Case Study on the Contextualisation of the INEE Minimum Standards by the Community-Based Education Forum in Afghanistan

Introduction

The INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (INEE Minimum Standards) represent the first global tool to provide guidance on ensuring access to safe, relevant and quality education in emergency and early recovery contexts. Since every context is different, the indicators in this handbook are neither universally applicable to every situation, nor to every potential user. They need to be contextualised i.e. adapted to each specific local situation. This case study, which is based on document analysis and interviews, describes the first formal contextualisation process of the INEE Minimum Standards, which was carried out by the Community-Based Education Forum in Afghanistan. It also identifies lessons learnt, good practices and recommendations, that can be used by other education coordination mechanisms, government institutions and implementing partners.

Background

The Education Context in Afghanistan

Primary education in Afghanistan consists of Grades 1-6, lower secondary education of Grades 7-9, and higher secondary education of Grades 10-12. According to the new Afghan constitution endorsed in 2004, education through from grade 1 through to grade 9 is compulsory and the state guarantees the right to free undergraduate education. Enrolment figures in Afghanistan have improved considerably: more than 5.4 million children were enrolled in schools in 2007 with nearly 35% of them girls, compared to a little more than 1 million five years ago and almost no girls. However, it is estimated that half of all school-age children remain out of school, with significant gender and provincial disparities. According to the 1386 (2007) Schools Survey Summary Report, over the same period of time, the number of teachers has been multiplied by seven. However, only 22% meet the minimum qualifications of having completed grade 14 and only 28% are female, most of whom are located in urban areas.

Primary education is provided by the government through government schools and community-based schools. Community-Based Schools (CBSs) are schools which may be operated by the government but are often established and supported by non-governmental organisations and communities themselves in remote rural areas and villages where formal Ministry of Education (MoE) school facilities for children do not exist. According to the draft policy guidelines for community-based education, the government recognises two types of community-based schools: Community-Based Feeder Schools (CBFS) and Community-Based Accelerated Learning Schools (CBALS).

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They can also be found in the INEE Minimum Standards Toolkit
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3 CBFSs (grade 1 to 3) are established where the primary schools in the communities are not accessible to students in remote or scattered villages populated by at least 20 households and located more than 3 km from primary schools. CBALSs are temporary.
The Community-Based Education Forum

The Community-Based Education (CBE) Forum is a sub-forum of the Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A). PACE-A is a consortium of international organisations which was established in April 2006. The partnership consists of CARE who is the prime grantee, as well as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). Collectively, these organisations have been working in Afghanistan providing educational programmes for more than 20 years. The key objective of the consortium is to extend educational and life opportunities to remote or scattered villages in Afghanistan where governmental schools are not available. To increase its efforts in developing community-based education, PACE-A organised the first meeting of the Community-Based Education (CBE) Forum in November 2006 and invited other agencies working in community-based education such as BRAC, UNICEF, Save the Children Alliance, Oxfam GB and Aid Afghanistan.

The CBE Forum has five key objectives:

- To discuss and operationalise the CBE Policy Guidelines of the Afghan Ministry of Education
- To contextualise the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction
- To map out the geographic distribution and methodological approaches of the educational programmes implemented by CBE providers
- To develop a set of tools based on contextualised standards that partners can refer to when developing their work plans and overall programming in Afghanistan
- To share information, lessons learned and good practices among CBE providers

The CBE Forum is not a coordination mechanism but rather a collegial opportunity for learning via informal monthly meeting of partners involved in the provision of community-based education programmes in Afghanistan. The CBE Forum has generated positive relationships and good will among CBE partners which is evidenced by collaboration on several initiatives, such as district mapping of CBE activities, Global Action Week, and sharing of research findings. The CBE Forum also plays an important role in supporting national and donor initiatives and strategies to put education the national development agenda for affected regions.

The work of the CBE Forum is indirectly financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) which supports PACE-A through a cooperative agreement with CARE since 10 April, 2006. USAID has used both contracts and cooperative agreements with NGOs and for profit contractors operating in Afghanistan to support the education sector as well as indirect support to the MoE through multilateral mechanisms such as the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).

