

## Case Study on the Utilization of the INEE Minimum Standards: School Rehabilitation in Iraq

Case study author: **Ali, Programme Manager**

Organisation: **Name of organization is withheld for security reasons.**

Location: **Al-Anbar, Iraq**

Date of programme: **June 2005-July 2006**

Case Study Themes: **Engaging local communities; Ensuring equal access and the protection and wellbeing of learners; Cross Cutting Issue: Gender.**

All referenced materials are available online: **[www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org)**

They can also be found in the INEE Toolkit CD Rom, to request a free copy contact: **[minimumstandards@ineesite.org](mailto:minimumstandards@ineesite.org)**

### BACKGROUND

The Governorate of Al-Anbar in Central Iraq continues to be one of the most unstable and insecure regions in Iraq. In recent months crises have arisen on an almost weekly basis, affecting the main cities as well as smaller villages. These include, Fallujah, Qaim, Ramadi, Heet and Haditha. Some of these locations have suffered displacement of their populations more than once.

The Al-Anbar Governorate has been an unstable area since April 2004, due to the presence of a very strong armed opposition to the Multi-National Forces (MNF) and Iraqi Army. Following clashes between MNF and opponents and as a consequence of MNF sieges and attacks to the towns, a huge number of displaced persons are constantly fleeing from their locations. During every MNF operation, people are forced to leave their homes in search of safe shelter in the surrounding areas, either close to a relatives' house or somewhere in the desert in collective displacement locations. Due to the many crises that continue to arise, thousands of IDPs have been displaced, some of whom return home as soon as the clashes stop, while many stay away for a longer period of time. As a result, the children are not able to continue their studies at school and many displaced children lack access to education facilities in their new locations of displacement.

Our Programme involves provision of relief assistance to IDPs in Al-Anbar who are displaced due to military fighting between the Coalition Forces and the insurgents as well quick recovery activities as they return. The aid is delivered to the IDPs via collection points within camps, public premises and hosting families and includes food and non-food items as well as water. Early recovery assistance to assist the returnees in coping with their situation involves income generation activities and the rehabilitation of public services such as health centers and schools. Our programmes mainly involve the physical rehabilitation of teaching premises.

### HOW THE INEE MINIMUM STANDARDS WERE USED IN THE PROGRAMME:

In the rehabilitation of public schools in Fallujah, we made use of the INEE common standard on Community Participation (Minimum Standards p. 14). We involved returnees as well as the local communities who had stayed in the prioritization of needs.

Students, teachers and parents participated in small focus groups and shared their priorities. Most of the families insisted on the need to rehabilitate the water and sanitation systems in the five schools targeted and the priority of preparing the classes for the coming winter. This is an example of good practice relating to the first Minimum Standard on Community Participation: "Emergency-affected community members actively participate in assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the education programme" (Minimum Standards p. 14).

The beneficiaries then decided amongst themselves to form representative Community Education Committees, which were very helpful in ensuring the successful implementation of the programme. For example, the

## Case Study on the Utilization of the INEE Minimum Standards: School Rehabilitation in Iraq

rehabilitation of schools proceeded safely and smoothly as the community committees provided advice on security and also helped to negotiate fair rates with local contractors. One Key Indicator for the Minimum Standards on Participation relates specifically to Community Education Committees: “The emergency-affected community, through its chosen representatives, is involved in prioritizing and planning education activities to ensure effective delivery of the education programme” (Minimum Standards p. 15).

### CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

A major challenge, particularly given the cultural context and the poor security of the area, was the education of girls. Female enrolment in the newly rehabilitated schools was initially low, and our programme team worked with the community to address this issue. The issue of inclusive education is fundamental to the first [Minimum Standard on Equal Access](#): “All individuals have access to quality and relevant education opportunities” (Minimum Standards p. 42). Gender is also a cross-cutting issue that has been incorporated into many relevant standards.

The initial challenge was to involve all community representatives in the Community Education Committees, particularly women. Local traditions and habits limit women’s opportunities for participation in decision making and open involvement in these kinds of processes. However, our local female project staff worked to address this issue, meeting mothers and young women students at their homes in order to gather their input. The Minimum Standards provide a comprehensive [Guidance Note on Community Education Committees](#), addressing this issue of gender equality: “The community education committee should be inclusive and balances and should reflect the diversity of the affected population including, but not limited to gender, age, ethnic and religious groups and social categories. It is important to support women and girls in becoming equal partners in development by increasing and ensuring equity with regard to their participation in community education committees” (Minimum Standards p. 15)

The meetings with community members, particularly women, helped the community and our staff fully understand the issue of low female enrolment. It became apparent that there were two main issues. The first was concern over the safety of access routes for the girls to and from school. The Communities and our staff referred to the Minimum Standard on the [protection and well-being of learners](#): “Learning environments are secure, and promote the protection and mental and emotional well-being of learners” (Minimum Standards p. 45) The Community Committees agreed on proactive measures to ensure the safety of the students, arranging for girl children to walk to school together in groups or accompanied by an escort. The importance of access routes is reflected in the [Key Indicator](#) relating to the Minimum Standard on Protection and Well-being: “Access routes to the learning environment are safe and secure for all” (Minimum Standards p. 45)

The other issue raised by the families of female students was unease about the single male teachers working in the schools. The Community Committees worked with the school administrations to increase the [transparency of their hiring procedures](#), in order that families could be reassured that the teachers hired were acceptable and could be trusted to act responsibly with their children (Minimum Standards p. 66). This is an example of good practice, reflecting the [Minimum Standard on Recruitment and Selection of Teachers and Other Education Personnel](#): “A sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel is recruited through a participatory and transparent process based on selection criteria that reflect diversity and equity” (Minimum Standards p. 66)

### LESSONS LEARNT AND GOOD PRACTICES

Even if every standard was not met, due to the reality on the ground, the INEE Minimum Standards were very useful as a supporting tool during the design and implementation of the programmes. The Minimum Standards inspired a more participatory approach to our work in Iraq, and helped us come closer to ensuring a quality education for all – both boys and girls – despite many obstacles.