method for developing education while minimizing local capacity building.

The co-ordination discussion in this section thus ultimately returns to the issue of power and its direct connection to wealth. In neither Mongolia nor Cambodia do we find truly capable and empowered domestic education authorities. Dependence on foreign aid and expertise seems to capture both situations much more accurately. Indeed, the shadow of deep-pocketed and truly influential foreign actors is long in both cases; this is a difficult starting-point for any government entity seeking to co-ordinate education activities. What remains unclear, however, is whether foreign or domestic actors in the education sector are ultimately responsible for education’s successes and failures. For if a government responsible for education has a demonstrable shortage of cash and skill, does its reliance on foreigners extend the accountability for education’s successes and failures to foreigners as well?

## Implications of the education challenge during wars

The accountability and power of international donor and aid agencies are among the issues that assume a different character during war and early post-war periods. The accountability of humanitarian agencies in education work in many ways increases; this is because the ability or willingness of local education authorities to be active in education work tends to significantly weaken during times of war and soon after wars end.

It is not simply that agencies working with refugees in a camp or with internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside a war-torn country have an increased role in education because they have the capacity and received the funds to do the work. It is also because the presence and abilities of the education authorities, which may have already been weak during peacetime, may well have been reduced to the point of bare existence.

From Somalia and Sri Lanka to Colombia and Kosovo, civil conflict has been the most prevalent sort of war across the globe. These kinds of violent contests over state authority tend to produce a withering of national sovereignty. The normal apparatus of a state is under siege, and competing armed groups may control different parts of the country. It is almost inevitable that such circumstances make the government's education capacity even weaker. Many capable staff may no longer work in the education ministry. Funding may have dried up. Education officials may lack access to much of their country. Education sectors during wars, in short, generally descend into crisis.

Into the vacuum caused by the weakened state come international agencies, and their impact over education can be both sudden and broad. In such circumstances, the dynamics of co-ordinating action in the education sector take on a different context than during normal peacetime situations. Agencies working on education in different parts of the country, or with significant populations of the war-affected (such as refugee or IDP camps), may effectively become a sort of local education ministry. Faced with such a diverse and uneven education landscape – where some school-age children and youth may have access to reasonably good educational services while others may have minimal or no services at their disposal – co-ordination becomes both more significant and much more difficult. No education authority centre may exist, and it may be replaced by a diversity of smaller, localized education authorities. Some or none of these authorities may be connected to the government. Often a portion of the war-affected population will perceive its national education ministry as illegitimate and lacking authority over its local education system. This local system may be run by international agencies, not a government authority.

It is noteworthy that when wars fracture and even atomize an education system, adequate and consistent funding for education may be difficult to acquire. While the funding environment is changing, it remains the case that support for education during and immediately after wars is generally

unreliable (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003; Sinclair, 2001; Sommers, 2003c). While this issue is not at the centre of this discussion, it impacts our consideration of co-ordination of and responsibility for education. Managing a co-ordinated system, as Minear noted above, tends to require a financial investment. This is particularly the case when war has driven populations across a country and a region. Standardizing teacher certification, school and student accreditation, teacher incentive scales, a curriculum, and a language of instruction are among the issues that call attention to the need to negotiate and co-ordinate across a fractured terrain and among a diverse group of education actors. War has the power not only to destroy an education system. It also confronts local, national and international educators with new complexities and challenges that make running a school system exceedingly difficult.



## Chapter 2

### Key actors and co-ordination frameworks

Wars and the diminished sovereignty of war-affected nations invite a diversity of players into the education field. Their participation can be unregulated as well, and it is almost always infused with competition. With this in mind, it is useful to identify the central participants of education work during and after wars, and outline some of their tendencies. What follows is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather a review of who is involved and what they do, or seek to do. The concluding section of this chapter will consider some of the humanitarian co-ordination frameworks and approaches that involve officials based in their aid agency headquarter offices. It will also reflect on why education remains largely on the outside of such high-level co-ordination discussions.

#### Co-ordination actors and their roles

The roles of the multitude of actors that may be involved with education during emergencies and early reconstruction often do not fit together well. Overlapping United Nations agency mandates, international NGOs insisting on independence, restrictions that earmark donor funding in a particular direction and to particular recipients, confusion over which arm of the national government should be involved in education, competition for media attention to buttress agency profiles – these are only a handful of potential problems that can limit, obstruct, or even obliterate chances for co-ordinating education sector work effectively. Successful co-ordination usually succeeds when it is able to address at least some of these looming concerns.

Understanding the limitations of co-ordination requires an introduction of the key actors, and a review of the roles they may play in the education field. The following review is necessarily incomplete – it is simply impossible to depict accurately the differences in tendencies and objectives within, for example, the truly diverse array of NGO actors, to say nothing of the smaller number of United Nations agency, donor, national government, non-state, and other actors. It also will limit itself to those

actors who have some direct hand in education work, thus setting the roles of others, such as military actors (peacekeeping and otherwise) aside.

### *War-affected populations*

In many situations, communities begin to organize rudimentary schools for themselves soon after being displaced by war. These community efforts can be seen as building blocks for future educational programming. They may initially take place in basements or under trees, and may or may not have even the most basic school supplies, textbooks, teacher guides, staffing, funding and administrative support. Some seek to continue formal education for their children, primary school in particular. At the same time, there may be ‘courses’ being taught on particular concerns for children and adults, such as learning the dominant language of the area to which a community has fled. Either way, the teachers and other educators in war-affected communities frequently become the first line of emergency educators.

Schools started by refugee, IDP or other war-affected communities may be seen as heroic efforts to claim and assert the right of their children to access education. As such, they are worthy of energetic and appropriate international and national government support. The issue of co-ordination and support is important because, without it, the schools may find other benefactors. The case of Rwandan refugees in former Eastern Zaire is instructive (Sommers, 1999: 7):

“Left uncontrolled and uncoordinated, the many refugee-led schools in Eastern Zaire became sites for sinister teachings. An education expert described how ... international humanitarian agency officials ‘weren’t interested in education, [so] the government-in-exile ran the schools’ ... Reserved for young Rwandan Hutu elites, it was widely assumed that the schools emphasized the sort of ethnically based version of Rwandan history that [had] provided the rationale for ethnic genocide. The official concluded by declaring that the Eastern Zaire case provided ‘the strongest argument for why we need to [provide] emergency education support that is timely and involved’.”

It should be noted that the situation was eventually addressed by international agencies in the area, at least to some degree. As Bird (2003) has noted: “At the early phase of the refugee crisis in [the former Zaire],



UNHCR refused to support any education activities ... However, by early 1995 [perhaps a half year later], UNHCR did start to provide minimal support for [refugee education].”

*National or host governments*

There appears to be a growing awareness that the co-ordination role of national, or host, governments should be enhanced. Considerable room for improvement exists. As Van Brabant (1999: 5) has noted: “The most neglected and understudied aspect of the co-ordination of humanitarian action must be that by host governments.” Often, governments strive to “screen agencies for integrity and competence” or seek to ensure that international aid flows through government structures or “is at least in line with national plans and policies”. In some cases, the government will seek to “legislate and supervise an otherwise chaotic and unaccountable NGO sector” (Van Brabant, 1999: 5). This focused governmental concern directed primarily at international NGOs in their midst – the numbers may range from a dozen to a hundred or more – appears to be widespread. Often, government officials are resentful of NGO behaviour, such as in Sierra Leone during much of the civil war period. They may also become openly antagonistic. At the same time, and similar to the Cambodian case described above, the Sierra Leonean case suggests that such government critiques may be intentionally selective. While government views of international NGO behaviour could be caustic, the donor agencies that chose to fund international NGOs and minimize or resist direct funding to the Sierra Leonean Government “were spared the [Sierra Leonean Government’s] criticism directed at NGOs, perhaps because the government continued to seek access to [donor] funds” (Sommers, 2000: 30).

Possible national government suspicions of international NGOs may not be tempered by NGO reactions. Van Brabant suggests three reasons for the tendency of international agencies, and again, NGOs in particular, “to stay away from host governments” during times of conflict. One reason is political: agencies “may want to maintain a distance from the government that itself is party to the conflict, to maintain their neutrality.” A second pertains to “the capacity of the national authorities”. “Even assertive governments”, Brabant continued, “seldom have the administrative capacity” to adequately digest, review and respond to aid agency reports, provide policy guidelines or carry out assessment work. In addition, however,

there may be a lack of co-ordination within the government itself. This shortcoming can include ‘horizontal’ co-ordination across ministries and other national government units, in addition to ‘vertical’ co-ordination between national, provincial, and other government levels (Van Brabant, 1999: 5). A lack of government capacity, in its various forms, can enhance “the temptation among aid agencies to bypass even government structures that in principle are supportive” (Van Brabant, 1999: 6).

The issue of government capacities to co-ordinate education is addressed by an Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) document, which argues that “building the government’s ability to co-ordinate should be integral to any emergency education programme, because the government will be able to better respond to the current crisis and those in the future” (INEE, 2003b: 2). INEE calls for donor agencies to fund an expansion of government work, including improved staffing, more vehicles, equipment, and technical support that would seem to include training as well as technical advisers.

INEE (2003b: 3) also suggests that “A valuable tool for attracting donor support and guiding United Nations agencies and NGOs’ calls for ‘a comprehensive plan’ for enhancing formal education services and expanding access”. It should also demonstrate how the government will “transition from emergency response to development”. As the Mongolian and Cambodian cases suggest, such work would be a tall order even for developing countries during peace-time. Friction and frustration are unfortunately more common between governments and donor, United Nations and NGO officials, while patience during crisis situations is, not surprisingly, in short supply. Questions about government leadership capabilities have become a near-constant concern during emergency and early post-war reconstruction situations. INEE lists a number of checklist questions that should be asked during these situations, and they range from the complex (e.g. “Are statistics cross-tabulated to measure the effectiveness of collaboration?” and “Have standardized reporting structures been put into place to monitor the educational activities, and the number of children attending school?”) to the elemental (e.g. “Who chairs [education co-ordination meetings]?” and “Are the United Nations and NGOs implementing activities in accordance with national law?”) (INEE, 2003b: 4). In both cases, understanding that government capacities required to carry out such work may be questionable, one gathers a picture of overwhelmed government officials struggling to address a range of

concerns merely to know about and attempt to manage all the education work going on in their country.

The national government's role in education may be further complicated by the fact that the government's focal point for education may not be the Ministry of Education. Sinclair (2002: 81-82) notes that "for crisis-affected populations within their own country, emergency co-ordination is normally through the government, assisted by UNICEF" (although "UNHCR may provide support for education in regions receiving returning refugees"). This sort of co-ordination normally features the involvement of the education ministry. However, for refugee situations, where co-ordination normally is led by UNHCR and the government hosting the refugees (although "UNICEF may undertake [UNHCR's] role in large emergencies"), the government's education ministry may not be involved or may have a secondary role. Their reduced role is normally derived from the fact that the refugees are citizens of another country, making their education concerns appear to be the responsibility of the refugees' home country government. Refugees, large populations in particular, may present serious security concerns for the host government, especially if they are encamped in border areas. Accordingly, "refugee affairs often come under a home affairs ministry" (Sinclair, 2002: 88). Other government sectors that might be involved are the ministry of the interior or even the military. Education for refugees may seem to be rather nominal concern. Nonetheless, Sinclair insists that the host government should "establish appropriate and clear structures for dealing with refugee education" in order to become involved with issues such as teacher training and the refugees' curriculum (Sinclair, 2002: 88). It also can facilitate the government takeover of the refugees' education infrastructure following their repatriation, which may well include school facilities that can be absorbed into the local education system.

Sinclair notes that co-ordination and responsibility issues surrounding the education of refugees returning to their homes (often known as 'returnees') is complex and variable. Sinclair (2002: 91) observes that it is 'unlikely' for a government that remains hostile to the returnees to carry out "any preparatory work for repatriation until there are moves towards a peace treaty or something similar." A willing government can support education work for refugees from its country by "providing textbooks and educational materials" to refugee schools. It can also arrange for "the

assessment and certification of refugee students' achievements and teacher training". Ideally, the government should also become familiarized with the NGOs charged with implementing refugee education, to determine whether they might be candidates for continuing to support education after refugees return to their homes (Sinclair, 2002: 91). All of these measures would support a central co-ordination concern: ensuring the coherence of education work, particularly in the context of refugees returning to an often-devastated country and rejoining portions of communities they had left behind. Such situations present what is often the most difficult co-ordination challenge of all.

