

Conflict-sensitive education and gender

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Introduction

Conflict and insecurity are among the most significant obstacles to development of our time and present considerable barriers to realising the right to education for children and young people, especially girls.

Today there are 1.5 billion people who live in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.¹ In 2008, there were 60 million children of primary school age reported to be out of school; in 2011, this figure had reduced to 58 million, a positive trend. However, in conflict-affected countries, this figure has actually increased; up from 42 per cent in 2008 to 50 per cent in 2011.² In conflict zones, girls, who make up 55 per cent of the total,³ are the worst affected, often victims of rape and other sexual violence that accompanies armed conflicts. Additionally, almost a third of the world's out-of-school adolescents (20 million) live in conflict-affected countries.

The role of education in fragile contexts

Education is central to identity formation and can promote cohesive societies, as well as support nation building, positive values and the achievement of many other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In conflict-affected and fragile contexts, education can also play a crucial role in supporting peace- and statebuilding processes. A country that has ten per cent more of its youth in schools cuts the risk of conflict by four per cent.⁴ Thyne argues that primary enrolment rates are a strong proxy for equitable educational investment. His research shows that 'an increase in primary enrolment from 1 standard deviation (SD) below the mean to 1 SD above results in a 73% decrease in the predicted probability of civil war onset'.⁵ Enrolment in secondary education for boys also has an increased impact on reducing the likelihood of conflict.⁶

It is therefore common sense that there should be a focus by education policy-makers and practitioners in ensuring access to a quality education in these contexts. But does this mean delivery of education services in the standard way? Does this mean business as usual? How should education be delivered in a conflict-affected fragile context, and what can we do to ensure that gender is a focus?

Davies' talks about education's interaction with a range of five domains of fragility, including governance, security, social, economic and environmental aspects (see Figure 1).

Davies points out how critical it is to analyse both education's positive role in reducing instability and the risk of crisis (how best



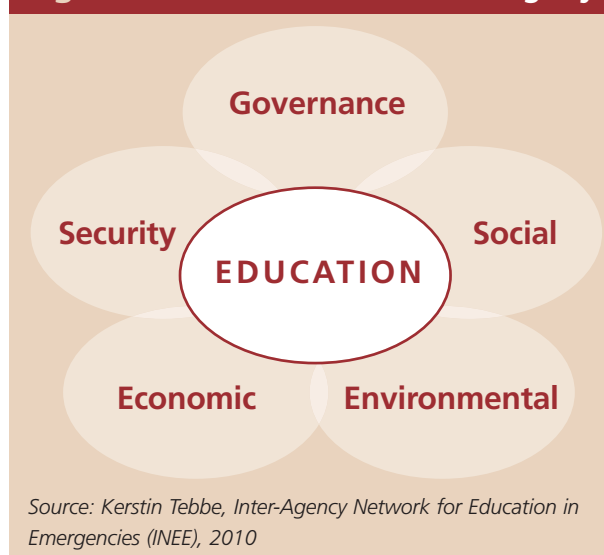
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Assess; Do No Harm: INEE has developed protection and distribution principles for different age/gender groups

to maximise this, improving service delivery) and the potential for education to play a negative role and impact adversely on specific domains of fragility.

Examples of how education can have adverse impacts or increase tensions include: unequal access along religious, gender, cultural, ethnic or linguistic lines; biased curriculum and textbooks; discriminatory teaching and learning methods or intimidation in the classroom; management structures and processes that promote distrust and entrench intolerance; discriminatory fees and

Figure 1: The five domains of fragility



Source: Kerstin Tebbe, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), 2010

geographical preference for school sites; and favouritism in the distribution of resources that mirror and reinforce social cleavages (see box below on adverse effects).

