

Learning to deliver education in fragile states

by Martin Greeley and Pauline Rose

The Fragile States Group within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)¹ of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development is working to advise donors on provision of education (and other) services in ‘fragile states’.

The Fragile States Group brings together experts on governance, conflict prevention and reconstruction from bilateral and multilateral development agencies to facilitate coordination and share good practice to enhance development effectiveness in ‘fragile states’.

The DAC characterises fragile states as those countries where there is a lack of political commitment or weak capacity to develop and implement pro-poor policies. Such countries tend to be characterised by poor governance and are prone to violent conflict. They are home to a seventh of the world’s population, a third of those who live on less than \$1/day and half the children who die before the age of five. More than half of the approximately 115 million children not enrolled in primary school live in fragile states.

DAC identifies four types of fragile states: deteriorating; arrested development; early recovery; and post-conflict. Such a typology is useful in thinking of different strategic responses. For example, in deteriorating conditions it may be neither feasible nor appropriate to work with the state, even though it may be possible to work with communities with the intention of planning for longer-term, sustainable support to the education system as state willingness develops. During early recovery donors can work alongside government partners with a gradual transition to the state playing a greater role in education service delivery. However, there is recognition of the need to take account of local realities in planning responses in particular contexts.

Education has only recently been included as the fourth pillar of

humanitarian support. Even so, it is not necessarily included within international agency humanitarian responses. This is despite the fact that education is an acknowledged human right with likely lifecycle and intergenerational benefits for growth, security and development. Education plays a key role in national identity formation and can



be both a weapon and a promoter of peace. Fortunately, there is now growing acknowledgement among educationalists that the relief-development dichotomy is artificial and that education must be planned as a long-term endeavour. This recognition needs to extend beyond educationalists, however, if it is to be addressed within the humanitarian-development nexus.

If interventions in fragile states are not developed in a holistic, sector-wide approach problems are likely to arise. Prospects for sustainable development can be set back by absence of post-primary education opportunities. It is also essential to focus on teacher training – particularly training of female teachers – even in deteriorating or arrested development conditions, as teaching can play a key role in

supporting post-conflict transition. If vocational training is not provided to out-of-school youth their frustrations can trigger a move back into deteriorating conditions. It should be noted, however, that vocational training has a mixed record, especially when job opportunities are not subsequently available.

It is important to build on spontaneous community-based initiatives which often precede externally-supported education provision. However, there is a need for caution. Reliance on communities can intensify inequality, particularly where communities are fractured as a result of conflict. School management committees can be captured by local elites, and can themselves give rise to conflict. Moving from voluntary community initiatives to a state-supported system-wide approach requires large expenditures for teachers’ salaries which may not be initially available. Attention to external support, for example through a transitional trust fund to ensure that teachers can be paid, is likely to be key in ensuring a smooth transition.

Innovative forms of coordination must be found in order to ensure education sector strategy plans are consistent with country-level multiple-donor cross-sectoral support. Involving NGOs with experience of service delivery in early phases in the planning, as well as UN agencies with prior coordination experience, provides an opportunity to ensure that the system is developed in a sustainable way that addresses local concerns and which can help to develop sector-wide approaches. Intra-agency coordination is also essential – for humanitarian and development wings of donor agencies still often fail to liaise.

It is important to:

- endeavour to pool donor funds and ensure timely, predictable and

Makeshift classroom in IDP camp where IRC, with UNICEF support, is running a school programme combining education, recreation and psychosocial therapy. Southern Province, Sierra Leone.

effective cash flows – particularly to secure teacher salaries

- merge the agendas of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)² and that of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI)³ in order to build on each of their strengths, and not maintain the current distinct tracks of emergency short-term response versus attention to long-term aid
- forge national consensus around curriculum reform
- avoid the dangers of over-focusing

on technical assistance while ignoring political realities

- make criteria for allocating funds to fragile states more transparent and less subject to strategic considerations
- ensure that mechanisms of accountability developed during the period of fragility are not ignored when government is strengthened.

Martin Greeley, an economist, is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex. Email: m.greeley@ids.ac.uk *Pauline*

Rose is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Sussex's Centre for International Education. Email: p.m.rose@sussex.ac.uk This article sets out preliminary findings from a study commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to assist the DAC's Fragile States Group to identify best practice and learn lessons for international agency approaches to support education in fragile state environments.⁴

1. www.oecd.org/dac

2. www.ineesite.org

3. www.fasttrackinitiative.org/education/efafti/

4. www.ids.ac.uk/ids/pvty/pdf-files/Education_and_Fragile_States.pdf