Forum: UNICEF
Issue: Supporting Child Education in Combat & Contingency Zones
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Overview

The role of education in conflict-affected countries has received increased attention during the past decade because of its significance for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education. There has been an increasing awareness that Education for All (EFA) goals will only be achieved through success in accessing children in conflict- affected contexts, who are among the hardest to reach (Save the Children Alliance 2006).

Since the publication of a UN Special Report on children and armed conflict (Machel 1994), attention has been given to assessing the impacts of com conflict on education. These include the disruption of schools, attacks on teachers and pupils, forced recruitment of child soldiers, and the needs of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Numerous studies have subsequently been released on this topic, including two recent reports from UNESCO (O'Mally 2010; UNESCO 2010). The aim has been to expose the extent and nature of the abuses perpetrated against children and education systems in conflict-affected situations, as well as to explore strategies to prevent and address the effects of conflict on education.

The past decade has also seen an increased awareness of the 'two faces 'of education, that is, how education may sometimes exacerbate or mitigate conflict. Research has identified a range of issues that may have such impacts, including factors related to access to education, the structure of schooling, teacher recruitment and training, and curriculum content (Bush and Salterelli 2000). While this has had the merit to highlight the need for 'conflict-sensitivity 'in education programming, its emphasis has mainly been on the negative effects. Conversely, as expressed in the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)'s Strategic Research Agenda, there continues to be a need to identify how education may make a positive contribution to peacebuilding.

The concept of 'peacebuilding 'has also received renewed attention following the UN Secretary-General's call for the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2006. These structures have emerged because of concerns to prevent relapses in the aftermath of conflict. They provide support to countries in the immediate post-conflict period mainly through funding for political, governance, security and macroeconomic reforms. However, the new UN peacebuilding architecture also provides the opportunity to initiate social programming in areas that support peacebuilding.

In recognition of existing gaps in knowledge and practice, the present research project was commissioned by the UNICEF Evaluation Office to undertake a study on the role of education in

peacebuilding processes in post-conflict contexts. The project is part of a wider knowledge generation effort undertaken by the UNICEF Evaluation Office and Education Section towards the achievement of Goal Four of the Education in Emergencies and Post-CrisisTransition (EEPCT) programme, which is a partnership between UNICEF, the Government of the Netherlands and the European Commission. Goal Four of the EECPT is designed to achieve: evidence-based policies, efficient operational strategies and fit-for-purpose financing instruments in emergencies and post-crisis transition.

Key Terms

1. **Millennium Development Goals (MDG)** - It was adopted unanimously by world leaders from 189 countries at the UN headquarters in New York in September 2000. These are the eight goals that we will implement by 2015 to reduce the world's absolute poverty rate by half.
   A. the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
   B. Expansion and guarantee of primary school education
   C. Promotion of gender equality and women's rights
   D. Reduction of infant mortality
   E. Improving the health of a pregnant woman
   F. Eliminate AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
   G. Sustainable environmental protection
   H. Establishing global cooperation for development, etc.

2. **Peacemaking** - Generally refers to the processes of diplomacy, mediation, negotiation or other forms of settlement that arranges an end to a violent dispute and attempts to resolve the issues that led to it. McCandless et al. (2007) present the following definition, adapted from UN documents: "political, diplomatic, and sometimes military interventions directed at bringing warring parties to agreement."

3. **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** - It is one of the permanent support agencies of the United Nations established to help children without discrimination in nationality, ideology or religion.

4. **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)** - It is an international organization dedicated to promoting cooperation among countries through the dissemination and exchange of education, science, and culture. It protects cultural and natural heritage that mankind should preserve and protect as a World Heritage.

5. **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)** - It is an intergovernmental policy research cooperation body that seeks to promote the joint

development and growth of the global economy and the welfare of mankind through mutual policy coordination and cooperation among member countries.

6. **Peacekeeping** - "... a unique and dynamic instrument developed by the [UN] Organizations as way to help countries torn by conflict create the conditions for lasting peace" (UN 2010).

7. **Conflict management** - "Aims to limit escalation or avoid future violence by promoting positive behavioural changes among the parties" (McCandless et al. 2007; Fisher et al. 2000).

8. **Conflict resolution** - "Aims to address causes of conflict and seeks to build new and lasting relationships between hostile groups" (McCandless and Bangura 2007; Fisher et al. 2000).

