

### **Framing Paper for Objective 3:**

Examine the ways in which INEE's Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction can be used by donors and other stakeholders to support their work in education.

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This paper aims to examine the ways in which INEE's Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction can be used by donors and other stakeholders to support their work in education, and to identify the most pressing challenges that confront donors today (within the context of using the INEE Minimum Standards).

## 1. Introduction: The INEE Minimum Standards Story so Far

### *Background*

Child-oriented humanitarian agencies like CARE, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council have included emergency education programs for children since the 1990s with support of humanitarian donors like UNHCR and UNICEF. Advocates of child protection and the right to education within these agencies recognized that there was little coordination of these efforts, limited funding and no solid foundation of accepted good practice on which to base their interventions. Ensuring quality education programs in challenging circumstances was an issue of common concern. Also important, however, was the need to link improved quality and accountability to advocacy; for many donors, education was not seen as a humanitarian response priority, and funding for it was often hard to secure.

The development of the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction initiative was prioritized by the early members of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), which was established in late 2000. The Sphere project was a model with potential to mainstream education into humanitarian response – thereby securing increased funding - and to increase the levels of quality, access and accountability within emergency education programming.

### *The Sphere Standards*

The Sphere project was launched in 1997 as a collaborative effort of various humanitarian NGOs and the Red Crescent and Red Cross movements to strengthen the quality and accountability of humanitarian assistance in response to the failures and criticisms of the humanitarian response in Rwanda in 1994. Built upon the Humanitarian Charter, the Sphere handbook codified a set of human rights and humanitarian assistance principles<sup>1</sup> articulated through a set of minimum standards and indicators for emergency assistance in four priority sectors: water & sanitation, food security, nutrition & food aid, shelter, settlement & non-food items and health. In addition, a category of minimum standards common to all sectors addresses participation, assessment, monitoring and evaluation, competencies of and support for humanitarian workers. Through global training and dissemination efforts, Sphere standards are now widely accepted and used as guidelines for humanitarian response.

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<sup>1</sup> namely that all possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering arising out of calamity and conflict and secondly that those affected by disasters have a right to life with dignity, and therefore a right to assistance.

### *INEE Minimum Standards Development*

Education was not included within the Sphere framework, but INEE recognized the potential significance of standards for the sector. Therefore, in 2003 a Working Group on Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies was established by 13 INEE member organizations.<sup>2</sup>

Over the course of 18 months, 2250 individuals from 50 countries shaped and refined the INEE Minimum Standards in a highly consultative international process. Since the launch in December 2004, interest and demand have been high. Over 17,000 copies of the handbook have been distributed worldwide and it has been translated into seven languages, with others planned. Adoption and implementation processes are underway and during 2006, INEE is facilitating a series of nine regional Trainings of Trainers to prepare 225 INEE Minimum Standards trainers. These trainers will in turn train thousands of humanitarian and education workers over the following year, strengthening the capacity of global, regional, national and local level workers to provide the psychosocial, cognitive and physical protection that quality education in emergencies can afford to communities in crisis and the coordinated, holistic response needed to lay a solid and sound basis for post-conflict and disaster reconstruction.

Informal feedback and documentation on Minimum Standards dissemination and implementation indicate that they are particularly useful in relation to:

- Improved coordination between agencies and organizations
- Developing a common language and shared visions between different stakeholders, including members of affected communities and governments
- Project design and log frame development
- Assessment design and process
- Project monitoring and evaluation
- Training and capacity building for students, educators, agency staff as well as for ministry of education personnel
- Emphasizing a gender equality focus
- Advocacy to promote education as a priority humanitarian response

More detailed reports now document use and impact of the INEE Minimum Standards in the field in recent crises. For example, in Aceh three INEE member organizations (the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children and UNICEF) distributed the INEE Minimum Standards handbook to their staff at the outset of the emergency response, and the framework acted as a guide to program development within each agency, as well as facilitating coordination between the larger group of agencies on the ground. The handbook was translated into Bahasa Indonesian and shared with the Aceh Provincial Ministry of Education. This facilitated acceptance of the Minimum Standards and their use as a common framework to promote coordination and quality programming. In-depth discussions from the outset of the response on how to best utilize this tool within the local context is described as having led to more effective emergency education responses, which at the same time were laying the foundations for long-term quality improvement in education (Anderson & Brooks, 2005). This report also points to the need for

