PROTECTING EDUCATION IN COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICT

BOOKLET 3

Community-based Protection and Prevention

In Afghanistan several
international agencies
have built on the history
of women like Adila
Poyanda, who taught 60
girls and boys secretly at
home during the Taliban
years. They are
supporting community-
based classes and
schools located in
people's homes or other
places of the
community's choosing,
which extends
education into remote
areas and may reduce
vulnerability to attack

Foreword

This booklet is one of a series of booklets prepared as part of the Protecting Education in Conflict-Affected Countries Programme, undertaken by Save the Children on behalf of the Global Education Cluster, in partnership with Education Above All, a Qatar-based non-governmental organisation. The booklets were prepared by a consultant team from Search For Common Ground.

They were written by Brendan O'Malley (editor) and Melinda Smith, with contributions from Carolyne Ashton, Saji Prelis, and Wendy Wheaton of the Education Cluster, and technical advice from Margaret Sinclair. Accompanying training workshop materials were written by Melinda Smith, with contributions from Carolyne Ashton and Brendan O'Malley. The curriculum resource was written by Carolyne Ashton and Margaret Sinclair.

Booklet topics and themes	
Booklet 1	**Overview**
Booklet 2	**Legal Accountability and the Duty to Protect**
Booklet 3	**Community-based Protection and Prevention**
Booklet 4	**Education for Child Protection and Psychosocial Support**
Booklet 5	**Education Policy and Planning for Protection, Recovery and Fair Access**
Booklet 6	**Education for Building Peace**
Booklet 7	**Monitoring and Reporting**
Booklet 8	**Advocacy**

The booklets should be used alongside the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.* References to the most relevant standards for the content of each booklet are given in the resources section.

There is also a supplementary booklet, Curriculum Resource: Introducing Humanitarian Education in Primary and Junior Secondary Schooling, which can be used with Booklet 6.

Please feel free to share these booklets with interested professionals working in ministries of education or non-governmental organisations, and others concerned with education for populations affected by armed conflict or insecurity.

If referenced, please use the following text: Global Education Cluster, Booklet 3: Community-based Protection and Prevention, Protecting Education in Countries Affected by Conflict series (2012)

Introduction

This series of eight booklets is designed to provide:

- an overview of the problem of conflict-related threats to education

- a range of responses that can be made by education clusters, and ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dealing with education, security, protection, psychosocial support and legal accountability issues.

- a tool to be used with an accompanying set of workshop materials for use in training people in aspects of protecting education in conflict-affected countries.

This booklet focuses on community-based protection and prevention measures.

Key messages

- Giving communities a say in the defence of education can be crucial to ensuring that protection[i] measures are effective.

- Ensure there is full community participation in decision-making and that responses are relevant to local threats and motives for attack.

- Negotiate with potential attackers, if it is safe to do so, to agree that schools must be safe sanctuaries/zones of peace.

- Seek support for community actions from local, regional, national and international education and other organisations and authorities.

- Always consider how to keep community members safe when taking measures to protect against or prevent attacks.
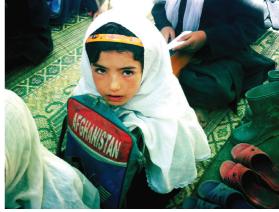
Background

Protection is a community concern

The local community[ii] and school management committee can play an important role in protecting a school from attack, notably through forming a safety and security committee or sub-committee. A number of countries have developed community-based approaches to:

- protect students and teachers, and school and other education facilities from conflict and deliberate attacks
- lessen the impact of conflict on education
- reduce the risk of further targeting of education.

Community involvement in the management and protection of schools sends a message to potential attackers that schools are local institutions supported and valued by local people. A study conducted in Afghanistan by CARE International, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), indicated that local people believe community leadership in school defence mechanisms, school governance, and communication with attackers reduce the risk of, and damage from, attacks.[iii]

The study concluded that education has the best chance of being protected if decisions about school security are taken and acted on at provincial, district and community level.

It is more effective to encourage community-based responses through existing local structures, such as school management committees, than via new structures set up by external agencies. Measures taken by communities are not

Tarusht Community Based School for girls and boys in the rural town of Tarusht, Takhar Province, Afghanistan

always sufficient on their own, however.

For instance, monitoring and reporting is more effective when carried out as part of a regional or national process covering the whole conflict-affected area. Also, the best ways to protect education often involve many actors working together. This might include national ministries, including the ministry of education, and armed forces in addition to community representatives. Protection is also needed at higher-education level. Protection committees made up of management, community leaders, academics and students, are needed in universities and other national or regional institutions.

