

# *Education in emergencies*



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# Education in emergencies

**Emergency** is defined as an acute, difficult and often life-threatening situation involving a large number of people, such as armed conflict, displacement, natural disaster, epidemics, drought and famine, or any crisis situation that overwhelms the capacity of a society to cope using only its own resources.

**Education in emergencies** is understood to include formal and non-formal educational activities taking place for the benefit of children and young people during an emergency situation. The education provided in such a situation may target refugees, internally displaced persons, or populations living in their original locations, but affected by the emergency.

**Formal education** is understood as the unified system of education supported by national, regional and local authorities.

**Non-formal education** is understood to include pre-school education, peer-led and other study groups and temporary education provided within a local community setting.

Education, quality-assured education, is one of the basic rights of the child. Without education, a child is immediately disadvantaged and far less likely to achieve his or her true potential. It is Save the Children's vision that education should be child-centred, child friendly and empowering. This has implications not only for long-term development but also for emergency situations, where the normal provision of schooling is disrupted or has completely broken down. In recent years the issue of education as an integral and important part of the humanitarian response has become increasingly highlighted. Education in these situations is a major factor in minimising the interruption of children's cognitive and social development, and supporting their psychosocial well-being and their protection.

## **Education in Emergencies and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

Article 28, of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for states to make primary education compulsory and free to all, and to encourage the development of accessible secondary and further education. Article 29 mandates an education that builds on children's potential and that supports their cultural identity and their capacity to take up their responsibilities within the community. Additional articles are also relevant to the provision of education in emergencies. The Convention emphasizes the importance of psychosocial support for children affected by conflict and emergency (Article 39). The principle of non-discrimination requires that education be accessible on equal terms for disabled children and for both boys and girls, and with full protection of the linguistic and cultural rights of ethnic minorities (Article 2). The Convention also protects the child's right to participation (Article 12) and to recreation and culture (Article 31), and these rights should be understood to extend to their education even in emergency situations. The right to education is often perceived as an 'enabling right' – one through which other rights can be achieved. The right to education is

also enshrined within other international legal instruments, such as the Geneva Conventions and the Refugee Convention. It has also been the focus of influential international conferences and agreements, one of the most recent being the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal 2000. INEE, the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies, of which Save the Children is a member, was formed shortly after the Forum in Dakar, and is composed of members from UN agencies, NGOs, community members, practitioners, donors and researchers working together to ensure the right to education in emergencies and post-crisis reconstruction. INEE has now 700 Members and has agreed on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (See appendix). Education is also a focus of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2001.

### ***Why highlight the issue?***

In situations of emergency, school buildings, equipment and books often are destroyed; teachers might be killed or displaced; and students are frequently separated from their home communities and from the chance to continue at school. There are a number of reasons why it is essential to ensure that schools are re-established, or that children are given access to alternative solutions.

- Education contributes to protection for children in emergencies. There are aspects of education that are inherently protective: the contribution to children's cognitive development, for instance, protects their future prospects. But structured educational activities can also be targeted to respond to specific threats that children face in the emergency context, for instance, the risk of forced recruitment, attack on their way to school, or the potential for sexual exploitation. Education may also play an important role in the integration of children and increase acceptance in society.
- Education plays a fundamental role in providing structure, contributing to stability and restoring a semblance of normalcy in an extreme and stressful situation for children and families. It is therefore an important factor in providing psychosocial support, lessening the traumatic effects of emergencies, and assisting in recovery. Safe, structured activities at school, aside from providing routine and predictability, can give children the opportunity to take initiatives and be active, a fundamental element for rehabilitation. Additionally, community-based healing activities, such as recreation and creative expression, which can give children and young people avenues for coping with trauma, are often easier to implement in an educational setting,

### ***Illustration***

In Akbar, a fishing village on Sri Lanka's eastern coast, amid the wreckage of an empty school, and 11-year old boy, Jaheer Najoor, wanders through his former classroom searching for friends who will never return. Out of the 30 pupils in his class, he is the only survivor. Gone too is the boy's speech. "Jaheer has not spoken since the tsunami came", says Ahmed Mohiddin, principal of the school.

- Children do not stop growing in an emergency situation and education is essential for normal development. Efforts must be made to reach all children, support parents and make the education accessible for all. It has been proven that children not having access to education during an emergency also are exposed to a higher risk of not returning to normal education. Even when families are internally displaced, educational facilities must be available in such a way that the family will be able to make the effort to send the child to school.

**Illustration**

‘Most of all we need education, especially for girls because we are the future of Afghanistan. In my country many talented girls are not allowed to go to school, and it makes me sad. But if we had peace and security I am sure we will also have education.’

