INEE

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l´Éducation en Situations d´Urgence
La Red Interagencial para la Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia
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الشبكة المشتركة لوكالات التعليم في حالات الطوارئ

INEE Thematic Issue Brief: Inclusive Education

Definition

Inclusive education ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all learners in learning opportunities. It involves ensuring that educational policies, practices and facilities respond to the diversity of the individuals in context. Discrimination, language barriers, and content or teaching methods that do not benefit all learners can all lead to exclusion from education. People with physical, sensory, mental and intellectual disabilities must not be excluded from education.   In many cases, inclusive education is understood in association with inclusion of learners with disabilities, who have "special educational needs." However, it is important to remember that all individuals have their own learning styles and learn at their own paces, especially after stressful experiences during emergencies. Because of this, addressing the wide diversity in education is not a special, but a basic principle. In light of this, the INEE Minimum Standards uses the term "inclusive education" in place of "special educational needs."

While inclusive education is for all, it is true that persons with disabilities are one of the most excluded groups especially in and after emergencies. According to Article 1 of the 2008 *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, persons with disabilities refer to, "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". As stipulated, *disability* is an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Emergency situations greatly impact inclusive education because some learners who previously had access to education may be excluded because of circumstantial, social, cultural, physical or infrastructural factors. Inclusive education means removing these barriers to participation in learning are removed and that teaching methodologies and curriciula are appropriate and accessible for all students, including those with disabilities. All individuals are welcomed and supported to make progress, and their individual needs are addressed.

Inclusive Education as a Thematic Issue

All individuals have a right to education during emergencies and chronic crisis and recovery processes. Despite various international legal instruments that ensure rights to education for everyone, many learners face physical, social, and attitudinal barriers to accessing educational opportunities.   Girls, orphans, working children, children from nomadic communities, linguistic minorities and children with disabilities are some of the most frequently excluded groups due to factors such as ignorance, discrimination, poverty, lack of gender-sensitivity and accessibility in already overcrowded learning spaces, and shortage of appropriate learning materials in learners' languages.

Inclusive education needs to be ensured as education is a human right, provides protection, offers the necessary skills and knowledge needed during emergencies and provides the opportunity to contribute to the post-crisis reconstruction and development processes. Inclusive education also challenges traditional discrimination and stereotypes and promotes diversity and mutual understanding, thereby preventing further conflict and violence. Inclusion, therefore, is a strategic process towards a society where individuals respect differences and are able to enjoy full participation as equal members of their communities.

In many cases, inclusion is not realised even before the emergency and therefore, education authorities and practitioners are not clear how they can make learning environments inclusive of all. Furthermore, the feelings of stress and vulnerability and lack of key educational materials, proper facilities and specialised teachers often brought about by emergencies adds challenges for those trying to include all learners. Overall, inclusive education requires restructuring the culture, policies, practices and facilities in education so that learning environments can respond to the diversity of

learners, rather than requiring learners adapt to the existing system. Bringing the excluded learners into inclusive learning environments from the initial phase of an emergency and ensuring the commitment and capacity of educational personnel towards inclusion are essential to achieving this goal.

Addressing Inclusive Education in the INEE Minimum Standards

The INEE Minimum Standards Handbook aims to help education practitioners practice inclusive education in their own contexts.   To do this, inclusive education is mainstreamed throughout the handbook to ensure the content, language and terminology is consistent with the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2008) and *Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone - INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education* (2009). Examples of how inclusive education is mainstreamed throughout the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook include the following:

- **Foundational Standards** highlight inclusive education response strategies and explicitly mention critical areas that need inclusion of persons with disabilities and other people at risk so that they are able to participate with the community and are not overlooked during the planning, implementation, and assessment of educational programmes. Emergency education responses should include strengthening an inclusive education system for all learners, building a better system for the future.
- **Access and Learning Environment Domain** encourages education practitioners to take various actions to promote inclusive education such as identifying excluded groups, determining the reasons for exclusion and taking action to ensure their inclusion. Such actions may include removing communication barriers, related to the medium of instruction, or physical barriers, related to the accessibility of the learning environment, which prevent certain groups from participating in education.
- **Teaching and Learning Domain** emphasises the need to ensure curriculum is reviewed for its appropriateness and relevance for excluded groups and those with disabilities, and that teachers have the necessary training, skills and materials to promote inclusion through differentiating instruction according to students' learning styles and abilities.
- **Teachers and Other Education Personnel Domain** encourages non-discriminatory recruitment and selection of education personnel, especially of female teachers and persons with disabilities, and stresses the need for education personnel to be well trained to teach learners with disabilities.
- **Education Policy Domain** includes guidance that underscores the right to education for persons with disabilities, as outlined in the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2008). Formal and non formal education programmes should provide inclusive education activities that fulfil educational rights and goals.

Additional Guidance

The INEE Minimum Standards can be used to support the implementation of inclusive education within emergency programmes through various means, including:

- **Data collection and monitoring:** The information about learners who are not enrolled in education programmes is often not collected and shared. The INEE Minimum Standards constantly reminds education personnel to take necessary measures to promote inclusion, during data collection and monitoring.
- **Advocacy for implementation, partnerships and resource mobilisation:** Implementation of inclusive education requires actions to reduce barriers in education and in wider communities, the process of which needs partnerships with education personnel, communities, different sectors, donors, and most importantly, those who experience exclusion in and from education. The INEE Minimum Standards can be used to raise awareness and encourage the participation of these various partners in actions supporting inclusive education; furthermore for donors, the INEE Minimum Standards will serve as a tool for resources mobilisation. In addition, the resource, *Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone - INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education* (2009) will be of great help to suggest various actions to be taken.