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<sup>2</sup> Funding was provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the International Save the Children Alliance, Save the Children Norway, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank

staff to be familiar with the standards through training, especially given high turn-over rates in crisis situations, which was also found in an initial baseline study of Minimum Standards implementation in conflict-affected areas of northern Uganda. The research in northern Uganda indicates that staff from the different agencies are generally at an *awareness level* of Minimum Standards implementation; that is, they have received training or through some other sensitization activity have learned about them, but have not yet started to fully apply the Minimum Standards in their programming. Some have, however, started to use them as an informal checklist for program implementation or monitoring (Sullivan-Owomoyela, 2006).

To date there have been only three short reports to INEE on Minimum Standards implementation from donors. A JICA representative, Nobuko Kayahima, has indicated that her agency is looking at how to use the Minimum Standards in education projects in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and DRC. Maysa Jalbout of CIDA describes in more detail how the Minimum Standards have been both a reference document and an advocacy tool, resulting in a specific focus on education in emergencies within the Government of Canada's International Policy Statement. This has since been translated into a focus on education in conflict, post-conflict and/or emergency situations as one of four strategic areas within basic education (See: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicida.nsf/En/JUD-2107401-GV3>). John Hatch reported that USAID used the standards as part of the process of developing an assessment tool regarding the role that education can play in fragile states and that they have also served an advocacy function to put education on the map as part of USAID responses to crisis situations.

## 2. Developments in the Program and Policy Context of the Minimum Standards

Despite these positive developments within the context of the INEE Minimum Standards, the need for emergency education and protection for children and youth remains critical. Post-conflict and early reconstruction contexts pose different challenges. Peace is often fragile, and the influx of returnees, high expectations of the social and economic dividends of peace, low institutional and government capacities to (re)-establish services and manage such transitions constitute significant risks of continued instability. Under these circumstances, the transition from emergency programs to institutionalized education requires time, funding and capacity.

According to the informal feedback from INEE members, in these types of settings, the Minimum Standards are starting to provide a more consistent framework for planning, implementing and evaluating emergency education interventions, and to form a more solid basis for advocacy and action to donors and policy-makers.

In some locations this is more explicit than others. In Pakistan, for example, the Early Recovery Plan, launched jointly by the government-appointed Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, ERRA, and the UN states that:

“All education programmes outlined will be coordinated through ERRA. Programmes in the affected areas will be implemented within the framework of the Minimum Standards of Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction, and will take place under the overall supervision and coordination

of the necessary provincial/district and local authorities, including Department of Education, implementing partners and other government and rural development institutions” (ERRA & IASC Country Team, 2006, p 11).

Recent donor policy developments include: a new USAID education strategy which includes reference to supporting education in crisis settings (USAID, 2005); as part of CIDA’s strategic directions for basic education, education in conflict, post-conflict and/or emergency situations is highlighted as one of the four strategic areas (2005); the Australian government’s white paper on international aid also sets a new expanded framework for AusAID’s work in both education and humanitarian assistance (Australian Government, 2006). The World Bank document, “Reshaping the Future: Education and Postconflict Reconstruction” is significant in that it highlights the importance of education in post-conflict reconstruction and makes the argument for early education interventions as critical to peacebuilding efforts. Norway’s strategy for achieving Education for All by 2015, as outlined in the 2003 strategy paper, “Education –Job Number 1” commits Norway to supporting efforts, “to ensure that education is provided in emergencies and from day one in post-war rehabilitation situations” (MFA, 2003, p3). The paper “Education in Conflict and Emergencies” by the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD) refers to INEE and the Minimum Standards as key resources (NORAD, 2005). DfID’s latest Education policy document highlights both the need for and the challenges of education in Fragile States (DfID, 2006).