Meena, 17 years old

**Illustration**

‘School was closed for weeks and I missed my friends, but today I went back to class. Because I had been away so long I even forgot some of the Arabic alphabeth. I forgot the sign for ‘T’, which even young children know. Ther are still not enough books and some of the charis are broken. Nor all of my teachers have come back to school.’

Belan, 9 years old from northern Iraq.

- Organisers and providers of education, such as teachers and youth workers, play an indispensable role in shaping the lives of young people. In many emergency situations, when parents are unable to provide and guide the development of their children, trained adults, as well as youth and children themselves, can be important sources of guidance and support.
- In the medium to longer-term, restoring access to quality education promotes reconstruction and sustainable development for communities affected by emergencies. In emergencies in conflict-affected communities education can often support conflict resolution and peace building. As much as education is important for the development of the individual child, it is important for the development of the community and wider society in the midst of an emergency, situation caused by a natural disaster or conflict situation.
- Education is essential in order to enable children and families affected by an emergency to regain hope and dignity and to rebuild stable futures for themselves and their communities. It is increasingly recognised as one of the four pillars of humanitarian assistance, alongside food and water, shelter and basic health care. Educational activities tend to minimise the extent to which
- children’s intellectual and social development is interrupted by emergency situations and therefore represent a long-term investment in the future of both the individual and the community.

## **What is important for children?**

- Children and their families are often extremely aware of the importance of education in order to secure hopes for their future.
- The re-opening of schools can be important to children as a symbol for reconstruction.
- Opportunities to play and interact with other children are important, especially in situations where parents may be highly stressed, or even absent.
- It is important to children that schools and educational facilities are designed and run as “safe” areas. This should include the absence of corporal punishment and other abusive behaviour.
- Children should themselves be involved in the planning and design of education in emergencies.

## **Save the Children’s strategy for education in emergencies**

Save the Children Sweden’s strategy regarding education in emergency has been shaped by the principles and standards developed after the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, 2000 within the framework of INEE. A short description of the outcome of the Dakar outcomes and the minimum standards developed by INEE are attached to this document.

The area of education in emergencies has received increasing attention during the last few years and strategies are rapidly being refined and improved.. A cornerstone of this effort is the belief that the educational needs of children in emergency situations must be given the same priority as under normal circumstances. Save the Children is attempting to use lessons learned from each crisis situation to improve provision of quality education systems in difficult circumstances. Save the Children also takes an advocacy role, using every opportunity to influence and inform donors and international agencies on the importance of meeting educational needs of children in emergency situations, with recognition of the impact of macro-economic policies and donor practices on the delivery of education.

Beginning in 2005, the International Save the Children Alliance has agreed to focus its united long-term efforts on the “Global Challenge” which targets the issue of quality education for children in crisis. Within this broader challenge, the initial focus for the next five years will be children affected by armed conflict”.

By 2010 Save the Children will contribute towards the overall goal by achieving the following four key objectives related to access, quality, protection and financing.

- 3 million conflict-affected, out-of-school children gain access to education by 2010 due to Save the Children Alliance efforts
- 5 million conflict-affected children benefit from improved quality of education by 2010 due to Save the Children Alliance efforts, emphasizing relevance, learning and participation

- Education established as a recognised means for protecting children affected by armed conflict by 2010
- The international community mobilises significantly increased resources for education for children in countries affected by conflict by 2010

Targets will include early childhood development (ECD), primary education and educational opportunities for adolescents. A particular focus on girls' education should endeavour to eliminate gender disparities. A few countries will be selected for programme implementation and for tight measurement of achievements.

### ***In order to safeguard children's rights to education in emergencies, action on various levels is needed***

- Time is an important factor, and educational activities should be prioritized and ideally in place within a few weeks after an emergency is declared.
- Psychosocial support should be an integral part of the immediate educational activity, for instance structured play, art activities and other creative activity. If possible, this should be led by trained and qualified adults.
- All educational activities must take place in a safe environment and in a place where children themselves feel safe, even when temporary facilities are used.
- Corporal punishment and/or other abusive behavior towards children can not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- Particular attention should be given to providing access to education for target groups at risk of discrimination, like orphaned children, children with disabilities, girls, children from ethnic minorities and internally displaced children.
- Teachers and other adult leaders of activities should if at all possible have pedagogical training (formal or non-formal).
- Education in emergencies should be based on developing basic skills, like literacy and divided according to age and abilities. For older children, specific education about protection measures against mines and unexploded ordnance, HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution and peace building be introduced, as well as vocational training
- Formal education and curricula should be developed in a long term perspective, based on quality criteria.

