

LESSONS LEARNED FROM HORN OF AFRICA DROUGHT CRISIS: Summary of Report

ETHIOPIA, KENYA AND SOMALIA EDUCATION CLUSTERS

In order to ensure the most effective response in the face of humanitarian crises, education in emergencies partners operate, advocate and coordinate efforts through Education Clusters and Education Sector Working Groups at national and sub-national levels. First established in 2005, the Cluster System was developed in an effort to render emergency response more effective based on improved predictability, accountability and partnership. In an ongoing effort to build our response capacity, we reflect and draw upon previous experiences. In this document, we have taken lessons learned from three Education Clusters in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia during the during the 2011 Horn of Africa crisis.

In 2011 the Horn of Africa faced one of the most severe drought and food crises seen this century, affecting over 13 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. The scale of the drought had a significant impact on education systems, with vast migration causing rapid fluctuations in school enrolments and depletion of school resources. Given the magnitude of the crisis, a lessons learned exercise was conducted to determine which key elements of education cluster coordination and response in the three countries worked well and areas for improvement. A closer look at how the Education Clusters were set up, their function and which education partner-led programs were coordinated by the Cluster across the region have contributed to a set of recommendations for education responses in slow onset crises and to create a better understanding of the potential role for education in a food crisis through the phases of preparedness, response and recovery.

The lessons learned exercise took place between February and May 2012 and was led by two external consultants and guided by a small reference group from within the Education Cluster. Key regional issues for the Education Cluster emerged through the lessons learned exercise that provide a context for framing our overall findings and recommendations while presenting overarching challenges for the Education Cluster action:

- displacement within and across borders;
- entry points for inter-cluster initiatives;
- taking a co-facilitator role with the Ministry of Education;
- creative modalities employed to overcome access;
- financing

The entire report can be found [here](#)¹ but Key Lessons are captured below.

KEY LESSONS

PREPAREDNESS: The level of preparedness during (and prior) to a response significantly influences effectiveness of Education Cluster action, in four key areas; emergency response planning, baseline education data hosting, knowledge of what information systems are being used between national and subnational levels and nature of EiE training topics along with tracking recipients of it to building on existing knowledge and capacities.

¹ Alexander, Jessica and Renée Christensen. Lessons Learned from Horn of Africa Drought Crisis: Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia Education Cluster. February - March 2012

IMMEDIATE SET UP AND ONGOING COORDINATION: Determination of additional surge needs should be based on an assessment of capacities for scale up and the potential of the national government to support the coordination mechanism following the initial response. Comparing Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia there were noticeable differences in ‘set up’ requirements based on the Cluster being “active”, “dormant” or not yet established. Similarly, the context (e.g. mix of drought and conflict), geographic focus and number of Education Cluster partners to harness complementarities should be quickly assessed to guide ongoing coordination support needs.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT: A proactive stance on regular travel to field locations, emphasis on relationship building with MoE, OCHA and other Clusters while doing assessments and sharing information and having communications staff available will help reduce barriers to information flowing from subnational to national levels (and back). Limited reliance on email/internet and ensuring visibility of activities in public reports allows for greater collaborative effort by increasing trust in the Education of Cluster and encourages information sharing.

INTER-CLUSTER LINKAGES: Drought crises highlight the integral role of education and schools in effective programming across sectors. Protection and Education interventions include temporary learning spaces that are safe and protective and provide children with psycho-social support. Data sharing with WASH helps to identify water sources for schools and communities and together with Health colleagues, schools are used to administer vaccinations. Exploiting new linkages more systematically with Food Security, WFP’s school feeding and the Nutrition Cluster in a drought was learned and needs more attention to better articulate how education can serve as a flashpoint for reaching young and school aged children and their families.

CLUSTER PREPAREDNESS-KEY LESSONS

Across countries priority is placed on developing preparedness plans however, whether they are signed off the right levels or implemented in the affected areas needs further attention. These plans can only make a difference in the effectiveness and timeliness of the Education Cluster response if they are appropriately tailored to the affected regions.

THEY MUST BE OWNED, AGREED TO AND RELEVANT FOR REGIONAL-LEVEL TO BE EFFECTIVE.

While partners described the EiE trainings as useful for enhancing their knowledge, ensuring that trainings are relevant to the context and targeted to those who will actually put the learning into practice, is essential. Follow up and support is also needed for the trainings to have any sustainable impact. Generic INEE trainings will not be effective unless clearly linked to practice and specific priority tasks.

Recommendations

CLUSTERS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Due to its cyclical nature and the consequences of climate change, dry season in the region will be extreme again. As one respondent stated, people are “settling down now and there are worries that when it happens again it will be the same.” Another mentioned ‘we plan for disasters after they have already happened.’ Now is the time to oversee and promote the development of locally based and owned preparedness plans.

Provide guidance and best practice to regional Cluster Coordinators on drafting actionable plans, monitoring their implementation and updating them as necessary.