Schools and universities may be placed in danger if they are associated with particular political groups or events (such as elections) or military groups (see Booklet 2: Legal Accountability and the Duty to Protect).

Actions to consider

When responding to attacks, at all times consider how best to maintain safety for community members and students. Responses such as negotiating with armed groups, conducting fact-finding missions to

remote areas, or simply monitoring threats, could pose a danger to community members.

The use of armed guards may or may not increase the risk of attack. All the risks must be considered when choosing courses of action.

1 Ensure community participation in responses

- Ensure fair representation and identify and give responsibility to trusted leaders.

- Ask trusted community members to lead efforts to prevent or respond to attacks. Make sure that a range of stakeholders are involved in community approaches so that one group does not appear to dominate the process and further ignite any existing tensions.

- Ensure members are neutral. Ensure that community leaders involved in prevention and response represent the diversity of the community. If leaders are perceived as favouring one religious or ethnic group, for example, they may not be able to gain the trust of the community, especially in conducting negotiations.

- If appropriate, encourage young people to participate. Youth clubs and groups in some countries have played an important role in advocacy and in peer education on safety, security, human rights and peace education. However, young people should not be endangered by their participation.

Village elders lunch at a community based school for boys, Tarusht, Takhar Province, Afghanistan

2 Involve communities in school management

- Strengthen school or university management committees to make them more democratic and inclusive.

- Involve religious or community leaders in school governance. This can remove ideological or religious motives to oppose or attack education. In Afghanistan, religious leaders have been consulted over curriculum issues and recruited as teachers to reassure the community that cultural and religious norms are being respected.

- Jointly prepare safety and security plans. The school management committee, teachers and students should be involved in the development of safety and security plans to protect schools and respond appropriately in the event of an attack.

Liberia: Community protection committees

During the civil war, Lofa and Nimba Counties in northern Liberia were entry points and routes for rebel groups from neighbouring countries. As a result, children attending schools in the aftermath of the conflict were susceptible to separation from their families, rape, abduction and forced recruitment, on the way to or from school, or while at school.

With the help of the International Rescue Committee, communities formed committees to protect children's education from attack. Ministry officials, representatives of aid agencies, and other education and protection stakeholders were also members of those committees.

The issue of protecting education became a rallying point for community participation in education reconstruction programmes.

Through the work of the committees, community members agreed on, prepared and used duty rosters to escort their children to and from school.

Provision of unarmed guards was viewed by the community as their own mechanism and relatively cost-effective and sustainable. The unarmed guards helped teachers and students feel safe at school.[iv]

This might include training of students and teachers in what to do to make themselves safe when confronted by a threat or attack. This also applies to non-formal schools and daycare centres as well as formal schools.

- Involve communities in maintaining provision of good-quality education, including seeking an adequate supply of textbooks and making greater efforts to recruit and train teachers.

3 Involve communities in the building and rebuilding of schools

- Build community support for schools. Schools built by or at the request of communities are perceived to be less likely to be attacked (according to survey responses in Afghanistan).[v] Education institutions built with assistance from international donors or military forces may be more vulnerable to attack, especially if they are branded as such.[vi] Community-based schools supported by NGOs in Afghanistan received threats but few were attacked physically.[vii]

- Involve communities in rapid response, eg repairing and rebuilding schools to return children to school as quickly as possible once it is safe to do so.

- Publicise threats, for instance through radio or community meetings. This can help alert the community to the need to take precautions and may help deter attackers. However, be aware that some armed groups are thought to carry out attacks on schools precisely because they generate media coverage, eg in southern Thailand.

4 Support locally appropriate protection mechanisms

As a basic premise, educational institutions should be respected as zones of peace and therefore should be free of weapons of any kinds. Neither students nor teachers should be allowed to carry any type of weapon. Moreover, no one with weapons should be allowed to enter the educational compound.

Physical protection measures in different countries differ according to local circumstances and the types and methods of attack, as well as the different targets of attack. But they have included:

- Armed escorts. Armed escorts and/or bulletproof vehicles have been provided for students and teachers travelling to and from school in Thailand and Israel. Be aware that these measures have sometimes appeared to increase the risk of being targeted. For instance, in Thailand there have been many cases of both armed escorts and the teachers they are guarding being targeted using remotely detonated explosions.[ix]

- Unarmed escorts. Communities, families and NGOs have provided unarmed escorts to accompany children to school in countries such as Central African Republic, India, Iraq, Kosovo, Liberia and the occupied Palestinian territories.[x]

- Security guards at schools. Both armed and unarmed night guards have been deployed to protect schools.