### *Fragile States Policies*

Fragile states pose a critical and timely challenge for international assistance, and policies, papers and guidelines on them have been developed by DfID, CIDA, USAID and AusAID. DfID’s “Keeping our promises: Delivering Education for All” (2006) report highlights the “massive” education needs in fragile states, and asserts that “a significant push from international agencies is needed if the MDGs on education and gender equality are to be met”.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has created a Fragile States Working Group focused on the key challenges of service delivery, policy coherence and aid allocation to fragile states. Education was selected as a service delivery topic, and a sector-specific paper was developed (Rose & Greeley, 2006). The aim of this work is to provide practical and relevant guidance to both donors and affected countries on how to improve service delivery in fragile states within an overall framework of “Principles for Good International Engagement” (see <http://www.oecd.org/dac>). Connected through the INEE network and equipped with the collaboratively developed INEE Minimum Standards, the education sector has some useful tools for working in fragile states. With the experience of the INEE Minimum Standards development and now increasing experiences of members in applying these standards in different locations, INEE has much to contribute to a global, multi-sectoral process of principles development. At the same time, it will be important for INEE to advocate for coherency between DAC and the INEE Minimum Standards, with a strong emphasis on key issues within the standards, such as community participation, gender equality, child protection and well-being and the provision of psychosocial support.

### *Increased Attention to Measurability and Accountability*

Also significant are the multiple reform efforts underway to increase measurability and accountability in humanitarian action and thereby address concerns about speed and quality of international response to crises. There is increasing pressure for governments, donors, and agencies to account for and to ensure that the money dedicated to emergency relief is used effectively. Recent reports of abuse and exploitation by aid workers, especially in refugee camps, only increase the pressure to ensure that humanitarian actions have positive impacts and mitigate the suffering of the most vulnerable.

One example is the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative, established in 2003, which brought together donor countries,<sup>3</sup> UN agencies, NGOs and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to agree on a set of 23 principles of good practice. This is an ongoing project with reviews and action plans developed on a yearly basis (see: <http://www.goodhumanitarianandonorship.org/>). However, this initiative does not yet have strong links to INEE or the INEE Minimum Standards which is an issue for future INEE advocacy.

The new IASC Cluster system for coordinating humanitarian response across UN agencies is another accountability and reform effort, which was operationalized for the first time within the Pakistan earthquake response in October 2005. The Cluster system, with the assignment of lead coordinator responsibilities in each sector to different UN agencies, aims to improve the predictability and accountability of the humanitarian response system. It was a recommendation taken up the Humanitarian Response Review (HRR) commissioned by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland in late 2004 (See <http://www.icva.ch/files/hrrfinal.pdf>). While an education cluster on the ground in the Pakistan earthquake response has produced positive results, as of June 2006, there is no education cluster within the global IASC framework.

Whilst the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative and the Cluster system address the principles and processes of humanitarian action and accountability, apart from the Sphere standards, there are no standardized and collectively agreed-upon measures for, for example, quantifying the coverage of humanitarian assistance for an affected population.

DfID's initiative to define new benchmarks is being further developed through the SMART initiative (Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition) supported by USAID and CIDA, with participation of UN agencies and international NGOs which aims to standardize the way in which key emergency-related data are collected. (See <http://www.smartindicators.org>).<sup>4</sup>

Complementary to, and to some extent a part of, such initiatives, individual agencies and consortia are also making efforts to expand and improve their own monitoring and evaluation

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<sup>3</sup> Germany, Australia, Belgium, Canada, the European Commission, Denmark, the United States, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, Luxemburg, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland

<sup>4</sup> Another significant initiative related to accountability and measurability in humanitarian aid is the UN-OCHA managed Financial Tracking Service (FTS), a searchable global, database which records all reported international humanitarian aid, serving to analyze aid and monitor accountability among humanitarian actors (See <http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/help/whatis.asp>).

processes, data collection methods, and databases to ensure that emergency programs are designed and implemented for maximum impact, effectiveness and quality. Such initiatives also help agencies to more clearly and precisely demonstrate their accountability to beneficiaries, donors, governments and consortia or Cluster members. Within this context of increased attention to accountability and measurability at all levels, the INEE Minimum Standards provide timely guidance.

### 3. Potential of the INEE Minimum Standards for Donors

Current efforts are currently focused on initial training and dissemination, and evidence of the use and impact of the INEE Minimum Standards is just emerging. Therefore, the following section suggests programming, internal and external policy development and advocacy areas where the INEE Minimum Standards can support donors' efforts to improve education and protection for children affected by crises.

