ZOA POLICY ON BASIC EDUCATION

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ZOA

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Content

1   SCOPE AND RATIONALE

This policy is guided by ZOA's Strategic Plan 2015-2018 'Signs of Hope'. The plan mentions the following on the sector Basic Education[i]:

"...*education is crucial to the realization of each of our three specific goals[ii]. Besides education being a basic need and right, literacy and numeracy are also important preconditions for community governance and economic development. Education brings adults and children of different backgrounds together and peace education can reduce conflicts. Education also contributes significantly to the work we do in the other sectors. We therefore focus on basic education, both formal and informal, which includes primary education, lower secondary education, functional adult literacy and numeracy, and vocational training. In doing so, ZOA supports interventions that ensure access to sufficient and sustainable resources for education, increase retention, enable the active participation of communities in the planning and monitoring of education services, increase the willingness and capacity of local governments to take responsibility for education, and guarantee equal access to education for boys and girls*."

The current document replaces ZOA's policy on Basic Education from 2009. The policy focuses on primary and lower secondary education, vocational skills training, and functional adult literacy. For each of these foci the relevance for the work and specific fragile circumstances of ZOA's programmes is presented below.

Primary & Lower Secondary Education

School-aged children (5-14 years of age)[iii] are in their most decisive part of life, in which they develop their ability to become a valuable member of their community or society. Primary and lower secondary education plays such a crucial role in the development of children's life skills that no child should be out of school for any prolonged period. Humanitarian agencies increasingly recognise that primary education is life-saving in emergencies, as improved life skills have the potential to increase peoples' capacities to survive in dire circumstances. Moreover, primary education is a precondition for recovery of communities that have seen violent conflict and displacement.

Vocational skills training

During conflicts and in displacement people often are removed from their original source of income. They become dependent on external assistance, while their own capacities are no longer relevant and not used. However, new situations also give new opportunities, for which the newcomers may not be equipped with the adequate skills. Providing people in displacement with the right set of vocational skills will enable them to exercise a profession and generate income for themselves and their families. In their profession people become more self-reliant and regain their dignity. In addition, people take their skills with them when they return to their areas of origin. It is often stated that employment will lead to stability, as people will have too many vested interests to not engage with conflicts or to join warring parties. This especially seems to hold true for young people, who may feel frustrated not being able to find a job. It is assumed that when they have adequate vocational skills their perspectives of finding employment improve. Therefore, they will refrain from violent or criminal actions and become less susceptible for manipulation. In that sense Vocational Skills Training (VST) may contribute to reduced conflicts and to more stability. However, it is still vital that at the end of the training the graduates find meaningful (self-) employment.

Functional Adult Literacy

The ability to read, write and calculate is fundamental for any significant progress in development of livelihoods at individual, household and community level. Illiteracy leads to situations in which people make ill-informed decisions and are unable to develop their knowledge further. Moreover, being illiterate makes people dependent on others for information and therefore easy targets for manipulation. This manipulation can take place to serve political ends, but it also occurs when people need to negotiate their terms on the market and public domain. Promoting literacy and numeracy contributes to reduced conflicts as people are better equipped to solve their issues in a non-violent manner.

However, when this is not done in a conflict sensitive manner promoting literacy could fuel conflicts and become counterproductive[iv]. Moreover, it gives peoples a better position to create better living conditions for themselves and their families. Where illiteracy creates conditions for violent conflict, the conflict itself also causes illiteracy. Especially protracted crises inhibit pupils and students to attend classes for many years.

The policy on Basic Education applies in all ZOA's operations. The policy is directed primarily towards ZOA staff members engaged in programmes and projects related to basic education. Successful implementation of this policy requires engagement with and by local partners, host communities, local authorities and other partners and stakeholders.

This document also does not endeavour to provide detailed operational guidelines.

2   KEY PRINCIPLES

The policy on basic education is guided by the following principles:
- Basic education is a basic human right.
- Basic education should be equally accessible and inclusive to all people, regardless their gender, ethnicity, religion or physical/mental ability.
- Basic education should be relevant for and focussed on the learning needs of students (pupils or adults).
- Basic education is an early victim of crises, at the same time it is a powerful tool to create stability.
- Basic education offers protection and a sense of normalcy to people affected by crisis and instability.
- Basic education supports livelihoods as it provides people with skills that generate them an income.
- Basic education is the responsibility of government authorities and should be supported by its structures, with active participation of parents.
- Planning and implementation of basic education interventions should be transparent and accountable towards beneficiaries and relevant government authorities.

These principles are based on the principles formulated in Signs of Hope 2015-2018[v] and inspired by the core values of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)[vi].