Contextualisation Rationale and Mechanism

Rationale

The process of contextualising the INEE Minimum Standards and indicators to make them more relevant and applicable to the Afghan context started in May 2007 after CARE organised initial orientation training on the INEE Minimum Standards for representatives from PACE-A, USAID, BRAC, Save the Children Alliance and Creative Associates. During this initial orientation, many participants were inspired by the recommendation of the INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards – the group which coordinates INEE Minimum Standards activities at the global level - to take the INEE Minimum Standards one step further by adapting the indicators to maximise their potential, appropriateness and relevance to specific contexts. It was envisioned that the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards and indicators will be used by community-based education providers to guide their work in communities as well as by the MoE who will be able to use them to monitor the work of CBE providers.

schools providing accelerated learning classes covering the primary curriculum (grades 1 – 6) for out of school children aged 11 to 15 years; such schools will be established in the villages where more than 20 out of school age children (11-15) are willing to enrol and where communities are supportive of such initiative.


5 The CBE providers in Afghanistan include the following organisations: Aid Afghanistan, AKF, BRAC, CARE, CIC, Creative Associates, CRS, IRC, Oxfam GB, PACE-A, PARSA, SCA, SC-Sweden/Norway, SC-UK, SC-USA, and UNICEF
Therefore, the CBE Forum outlined the following goals for the contextualisation of the INEE Minimum in Afghanistan:

- to make the INEE Minimum Standards and indicators relevant, applicable and more accessible to the education system in Afghanistan and develop specific contextualised guidelines that all CBE providers could use in their work
- to ensure equitable service delivery to communities by all CBE providers
- to align education programmes implemented by CBE providers with each other and with the Ministry of Education’s CBE policy
- to develop tangible indicators that help to reflect on the quality of CBE providers’ activities in meaningful ways

Establishment of a CBE Forum Working Group
At the time of this case-study, four of the six INEE Minimum Standards categories had been contextualised over a period of 10 months. CBE Forum members agreed to form a working group to adapt the INEE Minimum Standards to CBE issues in Afghanistan. The working group met regularly with the exception of a longer break between November 2007 and January 2008 where the group did not meet at all. The working group still has to complete the contextualisation of two categories; “Analysis” and “Education Policy and Coordination”.

Contextualisation Tools and Step-by-Step Process

Development and Use of Contextualization Tools
The CBE Forum Working Group developed comprehensive and easy-to-use matrices, which facilitate discussion, reflection and consensus. This contextualisation matrix consists of four parts:

- The standard as stated in the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook
- What does the standard mean for CBE classes in Afghanistan?
- How does this description transfer to practical reality?, and
- Which indicators can be identified as means of verification for the standards being met?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>What does this mean for CBE in Afghanistan? (definitions)</th>
<th>What does this look like in practice?</th>
<th>How do we know? Means of verification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and other personnel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>standard 1: recruitment and selection</td>
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<tr>
<td>A sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel are recruited through a participatory and transparent process based on selection criteria that reflect diversity and equity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>sufficient number:</strong> one teacher for a maximum of 35 children</td>
<td></td>
<td>The community can expect to select a teacher according to a criteria, through a transparent process. The teacher will have the potential to provide proper instruction to children. The SMC will have time and commitment to support the education activities.</td>
<td>Attendance register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>appropriately qualified teachers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher’s graduation documents or grade 6 equivalency test score</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least grade 6 schooling (plus initial / basic teacher training based upon training needs assessment of teachers) for grades 1 – 4</td>
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<td>Selection criteria available in local language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least 9 grade schooling (plus initial / basic teacher training based upon training needs assessment of teachers) for grades 5 – 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>At least 12 grade education (plus initial / basic teacher training based upon training needs assessment of teachers) for grades 8 - 9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>appropriately qualified other education personnel:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>refers to Head Masters / Community Education Committees / Village Education Committees / School Management Committees / School Advisory and Support Committee</td>
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<td>Members should be identified by the community according to members’ leadership roles. Committee should have representation that reflects the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Etc.</td>
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Development of a CBE Teachers’ Code of Conduct and Monitoring Forms for MoE Staff
The working group also developed a Teacher’s Code of Conduct to serve as a generic job description for community-based teachers. The Code of Conduct will assist the teacher in holding herself or himself

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6 Community Participation, Access and Learning Environment, Teaching and Learning, Teachers and Other Education Personnel.
accountable for her/his actions and it will also be a guide on what is expected from a community-based teacher. In addition, Monitoring Forms were developed for MoE staff monitoring community-based classes. The monitoring forms function as checklists to ensure the quality and safety of the community-based schools are met.