Use lessons in this report to prepare funding messages to donors, establish work plans with other sectors and begin gathering relevant data.

Emergency Response Plans should be aligned with the appeals processes in each country (such as CAP, Ethiopia's HRD, ERF or HRF) so that targets are realistically tied to funding. When done separately, action plans may be unachievable due to lack of funds.

CLUSTER COORDINATOR WITH MOE

A constraint in this emergency was data hosting and accessibility on basic education indicators. Focused attention to strengthening data hosting systems would be a worthy longer term investment. The RALS type of system developed in Ethiopia is useful for facilitating rapid assessments and including relevant data in proposals. This or another contextually appropriate system should be rolled out in Kenya and was even suggested as a useful possibility in Somalia, with information such as school types, locations, facilities and enrolments to be collected by local partners. In this case, information should be stored anonymously in the database for security reasons, without naming organizations or donors.

GLOBAL CLUSTER OR CLUSTER AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Capacity building through training on EiE or other related emergency response skills can play a key role in being prepared for a response, but this needs to be done in advance of an emergency. Tailoring the trainings to the needs of the affected region is key for them to be relevant and most useful. Also investigating how these trainings enhance or do not enhance the effectiveness of responders would be useful to further improving them.

CLUSTERS AT REGIONAL/LOCAL LEVEL

Identify and mobilize actors (including civil society, teachers, management committees, parents, district leaders) best positioned to respond. Delineate roles and responsibilities and the actions to be taken in the onset of severe drought. Share and review these plans with the National Cluster and reach out for further guidance and support as needed.

SCALE UP OF CLUSTER AND COORDINATION OF PARTNERS-KEY LESSONS

The Cluster in Kenya being 'dormant' and in Ethiopia not functioning consistently before the onset of the drought emergency made it difficult to prompt initial action (although assessments were done quickly). Comparing the initial partner attendance rates for Somalia (where Cluster was active) to Kenya demonstrates this discrepancy clearly. In crisis prone areas it is important that the Cluster linkages are up to date, even if not in full emergency mode, so that these can be more quickly triggered. This requires continued communication with partners, engagement by the MoE and joint activities (such as EiE trainings, group workshops to engage in regular dialogue and sharing of information/best practices) outside of emergency periods. Pre-determining roles and responsibilities amongst this group for emergency response can facilitate faster engagement when the time comes.

Recommendations

CLUSTER COORDINATORS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

It is vital to promote a supportive cluster environment and community of practice where members feel they are part of a larger network, promoting the same educational goals. Conduct more field visits, or where not possible, invite sub-clusters to Nairobi or Addis for meetings. Initiate regular phone calls, engage in on-line peer forums, plan workshops to help keep members involved and interested.

LOCAL AGENCIES AREN'T NECESSARILY REPRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND THEREFORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACTIVITIES TAKING PLACE THERE IS LACKING.

A push to move the Clusters to the sub-national level was a large part of the 2012 strategy in Kenya. In Ethiopia this was already the case, but more support at the Regional level is necessary. A recommendation from the Global Education Cluster

Somalia Mission report², is appropriate to reiterate here as it is in line with the findings from this assessment and applies to all countries: "Re-conceptualize the cluster function in Nairobi to providing technical and coordination support to the sub-clusters in the field and develop a new action plan for 2012 which reflects this greater field focus. The ToR for the cluster may be adjusted accordingly. This could be the first phase in a transition process to shifting the Education Cluster team to the field entirely."

USE EDUCATION CLUSTER MEETINGS TO EXPLORE GAP ANALYSIS AND IDENTIFICATION OF RESOURCES FOR RESPONSE, INSTEAD OF AS A FORUM FOR SOLELY UPDATING EACH OTHER ON WORK.

Most important updates can happen there but should not take over the entire meeting. In Ethiopia, updates are collected and distributed in a hand out before the meeting and only discussed if particularly important issue arises. In depth exploration of an education topic in each meeting, such as school feeding, was highlighted as a way that participants can get more out of meetings.

GLOBAL CLUSTER AND REGIONAL ACTORS

Check in with Cluster Coordinators on a regular basis to offer support, and maintain ongoing communication channels. There is also a need to provide Cluster Coordinator trainings for organizations coordinating sub-clusters as the capacity of some to conduct Cluster functions was reportedly weak.

CHECK IN WITH CLUSTER COORDINATORS ON A REGULAR BASIS TO OFFER SUPPORT, AND MAINTAIN ONGOING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

EDUCATION PROGRAMMING RESPONSES IN THE HORN-KEY LESSONS

The appropriateness of some of the interventions was questioned by many respondents, especially local actors. It is necessary to better understand the impact (or lack of impact) that these responses have in order to further refine programming approaches and plans.

Recommendation

CLUSTER COORDINATORS

Work with UNICEF and other implementers to better monitor and assess the success of their programming. This can provide valuable advocacy information and best practices for future response. It will also allow actors to alter responses if they are not having the desired result or are not being used by the target populations.

