

# KEY ADVOCACY MESSAGES

## EMERGENCY EDUCATION SOMALIA

### Purpose of the paper

- To clarify key advocacy messages for the provision of Emergency Education for children and youth affected by disaster, conflict, displacement or other emergencies
- The paper has been developed by the Somalia Education Cluster and may be freely used by all cluster members to support their advocacy efforts towards education stakeholders, donors and the international community at large

### 1. Education is a right for children and youth affected by armed conflict and disaster

Worldwide 72 million children are out of school and more than half of those live in conflict affected and fragile states. In Somalia currently 72% of children and youth of school going age are out of school due to civil strife, insecurity, drought, recurrent floods and economic crisis<sup>1</sup>.

A host of global agreements and legally binding treaties including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Convention Related to the Status of Refugees as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights state that every child has a right to education regardless of the context in which he or she lives. Somalia is signatory to the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Related to the Status of Refugees, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and The World Declaration on Education for All. However Somalia is not signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 2. Emergency education is life saving

Education in emergencies can help reduce the many risks faced by children and youth and can ultimately prevent death or severe harm being done to children and adolescents by conveying life saving messages on e.g. health and hygiene issues. Schools and learning centres can likewise facilitate the communication of life saving messages on unexploded ordnances which can cause severe and lasting physical and psychological damage to children and youth. Furthermore emergency education can help protect children and youth from recruitment into armed forces or criminal activity arising from idleness or poverty.

### 3. Emergency education helps protect children and young people from physical and sexual abuse

During emergencies or times of crisis it is especially important to focus on protection of children and youth. Physical and sexual abuse of women, children and adolescents increases

---

<sup>1</sup> Primary Education Survey 2004/2005, UNICEF

during emergencies as normal coping mechanisms brake down and the affected population is exposed to a lot of distress. As children and youth, especially girls are among the most vulnerable individuals they are often the first to experience the increase in all forms of abuse. Schools and learning centres can help identify, address and mitigate risks in the community. Education in emergencies also helps reduce the psychological distress of children by restoring a sense normalcy and enabling them to be and play with peers. Children more than anybody else need a structured and predictable daily framework in order to develop normally.

#### **4. Emergency education is a building stone for the future**

Engaging in emergency education is not only addressing immediate needs but also taking the first steps towards rebuilding the future. Conflicts and disasters have long term impact on affected communities. If education needs are not addressed entire generations will miss out on education. Studies show that if a child misses out on school even for a short period of time they are likely to never return to school. When asked communities often prioritize education because it carries hope for the future. Furthermore education is good platform for the integration of refugees and IDPs into host communities and preparing communities for a peaceful co-existence through peace education and conflict resolution initiatives.

#### **5. Consideration of gender in emergency education further protects vulnerable groups**

During emergencies the most vulnerable groups in society become even more vulnerable and marginalized. It is therefore especially important to focus on gender issues during emergencies to ensure that both boys and girls have equal opportunities to education. Female teachers in schools can act as role models and help identify, address and prevent girl's protection concerns such as physical and sexual abuse. The location of schools should be safe and accessible for all children. Schools should have appropriate and separate sanitation facilities for girls as this has proven to be very important for promoting girl's education.

#### **6. School feeding retains children in school and improves their learning**

It is well proven that school feeding increases enrolment, reduces drop-out and absenteeism and improves children's learning. Furthermore it can ensure that children get at least one nutritious meal in a situation where the coping mechanisms of the family are depleted and they are unable to meet basic needs. School feeding can help stabilize the education system and ensure that gains made within education are not lost due to the emergency situation. Despite all these benefits only WFP is currently involved in school feeding in Somalia.

#### **7. Teacher incentives are needed to provide education during emergencies**

Teachers are key to children's learning – more important than structures, teaching aids, text books and school supplies. Providing quality education to children and youth requires well trained teachers who are paid for their services. However, parts of Somalia has been without a functioning education systems for almost two decades and have no resources nor systems to train and pay teachers. According to the 2005/2006 Primary Education Survey 70,3% of teachers reported that communities and parents were the main source of support. With the current emergency unfolding in Somalia many communities are unable to contribute towards teacher's salaries. Few teachers are willing to work for free as they also need to cater for their household. Yet again others teachers migrate to urban centres looking for other employment.

Paying incentives to teachers can ensure that education continues despite the emergency and can motivate teachers to provide better quality education. A study is currently undertaken in conjunction with the Education Sector with the aim of harmonizing the payment of incentives to teachers.

#### **8. Emergency education is underfunded**

Donors in Somalia are still not fully recognizing that education is an equally important emergency intervention. As a result of this education has only received 9% of the requested funding in the CAP 2008. This makes education one of the least funded clusters in Somalia. In comparison the Food Cluster has received 93% of the funding requested (US\$ 312,802,068 of US\$ 335,954,285). The large disparity between the clusters both in terms of volume of requested funds as well as the percentage to which the requested amount is received is a big concern.

The funding situation for emergency education in Somalia reflects trends in the global funding situation for emergency education. Globally emergency education is likewise hugely underfunded both relative to need and to other clusters. Overall the coverage of education in the CAP was 40% in 2007.

Much more resources are needed to ensure that all children and youth affected by the emergency in Somalia have access to education and hope for a better future.

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- “Delivering Education for Children in Emergencies”, Save the Children Alliance, 2008
- “Minimum Standards for Emergency Education, Chronic Crisis and Conflict”, INEE