9. **Conflict sensitivity** - Refers to the ability of an organization to:

   1. a) Understand the context in which it is operating
   2. b) Understand the interaction between the intervention and that context
   3. c) Act upon that understanding, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive
   4. impacts on conflict (International Alert et al. 2004).

Past Actions

It is important to understand the relevance of education programming to peacebuilding in terms of timing and sequencing. It reveals a fairly clear pattern of sequencing that suggests different forms of education programming relevant to early humanitarian response, through early recovery and into post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Humanitarian response

Education in humanitarian response is largely about programmes that protect legal, physical and psychosocial needs, and often combines both education and protection-sector approaches into one intervention. This goal for education to 'protect 'is often articulated in humanitarian emergencies. As a follow-on, the early UNESCO PEER school-in-a box type response strategies that date back to early education work in Somalia (Aguilar and Retamal 1998) are the foundation for what are called child-friendly spaces today. This programme serves as a mix that combines learning with play, peer-to-peer socialization and expressive activities all within a protective space for children. This signature response by the education sector, in collaboration with protection partners, is offered in a number of contexts, although limited evaluation of this response strategy has been undertaken.

It has been more than 15 years since this programme was initiated and it was pioneered initially by UNICEF as a programme response in emergencies. Currently, there is a thematic

working group, housed within the global education cluster, which has drawn together inter- agency practitioners to agree upon child-friendly space principles to guide and improve its work by setting standards and eliminating potential harm. Different agencies use different terminology; for example, Save the Children has used emergency spaces for children, while Child Fund International has used child-centred spaces. Generally speaking, these spaces allow for structured recreational and learning activities that act as a first step in the early stages of an emergency. It has been said to give children a chance to play, sing, draw or participate in recreational activities and are meant to provide normalcy in the aftermath of war. An added goal is to provide psychosocial healing for those children who have experienced extreme exposure to war, and services also often includes health, child-tracing services and education. Examples of child-friendly spaces can be found in Angola, Burundi, Chad (Child Fund International), East Timor (International Rescue Committee), Sierra Leone and Uganda, and UNICEF operates them in Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Colombia, East Timor, El Salvador, Haiti, Kosovo, Liberia and Turkey.

Demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation (DDR)

DDR programmes constitute another humanitarian response programme with education components. This programme type is aimed to protect school-age children, youth and adults who were engaged in the war in some way. Children associated with fighting forces and armed groups (CAFFAG) is the most recent agreed-upon terminology, according to the Paris Principles developed in 2007, to help guide programming terms and impacts on a child's status, role and trajectory once separated from the armed forces. On the one hand, DDR programmes reduce violence; for example, in Colombia, disarmament processes were part of broader DDR effort that between 2003 and 2006 collected more than 18,000 weapons. This was thought to account for more than one third of the insurgent weapons in the country. The programme was believed to have reduced homicides by 13 per cent in areas where demobilized groups had been operating, preventing between 650 and 2,300 homicides in its first year. In Cambodia, weapons collection efforts following the end of the civil war removed 130,000 non-government-controlled firearms between 1998 and 2006. Data analysis suggested that the measures contributed to reducing both firearms deaths and overall homicides (Willie 2005). In addition to the removal of arms, DDR programmes work directly with child and youth soldiers who, at times, have been forcibly conscripted into fighting forces. Programming for these groups often has an educational component to gain skills, re-enter formal schooling or take part in non-formal educational activities during transitions from war to a time of peace.

Refugee and IDP education

Formal education is often set up in camp settings and incorporates primary and sometimes secondary education services. The vast majority of agencies, however, focus on primary-level schooling. All educational activity is coordinated with the camp committees, and very often youth who have missed out on years of education are overlooked, as they tend not to attend primary-level classes due to being overage. Generally, the international agencies working on formal education programmes for refugee and IDP camp settings or returnee areas collaborate directly with communities, governments and religious actors to support continued schooling opportunity through support to construction, education materials, furniture and supplies. Teacher training and school rehabilitation are also supported as part of formal education programmes. Some examples of agencies working on formal education include GTZ; Care International in Afghanistan, Kenya, the Sudan and Zambia; the International Rescue Committee in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda; Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) in Thailand and Uganda; Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Kenya; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Pakistan; Plan International in Sierra Leone; Save the Children in a variety of settings, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, the Sudan and Uganda; and ZOA Refugee Care in Thailand.

