

# The Roles of NGOs

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International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are able to rapidly mobilize and manage resources, and provide multi-sectoral assistance, including educational services, to communities in crisis. They are often able to bring trained educationalists who can bolster the teachers' morale, and initiate quality formal and non-formal education programs. International NGOs as outsiders, with or without international staff, can bring new perspectives and experience, and in some cases initiate change, especially in the areas of educational methods, gender equality, community involvement in education, and educational access for minorities, girls and children with disability. For these changes to be adopted into the long-term education planning, international NGOs can help build the capacity of local NGOs and governments to continue after they leave.

## Strategies

1. **Provide a coordinated, situation-specific, rapid response.** Education should be coordinated within the larger initial humanitarian response of food, shelter, health, water and sanitation. The formal and non-formal education interventions, based upon known best practices, should be tailored to the needs of the community within the specific context of the emergency. Survival skills such as landmine, hygiene and HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns should be provided to all age groups.
2. **Build technical and operational capacity for the long-term.** Community involvement in the planning and implementation of interventions and programs is vital to the success of any emergency response. In the area of emergency education, international NGOs take this involvement a step farther, and seek to build the long-term capacity of communities to manage schools and education programs. Such programs may include training teachers and school administrators, supporting the development of local community education committees, PTAs, local education NGOs, or local and district educational authorities. Within this context, the areas identified for capacity building should be carefully targeted to ensure that goals are met and results are evident. This includes providing ample time, training, materials, monitoring and moral support.
3. **Ensure educational services to all.** As outsiders, international NGOs should be uninfluenced by the prejudices and political biases in the system, and should seek to provide educational services to all, especially children. This means ensuring that all of the sub-sets of society have access to basic and life-saving education, including girls, women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disability. In many emergency situations, international NGOs play an important role in providing educational services to minorities or special groups affected by the crisis, such child soldiers or victims of violence. While providing for these groups' immediate needs, educational activities often serve as a means for integrating them back into the larger community in which they can start to have normal social interaction.

## **Checklist**

- Are NGOs needed to intervene in the situation?
- Are they performing a service which cannot be provided by the government or local NGOs? (e.g. technical expertise in emergency education, rapid response, training?)
- Are the NGOs able to provide educational services to populations which the government or local NGOs cannot reach? Is this an issue of resources, technical skills and knowledge, or security?
- Do the NGOs coordinate amongst themselves? With the local government? The U.N.? With local organizations? How is this accomplished? Meetings? Special plans?
- Do the NGOs specialize in any specific field of education? (i.e. training, working with persons with disability, literacy?)
- What are the staff's qualifications, training and experience?
- What technical support do they receive from their headquarters?
- Do the NGOs serve all populations equally? Are written policies in place regarding gender equality, and non-discrimination of minorities and persons with disability? Are they enforced?
- Do national and international NGO staff understand the philosophical and legal foundations of providing Educational For All?

## **Capacity Building:**

- Are the NGOs working with or through local organizations? How were the local organizations identified? What criteria were used? What is the long-term goal of the local partner? Does it only work in emergencies, or does it have experience in development? How were its capacity building goals developed?
- How does the NGO assess the local organization's capability to implement long-term institutional capacity?
- How often does the NGO conduct training? Is adequate follow-up planned and carried out after the training?
- Are the trainees and local organizations given adequate support by the NGO to implement the program? (e.g. office materials, computers, vehicles?)