#### *To Develop Policy*

The INEE Minimum Standards provide a framework around which donors may develop their own education in emergencies policies, or link education and child protection foci within wider humanitarian aid policy frameworks. This helps to ensure that policy promotes international rights and treaty agreements, because the INEE Minimum Standards are built upon and thus aligned with international conventions and agreements to which donor countries are committed (such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); Education for All and Millennium Development Goals (2000); the Geneva Refugee Convention (1951); CEDAW (1979)). They are rights-based in their approach, with human and children's rights and gender equality as cross-cutting themes. Although there are differences in the extent to which donors explicitly promote rights-based programming, most adhere to a broad rights-based framework which means that adoption of the INEE Minimum Standards does not imply any major shifts in approach, and should be relatively easy to integrate into overarching policy frameworks.

#### *As a Tool for Internal Advocacy*

For donor staff working in education and/or humanitarian response, internal advocacy may be required before a stage of policy development on education in emergencies is ever reached. The INEE Minimum Standards support such internal advocacy in that they are a concrete demonstration of education's position as a humanitarian sector, and of the important role education plays in times of crisis. The INEE Minimum Standards describe the field, anchor practice to rights and policy norms, focus on the specific educational needs of children, teachers and other education personnel in times of crisis, and provide a synthesis of widely accepted good practice.

Internal advocacy and policy development should be oriented to increased funding allocations to education in humanitarian contexts. Despite improvements, this is still critical, especially in the case of chronic fragile states and arrested development contexts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As Lexow (2006) states "Funding to education in humanitarian assistance has increased tremendously if one looks at natural disasters and conflicts combined. But it is less certain that the same increase has happened in conflict

### *To Promote Quality in Donor-funded Programs*

As policies are operationalized and funding and programs come on line, donors can use the INEE Minimum Standards as guidelines for program development and quality assurance. Results-based frameworks are widely used to ensure that projects meet established targets and have the desired impacts (e.g. the previous section highlighted some of the broader initiatives aimed at improving quality in humanitarian action). The INEE Minimum Standards provide a practical framework and detailed good practice guidelines that donor agency staff at all levels can readily use to promote quality and assess performance at the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of education program development. This is especially important where funding and programming for education in emergencies is relatively new, and there may be limited 'in house' expertise, tools or frameworks to guide and monitor programming.

The indicators in the INEE Minimum Standards are meant to be adapted to each specific context and thus provide the starting point for results matrices, for performance monitoring plans and monitoring and evaluation plans. In addition to promoting the use of the INEE Minimum Standards to implementing partners through, for example, writing INEE Minimum Standards implementation into initial calls for proposals or grant criteria, donor staff can use them as a guide for monitoring visits, reviewing reports and developing formative and summative evaluation frameworks.

### *To Promote Accountability*

Used as suggested above, the INEE Minimum Standards and indicators also provide an accountability mechanism at all levels from the field up. Donor proposal guidelines often refer to "minimum standards such as Sphere" and this wording represents sensitivity and commitment to the 'self-regulation' and voluntary implementation principles of the Sphere standards. The INEE Minimum Standards should also serve as transparent, aspirational good practice norms for all stakeholders to know and utilize, and as a resource for constructive feedback and self-correction by implementing agencies, donor monitoring and external evaluators. As is explained in the introduction of the handbook, the process of describing the gaps between the realities and the standard, identifying the reasons for them and what can be done to address different obstacles is crucial (INEE, 2004, p. 9), and is one that should be carried out by donors and implementing agencies as well as beneficiaries, teachers and other stakeholders.

