



Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l'Éducation en Situations d'Urgence
La Red Interagencial para Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia

INEE Good Practice Guide: Community Education Committees

Community education committees are important because they

- Build trust among community members
- Promote the common interests of school and community education
- Ensure a culturally sensitive approach to education
- Support quality education
- Improve access to education for marginalized groups: girls, women, persons with disability, minorities, etc.
- Empower local people to act
- Strengthen school management structures
- Develop productive links to government authorities and other external agencies
- Utilize participatory planning and design
- Mobilize and maximize local and district resources
- Monitor school finances and assets
- Develop community leadership and ownership
- Protect children, teachers and community members.
- Increase community awareness, responsibility and advocacy for education.

In most crisis situations, education programs originate through the work and organization of local leaders, parents and teachers. The form these groups take depends on the community's previous experience, group structure, function and membership.

Possible Community Education groups:

- School Management Committees
- Parent Teacher Associations (PTS)
- School Community Alliance
- Village Education Committees
- Community Child Protection Committees

As indicated above, Community Education Committees can be called many things. Regardless of their name, these committees play an important role in the community's development and recovery. A Community Education Committee should be at the foundation of any emergency education program. In order for these committees to function effectively they typically need training to define their:

- roles and responsibilities,
- material support and
- further capacity building requirements for sustainability, greater equity and inclusiveness.

Additionally, while formal schooling is the primary focus of these committees, they also should be encouraged to address larger educational issues within their community such as access of all children to basic education and life skills training, productive activities for out-of-school youth, and adult literacy.

Strategies

- **Maximize community participation**

Community education groups serve an important psychosocial role in bringing people together around the common interest of education, particularly for their children. Community involvement in planning for education inspires hope for the future. Additionally, these meetings rebuild social networks, and can be used as a way to increase tolerance and equity through representation of all segments of the community. Therefore, membership should include different political, religious and ethnic groups, as well as traditional leaders, parents, teachers, and students.

- **Emphasize the community education committee's role in protection and advocacy**

Because they are often the first to form, community education groups are typically the first manifestations of “civil society” in post-conflict areas. They play an important role in protecting and advocating for the rights of children and community members. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other human rights instruments related to education should be a foundation for the training of community education groups. Specific areas to address would be identifying the protection and education needs of women, children, minorities, the elderly, and persons with disability.

- **Build the organization capacity of groups to undertake educational initiatives**

Following an emergency, community education groups are typically organizationally weak, and lacking in leadership and the ability to concretely address educational issues. Addressing these weaknesses requires a long-term intervention at the community level, combining on-going training, on-site support, and if possible, the establishment of a network of community education groups. Community education training programs focus on:

- Participatory management and design
- Prioritization of needs
- Project design and implementation
- Financial accountability and leadership

It is essential that these trainings be divided into small do-able pieces and accompanied by community monitoring.

Checklists

General Assessment

- Are groups in the community focusing on improving education? Do they focus on the school, a specific target group, or the community as a whole?
- Has an assessment been conducted of what skills these groups have and need? Is this assessment being acted upon?
- Who is being trained? If not all at once, how are the trainees selected? Is more than one person from the same group trained so they can work as a team when they return to their home community?
- What activities are these community education groups presently undertaking? Are educational materials being distributed to the school? Is the PTA involved in the distribution of materials?

- Are these groups based on pre-crisis groups, such as Parent Teachers Associations? How were these groups set up? How were their leaders trained?
- What linkages do they have within the community? With religious institutions like mosques, temples and churches?
- Who are the members of the community education group? How were they selected?
- Do the community education groups hold regular meetings?
- Do these groups have rules or a constitution governing how often they meet? Who participates? What activities are undertaken?
- What was the community's role in establishing the school? Who manages the school? What is the community's role in managing the school?
- Are relationships with the local government clearly defined? With the local head teacher?
- What is the relationship of the PTA with organizations outside of the community? Government officials at the regional or district level?
- Do the district and regional government officials and NGOs respect the authority of the community education committees?
- Do the community educational groups belong to larger district, regional or national associations? How often do they meet? What issues do they discuss?

Protection

- Does the community education group monitor the situation of any specific group within the community? E.g. children, women, minorities, persons with disability?
- Do they take action to address issues of concern, e.g. discrimination, lack of appropriate facilities, need for special programs? What issues have they taken up?
- Have they had any exposure to human rights tools? The Convention on the Rights of the Child? Of what significance are these tools in assisting committees to frame their constitutions and their work?

Monitoring of schools

- Does the community education committee monitor the local school(s)?
- What issues or indicators are they monitoring? Was the group trained or involved in identifying these issues and way to evaluate them?
 - Do they monitor finances?
 - School inventory?
 - Student participation?
 - School discipline?
 - Quality of instruction?
 - Maintenance and safety of school?

Income Generation

- In the past, has the community education group undertaken an income generation or fundraising project? Have funds from a donor or charitable foundation been given to the group?
- Does the group have presently any income generation projects? How were the project selected?
- Was the project profitable? How do you know?
- Who keeps the financial records for the group?
- Who determines what activities are supported by funds? Do they benefit all students?
- How is the group accountable to the community for its management of funds and expenditures?