### *Non-state actors*

It is difficult to find a non-state actor that is uninterested in supporting some sort of education. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the largest opposition party, or movement, among the southern Sudanese opposition, for example, has an established education unit. The unit is writing its own curriculum, although its reach and impact in Southern Sudan remains limited (Sommers, 2003*b*). On the other hand, the unsanctioned 'parallel system' of education that Kosovar Albanians devised following severe restrictions in Kosovo by the Serb-dominated Milosevic regime, had broad reach and widespread impact (Bellamy, 2001; Clark, 2000; Crighton *et al.*, 2001; Davies, 1999; Nedeva, 1998; Sommers and Buckland, 2003).

While the southern Sudan and Kosovo cases illuminate non-state actors striving to establish formal education systems, others feature their own brand of non-formal education. For instance, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone employed a sort of non-formal 'education' that would more usefully be depicted as indoctrination. During the civil war in Sierra Leone, the RUF operated largely by raiding villages for property and children. Some of the abducted children (to be sure, some children and youth did join the RUF of their own accord as well) then received a kind of 'education' that featured instruction on the children's world view and military tactics. While the purposes that children were prepared to enact were thoroughly exploitative, abusive and even diabolical, it is also worth noting that some of their 'coursework' was remarkably creative. Richards (1996: 58), for example, noted how the RUF probably employed the movie *Rambo: first blood*, in part, as a kind of instruction video. Indeed, Richards noted that "all factions in Liberia and Sierra Leone

have routinely used *First blood* and similar videos to inspire, to entertain, and perhaps to orient their young captives towards the ambush skills that are the staple fare of this kind of low-level jungle warfare.” The subsequent use of lyrics from Tupac Shakur songs to cultivate and validate the RUF’s child and youth-dominated military corps, vividly dramatized during the RUF’s ‘Operation no living thing’ in 1999 (Sommers, 2003a), suggests how popular culture can be manipulated to fuel military tactics and strategies and inspire child soldiers.

### *United Nations agencies*

United Nations agencies normally are central to the co-ordination of education during emergency situations. Sinclair (2002: 81) describes two United Nations agencies that are featured contributors to this work:

“In refugee situations, the natural co-ordination mechanism is through UNHCR, jointly with the government, although UNICEF may undertake this role in large emergencies. For crisis-affected populations within their own country, emergency co-ordination is normally through the government, assisted by UNICEF.”

United Nations co-ordination for refugee education is usually fairly straightforward, since UNHCR is the United Nations agency mandated to protect and assist refugees. UNICEF’s mandate to protect and assist children is potentially broader and much more encompassing: war-affected children exist in refugee and IDP camps, and far beyond. Smith and Vaux (2003: 55) note that this co-ordinated arrangement has been certified in a Memorandum of Understanding. They also call attention an important point: that “By far the largest international actor in the field of emergency responses in the education sector is UNHCR” (Smith and Vaux, 2003: 54).

There are almost always more United Nations agencies in the mix, particularly those involving education for non-refugees. Some situations inspire unhelpful competition between different agencies. There are many reasons for this, but among them is mandate overlap. UNESCO’s mandate is education, science and culture, and so directly overlaps with UNICEF’s child orientation and UNHCR’s support for refugees. UNESCO’s role in education for emergencies is less well defined and may vary from context to context: in the Rwandan refugee camps in the United Republic of Tanzania in 1994-1996, for example, the UNESCO PEER unit (Regional

Programme of Education for Emergencies, Communication and Culture of Peace) was central to implementing and managing the refugee education programme. In many other refugee and IDP education situations, however, their role may be secondary, inconstant, not well defined, or a combination of the three. The uncertainty surrounding UNESCO's role has led Smith and Vaux to recommend that "there needs to be more clarity about the role of UNESCO as part of emergency responses to conflict" (2003: 52). While its role during emergencies, however, is a subject of ongoing discussion, UNESCO's contributions of technical expertise in early post-war situations – particularly regarding policy and system building with education, finance and planning ministries (Sinclair, 2002: 116) – can range from slight to considerable. Sinclair (2002: 117) notes that UNESCO is "trying to build donor confidence so that it may increase its level of 'extra-budgetary funding'" to support its work during and immediately after emergencies.

Still other United Nations agencies may be involved in education work during and soon after wars. The WFP often sponsors school feeding programmes with NGO partners and "plays a major role in emergency education through providing food for school meals and food-for-work for activities such as teaching, attending teacher training sessions, construction of schools, participation in adult education and training sessions, etc." (Sinclair, 2002: 17). UNDP, whose mandate focuses on poverty reduction, can reasonably argue that support for education is tied to development. It also is directly involved in supporting the Education for All effort. At the same time, however, UNDP's "stated decision to downscale its technical capacity in education" has reduced "its mandate overlap with UNESCO and UNICEF" (Sommers, 2002). The Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) cites other United Nations agencies who may have lesser education roles: the International Labour Organization (ILO) (for vocational education) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (for health education concerns), in addition to UNFPA and FAO (INEE, 2003c).

A singular and critical feature of United Nations agency work is their obligation to work with governments. Since most crises take place in countries that are United Nations General Assembly members, this may be expected. At the same time, this orientation towards generating relationships with governments is not necessarily the case with NGOs,

and it helps support the co-ordination role of the principal United Nations agency responsible for education in a particular context. While NGOs are expected to ‘partner’ with the United Nations co-ordinating agency (quite often, United Nations agencies also become their donors, funnelling money received from donor governments to NGO implementers), in reality their relationship with United Nations agencies, and even the local education authorities, may be nominal or close, or somewhere in between.

### *Non-governmental organizations*

The breadth of skills and savvy required to responsibly and appropriately support, adapt and grow an education system under the unique and difficult conditions caused by violent conflict is considerable. Implementing education requires a thoughtful understanding of education needs and standards, child protection, budgeting, training, assessment, negotiation, collaboration and communication. Situations continually change that reverberate across areas of education access, equity and quality. The tentacles of warfare, for example, may spread into the encampment where education exists, siphoning off children and youth, causing more displacement, making schools centres of conflict and terrifying students, teachers and parents. Displaced children and youth in cities or within war zones may have little or no chance to obtain a formal or even informal education. Social breakdowns that can lead to child marriages and households led by children may have a disastrous impact on the ability of affected children to receive any education.

The responsibility for implementing and sustaining education under such conditions quite often falls to members of the unwieldy category known as NGOs. Weiss and Collins (2000: 46) describe the diversity in the following way: NGOs “are non-state, non-profit, private organizations whose principles, mandates, functions, and accountability in responding to civilians defy any standard Organizational form or predictable behaviour.” Indeed, the variety of institutional structures, capacities and mandates of NGOs is so broad that it is difficult to adequately categorize those involved in what has come to be known as ‘education in emergencies’. None the less, broad strokes can be made to illuminate key features in the NGO landscape, while also highlighting their role as implementers of education.

The NGO playing field is large. “Hundreds of national and local NGOs ... work on emergency education”, Sinclair observes (2002: 113).

The presence of many NGOs in a single situation may not only undermine co-ordination but fuel chaotic conditions. Adiin Yaansah and Harrell-Bond (1997: 4) quote a Croatian government official who stated in the mid-1990s that there were “some 790 ‘both local and foreign active NGOs’” operating in his country.

The same Croatian official highlighted a particular co-ordination challenge involving international NGOs – the impression, whether actual or perceived, that “foreign NGOs oppose any attempt to regulate their activities [and] that the government which wants to do such could be accused of obstruction of democratic institutions of civilian society” (Adiin Yaansah and Harrell-Bond, 1997: 4). In fact, “In many countries there has been no method for registering either foreign or local NGOs” (Adiin Yaansah and Harrell-Bond, 1997: 5). The trend towards independent NGO actions, both real and perceived, is frequently tied to perhaps the central potential constraint on NGO contributions to co-ordination: the nature of their funding. First of all, “NGOs today control significant proportions of the resources available through international aid” (Adiin Yaansah and Harrell-Bond, 1997: 4-5). Second, governments and United Nations agencies usually rely on NGOs to do the necessary organizing and footwork required to manage school operations and non-formal education programming. Third, in return for donating money and sometimes materials to NGOs, donors rely on NGOs to inform them about what they are doing with their contributions. An NGO’s donors, however, may not have a particular interest in, or control over, whether or how their recipient institution participates in co-ordination, collaboration, and information-sharing activities on the ground. This can create serious problems, as Weiss and Collins (2000: 47) suggest:

“Because a number of NGOs are dependent upon conditional funding from governments, the United Nations, other IGOs,<sup>4</sup> and private citizens and organizations, subtle pressures bear down on NGOs to conform to the political will and interests of their supporters and may lead them to respect external, rather than internal, priorities.

4. Intergovernmental organizations, defined as “multistate-created institutions designed to further state interests” (Weiss and Collins, 2000: 45), such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO), the European Union (EU), and the Organization of American States (OAS), in addition to the United Nations.



A well-funded NGO, therefore, may not necessarily complement co-ordinated action in the field. What other humanitarian actors and war victims may need from an NGO may not coincide with the desires or interests of the NGOs' main financial contributors.”

The combination of high profiles, often-sizeable budgets, a reliance on NGOs to carry out education work, and the tangle of constituencies that some NGOs have can set NGOs up as targets for criticism – large international NGOs in particular.

The primary distinction among NGOs is between international and national NGOs. The dominant international NGOs in education during emergencies and reconstruction may be present in situations across the world. The Norwegian Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Academy for Educational Development, Creative Associates International, and members of CARE International and the International Save the Children Alliance have been among the most active, although many others have also operated in a number of contexts. Others that have been involved in education sector work include those that are faith-based to some degree, including the Jesuit Refugee Service, Catholic Relief Services and Caritas, Christian Children's Fund, members of Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT), the Aga Khan Foundation, and a diversity of Muslim NGOs such as Islamic Relief and various national Red Crescent societies. Still another type of NGO are those with a particular specialization on education, such as the Refugee Education Trust (which focuses on post-primary education), World University Service, the Africa Education Trust, the Hugh Pilkington Charitable Trust, the Southern Africa Extension Unit, and the Commonwealth of Learning.

The most active international NGOs working on education in emergency and reconstruction have the capacity and experience to make a positive contribution to education work. INEE observes that they are “able to rapidly mobilize and manage resources, and provide multi-sectoral assistance, including educational services, to communities in crisis” (INEE, 2003a: 1). Given their generally high level of capacity, much is expected of them. INEE states that such NGOs “should be co-ordinated within the larger initial humanitarian response of food, shelter, health, water and sanitation.” They should base their formal and non-formal education interventions on known best practices and then tailor them to the particular “needs of the community [they are working with and] within the specific

context of the emergency.” Moreover, these NGOs should provide skills trainings, build technical and operational capacity with community, NGO, and government actors, and ensure services to all who seek education (INEE, 2003a: 1-2).

Typically overshadowed by international NGOs with comparatively huge budgets, responsibilities, and agendas are national NGOs. INEE suggests that “national NGOs with an education focus ... should complement the government’s work” (INEE, 2003d: 1), an indication of just how difficult it can be for national NGOs to maintain a reputation that suggests independent action. Often burdened by low profiles and scarce resources, and frequently having limited technical capacity, there may be a tendency for national NGOs to be overlooked during co-ordination activities. There may also be simple problems limiting their contribution, such as language. “Local NGOs should not have to provide their own translation” at co-ordination meetings, INEE insists, “since this affects their participation in the meeting.” INEE also illuminates how a potential benefit of co-ordination work can be receiving attention and support from donors. Co-ordination meetings, INEE (2003d: 2) suggests, “are ideal places to meet and set up individual meetings with international organizations looking for local partners, as well as donors, who can fund services directly.” Achieving inclusion in co-ordinated work may require national NGOs to overcome a tendency for what Weiss and Collins (2000: 145) view as “relief agencies emphasiz[ing] delivery of assistance rather than locals’ empowerment”. One example of this focus on delivering assistance was noted with regard to UNHCR, which Telford (2001: 15, 18) argues has been “moving more and more towards direct implementation of projects”, while building national NGO capacities “is not a priority in the organization”.

