

Cape Town – new impetus for networking

by Eldrid Kvamen Midttun

Participants at the recent Global Consultation on Education in Emergencies celebrated progress towards mainstreaming education in emergencies. International collaboration and commitment are vital to maintain this momentum.

The second Global Consultation on Education in Emergencies took place in Cape Town, South Africa, 2-4 December 2004. The first, held in Geneva in November 2000, as recommended by the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000, led to the establishment of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, INEE [see pp8-10]. The network has strengthened the focus on the Education for All (EFA)¹ flagship 'Education in Emergencies' and has brought together a great number of actors conscious of the need to provide education to conflict-affected and disaster-stricken populations, to secure their rights and to help advance the process of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The Consultation brought together some 140 participants from governments, UN agencies, international NGOs and research institutions. Compared to the 2000 Global Consultation, it seemed that this time participants were either already more directly involved in education programmes or had a keen interest in contributing and playing a part in the future. Advocacy and research came out as strong focus areas for possible future INEE Task Teams and for more intensified efforts by INEE members. Challenges related to natural disasters were also brought more to the fore, especially through the strong participation from Caribbean states.

A new and crucial aspect at this Consultation was the presence of ten representatives of affected governments, among them three ministers and three deputy ministers of education, through cooperation with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)² and the Commonwealth³. Their interventions and active participation throughout the consultation provided added

awareness and insights as well as a reminder to UN agencies and NGOs that the main responsibility rests with and within the country – even if international support is needed and appreciated. The presence of the newly appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, gave added emphasis to the rights-based approaches to education – in emergencies as well as in other circumstances.

Resources and initiatives

Results of recent INEE efforts were presented and distributed, most concretely in the form of the *INEE Technical Kit on Education in Emergencies and Early Recovery: A Digital Library - 2004*. This CD-ROM, developed by the INEE Task Team on Learning Materials and Resources, contains 235 educational documents (20,200 pages in total) – proof of the spirit of sharing resources and experiences from and for the field.⁴ Another CD-ROM, the *Teacher Training Resource Kit*, developed by the INEE Teacher Training Task Team, was also disseminated.⁵ The most spectacular achievement, however, was the launching of the *Minimum Standards on Education in Emergencies, Chronic*

Crises and Early Reconstruction, engendered and developed by an impressive process of inter-agency collaboration involving some 2,250 voices from over 50 countries in all regions.⁶

Planning for the challenges of implementing the Minimum Standards started immediately after the Consultation. At the same time, the INEE Steering Group brought forward discussions and recommendations on how to involve more actors in the running and task teams of the network – particularly those from countries or regions directly affected by conflict and crises. Interaction with representatives from government and higher education institutions as well as with donors is a particular issue that is being dealt with.

Increased international and inter-agency cooperation has no doubt increased the level of advocacy and efforts being made to ensure the provision of education in crisis areas. Some examples within the UN family are the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) focus on the development of a *Guidebook for Government Officials on Education in Emergencies*⁷, annual summer training courses for the same target group and documentation from the field in the form of a series of case studies and thematic policy studies produced over the past couple of years by researchers and practitioners. UNICEF's Core Commitment for Children and education, in particular education for

Sudanese refugee children attend school in Goz-Amer camp, Chad.



UNHCR/H. Caux

girls, extends operations into most afflicted countries and situations. INSPIRE – the new UNHCR initiative [see p59] – is meant to facilitate and strengthen local partnerships for the benefit of education for refugees.

The Save the Children Alliance⁸ has decided on a global challenge for the next five years, focusing on Education for Children affected by Conflict. This commitment raises hopes of intensified activities in many countries, alongside a number of other international and local NGOs who are stepping up their efforts, providing funding is available. Preparedness is now on the agenda – perhaps slightly more advanced for conflict situations than for natural disasters. However, awareness of the latter has been raised and strategies for improved emergency planning are being put in place.

Outstanding concerns

Of special concern is a group that is not necessarily counted among the ‘out-of-school children’, namely the groups of youth – now young adults – who missed out on schooling and training opportunities, in part or entirely. The backlog is overwhelming and they must not be forgotten.

On the one hand they constitute the most immediate human resources of societies attempting to recover or rehabilitate after emergencies and crises. On the other hand their inclination to create unrest and participate in new conflicts – because of frustration and dire need – is real and must be attended to. This must happen in parallel with the reestablishment of educational opportunities for school-age children.

Funding is a key issue and is one of the elements that can really make a difference. There is little doubt that, in spite of increased levels of activity and input by many actors and donors, progress towards achieving Education for All by the year 2015 is painfully slow. Unless there is significant progress on the promises made by the 147 governments in Dakar, we will end up far from achieving the Millennium Development Goals. According to current prognosis, only 10% of the 120 million children who were lacking educational opportunities in 2000 will be enrolled in 2015.

Key next steps towards proving this prognosis wrong include:

- good governance by affected education authorities and communities

- fulfilment of funding pledges made by the international community
- provision of teacher training and special efforts to recruit female teachers
- increased attendance, retention of enrolled pupils and completion of basic education
- curriculum adaptation to provide relevant and useful knowledge and skills for school-age children and youth who have lost out on education.

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1. www.unesco.org/education/efa/
2. www.adeanet.org/
3. www.thecommonwealth.org/
4. To request a copy, email coordinator@ineesite.org or write to: INEE Secretariat, UNESCO ED/EPS, 7 Place de Fontenoy, 75007 Paris, France. Will also be online at www.ineesite.org/
5. as above
6. Online at www.ineesite.org/standards/MSEE_report.pdf Copies can be requested (hard copy or CD-ROM) at www.ineesite.org/standards/order_msee.asp or via INEE at above address.
7. To be published early 2005; details will be online at www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/publications/pubs.htm
8. www.savethechildren.net/alliance/