# Annex

The Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal 2000 urged governments to:

- expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children
- ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality
- ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes
- eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality
- improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Summary of INEE (the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies, with 700 Members from UN agencies, NGOs communities, practitioners, donors and researchers) Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction:

## **Community Participation**

- Emergency-affected community members, including children, actively participate in assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the education programme.
- Local community resources are identified, mobilised and used to implement education programmes and other learning opportunities.

## **Assessment**

- An initial rapid education assessment of the emergency situation is undertaken as soon as possible, taking into account security and safety. Core stakeholders are involved in identifying what data need to be collected.

## **Response Strategy**

- A framework for an education response is developed, including a clear description of the problem and a documented strategy for action. Education response strategies prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all children and youth, including those who are vulnerable or have special education needs. Education response strategies progressively meet the needs of emergency-

affected children for inclusive and quality education, and serve to strengthen national education programmes.

### *Monitoring*

- All relevant stakeholders, including children, regularly monitor the activities of the education response and the evolving education needs of the affected population. Systems for continuous monitoring of emergency situation and interventions are in place and functioning.

### *Evaluation*

- There is a systematic and impartial evaluation of the education response in order to improve practice and enhance accountability. Evaluation of policies, programmes and outcomes of interventions is conducted at appropriate intervals against overall response strategies, specific educational and child protection objectives and child rights.

### *Access and protection*

- All individuals have access to quality and relevant education opportunities. No individual is denied access to education and learning opportunities as a result of discrimination. Communities become increasingly involved in ensuring the rights of all children to a quality and relevant education. Learning environments are secure and promote the protection and mental and emotional well-being of learners.

### *Quality*

- Culturally, socially and linguistically relevant curricula are used to provide formal and non-formal education, appropriate to the particular emergency situation. Curricula should address life skills, literacy, and numeracy and core competencies of basic education relevant to given stages of an emergency, considering the best interest of the child.
- Teachers and other education personnel receive periodic, relevant and structured training according to need and circumstances.
- Instruction is learner-centred, and inclusive participatory methods are used to facilitate learner involvement in their own learning and to improve the learning environment. Instruction addresses the needs of all learners, including those with special needs, by promoting inclusiveness, active and cooperative learning. Parents and community leaders understand and accept the learning content and teaching methods used.
- Teachers and other education personnel have clearly defined conditions of work, follow a code of conduct and are appropriately compensated.
- Supervision and support mechanisms are established for teachers and other education personnel and are used on a regular basis.

### *Policy and coordination*

- Education authorities prioritise free access to schooling for all, and enact flexible policies to promote inclusion and education relevance and quality, given the emergency context.
- Emergency education activities take into account national and international educational policies and the learning need of affected populations.
- There is a transparent coordination mechanism for emergency education activities, including effective information sharing between stakeholders.

## **Criteria for Quality Rights-based Education**

### *Access - It meets the criteria for inclusion*

- by not excluding, discriminate or stereotype on the basis of difference
- by providing education that is free, compulsory and accessible
- by respecting diversity and ensuring equality of learning for all children
- by responding to diversity by meeting the differing circumstances and individual needs of all children
- by promoting gender equality in enrolment and achievement

### *Quality - It ensures effective learning*

- by promoting good quality teaching and learning processes with individualized instruction appropriate to each child's development level, abilities, and learning style and with active, cooperative, and democratic learning methods
- by providing structured content and good quality materials and resources for all children including disabled children and children from ethnic minorities and other language groups
- by providing qualified teachers with high morale and commitment, who recognize children as holders of rights
- by promoting quality learning outcomes by defining and helping children learn what they need to learn and teaching them how to learn
- by guaranteeing girl-friendly facilities, curricula, textbooks and teaching-learning processes
- by eliminating gender stereotypes

### *Protection - It ensures the health and protection of children*

- by ensuring a healthy and safe learning environment with adequate water and sanitation facilities and healthy classrooms and healthy practices

- by providing a school free of drugs, corporal punishment, bullying and harassment
- by providing health services and health education oriented towards life-skills
- by promoting the physical and psychosocial health and development of learners
- by helping protect all children from abuse and harm both in schools and on the way to and from schools
- by promoting positive experiences for children in a safe and stimulating place
- by socializing girls and boys in a non-violent environment

*Participation - It ensures the involvement of children, families and communities*

- by being child-centred, promoting child participation in all aspects of school life, for instance, through the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education, and the improvement of learning environments
- by working to involve families in education, and to help them establish good relationships with teachers and school managers
- by being community-based, encouraging local partnership in education through local school boards or school management committees acting in the community in the best interest of the children, and working with other actors to ensure fulfilment of children's' rights.

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