

THEMATIC HEA & Advocacy BRIEFING

World Vision

education in emergencies

Prepared by WVI HEA and Policy & Advocacy, Thematic Briefings are designed for World Vision staff who may be called upon to provide a "World Vision response" on emergency-related advocacy issues. If a more detailed or nuanced response is needed, please contact Jan Butter, Public Policy Communications Manager, or the people listed at the end of the Briefing.

In the quest to provide for basic needs in an emergency, traditionally the humanitarian community has tended to classify education as a secondary concern. There is now an increasing awareness of the importance of upholding children's human right to education in emergency situations, and World Vision is committed to doing so.

overview

Increasingly, the international community has become aware of the fundamental need for the provision and continuance of appropriate education in emergencies. The desperation of the majority of people caught up in emergency situations is not due to hunger or disease; it is the desperation and hopelessness of believing that they have lost their future. In the period immediately after an emergency, an educational facility provides a safe place for children to be, and important mental and emotional support to them in a time of crisis. In the long term, education is vital for the growth of both individual and community; studies have shown that each year of schooling increases one's earning capacity by a global average of 10%.

In response to the growing recognition of the need to address education in emergencies, in 2006 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed the application of the "cluster" approach to the education sector. The Education Cluster is now co-led by UNICEF and International Save the Children Alliance, and Education Clusters have been set up at field level in a number of countries experiencing humanitarian crises.

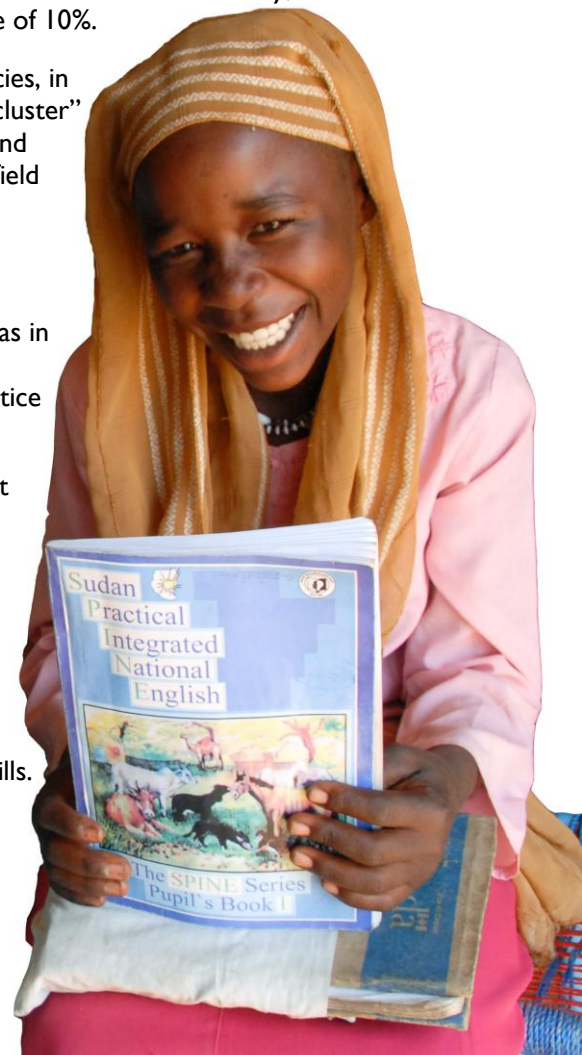
Operational definition and legal framework

The right to education is enshrined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, as well as in other instruments of international human rights law and humanitarian law. In law, this right does not change or diminish in an emergency or situation of fragility, but in practice it has been treated as a right that can be suspended or dispensed with entirely.

World Vision believes that a child's right to education does not change with the onset of an emergency. Access to a safe learning environment in emergencies is not only a right, but can save children's lives through disseminating messages that mitigate harm, increase resilience, protect against violence and exploitation, and build peace. We believe that children's right to access non-formal education becomes even more critical at such times, and that minimum standards of safe, inclusive and quality education must be maintained.

For World Vision, "education" includes both formal and non-formal systems that bring children and youth to functional levels of literacy, numeracy and essential life skills. Education starts during early childhood to prepare children to succeed in formal education, with the goal that a child be educated for life. Education incorporates the building of community learning and awareness, to help parents and other adults take charge of their development future.

Child-friendly spaces, such as the one in a South Darfur IDP camp that Mona (12) attends, serve as tranquil refuges for children living with war or trauma, providing psycho-social support, informal education and space to play. Photo: Jon Warren



World Vision programmes

Education and the opportunity to receive training are considered priority activities to assist people to return to a sense of normalcy. Education in emergencies should seek to help restore balance to an individual's life rather than merely to provide knowledge to him or her.

