

Case Study on the Utilization of the INEE Minimum Standards: Responding to an educational emergency in the occupied Palestinian territory

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Location: **Northern region of the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory**

Date of programme: **2006/07 school year**

Case Study Themes: **Initial assessment and framing a response to educational crises; Coordination of educational activities between key stakeholders; Ensuring equal access for and protection and wellbeing of learners.**

All referenced materials are available online: **www.ineesite.org**

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

BACKGROUND

Following the 2006 Palestinian elections there has been a freeze on aid from international donors and the Israeli government has withheld tax revenues due to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). This has greatly reduced funds available to the PNA, meaning that spending on basic services such as health care and education has been badly affected. The PNA financial crisis is seriously damaging the quantity and quality of basic education for Palestinian children and youth. Teachers in Palestinian National Authority schools have not received a regular salary since April 2006. Due to this ongoing difficult situation the Palestinian Teacher Union called for a general open strike at the start of the 2006-07 school year.

Teachers throughout the occupied Palestinian territory went on an open-ended general strike, as salaries had not been paid for six months. Teachers in the Gaza Strip suspended their strike after only 6 days, while teachers in the West Bank stayed on strike for over two months.

HOW THE INEE MINIMUM STANDARDS WERE USED IN THE PROGRAMME:

Aware that the teachers' strike in the West Bank might last indefinitely, UNICEF recognised that in order to meet the rights and needs of children in the area, an educational intervention had to be urgently planned as the long summer vacation had come to an end. UNICEF actions had to take into account the Ministry of Education & Higher Education's (MoEHE) central role as main duty bearer and as the responsible national body for Education Policy and Coordination (Minimum Standards p. 71). Key MoEHE officials, both in central and district level, were consulted throughout a preliminary dialog (Minimum Standards p. 77). Their role as duty bearers and coordinators was constantly highlighted and emphasized. Subsequently, MoEHE officials communicated their wishes to see UNICEF and other Non-Governmental Organisations initiate temporary non-formal learning activities.

Though Palestinians in general are committed to education, several major NGOs were reluctant to arrange learning activities in fear of being misread due to the political sensitivity of the teacher strike. In order to mitigate potential tensions UNICEF referred to the INEE Minimum Standards on Community Participation (Minimum Standards p. 14). Teacher Unions, key educational NGOs and parents and women's associations were contacted and a dialog was established. Together with one of our major educational NGO partners, TAMER (a national NGO established in 1989 to respond to urgent needs in the Palestinian Community), UNICEF managed to set up non-formal learning activities for 2000 children as a pilot project.

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Recreational kits, School in a Box and locally produced remedial worksheets were provided by UNICEF (Minimum Standards p. 56). Facilitators/teachers were mainly hired by TAMER. Local communities, represented by various associations, were encouraged to work closely with TAMER to insure the transparency of their hiring procedures (Minimum Standards p. 66).

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

PNA schools could not be used since this could be interpreted as breaking the teacher's strike. UNICEF and TAMER had to refer to the Minimum Standards on the protection and well-being of learners in selecting the different locations of activity (Minimum Standards p. 45). Municipal libraries, community houses and women association centers had to be assessed and approved. The Israeli Security-Barrier, checkpoints and roadblocks constituted a second challenge that is connected to the securing of access routes to learning environments for learners and adults (Minimum Standards p. 47). This was more challenging in the rural areas where the presence of Israeli settlements has an important impact on the daily life. The project overcame this by selecting multiple learning environments that could be reached by children through short and safe access routes.

LESSONS LEARNT AND GOOD PRACTICES

The INEE Minimum Standards were very useful as a supporting tool in this context of chronic crisis, in particular, during the dialog with MoEHE officials and organizations of local communities, assessment of Access and Learning Environment, implementation of the project and the monitoring and evaluation work. Applicable standards and key indicators served as landmarks for the development of the whole project. Dependent on the reality on the ground, one should expect that following and satisfying relevant INEE standards is time consuming and needs strong commitment. However, if this is well done the outcome will be highly satisfactory for all involved learners, communities, teachers and facilitators.