



Education in Conflict Emergencies in the Context of the post-2015 MDG and EFA Agendas

*NORRAG Policy Seminar
Thursday 30 May 2013*

SEMINAR'S MAIN OUTCOMES

INTRODUCTION

The NORRAG policy seminar on Education in Conflict Emergencies in the Context of the post-2015 MDG and EFA Agendas was held on 30 May 2013 at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (Geneva) with 25 participants from intergovernmental agencies (UN and EC), NGOs, research institutes and academia. The purpose of the policy seminar was to put the Education in Emergency (EIE) issues in some larger perspectives, to generate strategies of how to advocate for a suitable place for education and training in conflict emergency settings within post-2015 MDG and EFA policy frameworks, identifying the most appropriate advocacy messages, entry points and activities.

The seminar agenda and list of participants are attached. Independent NORRAG consultants Christopher Talbot and Alexandra Draxler gave keynote addresses on education in conflict emergencies and the post-2015 education agenda, respectively. A panel of education in emergencies specialists opened up a rich discussion of advocacy messages, entry points and activities. The panel members were Lyndsay Bird (IIEP-UNESCO), Lori Heninger (INEE), Elin Martinez (Save the Children) and Ellen van Kalmthout (Education Cluster / UNICEF).

The following paragraphs summarize the major points made during the plenary deliberations of the seminar, covering a range of conceptual, technical and policy themes and implications for advocacy in the post-2015 context.

THEMATIC MESSAGES AND ENTRY POINTS

1. Engaging with affected communities

In emergencies, practitioners hear anecdotal evidence that people in affected communities often say that their most important priority is their children's education. In advocacy with governments and in

the post-2015 debates, more attention should thus be paid to this dimension rather than more abstract arguments. Although it is true, it is not enough to assert that “education is life-saving” or that “education for all is a human right”. These arguments have dominated EiE discourse for a long time, with some success, but the stronger argument politically may be community demand for education in emergencies. That demand must be researched, documented and if possible quantified.

2. Definitions of conflict

Unfortunately, conflict and emergencies are the "new normal" all over the world. Climate change and attending natural disasters, different types of within-country conflicts, and economic stress are producing more and more situations in which populations live in situations of extreme precariousness, tensions and violence – both in rural and urban contexts. Conflict and emergency situations last, on the whole, between one and two decades, most of the time the entire school-age life of the children subject to them.

INEE and IIEP-UNESCO have recently developed and disseminated the *INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education* and associated tools and resources.

See <http://www.ineesite.org/en/resources/inee-guidance-note-on-conflict-sensitive-education>.

3. Conceptual issues: resilience, equity, equality, social justice and social cohesion

Resilience is a comparatively new analytical approach, focusing on assets and capacities in education, rather than on deficits and challenges. The use of the term ‘equity’ in education and development discourse suggests vague notions of ‘fairness’ and that something less than full equality of opportunity is a reasonable goal.

The concepts of social cohesion and social justice are critical in analysing education in conflict. They may be in tension insofar as what is just may not be cohesive and vice versa.

4. Human rights approach

Human rights are not part of the current MDGs. It is essential to integrate human rights into whatever emerges as overall goals post-2015 and to include the concepts of equality, equity, non-discrimination, protection. As an example, Switzerland has made human rights the fundamental framework for its position on the post-2015 agenda.

Duty-bearers: who is responsible to fulfil the right to education? How is the process of providing education in conflict and emergency settings to be held accountable and in compliance with existing human rights and international humanitarian law frameworks?

In advocacy, it is important not limit the “right to education” to the “right to schooling” but to include the right to vocational education and training as well as life long learning.

5. Hope for the future & life with dignity

Education helps meet psychosocial needs of conflict-affected and displaced children: it is “life-sustaining” and helps the reestablishment of “normality”. In other words, going to school gives them hope for the future as it means that there is something beyond the situation they are experiencing.

Moreover education has an inclusive component as it helps overcome gender disparities during displacement.

