

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
63<sup>RD</sup> WORKING GROUP MEETING

**Proposal for a Cluster Working Group on Education**

21-22 November 2005

Hosted by ICVA, International Council of Voluntary Agencies  
ECOGIA, Versoix (Geneva)

Circulated 17 November 2005

## **I Basic Principles**

### **The humanitarian community recognizes that:**

- individuals do not forfeit their right to education during emergencies;
- education is an integral part of priority humanitarian response;
- education, in a safe and protective environment, restores a sense of normalcy and rekindles hope in the lives of children, families and communities in emergency situations
- a broad-based commitment to minimum standards in access, quality and accountability is essential for education in situations of crisis

## **II Rationale**

The Humanitarian Response Review did not identify education to be in need of immediate capacity or response improvements; however education is a critical component in basic social services that should be integrated within the broader framework of enhanced response, accountability and leadership on social services in crisis. Educational activities promote a sense of normality and help children deal with the effects of crises. Education is increasingly part of humanitarian operations, with more programmes being coordinated within humanitarian responses mechanisms. UNICEF has been increasingly recognized as the lead agency by the international community –in 2004 out of 30 countries in emergencies, UNICEF led in 22. This however is still an *ad hoc* process in which *de facto* leadership and coordination is provided by “first responding” agencies like UNICEF that have a strong field presence, and have developed Core Commitments for Children in Emergencies (CCCs) as part of the emergency preparedness, from the emergency to early recovery. In general the agencies operating in this field agree on the need to ensure that education as an integral part of humanitarian response and early recovery is put on a more reliable and

sustainable footing, with designated leadership, improved coordination, predictability and accountability. The implications and growing process of responsibility for UNICEF and partners to further strengthen excellence in the humanitarian education response is central. A clearer articulation of the coordinating role, better definition of competencies, responsibilities, ensuring country level support structures and the organization to provide full cooperation and strengthen the support to the Resident Coordinators (RCs)/Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) of functions seems timely.

**It is therefore proposed** that the IASC-WG mandates the establishment of an Education Cluster for emergencies along the following lines:

- Designate UNICEF as the lead agency for the Cluster, based on its strong country presence and emergency preparedness as well as its regional capacity and global network of partners, resources, operations and proven track record in education in emergencies.
- Consultation on the lead agency role and responsibilities with all partner agencies with relevant expertise and capacity, and ultimately being accountable for coordinating emergency education in a humanitarian crisis.

After the endorsement of UNICEF's proposal to initiate discussions on leadership the following areas may be considered aligned with the Cluster approach:

- Establish the IASC Education Cluster Working Group, consisting of IASC-WG members and standing invitees (UNHCR, WFP, OCHA, ICVA, SCHR, InterAction), as well as UNESCO, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)<sup>1</sup>, and Save the Children Alliance.
- Elaborate comprehensive Terms of Reference for the Education Cluster Working Group and formulate a concept note on how the cluster will operate in practice to improve education response in emergencies and to address cross cutting issues like gender, HIV/AIDS, human rights and links with other sector clusters
- Assess capacities and gaps in terms of preparedness instruments and operational tools for education in emergencies, including advocacy strategies (like back-to-school campaigns) knowledge assets, dissemination mechanisms (websites and list serves), packaged solutions (school-in-a-box), among others.
- Develop a work-plan and prioritize actionable recommendations for 2006 implementation;

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO has a designated lead role in the Education for All (EFA) movement, which recognises emergencies and conflict as one of the main barriers to achieving the Education for All goals. INEE is a global network of over 1,000 representatives from NGOs, UN agencies, donors, practitioners, researchers and individuals from affected populations, and is strategically placed to significantly contribute to the education cluster.

- Enhanced utilization and implementation of the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (MSEE)<sup>2</sup> which consist of standards and guidance notes for access and learning environment; teaching and learning; teachers and other education personnel; education policy and coordination, and cross-cutting standards (e.g. community participation, the use of local resources, assessment, monitoring and evaluation).

Prepared by UNICEF – November 2005

### **III Proposed Action by the IASC Working Group**

1. To review the above proposal and provide feedback on the establishment of an Education Cluster with designation of UNICEF as lead agency.

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<sup>2</sup> Over 2,250 individuals from more than 50 countries contributed to the development of the Minimum Standards. Delegates and INEE members in the regions coordinated over 110 local, national and sub-regional consultations in 47 countries to gather input and information from over 1,900 representatives from affected communities, including students, teachers and other education personnel, NGO, government and UN staff, donors and academics. The MSEE are compatible with the SPHERE standards.