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**Education in Emergencies and the INEE Minimum Standards Process:
Background Note**

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Introduction

During times of emergencies and conflict, access to a vital resource – education - is denied to millions of children and adolescents. According to recent estimates, over 12 million displaced or refugee children and youth have no access to education and, in 2000, UNHCR provided educational assistance to only 1.1 million of the 5 million refugee children and adolescents within its purview.¹ These numbers do not account for the millions of children whose access to education is affected because they remain in communities in one of the 29 countries currently experiencing armed conflict.²

Statistics from the following countries illustrate the gravity of the situation:³

- Angola: approximately 1 million children have no access to education
- Colombia: perhaps 25 to 45% of child Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have access to education
- Northern Uganda: less than 30% of the school-aged internally displaced population are attending school
- Sudan: only 300,000 of the 1 million IDPs that are school-age attend school and only 26% are girls

Conflicts and emergencies also affect children in more immediate and harmful ways: it is estimated that over 300,000 children are serving as child soldiers and forced servants in armies and rebel groups around the world.⁴ Schools and other educational infrastructure can be targets, as they were in the recent conflict in Côte d'Ivoire where dozens of schools were destroyed or taken over by rebel groups.

The Protective Force of Education in Emergencies

¹ *The Education Imperative*, Academy for Educational Development and The Women's Commission, 2003.

² *The Education Imperative*, Academy for Educational Development and The Women's Commission, 2003; Project Ploughshares, www.ploughshares.ca, Swords and Ploughshares, 2003.

³ *The Education Imperative*, Academy for Educational Development and The Women's Commission, 2003. See also: *Surviving the War on Adolescents in Northern Uganda*, Women's Commission, 2001.

⁴ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/, 2003.

Education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction provides knowledge and opportunities that wars and natural disasters deny. It sustains life by offering protection, stability and hope for the future, particularly for children and adolescents who otherwise may grow up with little ambition and no opportunity except to re-activate the conflicts of their parents' generation. Education in situations of crisis addresses the psychosocial needs of children and adolescents affected by trauma and displacement. Equally important, education can serve as a mechanism for delivering key survival messages relevant to new and stressful situations such as HIV/AIDS prevention, landmine and environmental awareness, and peace, human rights and citizenship education.

New research and programs are emerging that provide evidence of the protective possibilities of education initiatives. For example, local education committees in Liberia actively sought at-risk children who were not in school. In Pakistan, an NGO's protection unit learned of domestic violence through teachers involved in its education program and eventually piloted a reporting form for teachers.⁵ As protection becomes an increasingly important component of humanitarian concern, education and its potential as a protective force in the lives of children should be more thoroughly examined and "education's inherent protective aspects" enhanced and expanded.⁶

Education as the 4th Pillar

As the fourth pillar of humanitarian response alongside food, shelter and health, education is the main outreach activity for children in refugee and other displaced communities that receive external assistance. In situations of displacement, children and adolescents can continue their schooling, while those who missed out on education in their home areas are often, but not often enough, able to enrol in school and obtain a basic education. Crises present opportunities for increased educational access for vulnerable groups who may normally be excluded. This can be especially true for girls who benefit from organisational and camp education policies that promote girls' education and gender equality.

Education is a future-oriented response to a humanitarian crisis and fills important gaps in the transition period between emergencies and reconstruction. When implemented with a long-term perspective, education is instrumental to individual and community rehabilitation. Support for the re-establishment and continuity of education must be a priority strategy for donors, affected governments, and humanitarian organisations. The Machel Study (1996), *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, recommends that governments, UN agencies and NGOs collaborate to ensure that children are provided with educational materials and opportunities throughout and after conflict.

To ensure the right to education, as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international community,

⁵ *The Role of Education in Protecting Children in Conflict*, Nicolai, Susan and Triplehorn, Carl, Humanitarian Practice Network, 2003

⁶ *The Role of Education in Protecting Children in Conflict*, Nicolai, Susan and Triplehorn, Carl, Humanitarian Practice Network, 2003

national governments and local communities must take immediate and thorough measures to ensure educational access for all people affected by natural disasters and man-made crises, especially children and adolescents.

Coordination and Standard Setting

The Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) is working to make this right a reality by bringing together humanitarian workers, national governments, education experts and affected populations to improve coordination and implementation of education programs. INEE maintains a web site, www.ineesite.org, moderates a list-serve, and disseminates information to over 550 individual members and over 85 organizational members and partners. Members share information on best practices, curricula and discuss emerging issues and challenges in the field. They also contribute to the functioning and accomplishments of INEE by convening and participating in Task Teams. Three Task Teams currently focus on the following initiatives:

- Updating, digitising, and disseminating the INEE Education in Emergencies Technical Kit;
- Surveying best practices and model programming in teacher training during times of crisis;
- Advocating for youth and adolescent education in crisis and identifying best practices in youth programming.

In its most far-reaching effort yet, INEE is facilitating the Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies (WGMSEE), a broad base of stakeholders who will develop standards that articulate the *minimum level of educational service* to be attained in emergencies through to early reconstruction. This will be accomplished through a process of regional, sub-regional and national consultations, INEE list-serve consultations and peer reviews. This model reflects lessons learned from the Sphere Project and emphasizes broad, transparent, cost-effective and consultative decision-making. The participatory process will enhance the applicability of standards to varying educational contexts, while at the same time ensuring relevance to and ownership of the standards across a wider group of stakeholders.

Participants will include students, teachers and other education personnel, NGOs, government and UN representatives, donors and academics. They will craft standards, indicators and guidance notes that reflect their own experience as well as consensus on good practice. The standards will apply to a variety of affected populations, from refugees to internally displaced and host country populations.

Expected Outcomes of the Development of Minimum Standards

Education is primarily the responsibility of governments. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, governments are often unable to fulfil their roles during wars and disasters. The standards will therefore be a common starting point for the international community and others in providing guidance and tools on how to reach a minimum level of educational quality. They will also contribute to strengthening the resiliency of education ministries by giving them the tools to help implement the standards. In addition, the establishment

of standards that articulate the minimum level of educational service to be attained, along with indicators and guidance notes on how to reach the standards, will give government and humanitarian workers the tools that they need to address the Education For All and UN Millennium Development Goals.

In addition, minimum standards will:

- Promote education as a core element of humanitarian assistance
- Enhance accountability among humanitarian actors
- Improve coordination among partners, including education authorities
- Serve as a capacity-building and training tool to enhance effective education design, implementation, management and evaluation
- Provide a strong advocacy tool for promoting education to humanitarian organizations, governments, donors and populations affected by crisis

Furthermore, the consultative process of developing standards will strengthen the education and humanitarian community by linking beneficiaries, practitioners, policy-makers and academics through discussions on best practice.

Proposed Action Points/Decisions by IASC-WG:

In order to advance the Minimum Standards Process and ensure the involvement of key actors in the humanitarian organizations and coordinating bodies, each IASC member sends *a memo to the education and child/adolescent focal points within their organization* that includes:

- Information on the minimum standards process; and,
- A request that these organizational focal points participate in the INEE Minimum Standards Process by participating in one five upcoming INEE-coordinated regional consultations and/or by holding a local consultation within their own organization structure.

The important role of education and its potential to protect children and adolescents in emergency situations cannot be overlooked. Therefore, the IASC-WG should:

- 1) consider a process of advocacy with donors, emphasizing the importance of education and requesting that they increase support for education in emergencies programming; and,
- 2) send a technical note on the importance of education in emergencies to Resident/Humanitarian Coordinators and encourage an increased emphasis on education programs in the Consolidated Appeals Process.