



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: Education Structures & Management – Clothing and Hygiene

Aside from paying school fees, parents must bear the burden of other “hidden” costs, such as educational materials (exercise books, pens, pencils). Making sure their children appear appropriately dressed and modestly groomed for school is also a challenge. In areas of crisis dress can be a significant barrier for children, especially for adolescents, to attending school. Children and youth are ashamed of looking poorly dressed and fear being mocked by other children and community members. In many areas, children do not have adequate or suitable clothing, footwear, or personal hygiene items. In many countries, the cost of sending children to school is significantly increased by the burden of having to buy school uniforms: long trousers or shorts and a shirt for boys, and a skirt and blouse for girls, as well as closed toed shoes and regulation socks. The crisis of clothing is not limited to students--during the initial emergency, teachers may be hesitant to undertake their work because they lack the correct clothing.

Strategies

- **Ensure all students and teachers have acceptable clothing to attend school**

All students and teachers should be able to attend school in dignity. No one should be expected to wear ripped or torn clothing to school. Depending upon the cultural norms, adults and children should have footwear and, especially in the case of adolescent girls, underwear. In cold areas, warm clothing (coats, boots, hats and gloves) should be sufficient to enable people to walk to school and attend class without being uncomfortable.

- **Discourage the use of mandatory school uniform**

To maximize the number of children attending school, mandatory uniforms should be actively discouraged, and footwear requirements should be as basic as possible. Some students are excused from wearing uniforms, but this marks them as “poor” or “different,” and can cause them to drop out.

Uniforms are a contentious issue because they represent an educational norm in many countries. Often uniforms are a means of income for school administrators, as they often have relationships with the cloth sellers, tailors, and sellers of school uniforms. The community should examine the issue of uniforms from several points of view: parents, children, youth, community and school.

- **Support basic hygiene amongst students**

Personal appearance is an indicator of personal pride, health and well-being. Students should be encouraged to be clean, well-groomed, and neatly dressed. Adequate water and soap should be available for children at school. As a suggestion, one bar of soap can be grated into a 20-liter jerry can with a tap to stretch limited soap resources for washing hands after the toilet and also for

cleaning up when arriving at school. Soap and water, and sanitary supplies are essential for girls as they reach puberty.

Checklist

- Do all of the teachers and children have adequate clothing for them to attend school in dignity?
- Do they have enough clothing to keep them warm? Footwear or shoes?
- Are uniforms mandatory to attend school? What allowances are made for children who do not have uniforms?
- Have any steps been taken to discourage the use of school uniforms?
- Do older girls and teachers have sanitary supplies that permit regular school attendance?
- Are students and teachers tidy and clean? Why is this? Do they have adequate soap and water at home?
- Are there any hygiene-related health conditions in the schools such as scabies and lice? What steps have been taken to limit their spread?