The State always bears primary legal responsibility for ensuring that all children receive a quality basic education, but governments are sometimes unable or unwilling to meet that right in situations of emergency. In such cases, World Vision partners with the State and the international community to ensure education for children affected by emergencies, and to advocate for the State to take an increased level of responsibility. Some of the programming approaches that World Vision employs in emergency response include:

- **child-friendly spaces (CFS)**

In all emergencies, but guided by the context, “child-friendly spaces” are created as soon as the situation allows. CFSs encourage education and life skills development, while helping children cope with emergency situations and loss. They can be established anywhere, and can be as simple as a large tent or a supervised open area. Staffed by local people who receive training from World Vision, CFSs provide children with a safe place to be – a location where they can receive non-formal education, and can meet their friends, play, take part in creative activities, and share and process the trauma and experiences they have had. It also gives parents or care-givers a chance to hand over responsibility for the children for short periods.

- **“Do/Assure/Don't Do”**

One particular challenge that World Vision has faced has been the expectation from some governments that the education response will provide new schools of a better quality than the previous ones, will take on all associated costs, and will then ensure the continuation of the previous curriculum. This is rarely strategic or wise, given the possible scale of the emergency and its impact upon the community's lives. Our strategic choices around education programming in emergencies (as outlined in the Do/Assure/Don't Do document) call us to promote literacy and life skills, and not to participate in the construction of schools unless this is identified as a priority for a Community Education Improvement Plan.

- **ensuring safe access to schools**

It is critical and of the utmost priority that all schools, and routes to school for learners, be “safe zones”. Children must be guaranteed safety at school and parents must feel comfortable sending their children to school. World Vision seeks the involvement of parents and teachers in ensuring that children safely access schools, for example through parent committees that take turns to escort children to and from schools, or ensuring that children have torches and whistles, and that they always walk in groups. In contexts of armed conflict where child soldier recruitment is a threat, international staff and cars are posted outside schools in the mornings and afternoons. Teacher training and applying a policy of zero tolerance for any form of violence, sexual harassment or exploitation at school are also essential steps to ensuring children are safe in the classroom.

- **life skills modules**

World Vision is developing templates of values-based life skills modules and a process for local adaptation in emergency contexts.

- **ensuring gender parity**

During the social upheaval often caused by emergencies, be they natural or humanitarian, there are also often “windows of opportunity” for previously marginalised groups to be included in non-formal (and then in mainstream) education. All girls, including those previously excluded (such as married girls, teen mothers or new widows) should be supported and encouraged in their education. World Vision notes that the presence of female teachers has proven to have a positive impact on reducing sexual and gender-based violence in schools, and on encouraging girls to continue and succeed in their education. We work to ensure that appropriate numbers of women are deployed and recruited into the classroom, and that all people working with children understand both the necessity for protection and the consequences of abuse.

- **addressing exclusion of children with disabilities**

World Vision is concerned that the exclusion of disabled children from education is only magnified in situations of conflict or natural disaster, and we advocate for this concern to be addressed. This exclusion is largely due to discrimination against disabled children, to a failure to identify disabled children during the assessment phase of emergency response, and to educational responses that fail to address the individual needs of each child. Key to including disabled children in education interventions is awareness amongst humanitarian personnel, communities, families and teachers about the right of disabled children to education. Also needed is training on how to effectively include disabled children in education programmes, through child-centred teaching methodology, accessible buildings, and countering negative attitudes towards disabled children and education. In order to include disabled children in education programmes, humanitarian agencies must ensure that they work with communities, families and disabled people's organisations to identify these children and address their needs.

Examples of World Vision education programmes implemented in emergency responses	
Pakistan	After the earthquake, while World Vision relief workers distributed shelter materials and food supplies in remote, hard-to-reach areas, our child protection and education staff worked with local partners to ensure that children had safe spaces to play and gain an informal education. CFSs were established in relief camps where children and families sought refuge and provisions after the quake. And, as soon as teachers could be recruited, World Vision and our local partner BEFARe (Basic Education For Awareness, Reforms and Empowerment) established emergency schools in villages like the 'Panjool Government Girls' Primary School' in Panjool.
Sri Lanka	In Sri Lanka, CFSs were not only places where children could play and spend time safely, but also spaces where children learned to express their views in all matters affecting their lives.
Darfur	In Darfur, CFSs are places that help children forget the ugly memories of war and what has happened to them. Many children find the World Vision CFSs a second home, a place for self-amusement as well as social interaction with other children. The CFS is also the main gate through which children pass to basic education, especially those aged 7–8 years.
Iraq	In response to the 2.2 million people displaced by the violence in Iraq, World Vision partnered with an NGO coalition to successfully lobby for bilateral aid funding to the Jordanian Ministry of Education, influencing Jordan's decision to accept 50,000 Iraqi children into Jordanian public schools regardless of their registration status. While this was a significant success, there is still a need for long-term funding for these children displaced by the war.