The monitoring forms were designed to collect such data as:

- the state of the facilities of the community-based class,
- the state of the classroom and latrines,
- classroom safety and safe passage to and from the classroom,
- students’ attendance,
- classroom instruction, and
- support and supervision of the CBE class

Most of the CBE providers appreciated having these tools, many of whom were seeing such instruments for the first time.

Endorsement and Use of the Contextualized Standards

The CBE Forum met in June 2008 to endorse the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards and indicators. A two-and a half day training workshop was organized on 19-21 October 2008 at USAID in Kabul for PACE-A’s provincial managers. The four facilitators of the training workshop were all participants in INEE Regional Capacity-Building Workshops conducted in April and May 2008, supported by the PACE-A Chief of Party who also represents CARE on the INEE Working Group on Minimum Standards. This is a great example of follow-up to participation in training, and of institutionalisation of the INEE Minimum Standards in general.

The objectives of the training workshop were:

- Understand what Inter-Agency network for Education in Emergencies stands for
- Understand what the INEE Minimum Standards for Education are and how they were developed
- Familiarise themselves with different INEE Minimum Standards, indicators and categories.
- Understand what the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards for CBE in Afghanistan are and how they were developed
- Have practiced how to apply the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards for education in PACE-A and how to measure how they are met in PACE-A
- Have prepared an action plan that will further assist to improve PACE-A implementation using the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards.

This training workshop on contextualised INEE Minimum Standards was the first of its kind globally and it in Afghanistan where a series of similar workshops is planned. The contextualised INEE Minimum Standards will then be used by those implementing CBE programmes in Afghanistan. Additionally, the CBE Forum will continue to be the place that presents and addresses educational challenges that need solutions, with the aim of including in its efforts and meeting the INEE Minimum Standards for quality education in the difficult environments in which CBE providers work.

7 Steps of Contextualisation Process

The formal process of contextualisation of the INEE Minimum Standards and indicators in Afghanistan for community based education has been the first of its kind in Afghanistan – and in the world. The CBE Forum has learned valuable lessons from this process and thus developed a step-by-step chart to facilitate the contextualisation process for other countries’ MoEs:

Step 1: Translate the INEE Minimum Standards into local language where not available
Step 2: Orient organisations on the INEE Minimum Standards
Step 3: Establish a diverse membership working group from those oriented
Step 4: Allocate consecutive days to contextualise the most relevant standards
Step 5: Seek group agreement through and make recommendations on how to use the standards
Step 6: Agree on a timeline that includes an opportunity to report back to the group on how the standards have been used, what learning took place, and if they need to be revised
Step 7: Share the results with relevant Ministry of Education staff
Key Challenges faced when Contextualising the INEE Minimum Standards

Language
One of the key challenges of the contextualisation of the INEE Minimum Standards in Afghanistan was the medium of discussion. All discussions of the working group on contextualisation were in English preventing many non-English speaking people from participating actively in the working group. Both Dari and Pashto are the two official languages spoken by most of the population in Afghanistan but the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook has not yet been translated into Pashto and although a translation does exist in Dari, it is still not fully complete.

Composition of the Working Group
The composition of the CBE Forum’s working group on the contextualisation of the INEE Minimum Standards has not maintained consistency. As mentioned earlier, prior to the launch of the working group, PACE-A organised an orientation training on the INEE Minimum Standards and encouraged all participants of this training to join the contextualisation working group. However, over time, members of the working group have changed and new members’ level of awareness of the INEE Minimum Standards varied. When new people who were not well aware of the INEE Minimum Standards participated in the working group, it often resulted in a slowed down discussion process. For some members of the working group it was still not clear how they can practically use the INEE Minimum Standards in their work.

Lack of Awareness within the Ministry of Education
According to the CBE Technical Advisor in the Ministry of Education, the number of employees within the MoE Afghanistan who are aware of the INEE Minimum Standards is very low. Therefore, one of the potential challenges will be the long process of acceptance, adoption and institutionalisation of the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards into the national education policy, especially when not many MoE representatives have been involved in the contextualisation process from the beginning. However, in partnership with CBE providers, the MoE has shown interest in translating the INEE Minimum Standards into Pashto, complete the translation currently existing in Dari, print copies of the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook and provide training on the INEE Minimum Standards to MoE employees at all levels. These initiatives should increase the awareness of the INEE Minimum Standards within the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan.