### *Major donors*

Large bilateral and multilateral donors are, almost by definition, influential. They can also have extraordinary influence on co-ordination. In Sierra Leone, for example, ECHO and USAID co-ordinated their funding strategies to a degree that was quite unusual for the two dominant humanitarian funding agencies. Among their co-ordination successes was the requirement that all international actors receiving their support for food aid be directly involved in sector co-ordination. Bolstered by the two donors’ combination of support and insistence on co-ordination, Sierra Leone’s food aid sector during much of the civil war years in the 1990s

developed a truly noteworthy co-ordination mechanism that weathered a series of setbacks and military disruptions (Sommers, 2000). This case of donor co-ordination is exceptional in light of the view that “co-ordination *between* donors may in fact be the weakest aspect of the co-ordination of humanitarian response” (Macrae *et al.*, 2002: 44).

However, major donor support for education during and immediately following humanitarian emergencies has often been a bugbear, overlooked and underappreciated. Illustrative of this problem is the following description of support provided by the European Union (EU) to Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1991 and 2000. During this period, only 3 per cent of total EU funding (which amounted to 2.6 billion euros) was invested in education (National Observatory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2001: 54). A long-standing belief about education during humanitarian emergencies is that it is inappropriate. As Nicolai and Triplehorn have noted (2003: 16): “Because education has traditionally been seen as part of development work, not humanitarian relief, humanitarian donors have generally been reluctant to fund emergency education responses. Moreover, few bilateral donors have a policy specifically on education in countries in, or emerging from, conflict.”

An important reason for generally limited interest in education arises from the bureaucratic division between humanitarian and development work within donor agencies. Many view humanitarian action as life-saving work, which is often then realized primarily as biological preservation. In bureaucratic terms, this is expressed in the broad tendency for education to be the responsibility of development departments, not relief or humanitarian departments. Sinclair (2002: 119) cites one weakness of this view: the fact that “a complex humanitarian emergency may last for years or even decades”. Talbot (2002: 4) goes further, arguing that the

“relief-development dichotomy is an artificial one. People have only one life. Children need a quality education whether they are living in peaceful or conflicted societies. A more realistic approach is to consider socio-economic development as a single process that *includes* catastrophes, responses to them and recovery from them.”

Increasingly, the reticence or even resistance by many major donors to fund education efforts during emergency and reconstruction periods (emergency periods in particular) has begun to ease. For example,

education is a stated objective, goal, or recommended priority for an increasing number of major bilateral donors, including Norway (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2003), Sweden (SIDA, 2002), the United Kingdom (Smith and Vaux, 2003), and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) in the US State Department (United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, 2003). Steps towards broader and more direct support for education during emergencies are being taken in USAID (noted in publications such as Sommers, 2002) and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (personal interview, April 2003). Early in the reconstruction period, still more donors enter the education ring, most notably the World Bank and the regional development banks (Sommers, 2002: 13-14), in addition to donor governments with strategic or development concerns that are specific to particular post-war situations.

An important event which helped turn the tide towards enhanced support for education during emergencies and early reconstruction was the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal in April 2000. Led by UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and a number of leading bilateral and multilateral donors, this second EFA meeting highlighted the need to provide formal education to children and youth affected by conflict. In particular, the second goal of the Dakar Framework for Action was to work to ensure "that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality" (World Education Forum, 2000: 8). War is considered a central component of the framework's conception of 'difficult circumstances'.

National government relations with multilateral and bilateral donor agencies can be a particularly challenging component of co-ordination. A government immersed in or emerging from war usually works in makeshift offices with scarce resources. It also may have a particularly tough road ahead when it comes to negotiating with donors. In most cases, the war-affected government may receive little funding directly from donors, with the lion's share of their resources directed to United Nations agencies and international NGOs. In addition, donors usually work with funds that are earmarked in some way (such as funding only for curriculum development, textbooks, support for girls education, and so on), and may have quite

particular restrictions on how their money can be used. The concept has been called ‘tied aid’, which the Centre for Global Development (CGD) and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) define as “financial assistance that recipient countries are required to spend on services from the donor nation” (2003: 60). They offer some examples of this tendency: “the Canadian or Italian governments may grant loans to a poor nation for highway construction but then require the recipient nation to hire a Canadian or Italian contractor to build the roads, thus preventing the aid recipient from getting the best deal.” The proportion of tied aid can be considerable: “In 2001 alone, roughly two-fifths of total international aid flows were tied; in the late 1990s, the US Agency for International Development reassured the US Congress that almost 80 per cent of the agency’s resources went to purchase US goods and services” (2003: 60).

Such restrictions and limitations on donor contributions can hamstring a cash- and capacity-starved government even further. In response, a veteran international education expert noted that only national governments have the power to truly co-ordinate donor actions:

“The only thing that will keep donors in line is a government that says, ‘If you can’t spend your money according to our plans, then take your money and go.’ But to do this, you need a government with a strong vision and strong leadership, and the confidence to assert itself with donors.”

As the Cambodia case suggests, and other examples that will be examined in *Chapter 3* indicate, the issue of the national government’s role, and its ability to assert its role, is growing in significance in many contexts.

### Humanitarian co-ordination structures: efforts to mainstream emergency education

Networks and associations that seek to co-ordinate and share information about education during and immediately after emergencies almost unfailingly include advocacy as a feature of their work. The reasons for this boil down to the still-low place that education continues to have in international humanitarian action. What follows here is a brief review of some major humanitarian co-ordination organizations, networks, and associations, together with an overview of international co-ordination

mechanisms that advocate a higher profile for education as a component of humanitarian work.

The United Nations dominates co-ordination efforts for humanitarian action. Its Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA,<sup>5</sup> is supposed to be at the forefront of co-ordinating this work and facilitating the overall coherence of international responses. Smith and Vaux (2003: 50) observe that OCHA “has developed a ‘strategic framework’ approach to complex emergencies in which all factors are brought into an integrated analysis.” OCHA also has a web site ([www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)) which makes reporting on various humanitarian crises available to a wide audience (Smith and Vaux, 2003: 50), and is expected to carry out a number of co-ordination activities. At the same time, OCHA’s work in the field may be reduced to a kind of hopeful facilitator because it usually lacks the clout within the United Nations system to convince or oblige United Nations agencies to act in a co-ordinated fashion when necessary (Minear, 2002: 29-30). Its influence on NGOs in such cases is even more suggestive, since NGOs may be able to opt out of OCHA-led co-ordination activities. In addition, “education does not feature as a specific activity or in OCHA’s current priorities.” A veteran NGO education official supported this view: “OCHA is not especially interested in education, so the co-ordination of education just tends to be forgotten.”

A critical component of OCHA’s work is to manage the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The IASC sits just below the United Nations’ highest humanitarian co-ordination body, the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA). While the ECHA “meets quarterly at the technical level and biannually at the level of heads of United Nations agencies”, the IASC “includes representation from [major humanitarian] NGOs and the ICRC as well as major United Nations organizations [and] meets for a full day every quarter” (Minear, 2002: 28).

There is an effort by proponents of education during emergencies and reconstruction to secure a much higher profile within the United Nations system for their field. A key part of this work is to push for greater recognition within the IASC. “We are trying to get on the IASC agenda to talk about why education should be a high priority”, one advocate explained. “We want OCHA to look at education, and to have a sub-task force on

5. Until January 1998 it was known as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, or DHA.

education.” Such sub-task forces, which others referred to as ‘reference groups’, report to IASC members on a regular basis. Emergency education supporters within the United Nations system regard the IASC as highly influential over humanitarian policy, operations, fund-raising, and efforts to co-ordinate action. As one advocate noted: “The reality is that much is decided by the IASC, so education needs to be part of their agenda.” In theory, the advocate continued, “education is part of IASC’s agenda, but in reality, it’s not. The IASC says there are always more pressing issues.” Hence the interest in an IASC task force or reference group on education: “If we can’t get a reference group for education”, one supporter asked, “how is education going to be recognized?” Such comments illustrate the frustration that many emergency education professionals feel about education’s low profile relative to other areas of humanitarian action.

Another indication of education’s low profile in humanitarian work, particularly among high-level humanitarian co-ordination bodies, can be found in the most prominent and productive co-ordinated activity involving large numbers of international NGOs in recent years, the Sphere Project. Similar to OCHA’s orientation, Sphere members have addressed what might be considered the traditional foci of humanitarian work: activities that are physically life-saving in nature. In developing minimum standards for responding to disasters in five ways (water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services), Sphere members also developed a ‘Humanitarian Charter’, which, together with the minimum standards, aims to “increase the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, and to make humanitarian agencies more accountable” (Sphere, 2000: 1). This approach is

“based on two core beliefs: first, that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering that arises out of conflict and calamity, and second, that those affected by a disaster have a right to life with dignity and therefore a right to assistance” (Sphere, 2000: 1).

The accent on supporting a dignified life for those in need is a fundamental part of the Sphere enterprise, and it is here that emergency education advocates have taken the Sphere Project to task. Although Sphere Project members openly admit that their minimum standards “do not cover all the possible forms of appropriate humanitarian assistance” (Sphere, 2000: 2), some emergency education advocates have argued that education should be among those forms of assistance that have Sphere minimum

standards. Their argument is partly derived from the view that education is a key component of living with dignity and of protection.

Nicolai and Triplehorn have illuminated how education is a fundamental protection tool. They emphasize that all children in war-affected situations are at risk and that education can prevent further risk. The varieties of protection functions that education supports are considerable. Education can help children realize many of their rights, provide a means for learning about human rights, and expand the capacities of children and youth to express themselves, become cultural contributors, and care for their own health. In addition, education can enhance the psychological and social well being of children and youth by re-establishing a normal routine and peer networks, help children and youth care for their health, and facilitate the integration of children into families and societies. Education can also help adolescents and youth transition to adulthood by providing them with job skills, reproductive health and leadership training. Finally, providing education to children and youth “offers a structure that can potentially guard against abuse, neglect and exploitation on into adulthood” (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003: 25). Such protection and education connections have helped call attention to the importance of more effectively highlighting education work within the humanitarian community.

While unable to yet mainstream their work either with the IASC or Sphere, sixteen leading United Nations agencies and international NGOs in the education in emergencies field are drawing up their own minimum standards in a highly co-ordinated and collaborative fashion. The effort is among those facilitated by INEE, the secretariat of which is based at UNESCO and supported by CARE USA and the Mellon Foundation. While INEE is not a co-ordinating body, an INEE official stated that “INEE’s role is to promote co-ordination.” As it states on its web site ([www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org)), “INEE was not defined as a distinct agency with bureaucratic functions, but rather as an open network based on the principles of collaboration and information sharing, in order to avoid needless duplication, while at the same time promoting diversity of approaches and gender sensitivity” (INEE, 2003*f*). This description is clearly suggestive of the work of co-ordination – avoiding duplication, sharing information, collaborating – but without the mandate or authority to carry it out. INEE, in other words, seeks to facilitate co-ordination without acting as a co-ordinator.



Additional information on education in emergencies and reconstruction is provided by a collaborating association, the Global Information Networks in Education (GINIE), which seeks to provide a “virtual learning community” that focuses on sharing information via their web site “for education professionals working internationally in nations in crisis and at risk to disruption” ([www.ginie.org](http://www.ginie.org)).



## Chapter 3

# Field co-ordination perspectives

Since the breadth of co-ordination challenges pertaining to education in crisis and post-crisis situations is vast and too lengthy to detail here, examples that illuminate significant co-ordination challenges in the field will be described and analysed instead. First, however, a review of the kinds of field co-ordination challenges that may surface is useful.

