

FACT Sheet Education and Conflict

- Education, and thus development assistance for education, can have very positive effects on the dynamics of conflict and peace. However, they can also have highly negative impacts.
- It is therefore imperative to understand the inter-relationship between education and conflict, and to shape interventions accordingly.

This factsheet provides an overview on the relationship between education and conflict and its implications for development co-operation (DC). Focusing primarily on complex emergency and post-conflict situations, it offers recommendations for practical implementation in DC projects. With the respective goals of the UN Millennium Declaration and the Education for All Initiative in mind, this sheet concentrates on primary education, but its findings are also applicable to secondary, tertiary and vocational education. Other sub-sectors (e.g. early childhood development, adult education) are not dealt with in detail here.

KEY MESSAGES

- Education can make a significant contribution to preventing violent conflict and to consolidating the ability of societies to manage tensions in a peaceful manner. It should, therefore, be a priority in development assistance strategies.
- Formal and informal education at all levels can help promote citizenship and a culture of peace and social cohesion no matter how diverse the society.
- Education assistance should, therefore, support inclusive and participatory educational structures and learning cultures, operating in a democratic context and available to all segments of society, especially marginalised groups.
- However, as the design and operation of education systems can also play a role in exacerbating and increasing societal tensions, education assistance must integrate an understanding of the variety of education-related factors that can drive conflict as well as an awareness on how conflict can impact on education and on assistance provided to it.
- In addition, education should be recognised as a primary humanitarian intervention in emergencies, both as a means of child protection and to begin re-introducing some normality into children's lives.

INTRODUCTION

Impact of conflict on education

Violent conflicts impair the functioning of education systems and they are often associated with considerable destruction of the educational infrastructure. As a consequence, millions of children are prevented from attending school.

The negative impacts of violent conflicts on the education system occur in differing, generally closely interwoven forms. These include the physical danger for teaching staff and students, schools as a place of recruitment for child soldiers, destruction of educational infrastructure, increasing level of (often gender-specific) violence in schools and sexual abuse, instrumentalisation of educational facilities in the interests of the conflicting parties etc.

Conflict also changes gender roles and relations and the nature of a society. Lack of security often results in girls staying home from schools. Child soldiers and children associated with fighting forces are denied an education and all children affected by war lose the opportunity to have a normal childhood.

The humanitarian crisis which violent conflict represents for a civilian population also implies an educational disaster. Education systems are destabilised, disrupted or even destroyed. In such situations, the response of the international community must be comprehensive and co-ordinated.

Violent conflicts severely decrease the availability of education. In situations of conflict and emergency, education tends to be a low priority. Yet it is particularly important to ensure that children in such situations have access to completely free and compulsory primary education of good quality in order to achieve the respective goals of the UN Millennium Declaration (MDG) and the Education for All Initiative (EFA).

The right to education, as laid down in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ranks among the fundamental human rights and in numerous human rights documents it is stressed that this human right to education is also valid during

emergencies, wars and armed conflicts. In this respect educational facilities are also given special protection under humanitarian international law: their destruction is regarded as a war crime.

Impact of education on conflict

Education, on the other hand, can make a significant contribution to preventing violent conflicts and consolidating the ability of societies to manage tensions in a peaceful manner. The stabilisation and reconstruction of the education system and its structures is of major significance above all in violence-based emergency situations for the protection of adolescents and to guarantee the elementary prerequisites for a peaceful development in the future.

However, educational institutions themselves are shaped to a considerable degree by structural or symbolic violence (Galtung, Bourdieu). The formal education system may play a role in exacerbating or increasing societal conflicts in particular when it (re)produces socio-economic disparities and brings about social marginalisation or promotes the teaching of identity and citizenship concepts which obscure or deny the cultural plurality of society and which then lead to intolerance towards "the other". Education is, as numerous examples document, a key medium with which ethnicity or tribal identity is mobilised for the escalation of conflicts.

KEY CONCEPTS

The development of a conflict-sensitive education system requires a holistic approach, which takes account of the potentially positive and negative impacts of education in all its manifestations.

The level of education alone is not the driving force behind violent youth conflicts or participation of children and youth in conflict. With regards to their recruitment into armed groups or their involvement in violent conflict and/or crime, it is the lack of desired 'life chances' (i.e. their lack of opportunities in the future) which can be a powerful "push" factor of economic necessity for the children concerned.

In most parts of the world, there is a gap between what is taught in school, and the skills and knowledge needed in the

workplace. But it is also increasingly evident that, in many parts of the world, there are simply not enough jobs for young people, irrespective of how well educated they are. Greater significance has to be attached to linking the supply of education and training with the labour market and above all the creation of jobs for young people.

The following factors play a key role in the design of conflict-sensitive education systems:

- Learning cultures and educational structures have to be as inclusive and participatory as possible. They must allow equal access for all segments of the population and, taking into account the social and cultural diversity of society, must promote tolerance, empathy and social cohesion.
- Particular attention needs to be given to integrating, for example, returning refugees and IDPs (alongside those in the communities to which they return), former child soldiers or children associated with fighting forces, and children with disabilities.
- Mechanisms for constructive dialogue serve to peacefully resolve tensions by consultation and negotiation among relevant stakeholders.

