



What your audience needs to know in an emergency: Life-saving information

Topic-by-topic guide to core humanitarian issues

INTRODUCTION

These guides are for media professionals working to help audiences affected by humanitarian crises. They give a brief overview of common humanitarian issues in emergencies. They will help you:

- Understand what kinds of problems your audiences are likely to be facing in emergencies
- Work alongside relief experts to provide audiences with accurate, relevant and life-saving information

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDES

These guides contain information on core humanitarian topics. They are intended to serve as a starting point to help you identify the kinds of issues to address in your programmes and questions to ask relief experts. To help you identify which topics to prioritise, you should speak with local humanitarian specialists. If possible, speak with your audiences as well to find out what they need to know.

When using the guides remember to:

- Consider the local situation, culture and context to make sure the information is relevant
- Consider the specific needs of different audiences (for example, men, women, the most vulnerable people)
- Check for consistency with other sources of information being provided
- Consult qualified local specialists to check the validity and relevance of humanitarian information
- Use the guides in conjunction with BBC Media Action's Lifeline Production Manual, which contains guidelines on how to do effective programming in crises



GETTY

EDUCATION



What is education?

Education in emergencies is about enabling structured learning to continue in times of crisis.¹ This covers different forms of learning including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education.²

Why is it important?

All forms of education can support communities to recover from crises. Education can include life-saving information for communities, for example about the risks of landmines or the importance of hygiene practices. Education is important for future development, instilling a sense of hope, providing routine and a sense of normality. Education can also offer a way to cope with stress, fear and loss.³

Children are often the most vulnerable people in emergency situations and schools can sometimes also provide physical protection. Out-of-school children are often more at risk of exploitation, violence or abuse.⁴

Access to free compulsory primary education is a basic human right.⁵ Education enables people to develop to their full potential and exercise many other human rights such as the right to life and the right to health.⁶

Emergency situations can also provide an opportunity to increase access to education for vulnerable groups that would normally be excluded, for example girls or former child soldiers.⁷



¹Save the Children (2003, p. 11)

²Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2012, p. 32)

³UNICEF (n.d.)

⁴INEE (n.d.)

⁵United Nations General Assembly (1948, Article 26 p. 7)

⁶INEE (2012, p. 7)

⁷INEE (2012, p. 3)

Remember each emergency is different. Ask local humanitarian education experts to advise on what information to prioritise and the best advice to share with your audience in the context.



What information can I share with audiences?

Your audiences may need answers to the following questions to help them take practical steps to access education. Get advice from local humanitarian education specialists.

Remember that there are different groups with different needs. Find out which groups are the most vulnerable (e.g. girls/boys, separated children, children who work, child-headed households, youth) and what advice to give them.

Sometimes audiences may misinterpret or misunderstand the information you are putting on the airwaves, so always try to check what you plan to broadcast before it goes out. Run your content by humanitarian specialists and colleagues or, where appropriate, ordinary members of the public to see whether your message is being understood in the way you hoped.



What are the main risks relating to education? Education risks in emergency situations can include:

- **Children missing out on school and falling behind with their studies.** This can happen because of physical damage, e.g. the school building is damaged, unsafe, or used for other purposes such as a shelter by IDPs/refugees or armed groups, or the route to school may have become unsafe. It can also happen because children are sick, hungry or malnourished as a result of the crisis and are unable to attend school.
- **Children attend school but the quality of education is low.** This can happen because of a lack of teachers or teaching supplies, or because the schools in the local area are overburdened with additional pupils from the displaced community.
- **Children dropping out because of pressure to help with family survival.** Emergencies can put additional burdens on children so they may take on adult roles, for example accessing humanitarian aid and searching for food, water or jobs.

How can children be protected from these risks?

- **Safety:** Find out from local authorities/advisors if the schools are safe, or if they have plans to assess the safety of the schools. You can help audiences by sharing this information. Ask local education organisations if the normal routes to school are safe. If school routes are unsafe, what can parents and communities do? For example, could they organise a system where adults accompany the children to school? What routes should they avoid completely, e.g. how can they recognise and avoid [landmines or unexploded remnants of war](#)?
- **Health:** Ask local education organisations if children are missing school because of poor health. Are children hungry and prioritising finding food above education? Are there plans for school feeding programmes in the area? Schools can also help by providing life-saving information, for example hygiene promotion information.
- **Falling behind on education:** Are there ways communities can help children continue their studies outside of school? For example, can they allocate a tent or shelter as a temporary classroom, or arrange a roster of volunteer teachers to help?
- **Low quality education:** Speak to local education groups to find out if the quality of the education is suitable. If not, can the community get involved to try to improve the quality of the education? For example, can they identify volunteers to be trained in providing teacher/student support? Can the community establish a group to help with raising funds for additional learning materials?
- **Children being tasked with adult roles:** Speak to community organisations and community leaders to find out if children are helping their families instead of attending school. For example, maybe they are helping to get basic supplies for life such as water, food, shelter, firewood. Are there any examples from communities where they have managed to overcome this problem? For example, sharing jobs amongst adults in the community to allow children to go to school. You can help by sharing positive solutions and stories from the community.
- **Not knowing where to get help:** Who can parents/communities contact for help to get children an education, e.g. local authorities/teachers/humanitarian organisations? Do communities have the resources (e.g. phones, credit) to contact them? You can help by informing audiences education is a basic human right for all children.

Example information about the importance of returning to school

Do not allow the crisis to rob your children of educational opportunity. In school, they will regain a sense of security, normality, continuity and hope. This is essential for your child to thrive now and in the future. Encourage your child to attend school if it is safe to do so.

CDAC Network Message Library

Example information about community involvement in education

You can get involved in your child's education through joining or starting a committee at the school or learning centre. You can then help decide what your child learns at school and what you think the learning environment needs, such as safety, access and quality. Committees should include representatives from groups such as children and youth.

CDAC Network Message Library

The information in this document is based on the following sources:

Resources

Global Education Cluster (n.d.). Education: an essential component of a humanitarian response. This document gives a good overview of the issue of why education in emergencies is important.

Available from: http://educationcluster.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Education-An-Essential-Component-of-a-humanitarian-response_EN.pdf

UNICEF (2013). Back-to-School Guide: Evidence-Based Strategies to Resume Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition. The chapter *Social mobilisation, communication and advocacy* (from p. 51) gives examples of information to share, key messages and case studies of community involvement in education programmes.

Available from: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF_Back_To_School_Guide_2013.pdf

Further reading

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2012). Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.

Available from: <http://www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards>

INEE webpage. <http://www.ineesite.org/en/education-in-emergencies>

Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training (NORRAG) (2013).

Education in conflict emergencies in light of the post-2015 MDGs and EFA agendas.

Available from: http://www.norrag.org/fileadmin/Working_Papers/Education_in_conflict_emergencies_Talbot.pdf

Save the Children (2003). Education in Emergencies: a toolkit for starting and managing education in emergencies. Available from: http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1043/Description_of_Education_Kits.pdf

United Nations General Assembly (1948). Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Available from: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf

UNICEF webpage. http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_61685.html