However, a conflict-sensitive education also has huge potential to mitigate conflict. This can be done by ensuring that:

- Access to education is inclusive
- There is no geographical preference for locations of schools
- Curricula and teaching materials are free of bias and accessible to the needs of all learners
- Teachers reflect the diversity of their societies and are recruited and compensated in an equitable way

Adverse effects

In Afghanistan, education has actively promoted insecurity through the militarisation of the curricula and textbooks in some schools, which has contributed to the promotion of military mindsets and the idea of solutions by force (Jones, 2009). Burde (2013) has since noted the unintentional consequences of counter-insurgency programmes in Afghanistan, which provide basic social services in the expectation of 'winning hearts and minds'. Education is a highly desired service, but focusing resources on the most restive populations creates resentment among other groups and a perverse incentive to be restive. Providing highly visible products such as schools created more incentives to loot and often there were no teachers to staff the schools. Counter-intuitively, because education was often requested, it was not considered to be a priority for reducing conflict – counter-insurgency decision-makers believed that if the community wanted education, education couldn't be a driver of conflict. Notwithstanding this rationale, the lack of education provision was among the top grievances listed by communities.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the politicisation of education has actively reinforced fragility through endeavours to maintain 'national' difference and segregation with regard to ethnicity, religion and language. This is manifested in a divided and segregated system; curricula and textbooks deliberately promoting 'national' identity; and 'national' language, music and anthems, poetry and history. In addition, the 'defence' curriculum, which teaches students techniques to defend themselves from military attack and ways to retaliate, has contributed to maintaining fear and the notion of threats from 'others'.

In Cambodia and Liberia, education now seems to be less overtly used to promote tension and 'othering'. Historically, however, education played an active role in contributing to fragility through the promotion of exclusion from schools. In Cambodia, mobilisation was organised around this core grievance. In Liberia, educational exclusion was officially recognised as one of the root causes of the conflict, playing a major role in larger patterns of exclusion and marginalisation by limiting access and offering low levels of quality for many.

Source: Davies, L. (2011)

- Teaching and learning methodologies and discipline systems are participatory, respect and actively promote children's rights, and are always child-friendly
- School management practices lead to better co-operation and reciprocity, and resources are allocated equitably

It is within this complex context and with the knowledge that education can impact conflict and peace that education policy-makers and practitioners must work to ensure that education is conflict sensitive. In order to deliver an effective conflict-sensitive education in these contexts, the policy-makers and practitioners must understand the complex interfaces of education and conflict/fragility that goes beyond service delivery and must consider education policies, planning and programming and their relation to the drivers and dynamics of conflict and fragility. There are many tools focusing on conflict sensitivity but few on how to deliver conflict-sensitive, education-specific programmes.

Therefore, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) working groups⁸ have recently been working together to develop a tool to ensure that education programmes in these contexts are conflict sensitive, and are designed, implemented and evaluated with conflict sensitivity in mind. INEE launched the Conflict Sensitive Education Pack in April 2003 in Paris.

INEE Conflict Sensitive Education Pack

The Conflict Sensitive Education Pack is made up of three parts:

1. INEE Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles are for integrating conflict sensitivity in education policy and programming in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. They lay out the principles for good engagement in fragile states, and can be adopted by organisations and used to raise awareness and institutionalise the founding principles that promote conflict-sensitive education. The six principles are:

1. Assess
2. Do no harm
3. Prioritise intervention
4. Promote equity and the holistic development of the child as a citizen
5. Stabilise, rebuild or build the education system
6. Development partners should act fast, respond to change and stay engaged beyond short term support

Understanding and action

Conflict-sensitive education is the process of:

- Understanding the context in which education takes place
- Analysing the two-way interaction between the context and education programmes and policies (development, planning and delivery)
- Acting to minimise negative and maximise positive impacts of education policies and programmes on conflict within an organisation's given priorities

The principles have several specific references to gender: Principle 2 talks about education not reflecting and perpetuating gender inequalities; Principle 3 is about supporting policies to protect girls (and boys) and young women (and men) from abuse and exploitation; Principle 4 discusses promoting equitable distribution of resources across identity groups, including gender, and curricula being free of gender and social prejudices; and Principle 5 discusses ensuring that gender is a consideration when recruiting and training teachers.

2. INEE Guidance Note

The Guidance Note provides examples and a list of resources to implement conflict-sensitive education programmes.