### Field co-ordination issues<sup>6</sup>

#### *Community-level concerns*

Certain co-ordination issues typically confront educators in war-affected communities, such as schools, rural villages, urban neighbourhoods, and IDP or refugee camps. Among the issues that might be addressed by co-ordinators are: (a) selecting sites for schools; (b) creating criteria and a process for selecting teachers and school administrators; and (c) addressing how education officials can work together to address access issues (such as increasing school enrolment and attendance and minimizing school dropout rates), equity issues (such as recruiting and retaining at-risk youth, girls, handicapped and child household heads in school), and quality issues (such as prioritizing and procuring key education materials and equipment).

Co-ordinating education at school and community levels provides an opportunity for teachers, parents, community or village officials, and youth and women's group members to become involved in meetings that co-ordinate and make decisions about local education issues. Such gatherings may also provide a starting-point for enhancing the capacities of local educators and education officials.

An experienced emergency education expert observed that, ideally, a United Nations official (UNHCR for refugee contexts, UNICEF or

6. The information for this section was largely obtained through interviews with emergency education experts and, where noted, archival documentation.

possibly UNESCO within war-affected country contexts) and the highest-ranking government official responsible for education should jointly chair co-ordination meetings at this level. Local and international NGO officials should also be involved, and may replace United Nations officials if they are not available.

### *National-level concerns*

The goal for national-level education for crisis-affected populations is to have a national-level co-ordination committee involving all stakeholders. Such a committee should be chaired jointly by a United Nations agency (again usually UNICEF or possibly UNESCO within a war-torn country, or UNHCR in a country hosting refugees) and what one emergency education expert called the “concerned Education Ministry official”. Who this concerned official is, and how high his or her rank will be, is decided by the government. If the co-ordination concerns involve citizens residing on the opposing side of the war zone (including, perhaps, refugees in another country), for example, the education official may lack any real decision-making authority. This may well be deliberate, since having a high-ranking official deciding on such matters might seem impolitic and possibly even personally dangerous for the actual official.

Getting all of those involved in education around the national co-ordination table may be a considerable challenge. Will donor officials attend, particularly if their investment in education is limited to a particular United Nations agency or NGO? Is it really necessary for them to go, particularly if the organization they are funding is supposed to report back to them? Will a representative from the central United Nations country co-ordination office (such as the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs – UNOCHA) attend, or is it thought that education is beyond the bounds of their responsibility, or too low a priority? Will the range of education concerns include representatives of non-formal education, such as local NGOs or religious groups? Who decides what the agenda will be, and who will have a chance to review it in advance?

In addition to such membership and procedural concerns, there are issues of cost. Will some agency pay for provincial-level government education officials or national NGO representatives to attend? If they do attend, who will pay for any language translation that might be needed? Who will underwrite still other co-ordination expenses, which one

emergency education expert stated should include supplies of “paper, computers, generators, and mobile phones”, in addition to the “capacity-building of national government personnel (through trainings and secondments) to enable co-ordination by Education Ministry people and promote sustainability?”

Capacity building is a recurrent theme in co-ordination discussions for a number of reasons. First, there is a widespread assumption among international humanitarian experts (emergency education and otherwise) that most national government officials have a limited capacity to address technical concerns. This assumption is often based on heavy experience in humanitarian contexts. But it may also be based on a low regard for national government officials. Regardless, it may be wrong with regard to particular individuals (for instance, some internationals may assume that a civil servant who cannot speak English or French has low technical capabilities) or contexts (the current Iraqi case appears to run against this assumption, for example).

Second, the low-capacity concern regarding national officials may be exacerbated by the fact that civil servant ‘counterparts’ with the best technical capacities have already been hired away by the very donor, United Nations and international NGO agencies attempting to co-ordinate with governments. Regardless of such common practices, the low capacities of national government and civil society officials have been highlighted as a particular co-ordination concern. Sinclair (2002: 90), for example, argues that it may be necessary “for an emergency education expert to be deputed to the Ministry [of Education] to help with co-ordination and to build up expertise of national counterparts”.

Third, there is also the question of whether strong co-ordination involving international NGOs and donors works to undermine the authority of the national government and NGOs if they are not included in the funding mix. This situation can reveal another important theme involving co-ordination: the tension between (a) limiting co-ordination membership to prioritize speed and efficiency in humanitarian work (which tends to favour international agencies with generally higher capacities to work fast and effectively, and is thus fairly exclusive); and (b) prioritizing the building of local capacities (which expands the number education actors, is slower to act, but tends to be much more inclusive).

Some international humanitarians may not see this separation as a tension but as two parts of a sequential process. The relief to development paradigm, discussed earlier, implies that speed and efficiency must come first because the lifesaving nature of humanitarian work requires it. The process of building local capacities is time-consuming and essentially a development activity, and so naturally follows the work of humanitarians.

Governments in countries consumed by war tend to have minimal bargaining power in garnering the authority, funding, and training to bolster their ability to lead and co-ordinate the work in sectors such as education. This may not be the case for governments hosting refugees. Wars are, among other things, economically disastrous for most citizens and their governments. This is particularly true where wars take place. A government's coffers during times of war are generally very low, something that is not helped by the fact that most war-torn countries were already very poor before the war started. Refugees from these wars spilling across borders may be seen to negatively impact the host nation's economy, environment and security. Refugees are also foreigners, which means that their education may appear to be of no real concern to the host country's Ministry of Education. Responsibility for the refugees' education may seem to naturally lie with their country of origin, yet according to international law it is the responsibility of the government that is hosting the refugees – together with the assistance, if necessary, of UNHCR.

Despite such obligations and expectations, involving the Ministry of Education in the host nation in refugee education affairs may require advocacy as well as negotiation. An experienced refugee education expert noted that: "One of the main issues is whether [responsibility for refugee education] goes to the Ministry of Local Government or Home Affairs instead of the Ministry of Education." Involving the host nation's education ministry facilitates the process of approving appropriate textbooks and attaining certification for refugee schools and the schooling students receive while in exile, student examinations, and teacher training, since "cross-country co-operation is very helpful, as Ministries of Education know the technical issues and work well together." However, since refugee education may not seem to be a particular concern of a host nation education ministry, they can negotiate with international agency officials from a position of strength to a degree that their war-torn country counterparts might only hope for. As the veteran refugee education expert observed: "If you want

the [host nation education ministry] to do things [involving refugee education], you have to pay.” The official added that “Anything that creates jobs and increases funding levels is considered a good thing” by local government officials (a view shared, of course, by humanitarian agencies). An added benefit of their involvement is the fact that, “the [host nation education ministry] can help plan and manage school buildings” that refugees vacate when they repatriate to their countries of origin. Guinea’s Ministry of Education, in fact, has received immediate benefits of investments for refugee education by the sharing of new facilities in areas near refugee camps: “Guinean students attend school in the mornings, and refugees attend in the afternoon.”

The official also warned of a common danger of not supporting a high Education Ministry role in both war-torn and host nation governments. “USAID, the World Bank and other Western donors often set up parallel education systems called ‘projects’. It happens all the time.”

## Field co-ordination challenges

The following section contains a selection of cases designed to shed light on a number of pertinent field co-ordination concerns. The initial case on post-war Afghanistan is described in considerable detail because it provides a particularly revealing example of co-ordination challenges during and following wars. The two subsequent cases are shorter, and are used to illuminate more specific aspects of the co-ordination challenge. For southern Sudanese, it is the case of locally co-ordinated education systems residing in separate geographic areas which remain virtually uncoordinated between the systems. For refugees from Sierra Leone in Guinea, there is the vexing challenge of co-ordinating appropriate teacher salaries, a problem that seems to plague virtually every education situation during and after wars.

While these cases largely examine difficulties in co-ordination, it should be noted that co-ordinating education systems during crises is sometimes successful. For example, negotiating a ‘neutral’ curriculum for schools on both sides of the civil war in Angola (facilitated by the Norwegian Refugee Council and UNICEF) stands as a remarkable co-ordination achievement (Sommers, 2002: 19-20). The example of an unusually well co-ordinated education system for refugees took place in Ngara (the United Republic of Tanzania) for Rwandan refugees, and has

been well detailed elsewhere (Aguilar and Richmond, 1998; Bird, 2003; Retamal and Aedo-Richmond, 1998; Sommers, 2000).

*An emerging trend: national governments taking charge*

On 11 December 1995, the Rwandan Government ordered 38 humanitarian aid agencies to leave the country within a week, and leave all their vehicles and equipment behind. Christine Umutoni, the government's Deputy Rehabilitation Minister, announced that "the expulsions were irreversible because the relief organizations had been given a year to register with the Government and failed to comply." The materiel left behind, Christine Umutoni explained, would be distributed to Rwandan NGOs and government agencies (Kiley, 1995: 1).

Speculations over the reasons for this dramatic announcement went beyond the government's claim that the expulsions were due to registration failures. One of the NGOs that was expelled, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), which is based in France, accused Rwanda's army of theft. The military, MSF announced, stole "the agency's vehicles, equipment and medicine" (*New York Times*, 1996: A12). The government also cut the telephone lines and froze the bank accounts of those agencies ordered to leave the country. MSF declared that it was "thrown out [of Rwanda] for reporting atrocities committed by the [Rwandan] authorities" (*The Guardian*, 1996: 8). A third suggested reason arose from the observation that the Rwandan Government "appears to have targeted French agencies in particular", it was surmised, "because the French Government supported the previous [Rwandan] region with arms and ammunition up to, and during, the genocide committed by Paris's allies" in Rwanda in 1994 (Kiley, 1995: 1). A fourth suspected motivation was connected to money: "The [Rwandan] Government, smarting at the slow response of donors in supplying it aid directly, has already ordered 1,800 United Nations blue helmets [that is, United Nations peacekeepers] to leave" (Kiley, 1995: 1). "Diplomats said the moves were partly in response to delays in arrival of US \$1.2 billion of aid", another observer reported (*New York Times*, 1996: A12).

The scale of government expulsions in a war or post-war context appears to have had no precedent. It has remained a touchstone in discussions about the role and responsibility of national governments in humanitarian situations. To government officials in Sierra Leone, it served



as an example for acting against humanitarian NGOs perceived as operating outside government control. “‘Maybe we have to do like the Rwandans and Ethiopians’ and expel some NGOs from the country”, a Sierra Leone Government official suggested (Sommers, 2000: 29).<sup>7</sup> He was among those in his government who believed that international NGOs had “trampled on their authority and government sovereignty” (Sommers, 2000: 29). The Sierra Leonean Government never carried out such an action, but officials made clear their suspicions of, and resentments against, some international NGOs.

### *The case of Afghanistan*

Probably the most significant example of a war-affected government boldly staking its claim to authority over humanitarian action is the current case of Afghanistan. It is a scene reminiscent of other early post-war education systems, with profound infrastructural and psychological devastation, a ruined national economy, a shredded social fabric, widespread insecurity, and punishing poverty. Similar to Somalia, it has become a country in name only, a splintered polity that Donini (1996: 21) has called “a new world disorder”. The December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ultimately left more than 1 million civilians dead and “one of the largest exoduses of population since World War II” (Donini, 1996: 21). Writing in 1995, Rubin noted how “millions of [Afghan] people [have] sacrificed their homes, their land, their cattle, their health, their families, and their lives, with barely a hope of success or reward” (1995: 145). The attack on the Taliban rulers in 2001-2002, led by the United States, has allowed Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and beyond to return to their homeland. But unrest and uncertainty continue to plague much of Afghanistan.

A country with a recent history so engulfed by more than two decades of war, loss, and sheer disruption may not be the place where a vigorous assertion of the role of the state might be anticipated. On the other hand, Afghanistan has become a society inured to humanitarianism, its politics and its players: Stockton (2002: 6) counts the current humanitarian effort the third, at minimum, “major United Nations peace-building” initiative in

7. The Ethiopian example also took place in 1995 but is somewhat different from the Rwandan case because it was an emphatic political manoeuvre. On 1 September, the government ordered all NGOs thought to be “‘directly or indirectly’ linked with the [Sudanese] regime” to suspend their activities (*Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 1995: 1).

Afghanistan “since the end of the Soviet occupation” in 1989. The war and post-war situation in 2001-2002 was playing out much like before, with enormous humanitarian needs, a swirl of international aid agencies garnering funds and starting humanitarian projects and programmes – and an emerging government being largely sidestepped.