3   KEY OBJECTIVES BASIC EDUCATION

3.1   OBJECTIVES

The policy on Basic Education contains three key objectives:

i.   Improve access to primary and lower secondary education.
ii.   Increase confidence of people because of their new skills to read, write and calculate.
iii.   Support people to find relevant and meaningful (self-) employment through vocational skills training.

How to achieve these key objectives will be specified below. Moreover, for each objective indicators[vii] at outcome (short term, 1-3 years) and impact (long term, 3-5 years) level will be given, which reflect the change that is envisioned for each policy area. For each of the objectives it is important to take mainstreaming of gender, disaster risk reduction and beneficiary accountability into account. These three topics are briefly discussed below.

Gender

Coherence with the Gender Policy lies at the heart of the Basic Education Policy, as education in all its forms functions as a vehicle to promote the social and economic position of women. Gender mainstreaming in this policy goes beyond the promotion and registration of equal participation of girls and women in education activities. Interventions should pro-actively enhance women's capacity to negotiate better conditions for themselves and their families. At the same time interventions should better equip women to take a leading role in their communities and society. This type of interventions needs to be supported by raising awareness at community level, focussing on the creation of societal space for women to express their opinions and claim their rights.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Coherence with DRR can be established when basic education prepares people for sudden or slow-onset disasters. Basic education should provide its users with sets of skills which enable them to recognise signs leading to disasters and to take mitigation measures

Beneficiary Accountability

Mainstreaming of beneficiary accountability can be realised at various levels. Before designing basic education interventions, beneficiaries should be consulted about their education and training needs. Roles and responsibilities towards basic education need to be discussed with relevant stakeholders with a view to managing expectations and creating a sense of ownership over the intervention. Special attention should be paid to how school-aged children express their concerns about the quality of education they are receiving. Moreover, interaction between school directors, teachers and parents need to be stimulated, so that parents become more involved in school matters, but also that parents will find room to express their interest in quality education towards teachers.

3.2 HOW TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES

3.2.1 OBJECTIVE I – PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Quality

Interventions in primary and lower secondary education should lead to accessible quality and relevant education opportunities for school-aged children. Below is summarised what is considered to be quality and relevant education.

Relevant[viii] primary and lower secondary education refers to the appropriateness of students' learning opportunities. Relevant education takes into account local traditions and institutions, positive cultural practices, belief systems, and the needs of the community. It prepares children for a positive future in society in the national and international context. Relevant education is an element of educational quality and refers to what is learned, how it is learned, and how effective the learning is.

Quality[ix] primary and lower secondary education is affordable, accessible, inclusive, gender-sensitive and responds to diversity. It includes:
a. A safe and inclusive learner-friendly environment in reasonable walking distance.
b. Competent and well-trained teachers who are knowledgeable in the subject matter and pedagogy.
c. An appropriate context-specific curriculum that is comprehensible and culturally, linguistically and socially relevant for the learners.
d. Adequate and relevant materials for teaching and learning.
e. Participatory methods of instruction and learning processes that respect the dignity of the learner.
f. Appropriate class sizes and teacher-student ratios.
g. An emphasis on recreation, play, sport and creative activities.
h. Teaching that creates a climate of understanding and mutual respect between different groups.

Improved access to primary and lower secondary education not only refers to school-aged children attending classes, therefore it is not sufficient to pay attention to increasing enrolment and retention rates only. Higher enrolment and retention rates should also lead to higher pass rates (children moving from one grade to a higher grade and eventually graduating from school). Quality and relevant primary and lower secondary education will be required to reach higher pass rates. Drop-out is often caused by external factors, but can also be motivated by a poor quality of teaching in the classroom. Teachers' motivation and attitude to apply child centred teaching methods is pivotal to the improvement of pupils' performance in the classes. Another important role is played by parents, by sending their children to school and in some cases becoming involved in school management. Only when more children leave school with a well-earned and valuable diploma in their hands, primary education efforts contribute to a more peaceful and stable society.

Indicators

Outcome: By <DATE>, in <NUMBER OF SCHOOLS> in <GEOGRAPHICAL AREA> child-centred teaching methods are practiced.
Impact: By <DATE>, the pass rate among <NUMBER OF PUPILS/STUDENTS> in <NUMBER OF SCHOOLS> in <GEOGRAPHICAL AREA> has reached more than 90% (data segregated by sex).

Instructions

In acute emergencies girls and boys are equally likely to miss out on primary and lower secondary education, while in chronic situations girls more often fail to attend classes. Moreover, often statistics show that even in a pre-conflict or -displacement situation that there is a gender-imbalance in enrolment rates. For this reason special attention should be paid to encouraging parents to allow their daughters to attend school. This will help bridging gaps in education caused by conflict or displacement.