World Vision works with other actors, including local and national governments, stakeholders and members of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), to ensure that minimum standards of education are provided to all children during and after situations of emergency and conflict. World Vision is committed to promoting and implementing the INEE *Minimum standards for education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction*, the first global tool to ensure a minimum level of access and quality of education.

World Vision advocacy

Advocacy remains essential to ensuring education for all children affected by emergencies. World Vision continues to call upon the nations experiencing emergencies and the humanitarian community to prioritise education as a fundamental part of humanitarian relief. Because states experiencing emergency are often unable to finance education for all children, the humanitarian community must step into the funding gap.

World Vision currently works with other agencies in recognised coalitions to ensure co-ordination of education in emergencies, to share lessons learned and best practices for ensuring education in emergencies, and to advocate for this important response. These partners include the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (World Vision staff serve on the Disability and Inclusive Education Task Team, and the Learning and Teaching Task Team); the IASC Cluster for Education in Emergencies; and the UNHCR-led Campaign on Safe Learning Environments for refugee and IDP children.

Three particular concerns to which we advocate greater attention are:

- education of **girls** in emergencies
- education of **children with disabilities** in emergencies
- inclusion of **values-based life skills curricula** in all education responses.

Essential messaging for World Vision advocacy on education in emergencies

1. World Vision calls upon the humanitarian community to prioritise education as a fundamental part of humanitarian relief, including as an important measure of child protection. Because states experiencing emergency are often unable to finance education for all children, the humanitarian community must step into the funding gap.
2. All states, international organisations and NGOs should adopt and implement the INEE *Minimum standards* as a foundational part of their emergency response, ensuring that policies and programming to support education in emergencies are in line with the standards. The *Minimum standards* provide a global framework for co-ordinated action to enhance the quality of educational preparedness and response, increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities, and ensure humanitarian accountability in providing these services. Although not binding under international law, the standards are founded on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other legal instruments.

3. World Vision urges states, international agencies and NGOs to prioritise the protection of women and children from all forms of violence (including sexual and gender-based violence) during emergencies, including in school settings. International commitments must be translated into local efforts to reduce SGBV and gender inequity through combating impunity for rape and other acts of SGBV, regardless of the status of the perpetrator.
4. States should ensure that national curricula provide life skills education relevant to the context of the existing or threatened emergency. Such education might include practical elements such as landmine awareness, health and hygiene, HIV and AIDS awareness, environment education, and longer-term community-building skills taught through peace education and projects to address violent and anti-social behaviour. Men, women and children should be engaged in such grassroots advocacy.
5. States should prioritise the protection and inclusion of all children, through training at least two teachers per school on child-centred teaching, needs and opportunities for disabled children, and how to create and carry out Individual Education Plans. This would allow all children to move towards inclusion in education systems.
6. The donor community should improve mechanisms for education funding disbursement so that all children in emergency-affected areas are reached quickly and returned to school as soon as safely possible. Donors should give a higher allocation of their humanitarian and development aid to national education plans through direct budget and sector support, especially during situations of emergency and through the transition phase from humanitarian recovery to early development. Such aid should prioritise quality and the inclusion of hard-to-reach children, which will help build the capacity of weakened states.
7. World Vision acknowledges the essential role of trained professional teachers in providing quality education, and recognises that in emergency contexts, inevitably some poorly-trained and non-professional teachers have been recruited. In these cases we promote a fast remedy to discourage this temporary solution of contract and para-teachers: provision of professional training, permanent positions and fair wages for all teachers.
8. World Vision supports the rapid establishment of child-friendly spaces following the onset of an emergency, to provide children with protection, psychological support, play and education.
9. World Vision calls for the systematic application in all emergency settings of the UNHCR Best Interest Determination – a framework of State child protection systems to determine the child’s best interest, involving decision-makers with expertise in relevant areas, including education. Children who do not have identification papers, especially apparent stateless children, must not be rejected.
10. World Vision calls for the prioritisation of education in matters of resettlement and local integration processes for displaced children, and the provision of skills development for older children and youth.

resources

DOCUMENTS

Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Day of General Discussion on “The Right of the Child to Education in Emergency Situations”, Recommendations*, 19 September, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion/RecommendationsDGD2008.doc>

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (2004), *Minimum standards for education in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction*, http://www.ineesite.org/minimum_standards/MSEE_report.pdf

Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education (2008), *Report to the UN Human Rights Council*, focusing on the Right to Education in Emergencies: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G08/135/33/PDF/G0813533.pdf?OpenElement>

World Vision International (2008), *Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of Discussion on Education in Emergencies*, 19 September, http://www.worldvision.jp/learn/pdf_materials/08_7_en.pdf

WORLD VISION CONTACTS

(Please do not give a person’s name or details to external media contacts before speaking with the person directly.)

Micael Olsson, Senior Education Advisor, Child Development (USA) micael_olsson@wvi.org

Patricia Hartasanchez, Life Skills Advisor, Education, Child Development (Mexico) patricia_hartasanchez@wvi.org