Minear (2002: 196) notes that “disconnects between the international aid apparatus and Afghan institutions ... did not spring up overnight. A series of United Nations missions had regularly flagged the problem.” He cites an “embarrassing lack of co-ordination among humanitarian organizations” since 1997 (Minear, 2002: 204) as among the most prominent problems. By January 2002, shortly after the post-Taliban humanitarian operation had begun, marginalization of Afghan Government and civil society institutions was well under way, and “signs were already present of ‘business as usual’” being carried out by international humanitarian organizations (Minear, 2002: 196). Minear then quotes a Kabul academic who highlights the actions of international NGOs as an indication of what he considers ‘business as usual’:

“The NGOs are playing the role of a new colonial administration. They hand out flour, but don’t build factories. They give oil, but don’t create jobs. They manage the aid themselves and prevent the creation of a strong state” (Minear, 2002: 196).

Minear (2002: 197) concludes that “The heart of the problem, clearly, is the political economy of the humanitarian enterprise itself” which is “driven not by the needs of vulnerable civilian populations but by donor interests, heavily political in nature, and reinforced by the institutional dynamics of humanitarian organizations themselves.” Stockton’s (2002: 40) take on international humanitarianism in Afghanistan is no less caustic: “A growing thread of Afghan opinion asserts that the only people dependent upon international aid for Afghanistan are the aid employees themselves.”

In Afghanistan, the precedent for sidestepping the national government had a somewhat different accent than it did in many other humanitarian situations. It was not simply the case that working with the national government was avoidable and would slow down the delivery of humanitarian aid. Much more important were responses to government policy. Examining the education sector in this sense is particularly illuminating. The Taliban regime that was ousted by the United States led

coalition in 2001 and replaced by the government of Hamid Karzai forbade education for girls (even though, as one humanitarian observer noted, “Many Taliban leaders had girls in [hidden and illegal] home schools”). A United Nations education expert recalled how international humanitarian agencies during the Taliban’s rule (1996-2001) “could not co-ordinate with the Ministry of Education” because of the regime’s policy that excluded girls from education. For this reason, UNICEF intentionally shifted away from its traditional stance of working with national governments, deciding “not to work on a technical level with the [Taliban] Ministry of Education”. The international aid agency work in education was actually based in nearby Pakistan, where most agencies had their headquarters, and where the world’s largest population of refugees resided. UNHCR (2002: 91) estimated that there were 2,197,800 Afghan refugees in Pakistan by 2001.

Significantly, a United Nations aid agency official noted that not one but two co-ordination configurations arose around education in Afghanistan. “A lot of effort was put into a United Nations co-ordination structure, and also an NGO co-ordination structure.” The two were then “put together”. Not surprisingly, given that working with the Taliban Government (at least at the national level) was not going to be an option, the Pakistan-based agencies collectively focused on community education work. Accordingly, “NGOs and others emphasized work at the community level, starting non-state community schools for boys and girls.” The official noted that CARE International “had a good community education project in Afghanistan” during the Taliban era, working in rural areas and including girls in their basic education schools. The community education work did not entirely exclude the Taliban Government, however, since CARE International also reached an “agreement with the Taliban” to allow boys to shift from their community schools to state schools beginning in the fourth grade.

The regime of Hamid Karzai was hardly the pariah state that his Taliban predecessors had led. On the contrary, Karzai’s government has received wide international acceptance following “the UN-sponsored Bonn Conference with representation from all Afghan factions and the international community” (ADB, 2002: 2-3). Yet as appears to have been the case in post-genocide Rwanda as well, the genesis of the strong assertion of the Afghan Government’s role in humanitarian and development work was partly a reaction to predictions over when donor

aid pledges would be realized and who would receive their money. As the Transitional Government of Afghanistan noted, “Of the US \$1.84 billion grant money disbursed since the Tokyo conference [a gathering of major donors, who pledged money for Afghanistan’s reconstruction in January 2002], only US \$296 million or 16 per cent, has been provided directly to and received by the Transitional Government” (Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan [undated]: 2). In response to the realization that donor funding was largely going to international agency hands, Ashraf Ghani, a former World Bank official, threw down the gauntlet on the transitional government’s behalf. His attempts to direct funding through his government sent shockwaves through the international humanitarian community working in Afghanistan. An NGO official’s notes of a meeting with Ghani in March 2002 are indicative of his growing reputation for forceful, direct communication. First, Ghani emphasized that international NGOs are crucial contributors in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. He then proceeded to make a number of points, including:

- NGOs seeking to build local capacity are the ‘most valuable’. In turn, Ghani recommended that NGOs employ a high number of Afghan interns.
- There would be a ‘three strikes’ policy regarding agencies who “abuse the rule of law” and “waste this country’s resources”. Those found guilty of misusing funds would first get a warning from the Afghan Government, followed by exclusion from further activities and, finally, being completely “shut out” of work in Afghanistan.
- Sharing information on agency actions was a high priority. “If you withhold information”, Ghani warned, “I’ll be horrible with you. We’ll be on the warpath.” There was a need to be transparent with the Afghan people, particularly with regard to sharing the proportions of agency budgets that went to administrative overhead and field activities.
- An insistence on dialogue that featured ‘pushing back’ from both sides; a kind of forceful inquisitiveness between government and aid agency representatives.
- A recognition of the government’s reliance on NGOs that ‘are a source of learning’ for the Afghan Government.

- A final plea to NGOs in Afghanistan: “Try to figure out how to work with us. You are a very valuable partner. What we need most is honest dialogue.”

An NGO official attending the March 2002 meeting expressed sympathy with Ghani’s goals. “I was impressed that the Afghan Government was even trying to co-ordinate” humanitarian agencies, the official noted, as similar attempts had not been made in other post-war countries that the official had visited. The NGO official also recalled how “some NGO officials were intimidated by this guy [Ghani]. Some even felt that the government was anti-NGO.” The official was unconvinced of this, appreciating Ghani’s stated goal to work with NGOs. “That said”, the official concluded, “the Ministry of Education was very unorganized.” With limited government capacity in the government sector, just how this government/NGO relationship would evolve remained unclear.

A broader view of the Afghan Government’s confrontational approach and insistence on co-ordinating humanitarian and reconstruction work in its country was provided by an experienced observer of war and post-war action. “The ministries of the new Karzai Government are actually looking to become a part of the action. They want to be operational and co-ordinate sector work”, the official stated. At the same time, “NGOs and United Nations agencies are channelling funds around the ministries, so the [donor] funding hasn’t supported the government at all.” This state of affairs, the official noted, “has infuriated the government”.

What seemed particularly revealing about post-war Afghanistan to the observer was that, for international humanitarian organizations confronted by a government seeking to “flex its muscles”, the broad international response was to do their work as before. One United Nations agency official, for example, insisted that “We do programmes ourselves [and not with the local government]. That’s how we do business.” The observer characterized the “international NGO mentality” as: “If we can do projects ourselves and help out with local NGOs, then we can short-circuit the bottomless pit of working with a post-war government.” A veteran international NGO official familiar with the current situation in Afghanistan supported this perspective by noting how “international agencies try to avoid the Afghan government because it always complicates things.”

With such tendencies so ingrained into United Nations and NGO behaviour, the international observer of war and post-war action noted, a process instituted by Ghani and other Afghan Government personnel to review the contributions of each aid agency “was really difficult” for NGO and United Nations officials. Some left such review meetings in shock. “I must say that the international agencies were a little bit precious about just wanting to do things the way they’ve always done them”, the observer reflected. Some declared that they could not “adapt their programmes to what the government wants”, which was to put aid agency work “within their framework for reconstruction”. The Afghan Government’s assertive role effectively “puts the pressure on agencies to deliver”, and deliver in accordance with the national government’s “expectations, plans and objectives”.

By claiming a leadership role for the national government in the co-ordination of post-war action, does the Afghan Government represent, as the observer believed, “the wave of the future”? If so, what of their capacity to carry out their co-ordination responsibilities? A third veteran humanitarian visitor to Afghanistan, from a United Nations agency, voiced concern about the Afghan Government’s ability to co-ordinate. The government’s authority to expel agencies would not easily be matched by its ability to lead in the co-ordination of sectors such as education. Ultimately, Ashraf Ghani and the Afghan Government’s insistence on aid agency transparency, accountability, and aligning their work with government policies and plans was really about the donors. “Ashraf Ghani is really trying to get donors to behave”, the United Nations official noted. However, “the donors in Afghanistan won’t give the government much money.” In this, Ghani and his Afghan Government colleagues seem to realize that their influence over donors is minimal. Some of the reasons are practical. “There is no mechanism for donors to give the government money”, the official related. “There’s not even one bank in Afghanistan.” Donor officials also insist that there is widespread corruption in the government sector, that government officials lack the skills to manage funds, and that there is no accounting system. Under such circumstances, the United Nations official asked, “How can you have a transparent and accountable system?” Within the education sector, moreover, the Ministry of Education “has nothing: many offices were destroyed, there are only a few computers, there is not even paper or stationery. At the same time, there’s an overstaffing of ministries, since employing people is a way to

allow people to generate income. In addition, thousands of Afghans come to the Ministry of Education daily: teachers seeking to be paid, people seeking jobs, students trying to get their education certified, and so on. It's so, so crowded."

For the time being, an accommodation appears to have been worked out. The United Nations official noted that the Afghan Government has accepted that it will not receive a large proportion of donor funding. At the same time, the ADB (2002: 23) states that the Afghan Government "will play a lead role in managing the aid co-ordination process." To be sure, the government's role appears to be somewhat similar to OCHA's in the United Nations system: in charge of facilitating the co-ordination of humanitarian action while lacking the authority to enforce co-ordination because it does not control the funding reins. But on top of this, as an international NGO official observed, there are cultural disconnects that the Afghan Government must also surmount. In the official's view, the Afghan Government "has to learn how to engage with development organizations. They're very militaristic and dictatorial in their style, and are still learning how to negotiate."

Meanwhile, the education system is "in a state of virtual collapse" (ADB, 2002: 18). The Ministry of Education "is under great pressure to meet the demands of some three million students", and "develop a national education policy and legislative framework, to develop an Educational Management Information System (EMIS), to reform curricula and textbooks, and develop a strategy for in-service and pre-service training of teachers" (UNESCO, 2002: 24). The educational needs in Afghanistan are simply overwhelming, and they take place in a country that a veteran United Nations education official noted was "a big, big, big mess: the need is so immense that you don't know where to start. It's a case of reconstruction with very little capacity." In such a situation, the ability of the Afghan Government to assert an effective co-ordination role over the education sector, in addition to all other sectors, is clearly a work in progress.

*Co-ordinating separated systems: education for southern Sudanese*

One of the most persistent examples of fractured co-ordination for education during an emergency involves the southern Sudanese in the East

Africa region. Civil war has plagued Sudan since before Sudan's independence in 1956, with the latest war between the northern-based national government and southern-based rebels beginning two decades ago. Most of the fighting has taken place in the south, displacing approximately 4.5 million people (at 4 million, Sudan's IDP population is the world's largest) (United States Committee for Refugees, 2003). The largest concentrations of southern Sudanese refugees are in Uganda (176,800) and Kenya (69,800) (UNHCR, 2002: 94). The geographic size of Sudan is enormous. At nearly 1 million square miles, it is Africa's largest nation.<sup>8</sup>

Even after nearly twenty years of educational work in emergency settings, most southern Sudanese who live in areas where education is available belong to systems that remain almost completely disconnected. Depending on where the schools are located, they may use different curricula, have vastly different pay scales for teachers, and receive funding from different sources. Three such systems will be briefly described here. Southern Sudanese refugees in Kenya follow the curriculum of Kenya. Their schools usually employ significant numbers of Kenyan teachers. Education officials working in Kakuma, for the Lutheran World Federation in particular, have struggled to involve Kenya's Ministry of Education. Ministry officials, in turn, have inspected refugee schools and allow refugees to sit for Kenyan national examinations. They also allow primary and secondary students in Sudan to travel into Kenya to sit for the same national exams. There is even a teacher-training centre in Kakuma, mainly designed to train and certify Sudanese refugee teachers in the Kenyan education system (Sommers, 2003b).