In situations of displacement, preference is given to the integration of school-aged children in the existing education system of the host country or community, especially in urban settings. However, local conditions or government policies may dictate that a separate education structure for refugee or displaced children need to be created. In any case it is recommended to include available teachers among the displaced people or refugees in primary and lower secondary education.

In emergency situations Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) offer protection and a safe environment for children, where they can play and interact with each other. CFSs give children opportunities to share what they have witnessed with others, which is an important way to reduce their trauma. CFSs will give a sense of normalcy to parents and children, who will become more resilient to recruitment by extremist groups. In case a ZOA programme decides to become involved in CFSs it should also include the facilitation of trauma counselling to young children in the CFSs.

For the development and implementation of primary and lower secondary education projects the work of INEE[x] is important. This network has formulated Minimum Standards[xi], similar to the SPHERE Standards. Along with these standards the network also developed toolkits[xii] for various topics related to education in emergencies. The most relevant toolkits are mentioned in annex 2. Similarly to the SPHERE Standards ZOA will adhere to the standards set by INEE.

Viewing the long-term sustainability of interventions in primary and lower secondary education, the coordinating and supporting role of government authorities and parents is crucial. In fragile and (post-) conflict settings often the ability of these key players is too weak to effectively play this role. Therefore, building their capacities can be considered to be included in an education programme design. Government authorities and parents need to be included in the earliest design stages of education projects, to ensure their ownership on the result of the intervention. Other stakeholders to be included in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of education programmes are: Pupils, Teachers, Headmasters, and Community Leadership (traditional/religious).

In addition, education programmes may be designed to address the learning needs of groups who fall outside the regular primary and lower secondary education system. For example, children who have missed out several years of education would benefit of an Accelerated Learning Programme. Also, children of pastoralists could be supported by some form of mobile schools. Finally, developing innovations that would support the quality of teaching and learning is highly recommended.

Activities

Below a list is presented of activities that can be included in programming in primary and lower secondary education. The programme design (mix of activities) depends on needs of beneficiaries and programmes implemented by other stakeholders in the same area. Please note that any mix should be aimed at meeting the criteria of quality and relevance as mentioned above.

- School (or class room) construction (including teachers' housing, fences and WASH facilities), according to adequate (disaster-proof) design and in appropriate locations
- Distribution of teaching and learning materials
- Teacher training
- Formation and training of parent/teacher associations
- Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP)
- School feeding in cases of severe malnutrition
- Peace education
- Awareness raising campaigns to promote pupil/student enrolment
- Awareness raising campaigns to promote the participation of girls in education
- Advocacy activities towards (local) government authorities
- Construction of Child Friendly Spaces in emergency settings

3.2.2 OBJECTIVE II – FUNCTIONAL ADULT LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Quality

Functional adult literacy (FAL) not only encompasses a person's skill to read, write and calculate. It also refers to this person's ability to understand and engage with written information. It is a deliberate policy decision to focus on FAL, as it will enable people to play a positive role in their communities.

The unique aspect of FAL is that learners should be able to apply it in their daily lives directly. The topics covered should be in function of daily realities and the learners should be the ones determining which topics they want to be taught. In addition, during FAL lessons, opportunities can be offered to the participants to discuss topics related to peace, conflict and displacement. This will contribute to raising awareness on these matters and has the potential to mobilize people and build their capacity to address raised issues. Again, this must be done in a conflict sensitive manner.

Indicators

Outcome: By <DATE>, the percentage of <NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS>, who completed a full cycle of Functional Adult Literacy Training, are applying their new skills to read, write and calculate, in <GEOGRAPHICAL AREA> is more than 80% (data segregated by sex).

Impact: By <DATE>, the percentage of <NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS>, who feel more confident in their lives because of their new skills to read, write and calculate, in <GEOGRAPHICAL AREA> is more than 80% (data segregated by sex)[xiii].

Instructions

Interventions in FAL should follow the benchmarks mentioned below, which have been derived from the Reflect approach.[xiv]
a. Governments have the lead responsibility in meeting the right to FAL.
b. Invest in ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, data systematization and strategic research. The focus of evaluations should be on the practical application of what has been learnt and the impact on active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.
c. Facilitators should be local people who receive substantial initial training and regular refresher training, as well as having ongoing opportunities for exchanges with other facilitators.
d. There should be a ratio of at least one facilitator to 30 learners and at least one trainer / supervisor to 15 learner groups. Programmes should have timetables that flexibly respond to the daily lives of learners but which provide for regular and sustained contact.
e. In multi-lingual contexts it is important that learners should be given an active choice about the language in which they learn.
f. Participatory methods should be used in the learning process to ensure active engagement of learners and relevance to their lives.

