

Philippines - 3 months after Typhoon Haiyan

Interview with Søren Pedersen, Education Cluster Steering Group



Søren Pedersen (pictured), Senior Humanitarian Advisor for Save the Children Norway and member of the global Education Cluster Steering Group, and James Sparkes, Global Education Cluster Coordinator, visited typhoon-affected elementary schools in Estancia on February 10. They talked with teachers about the disasters and priorities for getting schools back to being fully operational.

Søren Pedersen shared his thoughts on the role of the Education Cluster in the response.

What role did the Education Cluster play in the response? Was this important?

It is important to get the Education Cluster into place when the cluster approach is activated. It was very important that the Education Cluster was present in the first phase of the Haiyan response especially because the destruction of education infrastructure was so large. Getting the education response right from the beginning is paramount if education is to be restored quickly and effectively.*

Why do you think education received 56% of the requested funding for the Philippines response, but struggles in many other contexts to attract funding?

Good cluster coordination strengthens the preparation of proposals and production of the Strategic Response Plan, this support allows Education Cluster partners to show what they can do for education and gives the sort of justification and evidence that donors who want to support education need. This facilitation role of the cluster is key to making the case for education as part of the humanitarian response.

The context with the devastation after Haiyan was so huge on the education sector, that everyone understood that getting the education would need support and was so important to the communities.

It may be that in other emergencies, weaker coordination will make obtaining funding more difficult and also if the Education Cluster is delayed the lack of timely coordination is a challenge.

You talked to children and teachers. What did they tell you?

Schools I have visited are all up and running even though the destruction has been enormous. In some places close to 100% of the classrooms were damaged or destroyed. It was clear that teachers want to get children back to



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school as soon as possible and children are eager to get back and learn. In many places, in the early phase of the response children expressed they wanted to go back to school. Many temporary learning spaces have been established.

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Lots of the materials, textbooks, teacher materials were destroyed. There is a huge demand for textbooks, teachers' books, story books and learning materials. Some distribution has been done, many places have received some materials which is

What should the Education Cluster do to better prepare for and respond to future disasters in the Philippines?

The most important will be to support the Department of Education (DepEd) in building back better and getting the rehabilitation and restoration of classrooms right.

It is the authorities that have to take coordination responsibilities; the international staffing support for the Education Cluster is not a permanent feature so there is a need to transfer back to DepEd.



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However the Education Cluster must support the DepEd, to build their capacity and institutionalise the lessons learned, so that the DepEd can step up in future crises.

Any final thought?

It was a good experience to see how the Education Cluster is running, especially in a Level 3 emergency response and to see all the good work that the team are doing, both in the coordination role and the delivery of education support.

Interview conducted by James Sparkes

** As part of the Level 3 response four cluster coordinators and five information management officers were deployed during the first three months of the response, providing support at national level and in the UN field coordination hubs of Tacloban, Roxas and Guiuan.*