West of Kakuma, in northern Uganda, the degree of Sudanese refugee integration into the host country education system is even greater. Touted for years as an 'education for integration' policy, UNHCR and its implementing agencies have been using the Ugandan curriculum for Sudanese refugee education for more than a decade. But in 1998, UNHCR and the Government of Uganda jointly adopted a Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), designed to provide host and refugee populations with integrated services. Refugees and Ugandans began to attend the same primary and secondary schools, with local government and education officials assuming authority of refugee education issues, and UNHCR increasingly adopting an advisory role. This is an unusual policy, and against the law in many

8. 967,500 square miles (*Africa South of the Sahara*, 2003: 1030).



countries hosting large refugee populations, neighbouring Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Ethiopia among them. Similar to Sudanese students in Sudan who follow the Kenyan education system, Sudanese primary and secondary students in some areas along the border with Uganda also follow the Ugandan education system (Sommers, 2001).

Still another education system is emerging in south-western Sudan (western Equatoria and southern Bahr el Ghazal). In terms of investment, teacher capacity, teacher payment, and the access to and quality of education, this third education system is far and away the most inferior. Teachers are essentially volunteers who are scarcely ever paid. They work with few educational materials, and many have never completed primary school themselves. They are supervised by the education officials of a largely unrecognized, non-state government led by the primary opposition faction in southern Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Their curriculum, written by SPLM education professionals based in Kenya, remains a work in progress. At interview, SPLM and other officials working on education in southern Sudan were united in the view that still another curriculum – the one developed by the Sudanese Government – would be refused by most southern Sudanese even if it were available, as it is among the issues that stirred their rebellion against the Khartoum-based government in the first place. Currently, the SPLM's primary curriculum is being completed and circulated to some schools in the region. Schools also use a combination of Kenyan and Ugandan curriculum materials and textbooks (Sommers, 2003*b*: 17-18).

No regular meetings exist to share information, much less co-ordinate activities, involving education for southern Sudanese in Uganda, Kenya and southern Sudan. Indeed, the lack of knowledge about education activities for southern Sudanese in other parts of the region is startlingly low. Interviews with experienced education officials working with refugees in Kakuma, for example, revealed that they had little or no knowledge of schools for southern Sudanese just across the Sudan border. Moreover, recent field research in Kenya found that no one from UNHCR's Kenya Country Office had recently visited southern Sudan (Sommers, 2003*b*: 8). This lack of knowledge, information-sharing and co-ordination for education extended to primary donors as well. An example of this problem surfaced during research on teacher-training issues for southern Sudanese in Kakuma and southern Sudan, which found that two branches of the

United States Government – USAID in southern Sudan and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration in the US Department of State (PRM) in Kenya’s refugee camps – were unaware of the others’ education plans and investments for southern Sudanese (Sommers, 2003b: 5).

*Paying refugee teachers*

Among the most vexing and widespread operational challenges in field co-ordination for education during emergencies is devising an appropriate and affordable payment structure for teachers. Consider the following description of the teacher payment issue for southern Sudanese (Sommers, 2003b: 18):

“Since it is an issue that virtually every [Sudanese] teacher interviewed, and most [Sudanese] education system officials, mentioned during interviews, a word on incentives is useful. None of the sites visited offered teacher salaries: only ‘incentives’, considered something less ... and of a much less stable quality, than a salary. Incentives, as a rule, appear to have been accepted by international agencies and local authorities alike because, to date, few southern Sudanese in the military or civilian offices are receiving payment. Thus, the thinking goes, if soldiers in the military and officials in the local government aren’t paid, how can teacher salaries be justified? Most teachers and education administrators interviewed strongly disagreed with this rationale – they wanted to get paid better and more regularly for the work they performed. They are also keenly aware that the foreign personnel involved in Sudanese education, and Sudanese working with them, receive, in the eyes of teachers, excellent salary packages.”

In the camps for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea, the IRC, as UNHCR’s implementing partner, led an education system that created the best educated population of Sierra Leoneans and Liberians of any significance in West Africa. It has become a best practice of considerable renown in the emergency education field, and has been a long-standing programme, dating from 1991 until the present (Lange, 1998; Sommers, 1997, 2000).

Two IRC officials described the politics and challenges surrounding the persistent teacher payment problem. For quite a while, refugee teachers

received US \$40 per month. The number was arrived at by ‘the local market value of the teacher’. In essence, the amount had to be high enough to ensure that teachers would not leave to work for other agencies who employed refugees in the camps as drivers and health workers. All refugee payments were called ‘stipends’ because “you can’t employ a refugee” in Guinea – even though, of course, the refugees *were* effectively employed by IRC. The incentive/salary confusion is exacerbated by a tendency, noted in interviews with education officials in many contexts, to refer to incentives as salaries.

Competition between agencies working with, and programmes for, refugees cut into any chances for devising a well co-ordinated payment system for refugees in the camps. In essence, “whoever wanted to fight for the best refugee workers would compete by paying higher salaries”. This competition between aid agencies working in the refugee camps created “an artificial refugee labour market” that continually drove up stipend rates.

In 2001, IRC re-opened schools (following their closure due to security problems) but instituted a 10 per cent cut in teacher stipend rates. That action was based on the realization that, after a decade of running refugee schools in Guinea, IRC was “effectively becoming the Ministry of Education in the refugee camps.” Accordingly, IRC tried to promote community ownership of schools. Sierra Leonean refugee communities were encouraged to replace the 10 per cent incentive cut that their teachers had lost.

IRC’s attempt to cultivate community ownership for the refugee schools backfired. “We lost 30-35 per cent of our teacher force”, one official recalled. “UNHCR then urged us to raise teacher salaries.” To attract the teachers that had left, IRC was asked to raise its teacher incentive level by 25 per cent. The donors who supported refugee programming backed this move because it would maintain the refugee teaching force, capitalize on professional training that teachers had already received, and help stabilize the refugee education system. It also made the teacher incentive level competitive with those offered to skilled refugees working in other programmes managed by international aid agencies. In the end, most of the refugee teachers returned to their former jobs – but only after receiving what amounted to a significant boost in their stipend rates.

Attempts to ‘regularize’ the refugee incentive rates were never entirely achieved, in part because of the involvement of donors, who helped set incentive rates for refugee workers. One donor, for example, had funded two separate programmes for the same refugee population in Guinea, yet made the refugee incentive level for one programme twice the size of the incentive level for the other programme it supported. How had this happened? One official commented that “people are making decisions on incentives that are based on good intentions.” Paying refugees well recognizes the hard work they do and is a sign of respect. Yet, in this case, the decisions based on such well-meant sentiments were not co-ordinated between officials within the same donor agency.

In addition to evidence of inconsistent co-ordination within a single institution, there is the continuing challenge of getting implementing and sponsoring agencies to work out a viable and equitable plan for an issue as persistently problematic as setting incentive levels for refugee and internally displaced persons. For agencies working with southern Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, and many other war-affected populations, such collaboration and co-ordination may not occur. The oversight is made doubly serious because, as in the case of Sierra Leonean refugee teachers in Guinea, increasing payments to refugee professionals further complicates the challenge of repatriating refugees to their homeland.

In a problem common to many emergency settings, teachers working within Sierra Leone during the civil war years, as one NGO official recalled, “were paid little or nothing at all” while teachers in refugee camps were paid, by comparison, regularly and handsomely. As a result, when IRC approached Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) about facilitating the return of refugee teachers to schools within Sierra Leone by helping these teachers with job placement in their communities of return, ministry officials hesitated. An international NGO official explained that the ministry “has a political obligation to hire IDP teachers first”. The reasoning seemed to the official to be both political and sensible: “The IDP teachers are already on the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology payroll” and formed an existing constituency whose needs had to be addressed well before those of refugees, many of whom had lived in exile for a decade or more.

There were more difficulties. Some officials in Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), one international

NGO official related, had begun to distance themselves from interactions with international officials because “a lot of [international] NGO people had walked into MEST and said, ‘Your country’s in ruins and we’re going to tell you how to run it.’” Naturally, this experience has not helped IRC’s efforts to integrate refugee teachers into the ministry’s existing corps of teachers in Sierra Leone. The co-ordination of salary, or incentive, levels for Sierra Leonean teachers based in Sierra Leone and Guinea remains unresolved.



## Chapter 4

# Conclusion: the significance of co-ordinating education efforts

### Discouraging realities

When it comes to co-ordinating emergency and early post-war reconstruction work, actions speak much louder than words. Officially, much is made of the “need to co-ordinate” by the constellation of humanitarian and reconstruction actors. Unofficially, the realities and tensions that regularly undermine efforts to co-ordinate – mainly those relating to power, trust, competition and priorities – dominate discussions. Countless interviews and conversations with international agency, national and international NGO, and government officials about the challenges of co-ordinating emergency and early reconstruction action have regularly invited expressions of frustration and even cynicism. Nearly all of the institutions involved in this work are ultimately not set up to help make co-ordination succeed, many have explained. Co-ordination may invite expressions of the value of sharing information, co-operating, and even collaborating. Ultimately, however, it may simply not be an operational priority.

Writing about co-ordination is frustrating because it is always unclear whether findings or suggestions will inspire positive steps towards reform. “Lack of co-ordination”, Waters (2001: 244) suggests, is “another name for weak bureaucratic control”, which occurs because the ultimate goal is too weakly defined. This opens the ‘co-ordinating’ bureaucracy to charges of inefficiency as the situation is defined and redefined. In such a context, one bureaucracy fails and another is appointed to take its place.

Taking a broad view of what he considers “the humanitarian enterprise”, Minear’s perspective is no less gloomy. “Some analysts have ... suggested that lessons-learned units work to defuse pressure for institutional change rather than focusing or orchestrating it”, he notes. “In the change arena”, he concludes, “cosmetics often wins out over serious reform” (2002: 173). To illustrate his point, Minear cites a study

commissioned in 2000 by the United Nations OCHA at the behest of the IASC. He finds that the resulting study, *Humanitarian co-ordination: lessons from recent field experience* (Reindorp and Wiles, 2001), ultimately “documents failure by the United Nations and the humanitarian enterprise to follow up on a host of earlier reviews, both global and country-specific” (Minear, 2002: 173). One of the central findings of Reindorp and Wiles’ report for OCHA is “that there is so little that is new to say” (2001: 50). “A pivotal problem confronting the [humanitarian] system is its inability to change.” Another is that the involved institutions show a “determined resistance to cede authority to anyone or any structure”. The authors had no option but to call for “fundamental change”.

While the record for fundamental change in emergency and post-war situations remains uninspiring, it should not be assumed that co-ordination successes do not already exist in the education sector and beyond. “Remarkably”, Reindorp and Wiles note (2001: 50), “humanitarian co-ordination does happen”, even if “performance remains patchy”. This concluding chapter will share some conclusions about the challenge of co-ordinating education work during emergency and early post-war reconstruction situations, and share some ideas for addressing co-ordination’s daunting challenges at least somewhat more effectively.

## The case for co-ordinating education

Findings surfacing from this study strongly suggest that undervaluing the need to support and co-ordinate education efforts during emergencies and early reconstruction periods is a potentially debilitating tendency within humanitarian work. Co-ordinating education in humanitarian settings has been found to have the following five particular advantages.

First, co-ordination is essential not simply for education work during and after reconstruction. Unlike other primary humanitarian concerns (such as those pertaining to water supply and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, shelter and site planning, and health services), co-ordinating education is about far more than simply avoiding gaps and duplication in programming. A co-ordinated education system becomes connective tissue linking people from the same country (recognized or *de facto*) together.

Second, the significance of an education system that somehow manages to keep itself even marginally cohesive during times of extreme



and often lengthy crises goes far beyond the symbolism of nation building. A co-ordinated emergency education system promotes the acceptance and utility of humanitarian work because it addresses a fundamental value shared by families, communities, and nations engulfed by war. Education is the most practicable, durable and encompassing peace-making enterprise available to humanitarians.