- School defence and protection committees. Unarmed school protection committees have been established to patrol and guard schools, especially at night. Community protection teams have been organised in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal and Sri Lanka.[xi]

- Teacher housing. Housing teachers on campuses may reduce attacks on teachers by eliminating their travel from school to home. However, teacher housing can itself become a target for attacks. Teachers may be financially assisted to relocate to, or travel from, safer locations, such as urban centres, but they may then become vulnerable to attack on their journey to school.[xii]

- Adapting school infrastructure. Marking the boundaries of the education institution with lines of stones or with fencing, or building a wall, can reduce the risk of attacks. Schools have been given multiple exits to provide escape routes from attacks and from attackers seeking to abduct students and personnel. Reinforcing school infrastructure, eg by sandbagging walls and roofs, as in Bosnia, or by installing shatter-proof windows, as has been considered in Brazil,[xiii] can reduce the risk of injury from attacks.

5 Consider alternative learning sites and ways of providing lessons for learning

- Relocate schools to less visible buildings or locations. Relocation may involve creating safe learning environments in homes, mosques or other places of religious worship, basements, or in more remote locations, sometimes requiring

Afghanistan: Strengthening school governance with school management

School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations had been established in over 8,000 schools throughout the country by 2010, as mechanisms for community involvement in education and as a way to involve communities in the protection of schools.

These groups sought the involvement of religious leaders in school curricula, governance and protection.

They also tried to establish lines of communication with potential attackers in order to negotiate avoidance of attack, or after attacks to prevent subsequent ones. An example of successful community negotiation was reported by CARE International. In Herat, western Afghanistan, the police and community collaborated after an attack to negotiate an end to attacks and the reopening of schools. The police not only arranged the venue and transportation to the community meeting, but also facilitated it.[viii]

the movement of families or students to places away from the conflict. In Afghanistan primary schools have been relocated in community facilities such as mosques and homes. However, location in homes could also make the homes vulnerable to attack if known to potential attackers.[xiv] In the ongoing Naxalite conflict in parts of India, some schools have been relocated near or at police stations to provide extra protection, but this has also made them vulnerable when there are attacks on the police stations.

- Support community schools. Community-based schools have been set up to compensate for shortage of state provision and to improve the protection of schools. They hire teachers from the community, and to avoid association with outsider support, NGO and donor branding (names/labels) may be avoided or restricted on materials and vehicles. This approach has succeeded in some countries, but has been problematic in others. In Nepal, community schools were viewed by the Maoist rebels as private, a symbol of a privilege and counter to their ideology of universal government-funded education.[xv]

- Establish schools in displacement camps, where populations have moved. Schools were relocated in northern Uganda, when some areas were vacated due to threats from the Lord's Resistance Army. In India, schools have been relocated to camps far away from the Naxalite conflict. However, this has resulted in many children being separated from their families.[xvi]

- Use distance learning. The use of radio or television broadcasts and distribution of teaching resource packets has helped provide education to children in conflict-affected areas in countries such as Burundi, Iraq and Sri Lanka.[xvii]

During the conflict in Lebanon, UNICEF published an educational magazine for children. A challenge with this intervention is it is slow to develop and can be expensive.

6 Support community-based negotiations

Different negotiation strategies with attackers and armed forces or civilians occupying education buildings have been implemented in several countries.

- Negotiate respect for schools as safe sanctuaries/zones of peace. Stakeholders, including government, community members, school personnel and community organisations, can sometimes negotiate with armed groups. One approach is to agree on codes of conduct (see Case Study 4) to keep schools safe from political and military interference or attacks; this has been successful in Nepal. But there are risks. In practice, willingness to negotiate may depend on whether the armed opposition has a political commitment to education provision and/or is seeking political legitimacy among the local population.

- Hold negotiations to end or avoid attacks. Religious and other community leaders have been successful at negotiating agreements not to attack schools after written threats of attack were sent to some schools in Afghanistan. Negotiations with armed groups have also been conducted after attacks in order to prevent further attacks. Consultations with local leaders, religious leaders and representatives of armed opposition groups have been held to reach agreement on allowing closed schools to reopen safely. The agreement included offering safeguards to reassure local people that schools were not allowing anti–Islamic curriculum content.[xix]

- Negotiate to end military use of schools and other education buildings.