A potential future challenge is the adoption, implementation and institutionalisation of the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards by the MoE and CBE providers. According to the USAID Education Advisor in Afghanistan the CBE Forum is tremendously important and fills a much needed role of a sub-group within the MoE focusing specifically on education in emergencies and fragile contexts. The NGOs are best positioned to organise and standardise this sub-sector themselves, but they need the political capital, approval and input of the MoE in order to have their plans be official, sustainable and comprehensive.

Lessons Learned, Good Practices and Recommendations

1. Work within Ministry of Education Frameworks
The MoE Afghanistan has its own education policy and standards on education. The policy on community-based education was developed in August 2006 and clearly defines what community-based education is, as well as specifies types of community-based schools and criteria of their establishment and other aspects of community-based education. However, the contextualisation of the INEE Minimum Standards serves to fill a critical gap in the MoE standards, and ultimately to improve access and quality of education.

2. Conduct a 3-4 Day Workshop to Contextualise all of the INEE Minimum Standards at Once
Rather than meeting over many weeks and months the working group thinks that it should have allocated three or four consecutive days to contextualise all of the INEE Minimum Standards at once using the same organisations’ representatives. All members of the process should first attend the three day training workshop on the INEE Minimum Standards. Ideally, the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook should be translated into local languages prior to the orientation training and the process of contextualisation, in order to enable non-English speakers to contribute.

7 The MoE Education Policy guidelines were in the process of being revised at the time this case study was being developed in April – October 2008.
3. Include Staff of the Ministry of Education, Ideally Planning Department Staff
The representation of the MoE could also be increased on the contextualisation working group in order to ensure their future ownership and promotion of the INEE Minimum Standards at the national education policy level.

4. Continue to Include Donors
As the donor supporting the work of the PACE-A consortium, USAID acknowledges having benefited from the contextualization process and is now utilizing the INEE Minimum Standards itself, for example by using the language of the standards in contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants with implementing partners. This is another indication that the work of NGOs is instrumental for promotion and support of the institutionalisation of the INEE Minimum Standards at all levels.

5. Organise a Training workshop on Contextualised Standards and Indicators
Once the INEE Minimum Standards have been contextualised and agreed upon by all CBE providers, staff involved in the implementation of education programmes should be trained on the new contextualised INEE Minimum Standards and indicators and how to use them to improve the education programme they are working with.

6. Ensure that Contextualised Standards are Utilized and Institutionalized
Besides having been directly involved in the facilitation of and contributing to the contextualisation process, PACE-A has already used the contextualised standards in project implementation in Afghanistan. For example, CARE used the contextualised INEE Minimum Standards in their mid-term evaluation conducted in November 2007. Furthermore, PACE-A produced discussion guides for their community mobilisers that include the INEE Minimum Standards. One of the discussion guides focuses on Standard 3: Facilities, under the category “Access and Learning Environment”, assisting staff to mobilise communities to improve the learning environment of their community-based schools. Additionally, the PACE-A seconded CBE Advisor at the central level who was tasked to develop monitoring tools for MoE monitoring staff to use when visiting CBE classes. The contextualised INEE Minimum Standards were incorporated in the monitoring tools.

7. Follow up Using Participatory Evaluation or Lessons-Learned Processes
The contextualisation process should be continued by the working group and include the development of assessment tools that help implementing staff understand how well they are meeting the INEE Minimum Standards in their education programmes. The working group should also develop an action plan that includes a timeline of when to assess progress made in meeting the INEE Minimum Standards.

8. Contextualisation is Best Done as an Inter-Agency Exercise
As highlighted by an IRC representative in Afghanistan, “it is the action-oriented nature of the CBE Forum (and a truly functioning working group) that made this contextualisation process a successful story for coordination in the education sector”. Conversely, the development of contextualised INEE Minimum Standards for CBE in Afghanistan and particularly the efforts of the working group contextualising them, is seen as key to improve the coordination of CBE response.

Conclusion
In Afghanistan, the contextualisation process served to transform the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook into a more practical and digestible tool for education staff who work directly with local institutions and local communities. Given that contextualization of the INEE Minimum Standards is key for their implementation, education stakeholders operating in other settings are encouraged to utilize and build on the lessons learnt of Afghanistan’s successful experience.

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8 INEE (2004), INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction, p. 41.