It offers strategies for developing and implementing conflict-sensitive education programmes and policies. It has several references throughout to gender. For example, under strategies for conflict-sensitive access and learning environments, it discusses ensuring equal access through policies and programmes that make education accessible for all, including: unbiased curricula; ensuring teacher training opportunities, recruitment, deployment and compensation are accessible to both males and females; and that education policy is formulated in an inclusive way to include gender.

3. INEE Reflection Tool

The Reflection Tool is designed for education programme staff and other stakeholders concerned with education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, and aims to support them to integrate conflict sensitivity in education at all stages of the programme cycle.

It is a 'checklist' with a series of questions based on each principle (people can select different questions at different times according to what stage of the project cycle they are in), which allows stakeholders to design or 'check' the conflict sensitivity of a programme. It requests users to consider the questions and come up with a response and follow-up actions. By answering each question, it is hoped that stakeholders will have considered the fundamental areas and complex interfaces of education and conflict/fragility, and given some thought and reflection as to how education policies, planning and programming relate to the drivers and dynamics of conflict and fragility and therefore minimise the adverse impacts. Principles of community participation, equity, access, quality, relevance and protection are included across the Reflection Tool and are based on the INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response and Recovery. This Reflection Tool can be used in the following ways:

- For an assessment of a new education programme
- In the design of a new education programme
- In the implementation/management of an education programme
- In monitoring and evaluating an education programme
- In the review of an education programme

As with the other tools, gender is mainstreamed throughout: from the assessment phase, ensuring that all stakeholders have been consulted, including women and girls, and education data has been disaggregated by gender; to the monitoring and evaluation

phase, ensuring that the monitoring plan includes disaggregated indicators so that discrepancies can inform the programme.

The INEE Conflict Sensitive Education Pack⁹ articulates strategies to ensure that conflict prevention is integrated into education policies and programmes so as to prevent the development of new conflicts in the future, and can be used:

- As a reference to develop funding proposals to ensure interventions are conflict sensitive
- To develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure that processes and indicators promote conflict sensitivity
- To inform training and capacity development resources around conflict-sensitive education
- To support advocacy efforts around conflict-sensitive education
- To get ideas on conflict-sensitive strategies to strengthen project proposals and implementation

The INEE recommends that governments, donor agencies and implementing partners use the Conflict Sensitive Education Pack for education policies and investment, and calls for proposals and programmes in these contexts.

We hope that governments, donors, the UN, NGOs and other stakeholders at all levels will promote the widest possible use of this resource to ensure that curricula are not biased, marginalised groups are included, and teachers are recruited and trained equitably: so that the 28 million girls and boys who live in conflict-affected and fragile contexts will receive a thoughtful, conflict-sensitive education.

Endnotes

- 1 World Bank, *World Development Report*, 2011.
- 2 UNESCO, *Children battling to go to school*, 2013.
- 3 UNESCO, *Children battling to go to school*, 2013.
- 4 Unicef, *Programme brief: Peace building, Education and Advocacy in Conflict Affected Contexts*.
- 5 Thyne, C. (2006). 'ABC's, 123's, and the Golden Rule: The pacifying effect of education on civil war, 1980–99'. *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 50, pp. 733–754.
- 6 Dixon, J. (2009). 'What Causes Civil Wars? Integrating quantitative research findings'. *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4; and Barakat, B. and Urdal, H. (2009), 'Breaking the Waves: Does education mediate the relationship between youth bulges and political violence?' World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 5114.
- 7 Davies, L. (2011). *Understanding Education's Role in Fragility*. International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).
- 8 INEE is a network of more than 9,500 individual members living and working in more than 170 countries. INEE has three working groups: education and fragility; minimum standards; and Education Cannot Wait. These are made up of organisations that include UN agencies, bilateral organisations (donors), NGOs, governments and academic institutions based on their experiences of implementing quality education programmes in these contexts.
- 9 The INEE Conflict Sensitive Education Pack is available on the INEE Conflict Sensitive Education webpage: ineesite.org/conflict-sensitive-education.

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