6. Bridging the gap between child protection and education

Education in emergency settings is a tool of protection from harm and exploitation. Research over the past decade has begun to identify conditions under which education is protective. Clearly, schools and other education institutions and their personnel must be protected from armed attack. The work of many agencies associated in the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack is vital here. Children must be protected at school from being abused by teachers, other adults and their peers. There are opportunities, through the Education and Child Protection Clusters, for example, to strengthen the links between education and protection. There is also a need for joint advocacy as these are the two most underfunded sectors within humanitarian action.

7. Bridging the gap between “Education in Humanitarian Relief Operations” and “Education in Development Assistance Operations”

These are still regrettably considered competing visions, as humanitarian agencies, development staff are rivals to secure funding from the humanitarian and development ministries of wealthy nations. It is important to show that it is a false dichotomy. Increasingly local and international personnel engaged in development are taking on responsibilities within humanitarian relief and vice versa.

At the field level nevertheless:

- Communication between education development experts and emergency experts can be complicated in situations where there is no time to devote to discussion and coordination.
- National authorities can have conflicting attitudes to the way in which emergency education is organized. When, as happens, temporary populations in camps have better-organized education than that available for the surrounding population, management of the two systems needs to be coordinated with care
- Recognition of prior qualifications (notably, refugee teachers) and of qualifications acquired during emergencies (of teachers or learners) is poorly organized and needs more attention
- The situation can be more complicated when some military personnel is involved

8. Bridging the gap between education in emergencies and “general education”

Ensuring the continuity of education for children in conflict and displacement is essential. For that purpose, the certification of learning attainments of refugee and internally displaced students is critical. In recent years, more and more governments and agencies are making efforts to accredit emergency education and training programmes and to recognize and certify the achievements of students in such programmes. This goes some way towards giving learners the possibility to make use of their studies undertaken while in conflict and exile.

9. Involving ministries of education

Organized, equitable and quality education is therefore not just an emergency response but a long-term one. In that specific context the funding, international priorities, design of programmes, recognition of skills and qualifications acquired are key issues that are too often disconnected from ministries of education concerns – causing a lot of problems.

Furthermore ministries of education in conflict affected societies are almost absent from the post-2015 debates, as they see little interest or value to themselves in the issues being debated. It is very difficult to engage with them.

Sector planning depends on ministries of education, which have very little discretionary spending power (typically 5% of the annual budget) for issues such as emergency preparedness in the education system. Some measures needed for preparedness for emergency response in the education sector carry almost no resource implications and require mainly political will.

Political sensitivity is high in these contexts. National governments are often not especially keen on promoting education for peace-building and governments sometimes do not wish to acknowledge the fact that their country is affected by conflict or their state 'fragile'. The EiE community must find a balance between obsequious silence and offensive provocation in its advocacy messages and methods.

Ministries of finance are also vital targets for advocacy. Some of the most useful capacity building activities might focus on helping MoE staff present arguments for support to education in terms that matter to MoFs.

10. Education beyond schooling

In conflict emergencies, policymakers, planners and programme implementers need to adopt a life-long learning perspective, including balanced investments in early childhood learning and development, primary and secondary schooling, tertiary education, adult education, non-formal learning, TVET and skills development.

In protracted emergencies and situations of displacement, completion of primary education often does not lead to any kind of transition if there is inadequate investment in secondary and vocational education and training. Labour-market requirements and employability must be taken into account in designing education provision if we want it to promote economic and social reintegration and reconstruction.

On a different note, education also allows passage of essential life skills messages, such as landmine awareness, health, hygiene, human rights, peace and HIV/AIDS prevention.

11. Need for integrated approach in the education field

In general, the education community is poor in the way it packages education. In the post-2015 debates there is competition between a wide variety of topics (ECD, adult education, TVET, education for sustainable development, and of course education in emergencies!) to secure recognition and funding. Everyone is saying that their topic needs to be on the agenda. How can the EiE community work well with others, if it still divided into silos and competing with each other? The advocacy market should not be too segmented; there is a need for practical discussions on how we can join up the silos. Still, whatever the contours of the post-2015 goals and targets, EiE actors and organizations will have to continue to advocate, act and work with and within the new frameworks.

