THE UNESCO PEER EXPERIENCE
(PROGRAM OF EDUCATION FOR EMERGENCIES AND RECONSTRUCTION)¹

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UNESCO PEER began its existence in Mogadishu as UNESCO-Somalia in January 1993. An Education Development Centre (EDC) was set up which brought together and reintegrated trained Somali educationists into their specialized work. The programme expanded to the rest of Somalia, N.W. Somalia (Somaliland), the refugee camps in Kenya, Djibouti, Yemen and Ethiopia. The Rwandan crisis led to UNESCO PEER expanding its operations to Rwanda and the refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire. Occasionally, the PEER expertise is shared on demand outside of the areas where the programme is operating (see Figure 1) such as in Eritrea, Angola and South Sudan refugee camps.

I. The mission and mandate of PEER

The creation of PEER and other similar programmes in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, Angola, Mozambique, Haiti, Yemen, Afghanistan and Iraq is UNESCO's response to the complex emergencies of today. Typically, the response translates itself into educational interventions all along the so called "relief-to-development" continuum. This is in conformity with the ethical mission of the Organization as expressed in its Constitutional Act.- "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

By mandate, UNESCO PEER is an emergency-oriented programme. There is no formally adopted official definition of what constitutes a complex emergency although some of its identifiable constitutive elements are:

- Localized conflicts having long-standing ethnic, civil, religious and other causes and consequences
- Destruction of property, serious violation of human rights
- Civil strife; total or partial breakdown of government machinery
- Upsurge of micro-nationalism, separatist aspirations
- Social disruption/disintegration
- Starvation, spread of diseases
- Access to the victims rendered difficult or denied
- Lack of security of relief personnel and supplies
- Out-flow of refugees/inflow of returnees.

PEER's educational interventions preferentially seek to meet the educational needs of vulnerable groups such as children traumatized by crisis situations, particularly girls, women, especially those who head households and unemployed/uneducated and armed youth. PEER addresses problems such as:

- School infrastructure destroyed or in different stages of disrepair
- Absence of a standardized curriculum
- Need for re-professionalization (of teachers, head teachers, inspectors, educational administrators)
- Inadequate remuneration of teachers

• Absence of a well-functioning educational authority
• Deteriorating health conditions
• Underdevelopment
• Absence of relevant educational data
• Need for peace, tolerance and reconciliation.

II The principles and policies of PEER

On the basis of experience gained in the field, PEER has identified several principles and policies for education for emergencies and reconstruction:

1. Rapid re-establishment of basic education: In conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28, which stipulates universal, free and compulsory primary education, priority is given to primary school age children with a special emphasis on the girl child whose education is not perceived as necessary by several communities.

2. Use of appropriate delivery methods: In the absence of functioning educational institutions, open/distance learning strategies are adopted to give remedial training in the areas of teacher training, technical/vocational training, secondary education etc. Innovative teaching-learning materials such as the Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) and kits of different kinds are used. These materials are conceived, developed and used in the field. They can be culturally adapted for other contexts and countries, prepackaged and delivered within a matter of weeks.

3. While addressing basic and immediate educational needs, the emergency response contains elements for the long-term rebuilding of education system(s).

4. Training must go hand in hand with the rehabilitation of destroyed infrastructure and distribution of educational kits. In all educational initiatives the emphasis must be on developing knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes that are essential to life.

5. Community participation and ownership: International assistance during emergencies tends to create dependency in beneficiaries. When the assistance is reduced or withdrawn, educational and other initiatives suffer a serious setback and at times collapse. The aid-receiving communities do have expertise, initiative and resources which should be tapped even in the execution of Quick Impact Projects (QUIPs). Community School Committees (CSCs) are to be formed. Local education authorities are to be constituted with a mandate to provide policy guidelines, administrative coordination, supervision and inspectorate capacity to emerging schools. Training should be imparted to them to discharge effectively their duties and responsibilities even after the international aid workers and organizations withdraw from the scene.

6. Sustainability: First World intervention in Third World crisis situations often hastily establishes a network of schools not sustainable over the long haul. Sustainable salary scales, use of appropriate technology, low-cost production of curricular materials, increasing levels of community support to schools etc. have to be insisted on.

7. Building field-level partnerships: "National, regional, and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement for this task. New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary." (World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990, Article 7). These partnerships are built on the basis of the mandates of the participating agencies, complementarity, pooling of resources and avoiding duplication. Coordinating bodies are set up at the HQ and field levels.
8. Cross-border mandate: "Today, an estimated twenty million people are living beyond the borders of their home countries as refugees—double the number of ten years ago." Rehabilitation of the educational sector in country cannot be complete without ensuring simultaneous provision of repatriation-oriented education in the refugee camps. Making refugee children follow the host country’s curriculum makes repatriation which is difficult even more difficult.

III. The methodology and modus operandi of PEER

In any given location, PEER is present either as a full-fledged EDC with its curriculum development-production-training capacity or as an ERU (Education Rehabilitation Unit) which lacks the production capacity.

Figures 2, 3 and 4 present three modules which illustrate the field-level operationalization of the emergency education concept and the actual processes of intervention. They are self-explanatory and, with necessary modifications, can be implemented by PEER's experienced education officers. Typically, the stages include—.

- The missioning of an emergency education specialist to a potential area of educational intervention for needs assessment
- The development and stockpiling of emergency education materials
- Identification of staff and their (remedial) in-service training
- Non-formal literacy/numeracy training

In the post-emergency phase, PEER focusses attention on the following—.

- Recovery/re-development of curriculum
- Production of textbooks and teacher guides in sufficient quantities
- Identification of teachers and their (restraining in the use of textbooks/teacher guides

At this stage a formalized classroom situation should have resulted in country or in refugee camps. Depending on the “pull factors” in country and the “push factors” in the country of refuge, the repatriation of refugees begins.

