

# Recent research and current research gaps

*There is growing interest in education in emergencies and reconstruction as a research field – and a pressing need for more research into some priority areas.*

Education in conflicts, emergencies and early reconstruction is a newly emerging field of academic research, policy research and teaching. Universities and research institutes worldwide are beginning to teach interdisciplinary modules on this theme within Bachelors and Masters degree programmes. Research projects and academic endeavours have begun to yield publications of weight and rigour, which are beginning to influence field practice and policy development. Notable among those efforts are:

- The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's *Global Survey on Education in Emergencies*, which focuses on

global data and statistics of educational programmes in conflict- and disaster-affected areas [see p7]

- The UK Overseas Development Institute's paper in its Humanitarian Practice Network series entitled 'The Role of Education in Protecting Children in Conflict' [see p12]
- The World Bank's *Reshaping the Future: Education and Post-conflict Reconstruction* [see p39]
- UNESCO International Bureau of Education's Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion, which provides seven case studies and a synthesis on curriculum develop-

by Christopher Talbot

ment processes in conflict-affected societies<sup>1</sup>

- UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning's case studies and thematic studies on planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction.<sup>2</sup>

## Issues requiring research

Perhaps the most vital need in this emerging field of research is for those agencies and donors who commission research projects to listen to field priorities and needs for new research work and to be very clear on the purposes and outcomes that they are seeking. Effective partnerships between researchers, government ministries, NGOs and UN agencies would make it more likely that research results are disseminated widely and actually used by

field practitioners. Such partnerships would also reduce the feeling of some field staff that researchers are pursuing their own agendas, wasting the time of busy field practitioners and using affected populations in the process.

With those caveats in mind, the following themes are suggested as vital priorities for future research:

- Education is asserted to be a tool of child and youth protection; research is needed on how this occurs and on the conditions under which education promotes and provides protection.
- The Women's Commission's *Global Survey* showed that the use of data and statistics on education in emergencies and early reconstruction – a crucial prerequisite for effective policy making, planning, management and evaluation – is very patchy. Unfortunately, such data is rarely collected in a rigorous, systematic way and tends to be poorly communicated within and between institutions. There is a crying need to deepen and broaden the pioneering work of the *Global Survey*, extending it in scope, geographical coverage and time sequence. The research and its findings must then be used for more effective planning and managing of educational programmes in conflict-affected areas, by governmental authorities, NGOs and UN agencies, as well as for advocacy in these areas.

- Education in emergencies and reconstruction does not fit neatly into donors' artificial dichotomies of humanitarian relief and development assistance, as they perceive it – simplistically – as a developmental activity. As the articles in this FMR clearly confirm, education must also be a priority during conflict, emergency, displacement and early reconstruction. Research is therefore needed to support advocacy of education as both a humanitarian and a development priority.
- The influential 1999 UNICEF paper 'Education in Emergencies and for Reconstruction: A developmental approach' by Mary Joy Pigozzi<sup>3</sup> outlined a provocative hypothesis: that emergencies and early reconstruction should be viewed as opportunities for transformation of education systems. While some research conducted in some countries has looked into elements of that view, the Pigozzi hypothesis has never been systematically and rigorously tested.
- A range of detailed technical topics requires more thorough investigation, notably: optimal alternative education programmes for adolescents and youth; best ways to involve PTAs in emergencies and reconstruction; accreditation, validation and certification of internally displaced and refugee pupils' attainments; effective program-

ming for life skills and thematic awareness-raising issues such as peace, human rights and civic education.

- Finally, the documentary basis for research in this field needs radical strengthening. Because of the precariousness of the working environments, political volatility and frequent rotation of key staff, most of the primary sources for educational work in emergency settings consist of grey literature – unpublished documents in the form of assessments, project evaluations and donor reports, which enjoy limited circulation and are rapidly lost in dusty filing cabinets and the C-drives of key staff. On-line availability of grey literature is a vital need, to consolidate all the gains of the past few years and to ensure a rich source of documentary evidence for future research into better programming and planning.

Progress on all these research priorities will be immeasurably enhanced by the networking service offered to members of INEE, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [see pp8-10].

**Christopher Talbot is Programme Specialist, Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction, at the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and Chair of INEE's Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies. Email: [c.talbot@iiep.unesco.org](mailto:c.talbot@iiep.unesco.org)**

1. [http://upo.unesco.org/details.aspx?Code\\_Livre=4249#](http://upo.unesco.org/details.aspx?Code_Livre=4249#)
2. [www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/focus/emergency/emergency\\_4.htm](http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/focus/emergency/emergency_4.htm)
3. [www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/EducEmerg.PDF](http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/EducEmerg.PDF)



*School tents for Afghan refugee children, New Shamshatoo camp, Pakistan*