Community leaders can seek to persuade military commanders to vacate schools and other education buildings being used by the military as soon as possible so that education can resume.

- Negotiate to end the use of schools as shelters. Many schools are taken over as shelter by internally displaced people. Negotiations between the local community and the displaced people can be undertaken to provide alternative shelter arrangements, such as rapid supply of plastic sheeting, in order to free up schools for education as soon as possible.[xx]

7 De-politicise the running of schools

- De-politicise the school environment. In addition to creating conflict-free zones in schools, communities should advocate for ending the practice of using schools for political purposes, including political rallies, recruiting students and teachers to attend political events, and using schools as polling stations during elections. The use of schools and teachers during elections, for instance as polling officials or vote counters, has triggered election and post-election violence against them in some countries, such as Afghanistan, Philippines and Zimbabwe. In some countries there are laws that require teachers to serve as poll workers in schools during elections. Community groups and NGOs should consider advocating to reverse these laws and practices.

- Exercise caution about using donor labels. International aid is sometimes seen as hostile to local beliefs and norms, or could be identified with the government or international involvement in the country. This can result in further targeting of attacks on education buildings.

8 Seek regional, national and international support for community responses

- Build national and local coalitions to protect education from attack. Coalitions of school management committees, local NGOs and community groups, human rights organisations and education journalists can strengthen advocacy efforts to respect education as safe, secure zones of peace during armed conflict and insecurity. Coalitions can amplify advocacy messages and influence education and military policies. Support beyond the community may be necessary for a range of other actions, such as expanding monitoring and reporting mechanisms in regions or whole countries, prosecuting perpetrators in national or international courts, or enacting government policies to protect education.

- Seek multi-level support only if appropriate. In some cases, seeking government or international support can ignite tensions if the central government is viewed as hostile to local needs and interests. On the other hand, community organisations might seek endorsement from national or even global human rights organisations to strengthen their work.

Nepal: Negotiating a 'Schools as Zones of Peace' agreement

Nepal experienced a 10-year Maoist insurgency in which schools were literally and ideologically caught in the crossfire of the Maoists and the army. Maoists introduced a curriculum that was in conflict with the state curriculum.

Schools were taken over by the army to use as military staging grounds, and students were taken for Maoist indoctrination and recruited to join the insurgency.

Strikes and occupation closed the schools for prolonged periods; 344 students and 145 teachers were killed in the conflict. UNICEF, in partnership with local administrators, parents, community leaders, trained community facilitators and local and international NGOs developed the Schools as Zones of Peace (SZOP) initiative.

The partners mobilised community support to keep the conflict out of the schools. Community facilitators trained by UNICEF conducted backdoor negotiations with the Maoists to respect the concept of zones of peace.

Open negotiations with all parties were not possible because they could have endangered the negotiators. The components of the programme included:

- analysis by parents, teachers and community members of how the conflict was affecting the school and how the school could contribute to peace

- negotiation of a code of conduct with all parties to keep the conflict out of the schools
- provision of psychosocial support for students and teachers to improve their resilience and help them cope with the impact of the violence
- provision of landmine awareness activities to protect students and teachers from unexploded mines and other devices.

After the peace accord and elections, new violence and political unrest broke out in the Terai plains region among groups claiming exclusion from the political process. This caused additional school closures, harassment, attacks on teachers, and recruitment of students and teachers for political purposes. A reformulated Schools as Zones of Peace programme was initiated in 2008 targeting nine districts and including the following components:

- national and district advocacy and media campaigns
- negotiation of national codes of conduct and statements supporting SZOP
- negotiation of district codes of conduct
- negotiation of school codes of conduct embedded in child-friendly school initiatives.

Education programmes also addressed poor school governance, which was contributing to the conflict. School management was often dysfunctional, politicised and biased.