In acute emergencies girls and boys are equally likely to miss out on primary and lower secondary education, while in chronic situations girls more often fail to attend classes. Moreover, even in a pre-conflict or -displacement situation more often women are unable to read and write. For this reason special attention should be paid to encouraging girls and women to follow literacy training. This will help to bridge gaps in education caused by conflict or displacement.

In principle, FAL programmes should follow the curriculum that is prescribed by national or local governments. However, when such curricula are not available or government is too weak, ZOA can develop a FAL curriculum, but only in collaboration with the same government. In places where government authority is absent or contested, curriculum can also be considered, preferably in liaison with other organisations, which are also active in FAL.

Activities

FAL activities can be stand-alone interventions, but their effectiveness increases when it is part of a larger programme including peace building and livelihoods activities (e.g. Village Saving and Loans Associations). Below a list is presented of activities that can be included in programming in FAL. The programme design (mix of activities) depends on needs of beneficiaries and programmes implemented by other stakeholders in the same area. Please note that any mix should be aimed at meeting the benchmarks mentioned above.

- Coordination with (local) authorities for the provision of functional adult literacy training
- Construction of FAL training centres
- Distribution of teaching and learning materials
- Teacher training
- Payment of facilitators' stipends
- Awareness raising campaigns to promote student enrolment
- Curriculum development, in cases where no other relevant curriculum is available

3.2.3 OBJECTIVE III – VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING

Quality

Interventions in Vocational Skills Training (VST) should lead to accessible quality and relevant opportunities for those who aspire to improve their vocational skills. A relevant and quality VST programme should have:
a. the capacity to support the integration of their trainees into employment
b. the qualifications, professional experience and participation in further training of teachers and trainers
c. an efficient system for quality assurance and development including:
   i) orientation on beneficiary needs and aspirations;
   ii) continuous evaluation of training courses;
   iii) continuous improvement of training provision;
   iv) cooperation with external experts for quality development.

A relevant and quality VST programme should also take into consideration:
a. the preconditions of the intended target groups for the training
b. their perspectives for integration into employment
c. organisation of learning processes preparing for a recognised graduation, or at least part of this
d. clearly defined time frame for the training course, including adequate practical working experience

Indicators

Outcome: By <DATE>, the percentage of <NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS>, who completed a full cycle of Vocational Skills Training, are applying their new skills, in <GEOGRAPHICAL AREA> is more than 80% (data segregated by sex).

Impact: By <DATE>, the percentage of <NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS>, who found relevant and meaningful (self-) employment because of their new vocational skills, in <GEOGRAPHICAL AREA> is more than 80% (data segregated by sex).[xv]

Instructions

VST programmes should be aimed primarily at young people, in addition to those who had already developed a professional career prior to their displacement. VST should be relevant for the aspirations of the course participant as well as including a clearly identifiable needs or markets for the skills offered during the programme. It is therefore crucial for a proper design of a VST programme that it is based on a thorough market analysis of (self-) employable skills. In this analysis local government and small and medium entrepreneurs should participate, so that they can share their views and make the VST programme more relevant for the labour market.

Preference is given to embedding a VST programme into existing structures (government, private and/or other NGOs), through which the certificates of the training course are recognised. Only when and where no structure exists, new ones can be created (for example VST centres). Precondition is however, that in the earliest stages of the programme connection is and continues to be sought with institutions that want to manage the VST system after programme closure.

Often graduates from a VST programme do not receive any support beyond the training. To a large extent the inability of graduates to find work or use their vocational skills hampers the effectiveness of VST programmes. Although this is at the verge of a VST intervention, the graduates can actively be supported to find employment or to start a small business. Moreover, graduates should also be informed about their labour rights, so that they are aware when they enter into an exploitative labour arrangement and can take remedial action.

Offering a VST programme to displaced people exposes them to opportunities that were not available in their original situation. This could be a unique breeding ground for innovation, which should not be overlooked when designing a VST intervention. Especially ICT and Internet present opportunities for people to expand their knowledge and skills beyond physical borders.

Activities

Below a list is presented of activities that can be included in programming in VST. The programme design (mix of activities) depends on needs of beneficiaries and programmes implemented by other stakeholders in the same area. Please note that any mix should be aimed at meeting the criteria for quality and relevance as mentioned above.
- Coordination with (local) authorities for the provision of vocational skills training
- Construction of Vocational Skills Training Centres, when embedded in local structures
- Provision of Vocational Skills Training
- Teacher training
- Market assessments for (self-) employable skills
- Networking with (local) small and medium entrepreneurs
- Awareness raising to promote safe and healthy working conditions
- Start-up grants

ANNEX I TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Basic education

Basic education refers to primary and lower secondary education (approximately ages 5-14 depending on the country), adult literacy programmes and vocational skills training. This includes both formal and non-formal education.