12. Links with the health sector

The health field is not unified either. The global landscape is changing with the emergence of new actors, notably in the private sector. An influential debate is underway on health as a "global public good". There is also considerable debate around the future global architecture in health, with the suggestion that there be three global institutions in charge of: 1) norm-setting, 2) funding and fundraising, 3) monitoring, accountability and advocacy. (A debate about post 2015 and Health was recently held at the Graduate Institute.

See http://graduateinstitute.ch/globalhealth/Events_Global_Health_Programme/page14764.html

Bringing health and education together is critical as there are a lot of commonalities between the two sectors. However a strong difference lies in the political dimension of education (“education to transform the system”). Another difference is that there is a large and powerful industry (pharmaceuticals) behind the health debates, which is less the case for education, though some people see strong commercial influences behind the present emphasis on measurement of a narrow range of learning outcomes, and the increasing use of virtual ways of teaching and learning supposing huge investments in hardware and software.

13. Involving the “Global South” in the EiE debates

The actors of the “Global South” are less visible than “northern” agencies in the policy debates over education in conflict post-2015. What is the “consumers’ perspective”? Northern academic institutions undertake much of the research on the subject. How can southern researchers be encouraged to take part?

14. Need for more research/data

The 2015 debates are prioritizing the measurement of learning outcomes. As Rebecca Winthrop, stated, “What is measured is treasured”, but asked whether what is really treasured is what is being measured?”

Research needs to be conducted rigorously by independent personnel, which adds to the credibility of the findings and helps strengthen the evidence for advocacy and field practice:

- The figure of 28 million primary-school aged children in conflict-affected fragile states out of an estimated 61 million total out of primary school worldwide: How valid and reliable are those statistics?
- How can the EiE community move beyond anecdotal evidence that displaced communities demand education for their children and prioritize it over other services?
- How can the EiE community gather convincing evidence that efforts in EiE are making a difference to children’s and young people’s lives?
- We are not successful enough in documenting and communicating longer-term outcomes of education in conflict emergencies (“outcome stories”).
- There is also a need for “practitioner-relevant research”, to build evidence on what works and what does not work in EiE programming.
- Research needs to be conducted rigorously by independent scholars, which adds to the credibility of the findings.
- It is critical to build capacity in research in EiE, for example through securing funding for students to work in field locations for months at a time conducting research for their theses. Implementing agencies can partner with university faculties for this.

ADVOCACY IMPLICATIONS IN POST-2015 DEBATES

The EiE community should not seek one specific goal on education in conflict emergencies, because that is not realistic. They have their own advocacy agenda on which they will keep working, no matter what the overarching post-2015 goal is. Post-2015 should be seen as a starting point, not an end in itself. Regardless of what is happening, they will continue our work with the humanitarian community to **ensure that education is part of humanitarian action**.

- **Leadership and consensus-building:** INEE is ideally placed as a network to lead consensus-building processes around advocacy for EiE, in conjunction with Education Cannot Wait partners.
- Advocacy is one of the main functions of **Education Clusters** at the country level.
- The advocacy needs to be **evidence-based**.
- There need to be **advocates from the South** because they can better convey the message at national and local levels. **Blogs that include southern voices** are valued.
- Donor **champions** (and if possible respected celebrities) are useful.
- Advocacy needs to be conducted at multiple levels, e.g. implementation of policies ("**advocacy in action**"); continued **contextualization** and application of the INEE Minimum Standards.
- Maintain the **presence, profile and visibility** of the EiE community in advocacy events and media around post-2015.
- **Translate materials** and make them available to local communities.
- What is the **role of the academics?** Can they be activists or only independent research providers for activism?
- One of the most effective forms of advocacy is to **bring together people who usually do not meet** with or speak to one other to generate solutions to a shared problem.
- **Donors** are not prone to fund advocacy.
- We need to accept that the whole EiE community will never have one single position and that their positions will always evolve.