### *To Improve Internal Coordination*

One of the difficulties identified in the early days of INEE was that education in emergencies often 'fell through the gap'. This falling through the gap happens at different levels, including within agencies. Education advisers are not usually involved with emergency response programs, and are more focused on a 'regular' program of development projects in more stable contexts. Emergency response team members generally have little awareness about education's role in humanitarian action and do not have education-related skills. As separate units or sections within agencies, there is often little discussion or collaboration between the two. The INEE Minimum Standards handbook therefore is a tool to promote collaboration and coordination between departments within large agencies. The standards recognize the importance of education sector-

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ridden areas. Figures from the country case studies show that the gap between requirements and actual contributions is huge". Cited Rose & Greeley, 2006.

specific issues such as the role of communities, of parents and teachers; the importance of curriculum choices; of the certification of teachers and students; of teaching methodologies; and teacher training and support, for example. These issues are familiar to education professionals within the agencies and will be issues on which they should feel able to work. At the same time, the standards also fully acknowledge and address the particular dimensions and dynamics of humanitarian aid and include elements familiar to humanitarian response/emergency units, such as initial assessments, coordination mechanisms, school feeding programs, as well as a specific emphasis on the psychosocial well-being of students and teachers. Furthermore, the child protection components of the INEE Minimum Standards provide an entry point for child protection specialists within agencies to see the spaces within the field of education in emergencies for their support, expertise and collaboration. Internal coordination and collaboration on specific issues facilitate internal advocacy and also, it is hoped, can lead to increased funding possibilities through existing channels, and to internal advocacy for increased allocations to education in emergencies.

One very concrete example to illustrate this point is an initial training day on the INEE Minimum Standards held at CIDA in February 2005, co-hosted by CIDA and the Children and Armed Conflict Working Group of the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (CPCC). This event brought together staff from a number of different units within CIDA: education advisers and staff from various geographical branches; the Policy Branch (including education, gender equality, child rights and child protection specialists); the Humanitarian Assistance and Food Aid Division; and the Multilateral Program Branch's Peace and Security Unit (PSEC). Country desk officers of conflict and crisis-affected countries also attended. Such a gathering was unique within the agency, and it was acknowledged that this sort of cross-agency and multi-sectoral response is necessary in order to ensure quality education for children affected by emergencies.

#### *To Coordinate Internal Funding Streams*

The INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction cover a broad range of crisis situations and are relevant from the onset of an emergency through the post-emergency recovery and reconstruction phases. As such they are a tool to promote the coordination of internal funding streams and mechanisms, especially in the transition phase from emergency to reconstruction. Funding often dips once the initial emergency/relief phase is over and humanitarian funding is exhausted, before a country is able to access longer term, recovery and reconstruction funding. This may be complicated by the fact that the criteria for accessing such funds may be very high for a fragile, recovering country (for example a sound PRSP). Within individual agencies, there may also be disconnects between funding streams once emergency aid has been provided, creating difficulties in ensuring continuity in funding and therefore in programming. The INEE Minimum Standards represent global consensus on good practice and necessary interventions spanning emergency to development phases – and as many have observed, provide a blueprint for quality education in all settings, not just emergencies. They provide staff in all units and sections with a holistic, longer term perspective on priority policy and program actions and can be used to collaboratively advocate for longer term and coordinated funding streams as well as to design longer term programs which transition through different phases.

### *To Facilitate Inter-agency Coordination*

The standards category, Education Policy and Coordination, emphasizes the importance of inter-agency and multi-stakeholder coordination in education responses. For donors, a consistent, overall framework like the INEE Minimum Standards for coordinated efforts in the education sector makes it much easier to identify funding gaps and priorities, and should facilitate quick and strategic funding decisions.

Future emergency responses will be increasingly coordinated through the UN-led Cluster system. Although no Education Cluster has been officially established at the global level, in the earthquake response in Pakistan an Education Cluster was set up, operating at the central level with meetings in Islamabad, while at the field level, meetings at local hubs were organized. These Cluster meetings were initiated by UNICEF, with the Ministry of Education playing a stronger role over time. The Cluster Closure report (Education Cluster, 2006) documents how the Cluster promoted and applied the INEE Minimum Standards as a guiding framework for its work, and developed guidelines for emergency education specific to the Pakistan context, including minimum standards for educational provision such as teacher salaries and honoraria, in addition to draft designs for primary school reconstruction. Throughout it worked in close coordination with the government's Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Authority. The positive experiences of this Cluster would suggest that an 'official' and institutionalized Education Cluster should be established at the global level, and that for such future Clusters, the INEE Minimum Standards could provide a common language and vision as well as guidance on very concrete process steps to take, thus making the Cluster a more effective accountability, predictability and coordination mechanism.