Education systems may exacerbate conflict, or may themselves be factors "pushing" children and youth into armed groups, driving violence. This may happen where:

- Educational opportunities are not equitable in respect to certain social groups or where the geographic distribution is uneven. (In some cases, education is deliberately denied as a weapon of war or it is segregated as an instrument of oppression);
- Education is used as an instrument of repression, hatred or prejudice in respect to race, culture, gender etc.) by using educational tools (e.g. textbooks, images) and practices for political purposes (e.g. to manipulate history and images and/or to assert the superiority of a dominant culture or the inferiority of another group (ethnic, religious or other minority).

Promoting inclusive citizenship and a culture of peace and social cohesion is an investment in conflict prevention. This can be done through formal and informal education at all levels by:

- Creating specific education opportunities for the educationally-disadvantaged and for highly vulnerable groups such as former child soldiers;
- Nurturing a climate of tolerance for ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity;
- Fostering a sense of shared history that highlights co-operation and mutual interest rather than grievance and conflict.

KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN GETTING INVOLVED

Analysing the challenge

The transformation of education systems can only succeed if there has already been a critical and uncompromising review and analysis of the prior education system, its curricula and educational practices and any shortcomings this might have.

The gender ratios in schooling and the causes for drop-out rates among girls and boys should also be analysed along with the gender ratios of teachers and administrators.

General goals for programming

Intervention principles and success factors:

- the acknowledgement of the "ownership of conflict", i.e. the principle that conflicts may ultimately only be solved by the participants themselves;
- the necessity to tie in with the respective cultural traditions and processes for conflict management;
- the necessity to give attention to and assist marginalised target groups, e.g. handicapped children, cultural minorities, demobilised child soldiers, refugees, IDPs and girls associated with the fighting forces- many of which might already have children;

- linking up education offers with measures to reinforce the capacities of the respective communities and with further education offerings for parents;
- specifically promoting women and girls, and designing and implementing all education measures in a gender-sensitive manner, recognising that gender roles and relations will have changed as a result of conflict and that boys and girls respond differently to conflict and crises;
- promoting social studies as an independent subject that includes peace education, reconciliation, citizenship education and human rights education

Development assistance for education and for conflict prevention has to be more closely linked than has been the case to date. (i) Education assistance must be designed and implemented with a greater sensitivity towards the two way relationship (potentially both positive and negative) between programmes and projects and the context (and its dynamics) in which they take place, ("mainstreaming conflict prevention"). (ii) Any intervention should seek to strengthen the ability of individuals, groups and institutions to proactively contribute to peace – managing tensions and building confidence through communication, stakeholder consultation and dialogue.

GOOD PRACTICE

Peace Education in Sri Lanka

The Basic Education Sector Programme (BESP) in Sri Lanka aims to improve the quality of primary education through concentrating on pre-service and in-service teacher education, with a specific focus on children living in disadvantaged areas. With an emphasis on competency-based capacity-building for learner-centred, activity-oriented teaching/learning approaches, BESP is jointly financed by the governments of Sri Lanka and Germany and implemented with the technical assistance of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in close collaboration with national and provincial education institutions.

In light of Sri Lanka's recent history of ethnic conflict and civil war, a rapidly growing peace education programme for pre-service and in-service teacher training forms an integral part of this project. In this context, the overall goals of the BESP express the desire to promote in children the values of peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society. A specific peace education component targeting up to two thousand student teachers was initiated in 2001 with a literary competition on the themes of peace and conflict resolution organised among colleges from the North and South of the country. Later, a "Peace Link" programme was organised, entailing visits among student teachers and teacher educators from colleges of education in the two regions.

With the understanding of 'learning to live together' as a cross-sectoral theme which should pervade all aspects of teaching and learning, the concepts of peace education and conflict transformation are being incorporated into curriculum materials. Sustainability will be ensured by organising appropriate follow-up activities and designing additional relevant materials. The activities have raised awareness among existing partners regarding Education for Learning to Live Together and have had an indirect impact on other peace-promoting initiatives in the country.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

Planning and Implementation

For the last two decades, there has been an increasing emphasis on the part of the development community on primary education. The rationale behind is that it is better to concentrate scarce resources on basic education. However, it can be well argued that shifting the focus away from secondary and tertiary education can create generations of frustrated youth. Therefore, a balance in distributing scarce resources to the other education sectors is needed in order to prevent social conflict in the long term.

Development cooperation can help support a wide range of pedagogical measures in this field: structured leisure-time and recreational activities for children and young people, development of youth centres, formal school education, vocational training, accelerated short-term education programmes, bridging programmes, fostering of "life skills", further training for teachers. Alongside the "classical" target group of school age children, special attention has to be paid to former child soldiers and young refugees as the most explosive segment of a population in situations affected by conflicts.

The following issues need to be considered for the planning and implementation of

- 1.) education in complex emergencies, and
- 2.) education transformation in post-conflict societies.

