

Developing minimum standards for education in emergencies

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Wars and natural disasters deny generations the knowledge and opportunities that an education can provide. Education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction is a necessity that can be both life-sustaining and life-saving. It sustains life by offering structure, stability and hope for the future during a time of crisis, particularly for children and adolescents. It also helps to heal bad experiences and build skills, and supports conflict resolution and peace-building. Education in emergencies saves lives by directly protecting against exploitation and harm, and by disseminating key survival messages, such as landmine safety or HIV/AIDS prevention.

Traditionally, education in emergency situations has been seen, not as a humanitarian priority, but as a long-term development activity. In recent years, however, awareness has increased of the need for non-formal and formal education programmes in emergency situations. Two issues in particular have come to the fore: how to ensure a certain level of quality and accountability in emergency education; and how to 'mainstream' education as a priority humanitarian response.

The Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies

The Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies was constituted within the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) to facilitate the development of global minimum standards for education in emergencies. INEE is an open network of UN agencies, NGOs, donors, practitioners, researchers and individuals from affected populations, working together to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction. The network is responsible for gathering and disseminating information on education in emergencies, promoting the right to education for people affected by emergencies, and ensuring the regular exchange of information among its members and partners.

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In 2003, the Working Group began leading the development of standards, indicators and guidance notes that articulate a minimum level of educational quality and access in emergencies and the early reconstruction phase. The main components of this process were regional, sub-regional and national consultations; on-line consultation inputs via the INEE listserv; and a peer review process. Information gathered from each step was used to inform

Working Group members

CARE Canada
CARE USA
Catholic Relief Services
International Rescue Committee
Norwegian Church Aid
Norwegian Refugee Council and Norway United Nations Association
Save the Children UK
Save the Children USA
Refugee Education Trust
UNESCO
UNHCR
UNICEF
World Education

the next phase of the process. Funding was provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Rescue Committee, the International Save the Children Alliance, Save the Children Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNESCO, UNHCR and UNICEF.

INEE's minimum standards are founded on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Dakar 2000 Education for All goals and the Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter. Like Sphere, the standards are meant to be used as a capacity-building and training tool. INEE believes that they will also enhance accountability and predictability among humanitarian actors, and improve coordination among partners, including education authorities.

Building minimum standards from the ground up: field-based consultation

Given the humanitarian community's widespread familiarity with and use of the Sphere minimum standards, INEE adopted the Sphere Project's definitions of minimum standards, indicators and guidance notes. One concrete way in which the INEE's minimum standards process reflects the lessons learned from the Sphere Project is the inclusiveness of the initiative. While Sphere has been NGO-led, the Working Group is made up of both UN and NGO organisations (see box). The Working Group made special efforts to ensure that representatives from a variety of levels, including households, schools and communities, local authorities, ministry officials, funding agencies and implementers, were actively involved throughout the consultative process, in order to ensure relevance to, and buy-in from, all education stakeholders.

Over 2,250 individuals from more than 50 countries contributed to the development of the minimum standards. Delegates and INEE members in the regions coordinated over 110 local, national and sub-regional

consultations in 47 countries to gather input and information from over 1,900 representatives from affected communities, including students, teachers and other education personnel, NGO, government and UN staff, donors and academics. Four regional consultations were held between January and May 2004, covering Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East and Europe (the final reports from the regional consultations are posted at www.ineesite.org/standards/default.asp). The 137 delegates to these regional consultations included representatives from affected populations, international and local NGOs, governments and UN agencies in 51 countries.

The Africa Collective Consultation

The Africa Collective Consultation on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies was held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 21–23 January 2004. It was hosted by Care Canada and Norwegian Church Aid, and supported by CIDA and SIDA. In advance of this regional meeting, 29 local consultations were held, involving over 525 people from cities, towns and refugee camps in 14 countries in Africa.

The Asia Collective Consultation

The Asia Collective Consultation was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 21–23 April. It was hosted by the International Save the Children Alliance and supported by UNESCO, Save the Children Norway, SIDA and the International Save the Children Alliance. Approximately 650 participants were involved in 44 local and national consultations. These consultations, which produced over 200 standards, were held in 25 different cities, villages and refugee camps in ten different countries.