Module 2 (Figure 3) presents a state of affairs where community mobilization efforts towards school support have borne fruit. The focus is on the rehabilitation of schools by the community with donor inputs where necessary, provision of curricular materials and teacher in-service training, appointment of school heads and the promotion of Community School Committees (CSCs).

With self-reliance thus reached, the stage is set for creating or reinforcing a local education authority which, like other structures, tends to disintegrate during a complex emergency. (See Module 3 in Figure 4.) To this end school representatives and community human resources are identified. Long-term teacher education programmes are launched. Technical experts and administrators are appointed. There is enough stability to embark on educational policy development. Inspection mechanisms are reactivated to ensure uniform standards and curriculum. Community/regional school organization is strengthened.

At this point in time, an assessment is made of schools and curriculum in view of determining whether a post-rehabilitation developmental stage has been reached. If yes, UNESCO's PEER emergency operation is wound down.

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IV. UNESCO-PEER's activities, products, outcomes

Somalia-Horn of Africa

- Reintroduction of a standardized curriculum and provision of textbooks and teacher guides to primary schools; reprinted/prepared 32 textbooks (of which 25 are in print) and 29 teacher guides (of which 22 are in print). Writing of curricular materials for 5th Grade is in progress.

- Four reprints of textbooks; target of 1.25 million copies will be achieved by May 1996 with the help of EC-Somalia funds; 13,760 teacher guides and 22,415 teacher training/adult literacy booklets copy-printed within Somalia. The situation with regard to primary textbooks and teacher guides is now better than before the Civil War.

- TEP (Teacher Emergency Package): Development, production and distribution of TEP and other innovative curricular materials like cloth charts.

- Teacher training: Conducted over 100 training workshops- Somali Open Learning Unit (SOMOLU) offers a teacher training diploma programme in Benaadir, Bay, Bakool and Gedo; in coordination with UNICEF the Training of Trainers (TOT) programme is being organized in six regions.

- Education for peace: Symposium on the Culture of Peace in Somalia in Sana'a, Yemen, for Somali intellectuals (April 17 - 20, 1995); Multimedia peace campaign involving a road-show (Drop the Gun Rebuild the Nation) taken to 15 towns which was watched by an estimated audience of 69,200-1 the same play was distributed in the form of low-cost video and audio tapes and comic strips. A prototype peace education curricular package has been prepared in Somali. This will be produced in bulk and introduced to schools soon.

- Health education: A complete set of primary-level health education books-, in collaboration with WHO, booklets, posters and stickers on Cholera and Polio awareness were produced-, a number of health education charts, a low-cost video on polio and a booklet on HIV/AIDS have also been prepared and distributed.

- Mine awareness.- A road-show and kit which includes a low-cost video on mine awareness. A total population of about 70,000 was covered.

- Data collection- In collaboration with UNDOS (United Nations Development Office for Somalia) data collection has been completed in Bay and Middle Shabelle; it is being extended to other regions.

- School sustainability experiment: Twenty schools in Bay and Bakool--some of the best in the country--were being supported with EC-Somalia assistance and a phased programme of shifting them from total donor dependence to community ownership was being implemented before the two regions were overrun by forces loyal to General Aideed. A similar sustainability experiment is starting shortly in Nugal Region.

- Repatriation oriented education in the Somali refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen- Almost all UNESCO's in-country educational programmes and services are made available to the camps.

- Grade 1-2 level basic education package (language, maths, science and health education) was prepared and the associated training was given to the Uduk refugees from South Sudan now in Bonga (Region 12 of Ethiopia).
• Development of a TEP package for the promotion of basic literacy and numeracy among the Afar people of Region 2 (Ethiopia).

Rwanda operation

• The operation is a model exercise in inter-agency collaboration, particularly with UNICEF, UNHCR, GTZ and the government authorities.

• A TEP in Kinyarwanda language was developed and the joint UNICEF-UNESCO education programme eventually saw the distribution of over 8,500 TEPs inside Rwanda and over 1,000 in the refugee camps in Tanzania and E. Zaire serving over 700,000 children.

• Training in TEP and general classroom methodology was given to 12,000 teachers in country and 900 teachers in the camps.

• Mine Awareness Campaign in Kinyarwanda implemented with the associated training in 1,700 schools.

• Cholera Awareness Campaign implemented with the associated training in Rwanda and in the refugee camps.

• Supply of textbooks to schools, in-service teacher training, capacity-building of Rwanda's educational authorities at the central and local levels.

• Recovery of nonformal education with emphasis on youth education and designing/adaptation of educational materials for literacy and post-literacy.

• A National Seminar (November 1994) and a National Conference (April 1995) were organized through which, with UNESCO's assistance, Rwanda's educational authorities have formulated policies relevant to the country's new circumstances.

• In Ngara, PEER played a leading role in the management and coordination of the refugee education programme, provided technical advice to NGOs involved in education, established a local capacity for the printing of educational materials and organized the printing of textbooks for the camps.

V. The end of UNESCO PEER operations

PEER is an emergency education programme. The determination of whether an emergency requires a coordinated UN system-wide response is made by the DHA (Department of Humanitarian Affairs) in consultation with the IASC (inter-Agency Standing Committee). The duration of an emergency operation, likewise, is determined by the DHA and, in the case of peace-keeping operations, by DPKO (Department of Peace Keeping Operations) on the basis of a Security Council directive. The continuation of a PEER operation will depend on the operation being in the "relief phase and not fully in the "development phase" on the "relief-to-development continuum"; when the fully developmental stage is reached, it would be time for the PEER operation to cease, yielding place to a more traditional and permanent UNESCO presence.