Early recovery, reconstruction and development

During early recovery, there is often an emphasis on physical reconstruction of school infrastructure and return-to-school programmes that may focus on resettlement and reintegration. "There is also a need to find ways to support the generation of youth that have completely or partially missed out on their education during conflict. As countries emerge from conflict and governments focus on primary age children, UN agencies and NGOs have supported different forms of Alternative Basic Education" (James 2010). These include Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs), which are cost-effective ways of concentrating formal education programmes into fewer years of schooling. Catch-up education programmes have similar goals but operate by supporting children who have missed out to catch up with their age group and reintegrate into school. Early recovery periods may also provide opportunities to begin addressing legacies of conflict, such as shortages of teachers and capacity development needs within the education sector, such as lack of qualified personnel, and the establishment of reliable systems for gathering data and information, finance and education planning.

Psychosocial support and recovery

Many examples of psychosocial programmes both in and outside of school settings aim to increase the well-being of students and learning capacities by reducing stress and allowing for greater concentration in the classroom. Psychosocial support mechanisms are put in place for

teachers by training them on how to care for themselves and identifying particular stress- related behaviours in the classroom. The Mental Health and Psychosocial Guidelines in Emergencies (2007) identify specific actions that can be taken to improve education-sector commitment to psychosocial support needs by following suggested protocols. Example programmes include training for teachers on psychosocial support by the IRC, and UNICEF psychosocial support training for teachers, which was applied recently in Haiti. Based on a review of 13 studies of psychosocial interventions, it was concluded that interventions can help to improve aspects of psychosocial functioning in children and that the evidence is strongest for group interventions focusing on normalization.

Promoting inclusion

Education programmes that promote inclusion are designed to include minorities, vulnerable groups and girls in education. Minorities may be ethnic groups poorly represented, while vulnerable groups include, for example, disabled persons, former child combatants or separated children, and allow for them to be mainstreamed in the regular classrooms with support that does not target nor set them apart. The inter-agency network for education in emergencies has developed Guidance on Inclusive Education, illustrating the increasing importance of this issue within the education sector. Reducing discrimination in the curriculum is a less visible yet important early activity in post-conflict settings on the part of UNICEF, UNHCR and, in some cases, UNESCO, in collaboration with Ministries of Education.

It is clear from the literature that there is a 'chronology 'of education development in post-conflict situations. The patterns of change are not well documented, partly because they take place over long periods of time (at least a decade) and institutional memory is often poor because of changes in personnel. The country case studies provide an opportunity to get a better sense of the chronology in terms of the different programmes that were relevant at different times, and how progress changed with the changing post-conflict political environment. This will also mean making an effort to interview local and international personnel who were previously involved.

Possible Solutions

First, what is UNICEF's role? UNICEF works with states who have endorsed the Declaration and other armed groups to protect education from attack. UNICEF is on the frontlines in conflict-affected countries to develop school safety plans, get children back to learning by providing psycho-social support and informal learning opportunities, training teachers, rehabilitating schools and distributing supplies for teaching and learning.

UNICEF also works with a range of partners to help children learn despite conflict and insecurity. For example, a partnership with governments across West and Central Africa is helping expand an innovative radio education programme that provides an alternative learning platform for children and youth affected by crises.

There are few possible solutions.

1. The sequencing of education programming is important. -There is a significant difference between short-term, humanitarian approaches to protect children and provide access to school as a means of consolidating peace, and longer-term developments to support peacebuilding through education, such as engaging children and youth with values, attitudes and skills that might sustain peace. It is important that short-term approaches do not undermine longer-term development, for example, by reconstruction of the education system in ways that reproduce or reinforce inequalities and lack of trust between groups.

2. Education needs to engage with the UN peacebuilding architecture -The priority for the Peacebuilding Commission is to respond quickly to immediate needs, and security, political and economic responses typically receive early support from the PBF. But more attention needs to be given to the education sector and the role it might play in initiating plans for recovery and reforms that support longer-term peacebuilding. There is increasing demand for better coordination between UN agencies in post-conflict environments, which means that the opportunity for early engagement through agencies with a mandate for children and education is particularly relevant.

3. Protect the educating area - A child's right to education cannot be safeguarded in conflict zones without education itself being protected. Education can be a life-saver. Out of school, children are easy targets of abuse, exploitation and recruitment by armed forces and groups. School should provide a safe space where children can be protected from threats and crises. It is also a critical step to breaking the cycle of crisis and reduces the likelihood of future conflicts.

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