Primary education

Primary education or the first stage of basic education is normally designed to give students a sound basic education in reading, writing, and mathematics, along with an elementary understanding of other subjects. Primary education usually begins at ages five, six or seven and lasts for four to six years.

Lower secondary education

Second stage education follows on from basic education and is designed to complete the provision of basic education which begins at primary level and to introduce students to more specialised subjects.

Formal education

Formal education refers to education that is provided in a formal, institutional setting, most commonly through a state directed system of schools, colleges, universities and other institutions that normally constitute a continuous 'ladder' of full-time education for children and young people, generally beginning at age five to seven and continuing up to 20 or 25 years old.

Non-formal education

This refers to any organised and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education. Non-formal education takes place outside formally organised schooling, is not compulsory, may be made available to persons of all ages, and is often not state-supported. Non-formal education programmes do not necessarily follow the 'ladder' system, may have differing durations, and may or may not confer certification of the learning achieved. Depending on country contexts, non-formal education may cover educational programmes to impart adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children, life-skills, work skills, and general culture.

Protection

The framework for the protection of populations is principally enshrined in international law, which defines legal obligations of States or warring parties to provide assistance to individuals or to allow it to be provided, as well as to prevent and refrain from behaviour that violates fundamental human rights. International human rights law recognizes that all people have certain fundamental rights that must be protected at all times, even in conditions of war and emergency; they include the right to life, the right to legal personality and due process of law, the prohibition of torture, slavery and degrading or inhuman treatment or punishment and the right to freedom of religion, thought and conscience. These fundamental rights, which may never be waived, constitute the hard core of human rights.

ANNEX II TOOLKITS

Tools/Resources on Primary Education from INEE

Pocket Guide to Gender	(http://toolkit.ineesite.org/pocket_guide_to_gender)
Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education	http://toolkit.ineesite.org/pocket_guide_to_inclusive_education
Pocket Guide to Supporting Learners with Disabilities	(http://toolkit.ineesite.org/pocket_guide_to_supporting_learners_with_disabilities)
Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction	(http://toolkit.ineesite.org/guidance_notes_on_safer_school_construction)
Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning	(http://toolkit.ineesite.org/guidance_notes_on_teaching_and_learning)
Training and Capacity Development Tools	(http://toolkit.ineesite.org/training_and_capacity_development_tools)
INEE Conflict Sensitive Education Pack	(http://toolkit.ineesite.org/inee_conflict_sensitive_education_pack)

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[i] Signs of Hope, Strategic Plan 2015-2018, page 17.

[ii] These goals are 1) Sustainable access to basic services and resource, 2) Good community governance and 3) Stable and peaceful communities.

[iii] These ages are indicative as definitions of school-aged children may vary per country or context.

[iv] Weststrate, Marinne, "Literacy as an agent of conflict transformation. A proposal for a critical reflection on literacy interventions in peace building processes.", July 2014, Centre for Linguistics, Translation & Literacy, Redcliffe College, Gloucester, UK

[v] More extensive information on this can be found in chapters 1.4 and 1.5 of ZOA's Strategic Plan 2015-2018

[vi] An international network for education in emergencies. "INEE is an open global network of individuals and organisations, founded on the right to education of every person, including those affected by disasters, conflicts and other crises. We work together to ensure that all persons affected by crisis have access to safe, quality and relevant education."

[vii] The indicators in the policy paper are the standard indicators for ZOA basic education programmes, through which progress on impact and outcome of basic education programmes is measured and communicated. The policy paper provides indicators at output level in Annex 1.

[viii] http://toolkit.ineesite.org/term-bank/en/terms/relevant_education

[ix] Points a to g refer to INEE definition of quality education (http://toolkit.ineesite.org/term-bank/en/terms/quality_education). Point h refers to ZOA's view on conflict sensitivity.

[x] http://www.ineesite.org/en/

[xi] http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit/INEEcms/uploads/1012/INEE_GuideBook_EN_2012%20LoRes.pdf

[xii] http://toolkit.ineesite.org/toolkit

[xiii] This indicator can be measured through questionnaires during baseline and evaluation studies, both at project and programme level.

[xiv] http://www.reflect-action.org/literacybenchmarks

[xv] This indicator can be measured through questionnaires during baseline and evaluation studies, both at project and programme level.