



# Education in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict<sup>1</sup>



FOTO: LINNEA EHRNST

In a situation of internal war you may suddenly have to run from your village to become an internally displaced. These people brought with them the school as a symbol of value of education.

## Main areas of Sida's development cooperation

Sida has developed action programmes in the following areas

- Poverty reduction
- Justice and peace
- Equality between women and men
- Environmental care

The action programmes can be ordered through [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se)

During recent decades, a growing number of countries have witnessed the collapse of their social services systems, particularly their education systems. These are primarily countries that have been affected by disasters, both man-made and natural. Countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan etc., are some examples.

### Rights, Practices and Limits

The achievement of education for all and the realisation of the right to education will remain incomplete if the education needs

of societies in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict are not addressed in a proper manner. *There is today a growing recognition among the world community and national leaders of the critical importance of education in restoring a sense of normalcy and acting as an instrument for peace, protection and healthy development.* The role of basic and post-basic education in preventing the recruitment of child soldiers and in their rehabilitation has also been highlighted. Recognising the urgency, specificity and importance of addressing the education needs of these societies, the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (EFA) calls upon the international community to provide the support needed to achieve rapid progress towards EFA.

<sup>1</sup>This paper supplements Sida's policy for development cooperation in the education sector (April 2001). It describes Sida's views on support to education in societies in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict.

While some progress has been made in meeting educational needs, for instance, of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) during the last decade, much still remains to be done (Bensallah et al. 2000). Due to the nature of the environment, interventions have often been made on an ad hoc basis and in the form of discrete small projects targeted at specific groups and regions only (e.g. refugee camps, scholarships for individuals). This type of project approach has been preferred as it is relatively easy to manage, monitor and control. The limited and specific mandate and resources of UN agencies and NGOs have further contributed to the prevailing approach which is uncoordinated in some cases.

In emergency situations, historical evidence and practices suggest that education is given low priority. However, the critical role of education is being increasingly recognised. The inclusion of education in the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals (CAPs) is an illustration of the importance attached to the role of education. The UN agencies involved in the provision of education and reconstruction of education systems include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNESCO and, to some extent, UNDP. Hundreds of NGOs complement the efforts of the UN agencies. The Save the Children Alliance, OXFAM, CARE International and the International Rescue Committee are some examples.

### **Short-term or long-term Relief-cum-Development**

During the last 15 years, a number of agencies, researchers and academics have reflected upon the problems related to the transition from emergency assistance to development cooperation. *Most recognise the need for humanitarian/emergency assistance to be conceptualised and delivered within a broader development perspective.* However, this remains a continued and recurrent challenge. A gradual paradigm shift is being discerned. UNICEF (1999) notes that this paradigm shift "provides a better opportunity for education to contribute to a better life for the millions who are - or potentially might be - affected by emergencies, rather than serv-

ing as a means to maintain the status quo. This paradigm shift deserves serious attention because of its potential contribution to sustained human development and the better fulfilment of human rights".

While the need for rapid, short-term interventions would be unavoidable in emergencies and conflict situations, it is nevertheless *important to promote long-term strategic planning and analysis from a sectoral and rights perspective.* An approach of this type may facilitate the whole reconstruction process in these societies. In any event "it must be noted that because most education systems in crisis nations have many flawed elements, in all cases notable innovations will be required" (Vargas Baron and McClure, 1998).

### **Strategy for Sida.**

Sida's action in this field should be guided by the *right to education* for all children, youth and adults as enshrined in several human rights instruments and the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA, which calls for additional assistance for the provision and reconstruction of education systems in societies in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict, as well as the unquestionable recognition of the role of education for human development and peace. *Promoting rights in and through education should constitute a fundamental operational principle.* In order to link different education projects in an acute emergency phase to a long-term development approach, *Swedish support should lie, conceptually and operationally, within the framework of long term sectoral development.* In spite of potential pitfalls, Cassels (1997) argued that "there is no reason in principle why a sector-wide approach should not provide the basis for sectoral development - once basic humanitarian needs have been met. Rather than re-establishing planning and management systems around the needs of separate projects, the progressive establishment of systems which allow donors to support a common development programme, led by government, has much to recommend it". However, it is important to note that in some emergency situations, particularly in

countries in a state of protracted crisis, the absence of legitimate governments may constitute an obstacle. In situations of this type, it is imperative that context-bound solutions are identified that take the above parameters into consideration.

**In general terms Sida would consider:**

1. Supporting countries in situations of emergency, conflict and post-conflict to meet the education needs of children, youth and adults.
2. Supporting and assisting Swedish, international or local NGOs to build up capacity to intervene in the education sector, particularly through the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals (CAP) process.
3. Supporting various international networks and, as far as possible, participating in them in order to advocate the importance of education.
4. Supporting UN agencies and other relevant organisations to deliver education services and promote long-term sectoral development.
5. Promoting and supporting research and case studies.
6. Support to individual scholarship funds/programmes could only be considered in exceptional cases.

Different departments at Sida are involved in one way or another in assisting countries in situations of emergency, conflict or post-conflict. However, the primary responsibility rests with the Division for Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict Management.

**Selected References**

- Bensallah et al. (2000) Thematic Study: Education in Situations of Emergency and Crisis, UNESCO.
- Cassels, A (1997) "A guide to sector-wide approaches for health development", WHO.
- The Dakar Framework for Action (2000), UNESCO, Paris
- Retamal, G and A. Richmond (1998) "Education as a humanitarian response", IBE, UNESCO.
- The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (2001) "The Right to Education-Children affected by armed conflict and forced displacement: a child rights perspective in development co-operation and migration policies", Paper presented at the EU seminar in Gothenburg 1–2 March 2001.
- The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (1998). "The Humanitarian Imperative in Political Crises", Sweden
- Sida (1999). "Humanitarian Assistance in Armed Conflicts with a Children's Rights Perspective", Sweden.
- UNICEF(1999) "Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction: A developmental Approach".
- UNHCR (2001) "Learning for a future: Refugee Education in Developing Countries"
- Vargas Baron, E and McClure (1998) "The new heroics of generational commitment: Education in nations with chronic crises" in Retamal, G and A. Richmond (1998) "Education as a humanitarian response", IBE, UNESCO.