➤ **Education in complex emergencies and conflict contexts in general**

Complex emergencies need complex educational responses. Thus, it is necessary to link up recreational activities, trauma therapy, the teaching of competencies and skills, and peace education measures. In general, the following standards for education in emergencies need to be considered:

I. Access to education

- 1.) The right of access to education, recreation and related activities must be ensured, even in crisis situations.

- 2.) Rapid access to education, recreation and related activities should be followed by steady improvement in education quality and coverage, including access to all levels of education and accreditation of completed studies.
- 3.) Education programmes should be gender-sensitive, accessible to and inclusive of all groups. There should be a safe and non-threatening environment at all schools.
- 4.) Education should serve as a tool for child protection and prevention of harm.

II. Resources

- 1.) Education programmes should include a major component of training for teachers and youth/adult educators, and provide incentives to avoid a high turnover of teachers. Hiring and empowering female teachers and school administrators should be encouraged.
- 2.) Crisis and recovery programmes should develop and document locally appropriate targets for standards of teaching (materials), adequate to meet the educational and psychosocial needs of boys and girls.

III. Activities/ Curricula

- 1.) Education programmes should use a community-based participatory approach, with emphasis on capacity-building.
- 2.) Curriculum policy should support the long-term development of individual students and of the society and, for refugee populations, should be supportive of a durable solution, ideally repatriation.
- 3.) Education programmes should be broadened to include life skills such as health promotion, security issues and environmental awareness.
- 4.) Vocational training programmes should correspond as far as possible to the actual employment opportunities and workplace practices (internships, hands-on training in cooperation with the business sector) regarding the skills being learned.

IV. Co-ordination and capacity-building

- 1.) Governments and assistance agencies should promote co-ordination between all agencies and stakeholders.
- 2.) External assistance programmes should include capacity building to promote transparent, accountable and inclusive system management by local actors.

The absence of these criteria may at the same time serve as an indicator for the proneness of a society (or its education system) to crisis.

➤ Transformation of education systems

For the planning and implementation of education transformation in post-conflict societies the following issues need to be considered: The transformation of education systems can only succeed if there has already been a critical and uncompromising review and analysis of the prior education system, its curricula and educational practices.

Any interventions in this context need to take into account:

- a broad-based consensus and a clear vision of the reform of the education system need to be developed at an early stage;
- taboo topics have to be actively addressed (e.g. cultural and gender discrimination, distribution of societal wealth);
- the technical preparations for the implementation of the reforms have to begin as early as possible;
- the support of the most important stakeholders in society has to be obtained;
- the education system has to be de-centralised in order to ensure participation by the target groups (children and parents); the parents have to be granted the widest possible rights of co-determination;
- in multi-cultural societies curricula have to be developed in line with the plurality of the society and opportunities that are evolving to cater for linguistic diversity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation practice in this area remain insufficient. Conflict-specific tools and instruments are needed for understanding the inter-relationships between conflict and education and for monitoring and assessing the impacts of DC activities on them.

Indicators and processes need to be developed, which, where possible, take into consideration the following issues:

- conflict indicators for education system-specific conflict analysis and for "early warning";
- standards and processes for conflict impact assessment and analysis of the efficacy of education assistance measures on both boys and girls;
- standards and processes for the evaluation of peace education measures.

GOOD PRACTICE

Local and Global Citizenship Programme in Ireland

The Northern Ireland conflict dating back hundreds of years has resulted in an education system reflective of the division between Protestants and Catholics, which impedes the interaction of children from the two communities and perpetuates the divide. In response, the University of Ulster initiated the Social, Civic and Political Education Project in 1998, which later evolved into the Local and Global Citizenship Programme (LGC) under the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). The programme aims to develop young people's capacities for active citizenship through processes of reflection and participation, enabling them to assess their present society and envisage a better one in the future, considering what action may be taken to narrow the gap between the two.

Based on four thematic areas, which are investigated in local, national/European and global contexts, and are open to multiple, conflicting and changing interpretations, LGC is intended to be open ended, provoking enquiry, problem-solving and decision-making skills, rather than simply prescribing attitudes and behaviours. It seeks to promote open and frank discussions in the classroom which is seen as a safe place for the exploration of democracy, where teachers facilitate enquiry rather than merely transmit knowledge. The programme is being gradually introduced to all post-primary schools in Northern Ireland through an expansion of the initial small-scale pilot. Internal and external evaluations of the project show it to have had a positive impact from perspectives of both students and teachers. Students enjoyed and showed commitment to the subject while teachers appreciated the structure of the approach and the resource materials provided. Although they found LGC to be very demanding professionally, teachers were incorporating active learning methods into their practice. Teachers felt strongly that citizenship education should be taught clearly as a separate subject in the curriculum with adequate time assigned to it, despite the challenge of curriculum overload. LGC is felt to have wider applications beyond Northern Ireland, in the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain and possibly beyond.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)	www.ineesite.org
International Bureau of Education (IBE)	www.ibe.unesco.org
Government of Canada	www.waraffectedchildren.gc.ca
University for Peace: Degree in Peace Education	www.upeace.org
UNICEF: Peace education	www.unicef.org
International Peace Bureau: Peace Education Programme	www.ipb.org
UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)	www.unesco.org/iiep

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