

INEE Thematic Issue Brief: Inter-Sectoral Linkages

Definition

An inter-sectoral approach to education is essential for an effective education response. Taking an inter-sectoral approach to education means prioritising coordination and close collaboration between education and other sectors, particularly Water and Sanitation, Shelter, Camp Management, Health and Hygiene, Protection, Food aid and Nutrition, in order to address the holistic needs of learners. It is important to ensure that these vital linkages are made at the outset of an emergency through multi-sectoral needs assessments, followed by joint planning, in order to ensure consistency and reduce duplication in programme and service delivery.

Inter-Sectoral Linkages as a Thematic Issue

An inter-sectoral approach to education is even more vital in emergency contexts than in normal situations. Providing quality education in emergencies instills a sense of normalcy, provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection, and supports and enhances other humanitarian activities and sectors by offering a place for the delivery of vital emergency services and life-saving messages. In fact, it is this platform that education provides for jointly addressing the inter-sectoral needs of children and the community that helps demonstrate the life-saving and life-sustaining nature of the sector.

Examples of how linkages between education and other sectors provides for a more comprehensive response include:

- **Protection:** Safe spaces and learning environments for children provide psychosocial support and protection by establishing daily routines and a more stable sense of the future, reduces vulnerability to trafficking, exploitation and child labour; engages children in positive alternatives to military recruitment, gangs and drugs, and facilitates social integration of vulnerable children.
- **Camp management:** School areas, child friendly spaces, play and recreational areas can be planned jointly within a camp setting at the outset of an emergency to ensure safe and protective environments.
- **Shelter:** School shelters (tents, temporary structures, reconstruction of education infrastructure) must be jointly planned to ensure that minimum standards for schools and classrooms are applied, and that facilities are safe and disaster-resilient.
- **Water and Sanitation:** The supply of safe water and creation of gender-segregated and appropriate sanitation facilities is necessary for learning spaces and schools. Coordinated hygiene promotion and education for children is also essential to reduce the spread of disease.
- **Health:** Schools and temporary learning spaces provide an environment in which children can have safe and reliable access to various health services, be provided with basic knowledge on health and hygiene, and learn urgent life-saving health information.
- **Nutrition:** Children's nutrition can be improved by the provision of meals or nutritious snacks as part of school feeding programmes.

- **Logistics:** Coordination with the logistics sector for the provision of educational materials is a key part of education response.

While education provides a great opportunity for inter-sectoral collaboration, it must not be simply seen as a vehicle for sharing knowledge and skills about other life-saving activities. Rather, education must be regarded as a vital sector in itself and its planning and implementation must be supported by other humanitarian sectors from the onset of an emergency.

Addressing Inter-Sectoral Linkages in the INEE Minimum Standards

The INEE Minimum Standards Handbook aims to help education develop an inter-sectoral approach to education within their own contexts. Examples of how inter-sectoral linkages are mainstreamed throughout the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook include the following:

- **Foundational Standards** stress the necessity of coordinating national and local education planning and response with other emergency sectors, and ensuring the participation of the local education committee in determining the appropriateness of school-based nutritional, health and hygiene interventions and messages.
- **Access and Learning Environment Domain** promotes the well-being of learners through the active promotion of nutrition, health and hygiene in the learning environment. This domain also emphasises safe and appropriate facilities through the provision of adequate water and sanitation facilities. Guidance is also included on the use of schools as shelters.
- **Teaching and Learning Domain** emphasises the need to enrich curriculum with the most relevant health, hygiene and safety messages and practices needed in the emergency context.
- **Teachers and Other Education Personnel Domain** maintains that teachers and other education personnel must be provided with appropriate, accessible, and practical psychosocial support, referral and counselling, and that they are trained to deal with crisis situations through appropriate support and referral mechanisms.
- **Education Policy Domain** indicates that the planning and implementation of educational activities should be integrated with and follow standards set by other emergency response sectors. Special attention should be paid to applying the Sphere Standards in Disaster Response where appropriate.

Additional Guidance

On 22 October 2008, INEE and the Sphere Project announced a companionship agreement whereby Sphere acknowledges the quality of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction and of the broad consultative process that led to their development. As such, the Sphere Project recommends that the INEE Minimum Standards be used as companion and complementing standards to the Sphere Handbook, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.

As per the companionship agreement, education linkages and references to the INEE Minimum Standards have been mainstreamed throughout the 2010 Sphere Handbook and inter-sectoral linkages and references to the Sphere Handbook have been strengthening in the 2010 INEE Minimum Standards Handbook. Visit www.sphereproject.org for more information or to download the Sphere Handbook.