Third, it has already been argued by many emergency education experts and advocates that available, quality education limits the chances that trauma, abduction, forced labour, or a range of social and economic obligations will consume the lives of war-affected children and youth (Aguilar and Richmond, 1998; Boyden and Ryder, 1996; Foster, 1995; Midttun, 2000; Nicolai, 2003; Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003; Pigozzi, 1999; Retamal and Aedo-Richmond, 1998; Sinclair, 2001, 2002; Smith and Vaux, 2003; Sommers, 2002, 2003c; Triplehorn, 2001). A co-ordinated education system also dramatically enhances the relevance of education for young people. Knowing that the education children or youth are receiving in one crisis or recovery area is similar to the education their peers are receiving elsewhere helps keep children, youth and their parents and communities above board and facing the future together.

Fourth, an uncoordinated education system during crises makes the process of social reconstruction following wars far more difficult. Education, to be sure, is a mammoth sector in any nation, involving entire communities and their recognized or *de facto* government in a potentially uplifting endeavour during times of profound stress, uncertainty and tragedy. The work of education also keeps children and their teachers busy on useful activities. Teachers often comprise the largest corps of non-military civil servants in a government. Leaving these and other fundamental concerns uncoordinated constitutes a tragically overlooked opportunity to bind people together across war zones and borders, to unify people thought be separated by ethnicity, region, or religion by using the very same education system.

Finally, the study and practice of co-ordinating education systems during emergencies and early reconstruction is neither a dull mass of technical facts nor a set of avoidable concerns for educationalists and the larger international humanitarian community. On the contrary: co-ordination is of towering significance to the practice of education during emergencies and early reconstruction because a co-ordinated education

system magnifies the coherence and utility of education for students, teachers and their communities. Displaced people within and outside countries, as IDPs and refugees, have been cast adrift from their homes and distanced from their peace-time lives. Co-ordinating the education sector facilitates the practice of humanitarian work by signifying the humanitarians' response to a widely shared and fundamental value.

The following sections of this chapter are offered with an eye towards recognizing the challenges and constraints that can limit and even endanger co-ordination efforts, strengthening the co-ordination of education programming, enhancing the responsibilities of communities and recognized or *de facto* governments in the education sector, and illuminating the value of supporting co-ordinated education systems during emergencies and early reconstruction education periods.

## The bottom line

As suggested earlier, the subject of co-ordination tends to bring a sour taste to the mouths of veteran international humanitarian experts, including those working on education in emergencies and early reconstruction. In order to enhance prospects for co-ordinating education work, such realities and frustrations need to be carefully examined and recognized. Consider, as one illuminating example, the following views from a highly experienced emergency education expert working for an international NGO. To be sure, similar views could have been drawn from donor government or United Nations agency officials, which would have also included asides about the other two sets of international actors. None the less, the underlying sentiment contained in the following comments – hard-boiled, and infused with bottom-line realism – remain illustrative of the views of many, if not most, international humanitarians about co-ordination. They also embody Waters' conclusion that “resistance to central control is structured into the United Nations and NGO bureaucracies” (2001: 45) – and, in all probability, donor bureaucracies as well.

The NGO perspective on co-ordination, the expert noted, is often: “If you're not paying me, I won't play nice. Without the funding, NGOs don't have the need to co-ordinate.” As a result, relations between large NGOs and United Nations agencies, whose titular responsibility is to co-ordinate action within sectors such as education, can be testy. UNICEF, which often co-ordinates education within crisis countries, ultimately “has

no pull over my NGO if they don't give us money." This reality is inspired by the simple fact that recipients of funds are naturally accountable to their donors. Moreover, the official insisted that UNICEF is "very pushy on profile". Humanitarianism is infused with inter-agency competition for the sort of high profile and influence that can garner more funding: UNICEF officials would no doubt attest to the competition of other agencies involved in the education mix. But for this NGO official, such an environment can lead to suspicions about UNICEF's underlying intentions, since "If UNICEF gives your NGO US \$5,000 [a small amount of funding], they'll call it a UNICEF project."

At the same time, the NGO official also recognized that one of UNICEF's particular strengths is "the ability to work with home and host governments", a critically important role when issues such as co-ordinating school, student and teacher accreditation issues are being addressed. These seemingly conflicted views encapsulate how aid agency officials are frequently torn between two fundamental humanitarian drives: inter-agency competition spurred by fund-raising needs, and professionalism spurred by the sincere desire to contribute to ensuring high quality, coherent, and widely accessible education for afflicted peoples. As the NGO official noted, while co-ordination is generally valued by international agencies, there remains "an underlying concern around competition for limited resources".

The power of donors may serve to resolve such tensions and facilitate active co-ordination. The NGO expert described, for example, that an advantage that UNHCR frequently possesses, and which UNICEF usually does not, is their potential to have leverage over funding issues. If an NGO wishes to implement education in a refugee camp, "UNHCR can say, 'Either you co-ordinate with us or we'll cut your funding'". This approach, the NGO official insisted, yields results. "Without a stick [that is, the ability to cut funding if an agency refuses to co-ordinate their work], co-ordination depends on good will. But if funding is involved, agencies receiving funding will be more compliant".

On the other hand, government and multilateral donors often take a hands-off approach to co-ordination. "They often ask, 'Why can't [aid agencies] just co-ordinate among themselves?'" This view, the official related, does not appreciate how fundamentally competitive the humanitarian industry truly is: aid agencies aim both "to do good work and

have a high institutional profile”. Donors may also presume that co-ordination “does not require extra money”. This view runs counter to the arguments of other emergency education observers such as Sinclair (2002). At the same time, donors are expected to co-ordinate their work together, which “is very hard to do”, the NGO official continued. Indeed, attempting to achieve true donor co-ordination is “like beating your head against the wall”.

An indication of the power of international actors in emergency education is evidenced in the suggestion that they have the ability to include or exclude other education actors, namely the national government of the country where humanitarian work is taking place. It is a fact of much humanitarian work that powerful international agencies can sidestep or marginalize the sovereign government’s role, at least in the short term.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, international actors frequently have the power to decide the timing of the local and national education authority contributions to education work. “There’s a real tendency not to involve [the national government] early on in the humanitarian emergency”, the NGO education expert explained. “Six to 18 months after the emergency starts is usually when you seek accreditation” for the new schools, student work, and teacher training from government ministries, the official continued. Then, echoing a sentiment widely held about the need for speed in humanitarian work, the official concluded that “most international agencies working in education move without [local] government input because it’s faster.”

The NGO official summed up by returning to what may be the two most significant tensions that continually threaten the co-ordination of education during emergencies and early reconstruction: speed and competition. The pressure to provide services swiftly is directly tied to sidestepping governments. “Co-ordination with host governments will surely influence the quality of [educational] services down the line”, the NGO official admits, “but it can compromise an agency’s immediate work because it can be a lengthy time investment.” This inclination to focus on immediate concerns, while leaving the more time-consuming work of

9. An earlier study also found that such actions may invite serious consequences. Although findings from two humanitarian settings “suggest that international actors viewed humanitarian co-ordination as working best when national governments are marginalized from the process”, the study also found that “a co-ordination apparatus that functions smoothly by virtue of sidelining the national and local authorities may reap short-term gains but undermine national government authority and limit its capacity” (Sommers, 2000: 101-102).

building capacity and developing networks on the ground, remains a pervasive accent within international relief and humanitarian work.

Competition between agencies to increase their respective profiles (and thus their ability to attract more funding) necessarily inhibits efforts to work together. However, since aid agencies will “co-ordinate when it is our interest to do so”, they can be enticed to co-ordinate “when it’s linked to funding or when it truly influences the quality of services we can provide.” Here, the scepticism over whether co-ordination can actually improve service delivery is clear. This scepticism represents a third potential problem in the achievement of reasonable co-ordination in education work.

### Donor power

Among the efforts that the newly organized Palestinian Authority launched in mid-1994 was a Ministry of Education. With much of the world watching, the new government, including its education ministry, received considerable attention from donor governments and multilateral donor agencies.

The incoming official charged with establishing an office for donor relations within the Ministry of Education immediately found that, “as soon as we started, we were drowned by donors wanting to give the Ministry money.” The official divided these donors into three types: (a) donors with “ready-made projects in mind”; (b) donors “seeking to know what the Ministry’s priorities were” before releasing funds; and (c) “the destructive group” that included “companies who wanted you to sign separate agreements”. These groups, the official related, “wasted our time because they were trying to get on board with projects that we really didn’t need at that time.” One of the new office’s first steps was to initiate donor co-ordination meetings which, the official recalled, were “confusing, upsetting, and so difficult”.

A consistent finding arising from interviews with national and international NGO and United Nations officials regarding co-ordination is a shared, and often pronounced, hesitance to criticize donors. It is an indication of the remarkable power and influence of donors. Donor money empowers those who receive their support. In emergency and early reconstruction periods, international agencies (United Nations bodies and

NGOs) typically receive the lion's share of the funding for project-oriented work, while national governments generally receive limited support. As an official from a major humanitarian donor observed, "In post-conflict situations, our focus is on small or large United Nations or [international] NGO projects that have been recommended by education specialists who work for our agency." An official from another donor agency explained that "When a country is in a current emergency, our funds go to international NGOs."

Additionally, as the Palestinian case demonstrates, donors may not co-ordinate their efforts among themselves. There appears to be limited expectations among international officials that this situation will improve in the short term. Uncoordinated donor actions can inspire activities on the ground that may be viewed as chaotic, contradictory and, almost always, empowering of international actors. At the same time, they may precisely align with the priorities and constraints of individual donors. An attendant problem is a still-widespread tendency among many major humanitarian donors to accord a low priority to supporting education during emergencies and early reconstruction periods. This appears to be particularly true for donor agency departments responsible for supporting humanitarian or emergency action. As one education expert working in a Western donor government agency stated: "We never talk of education with people from the emergency section" of the official's agency.

A recent report on the role of donors in humanitarian action does not inspire optimism about prospects for improving humanitarian donor co-ordination. "One of the most striking and disquieting themes to emerge from the hundreds of interviews conducted for this study", Smillie and Minear (2003: 1) state, "is that mistrust and opacity pervade humanitarian financing and donor behaviour." In addition, the authors state that "Humanitarian action is largely imbedded within competing and sometimes inconsistent domestic and foreign policy priorities" which "do not provide a coherent or effective system of financing the international humanitarian enterprise." Despite such serious charges, some donor officials interviewed for this study voiced optimism about prospects for improving donor co-ordination. As one Western donor official observed:

“... there are signs that donors are realizing that they need to get their house in order and deliver more aid more flexibly and more efficiently. The challenge now is to make sure that aid is delivered in a way that really meets the needs of poor people.”

Notwithstanding such upbeat views of views of future action, findings documented here tend to support those reported by Smillie and Minear. The current challenge confronting donor co-ordination remains thorny, considerable – and, to some degree, potentially intractable.

## Enhancing co-ordination: a look ahead

When recommendations on a subject as challenging and conflicted as humanitarian co-ordination are called for, humility is required. The record for substantive co-ordination reform, as other commentators have learned, is uneven at best. At the same time, the need to co-ordinate education during emergencies and early reconstruction is unusually significant, as was stressed earlier in this chapter. And despite the often substantial institutional constraints on enhancing co-ordination, interviews with a wide range of educationalists involved in emergency and reconstruction work strongly suggest that the need to co-ordinate among professionals is widely recognized.

Keeping both the constraints against and need for co-ordination in mind, this final section will contain what might be considered suggestions instead of recommendations. It is divided into two parts. The first will attempt to enhance the awareness of some largely unresolved tensions and concerns that can serve to undermine or facilitate co-ordinated action. The second contains ideas that specifically address issues relating to education.

### *Tensions and concerns*

#### ■ Power

Who appears to be in charge, and who is really in charge? Even though an entire section of this chapter has already addressed the issue of donor power, a broader consideration is required, since power, and how it is exercised, is the central factor that facilitates or undermines co-ordinated action.

Donors, of course, are not the only set of actors who have power over education or other humanitarian activities. In addition, the locus of power in sectors such as education can be somewhat hidden. On the surface, for example, it may appear that the Ministry of Education, or its non-state equivalent, is in charge. Co-ordination flow charts may put them right at the top, or perhaps beside a United Nations agency.