At higher multi-sector policy levels, the INEE Minimum Standards provide a common framework for inter-agency collaboration within working groups and mechanisms, such as the DAC, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Good Donorship Initiative. As described above, there are collaborative efforts underway to establish principles for good practice in service delivery (including education) in fragile states. The INEE Minimum Standards were developed with a high level of sensitivity to the particular capacity, political willingness, governance and security issues pertinent in fragile states, and as such should articulate well with broader, multi-sector principles. Early discussions of the DAC principles reflect the priorities of the INEE Minimum Standards, especially the need for ongoing and systemic community participation, and for in-depth analysis of individual contexts. For agencies working within this initiative, the INEE Minimum Standards provide a complementary sector-specific tool to operationalize the emerging DAC framework.

The same is true of the commitments in the Good Donorship Initiative: within the section on 'Promoting Standards and Enhancing Implementation', Article 15 commits agencies to "fully adhere to good practice and are committed to promoting accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in implementing humanitarian action". In the section on 'Learning and Accountability' agencies commit to "support learning and accountability initiatives for the effective and efficient implementation of humanitarian action". The promotion and implementation of the INEE Minimum Standards represents a very tangible example of putting these commitments into practice.

#### 4. Challenges for Donors of using the Minimum Standards

Whilst the above discussion suggests that there is much to be gained from the adoption and institutionalization of the INEE Minimum Standards by donor agencies, there are clearly associated challenges to address. Not enough time has passed since the launch of the standards for there to be much concrete evidence or experience to draw, but the donor-specific challenges highlighted below have been identified.

##### *Contextualization is Required*

The INEE Minimum Standards are a combination of qualitative and quantitative targets which are not immediately applicable in the same way as some of the more quantitative standards of the Sphere sectors. Thus the education standards require a process of contextualization and prioritization of locally-appropriate indicators. These are important steps at the field level for building a shared vision and common goals amongst different education stakeholders. For donor agency staff with limited time who are less involved with project implementation, the broad menu of qualitative indicators itself can provide overall guidance, but it does not provide immediately useable formulas (e.g. class size and student-teacher ratios).

##### *Aligning Internal Structures and Processes*

The pervasive divisions within agencies that separate emergency response from development programming, education technical experts from humanitarian aid and emergency funding channels from longer term development assistance streams constitute a significant challenge. Within such an organizational structure, a framework like the INEE Minimum Standards that attempts to integrate components across multiple sectors may pose initial problems in terms of operationalization and ownership. If there is no one unit to take the lead, or no established mechanisms for collaboration to support such processes, the INEE Minimum Standards may fall into the gaps.

Collaboration, policy and program coherence as well as multi-sectoral synergies and linkages are required in order to fully meet the INEE Minimum Standards; they cannot be met entirely by educationalists, nor entirely through the humanitarian response section. One of the critical advocacy issues the INEE Minimum Standards target are the gaps between initial emergency program funding and longer term reconstruction and development funding. These are gaps not only in availability of potential financial resources but also gaps in terms of donors' internal funding streams and the lack of institutionalized linkages between emergency funding and follow up funding channels.

##### *Commitments to SWAPS, budget-support and other government-driven assistance-modalities*

For some donor agencies, there is an increasing tendency to provide education sector assistance through direct budget support to ministries of education, to partner with other donors in committing to SWAPs (sector-wide assistance programs) or SWAP-like agreements. This means that the donor agencies are less – if at all – engaged in project implementation within countries. Such alternative forms of assistance also represent a commitment to supporting ministries in their own priority policies and activities. Although regular meetings and discussions take place between donors and ministries, careful negotiation is required in order for donors to also promote their own priorities. This shift in roles of donors at the country level has been cited as a challenge

to the widespread use by donors of the INEE Minimum Standards at the country program level. Acceptable ways need to be found of integrating the standards into SWAP and other budgetary support programs and of presenting the standards to recipient governments as a guiding framework to support them in their work. This should become easier in the future as more ministry staff become aware of the INEE Minimum Standards through the training plan described above, and through national advocacy and awareness-raising by the UN, international and national NGOs. In relation to working in fragile states, Rose and Greeley (2006) welcome the standards on education policy and coordination and recommend more in-depth contextualization in implementation: “This is very welcome, though there is scope for strengthening this indicator [*Emergency education programmes are planned and implemented in a manner that provides for their integration into longer-term development of the education sector*] and relating it explicitly to broader processes of national policy development.”