Useful resources

This led to discrimination against members of cultural and linguistic minorities, which in turn made schools more vulnerable to attacks. By supporting the democratic or consensual election of representatives to school management committees and ensuring full participation of excluded groups in negotiation and enforcement of codes of conduct, schools were strengthened and threats to schools, teachers and students were reduced.[xxi]

Sample school code of conduct

1 No weapons inside the perimeter of the school premises
2 No political rallies or other activities which are not included in the teaching programme
3 No arrest or abduction of any individual within the premises
4 No harassment of children in or outside schools
5 No interference with normal development of education activities (eg through strikes, teacher harassment, attacks on schools)
6 No use of school uniforms or premises in warfare
7 Never consider school premises as possible target, no use of school as an armed base, no use of school uniforms for camouflaging purposes

We request all the parties, the security forces and the Maoists, to respect these rules and to help us make this school a Zone of Peace.[xxii]

The INEE Minimum Standards most relevant to this section are:

- Community Participation Standard 1: Participation and Standard 2: Resources
- Access and Learning Environment Standard 2: Protection and Well-being and Standard 3: Facilities and Services
- Education Policy Standard 1: Law and Policy Formulation and Standard 2: Planning and Implementation

Erum Burki, 'Militants Target Education to Terrorize', Save the Children UK, Islamabad, Pakistan, 2010 (unpublished paper)

Marit Glad, *Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on education in Afghanistan; risks and measures for successful mitigation*, CARE/World Bank/ Ministry of Education, 2009

Christine Groneman, 'Desk study on field-based mechanisms for protecting education from targeted attack', *Protecting Education from Attack: State of the Art Review*, UNESCO, 2010.

Brendan O'Malley, *Education under Attack 2010*, UNESCO

Melinda Smith, 'Schools as Zones of Peace: Nepal case study in access to education during armed conflict and civil unrest', *Protecting Education from Attack: State-of-the-Art Review*, UNESCO, 2010.

Study in Field Based Programmatic Measures to Protect Education from Attack, GCPEA, 2011, http://www. protectingeducation.org./resources?page=1

World Education Nepal, *Schools as Zones of Peace in Madesh, Phase 2 May 2009 – June 2010*, Final Report to UNICEF Nepal Country Office, June 2010

Notes

[i] Protection here refers to protection from attack, as opposed to child protection, which is dealt with in Booklet 4: Education for child protection and psychosocial support

[ii] 'Community' is defined geographically, emphasising a group of people living in a particular location such as a village or town, or city neighbourhood.

[iii] Marit Glad, *Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan; Risks and Measures for Successful Mitigation*, CARE/World Bank/Ministry of Education, 2009, 43.

[iv] Chapter II, Key Findings, *Protecting Education from Attack, A State-of-the-Art Review*, 2010, UNESCO, 27

[v] This hypothesis is supported by the findings of Marit Glad's study *Knowledge on Fire…* and by a UNICEF school construction officer from Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

[vi] This hypothesis is supported by the findings of Marit Glad's study *Knowledge on Fire…*

[vii] Marit Glad, *Knowledge on Fire…*, op cit

[viii] Ibid.

[ix] Brendan O'Malley, Education under Attack (2007, UNESCO), 28

[x] Christine Groneman, *Protecting Education from Attack: State-of-the-Art Review*, UNESCO, 2010

[xi] Christine Groneman, *Protecting Education from Attack: State-of-the-Art Review*, UNESCO, 2010.

[xii] Unpublished research by Brendan O'Malley in southern Thailand, September 2010

[xiii] IRIN, 'Brazil: Rio considers bullet-proofing favela schools', 26.7.2010

[xiv] Brendan O'Malley, 'Education under Attack 2010: A summary', *Protecting Education from Attack: State-of-the-Art Review*, 2010, UNESCO

[xv] Martha Caddell, 2007, 'Private Schools and Political Conflict in Nepal', in Prachi Srivastava, and Geoffrey Walford, eds. *Private Schooling in Less Economically Developed Countries: Asian and African Perspectives*. Oxford Studies in Comparative Education. Didcot, UK: Symposium, pp. 187–207.

[xvi] Human Rights Watch, India, All sides using Children in the Chhatisgarh Conflict, 5 September, 2008

[xvii] Chapter 11, UNESCO *Guidebook for Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction*, 2006, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO-IIEP

[xviii] Booklet 10: Early Recovery, Transition and the Resumption of Formal Education, Facilitators' Guide, Global Clusters, Education in Emergencies training package

[xix] Marit Glad, *Knowledge on Fire…* op cit

[xx] Brendan O'Malley, *Education under Attack*, UNESCO, 118

[xxi] World Education, 'Schools as Zones of Peace Final Report to UNICEF,' June 2010 UNICEF

[xxii] Melinda Smith, *Protecting Education from Attack: State-of-the-Art Review*, UNESCO, 2010.

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