The Latin America and Caribbean Collective Consultation

The Latin America and Caribbean Collective Consultation took place in Panama City from 5 to 7 May, hosted by UNICEF and supported by UNICEF and SIDA. In advance of the regional consultation, delegates held 22 national and local consultations, bringing together over 360 people in 12 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Middle East, North Africa and Europe Consultation

The Middle East, North Africa and Europe Collective Consultation was held in Amman, Jordan, from 19 to 21 May. It was co-hosted and supported by UNESCO and UNHCR. In preparation for it, delegates held 24 national and local consultations involving over 300 people in eight countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.

INEE listserv online consultation process

The INEE's 800-plus members also participated in the development of minimum standards through INEE listserv consultations. The questions generated many responses, which were shared with INEE members and presented to delegates prior to each regional consultation:

- What teacher/student ratio should the standards aim for?
- Should education programmes address barriers that prevent girls from attending school?

- Does school feeding increase school enrolment, especially of girls?
- Is a code of conduct necessary for teachers in emergency situations?
- How many students should share one textbook?
- Should teachers commit themselves to delivering good-quality teaching if they are given little or no financial support?

The peer review process

The final phase of this consultative initiative was the peer review process, which took place during the summer of 2004, and involved over 40 experts. The Working Group's Drafting Group and the Peer Facilitator, Joan Sullivan-Owomoyela, analysed the four sets of regional standards and honed them into one. The Peer Facilitator then held a 'virtual consultation' with the peer review experts, a group comprising education, health, humanitarian and protection specialists from NGO and UN agencies and governments, as well as academic and research institutions. During September 2004, the final draft of the minimum standards was posted on the INEE website, and members were invited to give their feedback. Given the need to maintain the integrity of this highly consultative process, INEE only considered edits that left the essence of the standards, indicators and guidance notes intact. Because the standards are meant to be a living tool, substantive comments are being compiled for future revision.

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The content of the minimum standards

The Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies comprise five categories:

- **Minimum Standards Common to All Categories:** focuses on the essential areas of community participation and assessment, response, monitoring and evaluation when applying any of the other standards.
- **Access and Learning Environment:** focuses on partnerships with stakeholders to promote access to education, as well as linkages with other sectors to enhance the security and physical, cognitive and psychological well-being of learners.
- **Teaching and Learning:** focuses on elements that promote teaching and learning, such as the curriculum, training, instruction and assessment.
- **Teachers and Other Education Personnel:** focuses on the administration and management of human resources, including recruitment and selection, conditions of service, and supervision and support.
- **Education Policy and Coordination:** focuses on policy formulation and enactment, planning and implementation and coordination.

Next steps: promoting and implementing the minimum standards

The standards will be launched at INEE's Second Global Inter-Agency Consultation on Education in Emergencies and Early Recovery, in Cape Town, South Africa, on 2–4 December 2004. The launch of the minimum standards will be accompanied by efforts to promote and implement them, through training and piloting. The Working Group is finalising specific plans for this next phase, which will take advantage not only of the lessons of the Sphere Project, but also of the networks created during the field-based consultation process.

INEE acknowledges that the minimum standards will not solve all the problems of educational response in emergencies. But they do offer a tool for humanitarian agencies, governments and local populations to enhance the effectiveness and quality of their education assistance. The standards give guidance and flexibility in responding to needs at the most important level – the community – while providing a harmonised framework to coordinate the educational activities of funding agencies and other development partners.

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User-managed public health promotion in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam

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Vietnam's Mekong Delta area suffers from annual flooding, which is typically slow-onset, and inundates large areas. Floodwaters stay for up to two months before slowly receding. The Vietnamese government's disaster-management strategy for the areas has been to live with these floods. Residential clusters have been developed near highways and river dykes, and families living in low-lying villages are being relocated to these areas. However, many of these residential clusters lack important water and sanitation (watsan) facilities.

To address these needs, Oxfam GB and the Dong Thap Province People's Committee implemented a watsan public health promotion project in Dong Thap Province in

2003. One of the major objectives of the project was to persuade the government and donors to support similar watsan systems in every residential cluster. Two – Binh Phu Commune in Tan Hong District and Thanh Loi Commune in Thap Muoi District – were chosen for pilot projects. This article describes the watsan system managed by the Watsan Users' Association in Binh Phu.

The project

Binh Phu is in Tan Hong District, Dong Thap Province. It lies near a road, about 6km from the district town. The watsan project was designed to serve 300 households, as well as government offices and schools (a total of 1,900 beneficiaries). The project was implemented by a Project