#### *Limited Awareness, Capacity and Differing Levels of Institutionalization*

Globally, awareness of the INEE Minimum Standards remains relatively limited, as are capacities to effectively apply them. At different levels, donors are likely to be working with agencies and organizations which are not using them in their education or humanitarian programming. This is especially so at the field level for government officials and local education authorities, where staff may not have heard of the standards. Efforts have been made to include government and ministry of education personnel in INEE Minimum Standards trainings and other activities, but as yet, awareness may be limited to a small number of individuals who do not necessarily have the authority and/or the capacity to institutionalize the standards within their own departments. There also is often considerable staff turnover within government departments. Yet it is not just a question of awareness; as highlighted above, the INEE Minimum Standards require contextualization, and they presume at least a basic understanding of key concepts, such as education as a protective force for children and youth; effectively using the standards requires relatively sophisticated understanding and skills.

Local and international NGO staff are likely to be at least somewhat aware of the INEE Minimum Standards through internal launches, trainings and global policy development, and yet donors may find that the levels of institutionalization and formal adoption of the standards vary widely, even within different country/regional programs of the same organization. The INEE global dissemination and training initiatives, as well as other dissemination and training activities conducted by INEE members, aim to address this lack of understanding, but especially whilst the process is ongoing (through the end of 2007) limited awareness, capacity and differing levels of institutionalization will be implementation challenges.

#### *Skepticism around the Potential Value of Minimum Standards*

Even where people are aware of the INEE Minimum Standards, skepticism about their ‘added value’ may exist. With no formal evaluation evidence of the impact of the standards as yet, this is especially difficult to counter. Education is a sector over which state control is politically, culturally and socially important; governments with whom donors are engaged may therefore be reluctant to accept what may look like an outside, and westernized imposition. Ministries have their own norms and standards, rules and regulations, and may see the adoption of the INEE Minimum Standards as giving these up or letting them be over-ridden by another set of external standards. One dimension of this possible skepticism is the reluctance of some governments to

have their situation labeled as an ‘emergency’ or a ‘fragile state’. Such situations speak to the need to work with the full title, ‘INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction Contexts’ or its abbreviated form ‘INEE Minimum Standards’.

Another issue which may affect donors differently depending on the geographic focus of their interventions is a perception that the INEE Minimum Standards focus primarily on complex, conflict-related emergencies and are less applicable to natural disasters and also to smaller scale localized disasters. This perception can be addressed through reference to the effective use of the standards in a number of recent natural disasters, but may be a hurdle to overcome, especially when presenting the standards to governments of natural-disaster affected/prone countries.

## 5. Conclusions

The INEE Minimum Standards provide a comprehensive tool to guide program and policy development for quality education interventions in emergencies, chronic crises and early reconstruction contexts. This is especially so for donors who are familiar with the principles and the content of the Sphere Humanitarian Charter. The INEE standards have potential to improve the quality of agency supported programs at the field level, to contribute to improved, coordinated internal policy and programming and to form a framework for inter-agency collaboration. They may also enhance accountability at multiple levels. However, emergencies, crises, natural and man-made disasters are by nature unpredictable, chaotic and uneven, therefore any efforts to standardize and systematize humanitarian response are inherently challenging. This is equally so in the education sector, and there are certainly challenges to be addressed in the implementation of the INEE Minimum Standards. These include the need for contextualization, internal divisions within agencies, budget support/SWAPs strategies, limited awareness, limited capacity, differing levels of institutionalization, and possible skepticism. Addressing these challenges with donors requires efforts from different stakeholders, including the INEE Secretariat, member organizations and individuals. On the other hand, challenges can become opportunities, and recommendations can be made, such as donors using the INEE Minimum Standards to bring together staff from different units to identify and address possible gaps and discontinuities, including the standards in their proposal guidelines, and channeling training to key actors, such as relevant ministry of education staff.

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