



Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l'Éducation en Situations d'Urgence
La Red Interagencial para Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia

INEE Good Practice Guide:

Assessing Resource Needs and Capacities in an Initial Emergency

School Site / Environmental Assessment

In a crisis situation, one of the first educational decisions to be made is where educational activities will take place. In situations where there are no buildings, communities often initiate these activities under trees with children sitting on the ground. In these cases, temporary shelter should be provided as quickly as possible to protect the students from sun and rain. Another possibility may be to have students integrate into local schools or use other existing buildings, which may have to be rehabilitated. As a last resort, totally new schools must be built. In all cases, efforts should enable access for the persons with disability. The school should also be well placed to ensure access for minorities and younger children.

Strategies

- **Ensure schools and educational areas are safe for children**

In many areas of crisis, schools have been mined or targeted throughout the conflict. Before doing an assessment, it is imperative that the assessment teams check with proper authorities to make sure that the roads to the school and the school itself are safe and cleared of land mines and unexploded ordnances. Following the clearance of these items, the area should be marked with string or plastic tape, and checked for and cleared of hazards such as sharp objects.

- **Assess school spacing and catchments**

In most cases, schools and educational spaces should be within walking distance for students. Typically, this means that communities may have many small primary schools to facilitate younger children walking to school. Older students are able to walk to more centrally located and larger middle/high schools. In areas with a large numbers of students and limited facilities, the possibility of morning and afternoon shifts should be considered.

- **Use local standards in the furnishing, rehabilitation, and building of schools and educational areas**

The construction and furnishing standards should be that of the local area. For example, in many parts of the world, mud-walled classrooms with a metal roof or thatched roof is the norm, while in other locally made bricks are standard for construction. Similarly, in some parts of the world students are used to sitting on the floor while in others, they sit at desks. Governments often have developed guidelines for school construction and furnishing. These are often idealistic and not realistic, and therefore it is good to use a rural, well-supported government school as a model.

Checklists

- Are persons with the necessary professional background included on the assessment? Is there a shelter engineer? Someone with experience in water and sanitation? A social worker?

Where no school or building exists

- Where are children presently learning? Under a tree? In which building?
- Who gave authority to use this space? Is this permanent or temporary? Is this in writing?
- Can space be allocated for schooling? And sports areas?
- Are the children protected from the weather? Are they sitting in the rain? In the Sun? Are they cold?
- What are the students sitting on?
- What materials are available to build a school? What is a traditional school built of? Bamboo? Mud?

School building exists

- Is this school safe? Has it been cleared of mines and unexploded ordnances?
- Has the school been damaged during the conflict? Bombed? Burned?
- What type of school is it? Pre-school? Primary? Secondary? What grades are offered at this school?
- When was the school built? Are there floor plans for the school? Has the school ever been damaged? What is the school built of?
- What is the condition of the walls? The floor?
- Number of classrooms? Are there blackboards in every room? Does every classroom have sufficient light? How many students per class are there? Are the classrooms sufficient for the number of students?
- How many floors/levels does the school have?
- How far must children walk to get to this school? Are younger children who live far from the school not attending due to the walking distance?
- Is the building functional? What is the condition of the roof? Are there any areas that are leaking? Are all of the windows intact?
- Is there a staff room? Is there sufficient furniture for the staff? Is there some place to lock school materials? Is there a private room for individual student attention?
- Is there a copying machine?
- Is electricity available? Do the light fixtures work? Are light bulbs available in the area?
- Do students study or attend classes at night? Are there lanterns available?
- Is there availability of water? Is the water safe for drinking? How do you know? Is there a well? When was the last time it was cleaned? Is the water piped? Inside or outside the building? Is the school charged for water?
- Is there a kitchen?
- Are there sanitation facilities? Latrines or indoor toilets? Are they sufficient for both boys and girls? Do teachers have a separate latrine?
- How is the school heated? Wood? Coal? Oil? If stoves, how many exist? How many are needed? Who pays for the fuel? Amount of fuel needed per cold season?
- Is the school fenced? Is there a crossing sign at the relevant roads?

- Are their playing fields? Football? Basketball? Volleyball?
- Is the school accessible for children with disabilities? Are the doors wide enough for children with crutches or in wheelchairs? If there are stairs is there a ramp? Are the toilets wide enough for children with crutches or wheel chairs?
- Do the children use benches, chairs or sit on the floor? Which is traditional? Is the seating sufficient? Is the seating the appropriate size for the children?

Community Contributions

- What work has the community done to make the school functional so far?
- What resources does the community need to rebuild/refurnish the school? Tools? Cement? Paint?
- Are there technicians in the area who can assist with the renovation/refurnishing? Are they available?
- Can the community contribute labor to renovating/refurnishing the school? Labor? Hauling of sand or water?

Resources

UNESCO's Educational Buildings and Furniture Programme:

<http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/erd/english/ear/text/index.html>

Please visit www.ineesite.org for additional Good Practice Guides.