Too often, the reality is different, and most of those involved know it. Often donors are orchestrating action as a result of their decisions on whom to fund and whom not to fund. Well-equipped recipients of this aid (usually international agencies), in turn, then receive opportunities to exercise power in a multitude of ways, such as deciding when and how to co-ordinate their work with national or local education authorities.

At the same time, national government and non-state actors also have access to power. But it is often a different kind of power, often expressed in potentially negative ways. The power of government and non-state authorities tends to reside less in their access to resources than in their power to veto or constrain humanitarian action. The competition of international agencies can enhance such powers by opening “the way for local authorities to play agencies off each other. Relationships that one agency develops with local authorities can affect other agencies’ work” (Anderson, 2000: 76). More significantly, a government or non-state actor could limit access to a particular region of a country, decide whether and when to recognize, validate, and certify the educational efforts of students and teachers, refuse tied aid, or expel an international agency. As the case of Afghanistan and other countries indicates, the power to limit or even prohibit some international action is a possible tool of which war-affected national governments appear to be becoming increasingly aware.

#### ■ Accountability and sovereignty

One constraint on co-ordinated humanitarian action surfaces from a limited understanding of accountability by international actors. Normally accountability is attached not to sectors or regions but to the capacities, reliability and even perceived character of actors themselves. Donors, for example, may be among the internationals that view a war-affected government or non-state actor as incapable of receiving and implementing funded activities. International agencies, on the other hand, may have the capacity to deliver the goods and then account for them.



This idea of accountability is to be expected – a donor government is ultimately accountable to its taxpayers, not to the people where the action is taking place. But this does not account for the additional reality that empowered international agencies are not directly accountable to the government or the citizens of the country where they are working. As one international humanitarian expert noted: “As a citizen [of a war-affected country], I’ve got no control over what a humanitarian agency does.” Moreover, as the Sierra Leone case suggests, work where an international agency effectively “becomes” a local education ministry represents a potentially significant sovereignty concern. While this usually surfaces as a result of international agencies operating in a vacuum of state control, it remains an uneasy position for any international agency to assume, as it awards a degree of power and responsibility to foreign actors that, properly, they should not have.

■ Respect

A fundamental problem that can further undermine co-ordinated action lies in interpersonal relationships between nationals and internationals. Such deficiencies may be keenly felt by people from war-affected countries. A Kosovar education official, for example, described how she went to an Internet café after discovering the nationality of the international education expert who had recently been assigned to her area. Researching the recent history of the expert’s country, the official noted that “the only stressful situations that children from that country may face are separated parents. For us, we have another stressful situation: fear and trauma.”

The gulf in experience separating war-affected nationals and international experts can inspire much stronger reactions. In southern Sudan, local education officials collectively expressed feelings of humiliation and rage. “No NGO comes here and gives us a document” about education, one complained. “They don’t respect our office”, another asserted. “They don’t give us democracy”, a third stated, “they just come and dictate.” “When a Sudanese explains a request, the NGOs just cut us off”, still another said. “The Sudanese won’t say anything again because they feel inferior.” Finally, the highest ranking official stated: “We are mad.”

Given the profoundly disproportionate power relationships that inform such relationships, together with the traumas and loss that afflict citizens

of war-affected countries, most of the responsibility for improving such unfortunate relations must fall upon international officials and their agencies. Co-ordination cannot function well if such interpersonal problems persist.

- **Setting priorities**

What priorities will inform co-ordinated action, and whose priorities will they represent? Humanitarian action consistently contains tensions between quick-action emergency work and the gradual development of local capacity. In many cases, international officials view the two as sequential: co-ordinating for emergency actions before addressing the more time-consuming work of training and development planning.

Yet emergency action, however necessary, tends to simultaneously represent an assertion of international actors into positions of leadership. As a result, efforts to co-ordinate action may effectively be led by powerful and influential internationals from the start. While such a scenario may often appear unavoidable (the national counterpart may not exist, may be reluctant to contribute, or may lack credibility), it may also be the case that priorities tipped strongly towards immediate action will prove to be a weak, short-term co-ordination strategy, since it will effectively delay the process of developing viable co-ordination roles for local and national actors.

- **Trust and competition**

How will trust be developed between key actors if they are competing for resources and a higher profile? The nature of international humanitarianism makes this tension unusually difficult to resolve. The consequences of such behaviour include, as a donor official observed, “a loss in perspective of the big picture and the needs of the country they’re working in. Many NGOs find it hard to work with governments and work in sectors.” Competition for funds and profile similarly afflict United Nations agencies. At the same time, it must be said that competition can be exacerbated and trust further undermined by the policies of donors, particularly when donor actions are uncoordinated. If viable and enduring co-ordination is to be achieved, co-ordinated donor action that emphatically demonstrates inclusion, receptivity to a diversity of national and international actors, and a long-term time-frame will need to take place.

### *Advancing co-ordination for education*

The following ideas are offered as ways to advance co-ordination for education during emergency and early reconstruction periods, with particular attention paid to the role of national or *de facto* government units or ministries responsible for the education of conflict-affected populations. They are provided with an awareness that some of the suggestions are potentially expensive, a pertinent concern for a field that regularly runs on limited funding. But some ideas are not costly, and others might begin to be addressed with limited investments. In addition, the suggestions assume that national or *de facto* government counterparts both exist and are reasonably approachable. While it is recognized that such a scenario is not always present, it should also be noted that questions of the sovereignty and legitimacy of government counterparts might not be sufficiently appreciated by international agencies.

With these two caveats in mind, the following ideas are suggested:

- Clarifying roles and strengthening leadership

Of all the major international agencies working in the education in emergencies and reconstruction field, the role of UNESCO is probably the least well defined. It is a concern that emergency education experts regularly raise. As one United Nations official observed: “UNESCO has a mandate to do all aspects of education everywhere.” Smith and Vaux (2003: 52) recommend that “there needs to be more clarity about the role of UNESCO as part of emergency responses to conflict.” This suggestion should be seriously considered, perhaps by devising a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR and UNICEF to establish UNESCO’s role, and then supporting this role with funds and consistent action.

The consistently high value that war-affected communities give to education is reason enough for the IASC to appoint a sub-task force for education. This would be an important step for the United Nations and the global EFA movement, as it would formally recognize the value of education in humanitarian work. It also promises to enhance understanding of, and support for, educating children and youth during and following wars. Co-ordination and collaboration among international agencies involved in the development of minimum standards for education in emergencies also deserves to be lauded, supported, and then seriously considered for widespread application.

Research and analysis for this monograph suggest that the challenge of defining roles and responsibilities between and among United Nations and international NGO actors ultimately arises from an atmosphere of underlying mistrust and competition. To address this, at least to some degree, strong leadership is required. This leadership may be in the form of a United Nations agency, such as UNHCR's central role in refugee education. But, ultimately, stronger donor agency leadership is generally needed. The Sierra Leone case (Sommers, 2000) demonstrated how linking access to donor funding to consistent and active participation in co-ordination activities can work.

An additional challenge is how to address the co-ordination role of national and local education authorities. To this end, it is essential that national or *de facto* government education authorities develop educational priorities and plans and be prepared to co-ordinate the education sector. This is emerging as a significant concern, particularly during reconstruction periods, because national education plans can be used by governments to accept or reject donor funding and funded international activities: an international agency may be allowed to contribute to the education sector only if it contributes to established national plans and priorities, and co-ordinates their work with the government in a collaborative fashion.

The national government's assertion of its co-ordination and leadership role may well be a rising trend among war-affected governments. The current approach of the Rwandan Government is illustrative of this emerging approach. As a senior government education official explained:

“We have an education sector policy and plan. If donors want to assist us, then they must assist us according to these policies and plans.

So we don't do projects [with donor funding]. A donor can't say that they want to only work in one part of Rwanda or another. A donor may also say they have their objectives, but if their objectives do not correspond with those of the Government of Rwanda, they [the Rwandan Government] may decline their aid.

Now, we're putting together French and British government money to improve computer technology in a ministry institution. This is what we call donor co-ordination. Before, it never would have happened: it was all donor enclaves.”

Invoking or even merely raising the prospect of such actions by national governments is, in general, a positive step. It may also be the only way to ensure that an education system is truly co-ordinated.

■ Expanding the time horizon

A fundamental constraint on co-ordinating education lies in the compressed time-frames that are typically applied. Focusing on the immediate may seem logical and appropriate, but only when viewed through short-term lenses.

Since education is ultimately not a short-term endeavour, it should not be co-ordinated as such. Accordingly, planning procedures for education during the early stages of an emergency must incorporate the development of long-range plans from the outset of emergency and reconstruction work.

To carry out such changes, a number of early actions should be considered:

1. With very few exceptions, a co-ordination framework that does not feature the role of the national government or *de facto* education authority is necessarily incomplete. Waiting to work with education authorities is ultimately short-sighted and creates avoidable delays and problems. It also promises to make the essential development of productive, mutually respectful relations between international and national officials more challenging than is necessary. As one NGO official noted: “If you exclude national government officials, they can’t help you reach your goals.”
2. Accordingly, it is essential to include national government or *de facto* education ministries from the outset in all facets of planning, but in particular co-ordinating policies on paying teachers (this issue is especially critical) and developing systems for implementing, recognizing, validating and accepting teacher training activities, student achievement and national examinations. Gaining agreements on curricular concerns, in addition, should generally begin to be addressed early in the emergency process.
3. It should not be cynically anticipated that impoverished ministries of education will look to receive funding for their operations (and to supplement their salaries). It should also be expected that the counterproductive tendency of ‘poaching’ qualified local and national

- educationalists away from national NGOs and government offices by well-paying international agencies will take place.
4. Unfortunately, creative ways to address these issues are consistently lacking from international humanitarian actions. It would be useful for donors and humanitarian agencies to regularly revisit this issue, and discuss it seriously with local and national government and NGO officials, to begin to address such potential problems at the outset of (or even before) an emergency. Developing co-ordinated policies, negotiated co-operatively and respectfully, can only help build relationships that are necessary to reconstruct and effectively co-ordinate a national education system.
  5. Much, or at least a considerable proportion of the rancour, disrespect, resentment, and even simple misunderstandings between international and national educationalists that can arise in humanitarian and post-war situations is almost surely avoidable. Its presence makes the challenge of co-ordinating the education system far more difficult. In addition, it is probable that many of the national and international personnel that will interact on education and other concerns are unprepared for doing so under stress.
  6. Training before or beginning reasonably early in a humanitarian emergency, even in the form of short modules, would help facilitate more consistently useful, trust-building exchanges. It might be argued that such training for national and international personnel is too costly and hardly a priority, particularly when emergencies surface. Perhaps, but consistent evidence of poor relations beginning at the outset of emergencies suggest that the opposite is probably the case. In addition, such trainings would signal recognition by international humanitarians that building good relationships with local and national counterparts matters.
  7. National and local education officials working in the government or *de facto* education ministry and national NGOs also require technical training. A component of this training might include support for the development of national education plans. Training is a widely recognized need, but not one that consistently receives sufficient attention or investment. It is indeed time-consuming but, again, if one looks at education needs in the long term, it is also essential. Enhancing planning and budgeting for such activities before and reasonably early during an emergency is thus a useful consideration.

- Secondments can also work, and are indeed potentially useful, but again, they lack the long range utility that training promises to provide.
8. Payment, of course, often figures into the issue of training local and national personnel. It calls attention to many concerns. Among them is the broad difference that normally separates local/national and international salary scales. While this may be an unavoidable inequity, it is not an ignorable one. Exploring creative approaches to addressing this concern should always be considered. In addition, the payment inequity may be attached to issues of the legitimacy of national and local education officials in the eyes of the citizenry. Again, it is probably more useful to recognize and discuss this concern inclusively, and perhaps explore ways in which potential problems can be minimized.
  9. Finally, it appears to be an unfortunate yet avoidable reality of humanitarian work that co-ordination costs need to be budgeted (for training, transportation, translation, photocopying, communication, etc.) and funded just like any other humanitarian activity. The downfall of such a lack of support in terms of the education sector can be serious. Funding to support this essential work needs to become a feature of education work during emergencies and reconstruction.





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