THE ROLE OF MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION KEY LESSONS

Meaningful Government engagement happens at the sub-national level. Resources are best spent bolstering Government at this level as the National level is too distant from the affected areas and the actual implementation of EiE responses.

Recommendation

For work done at the National level, if the focal person is not able to carry out his responsibilities vis-a-vis the Cluster, a delegate who has time must be identified who is senior enough to make decisions and manage the MoE's emergency education commitment. Ensure that when the new Cluster Coordinator sits full time at the MoE, she does not take over the MoE's EiE responsibilities. A clear ToR, agreed upon by all actors, should spell out the roles and responsibilities of the new Cluster Coordinator, with language that emphasizes main responsibility lies with the MoE.

² Kalmthout, Ellen van & Das, Rekha. Global Education Cluster Support Mission – Somalia, Debriefing Note. February 2012.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT LESSONS

Placement in OCHA sit-reps and other reports was inconsistent for all countries. The Education Cluster must bolster its visibility by making a better effort to ensure inclusion in these materials with updated information.

INFORMATION SHARING FROM THE AFFECTED AREAS TO NATIONAL LEVEL HAS A LONG WAY FOR IMPROVEMENT FOR BOTH GENERAL UPDATES AND ALSO NEEDS ASSESSMENT DATA COLLECTION.

Investing in alternative means of communication either through site visits, bringing sub-national actors to National level for information sharing opportunities, or using skype as a medium to involve sub-national actors in National meetings, needs to be further explored and utilized.

Recommendations

CLUSTER COORDINATORS AT ALL LEVELS

Invest in cultivating a stronger information sharing culture amongst partners so that this barrier is lowered. Strengthen relationships with local NGOs and sub-cluster coordinating organizations, through regular phone calls, skype conversations, face-to-face visits and meetings. Finding alternative means of communicating is important as email may not be the best mode. Ensure all cluster staff members are equipped with the necessary communication tools. For example, if phone communication is required for communicating with local partners in Somalia, ensure there is a cell phone or a funded skype account available for use.

Make sure to provide regular updates to OCHA for inclusion in sit-reps. Be proactive in sending information to be shared for all documents describing the overall humanitarian response.

NATIONAL CLUSTER PARTNERS

As highlighted in the Global Education Somalia Mission report but applicable to all countries, National-based partners should motivate their offices/staff in the field to take active part in the sub clusters and subscribe to the plans and strategies of the cluster. Whenever feasible, National-based partners to attend sub-cluster meetings when on field missions and report back in Nairobi Cluster meetings.

NATIONAL-BASED PARTNERS SHOULD MOTIVATE THEIR OFFICES/STAFF IN THE FIELD TO TAKE ACTIVE PART IN THE SUB CLUSTERS AND SUBSCRIBE TO THE PLANS AND STRATEGIES OF THE CLUSTER.

INTER-CLUSTER LINKAGES-KEY LESSONS

The drought crisis presented an opportunity to reach children and communities through an integrated approach, incorporating not only safe learning environments, trained teachers and educational materials but also providing access to lifesaving WASH messaging, psychosocial support and food through school feeding or the voucher system.

THE DROUGHT DEMONSTRATED THAT SCHOOLS ARE CENTRAL TO COMMUNITIES AND THEY CAN BE USED AS A CORNERSTONE FOR AN INTEGRATED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE. FURTHERMORE EDUCATION IS A MEANS TO COMMUNICATE VITAL LIFE-SAVING DRR MESSAGES TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

There is a strong opportunity for better advocacy with other sectors to not only appreciate the added benefit that education could play in their programming, but to realize that the end goals of their implemented programs can often not be reached without education (examples mentioned by partners included: needing to read instructions for medicine, being able to count for livelihoods).

Recommendations

CLUSTER MEMBERS AT REGIONAL/LOCAL LEVELS

Provide evidence where joint programming has proven effective as well as use the regional forum to give tangible examples of how education can be incorporated into other sector plans. Share this information with National level Cluster coordinators who can then use the information at National forums to advocate for increased collaboration.

UNICEF

As Cluster lead of a number of these overlapping clusters (WASH and Nutrition especially) UNICEF could actively promote an integrated response through proposal writing, strategic planning, and advocacy messaging.

CLUSTER COORDINATORS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

As recommended in the Somalia Mission report, active engagement with the food security cluster and coordination during 'emergency' school feedings could be strengthened. Lessons from Kenya's school holiday feeding experience for example should be shared with other countries. Furthermore, continue to promote joint assessments and field visits to demonstrate education's role with other Clusters.

ADVOCACY AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION-KEY LESSONS

The drought opened opportunities for greater advocacy as many schools were positioned at the centre of a holistic community response. As schools were in some communities the only central structure, their utility and importance was considered critical to share information, provide other risk reduction interventions. There are opportunities for communities to use education forums to better plan for and minimize the risks of natural disasters and other epidemics with the support of PTAs/CECs, teachers and youth. School feeding, immunization campaigns with the support of health cluster partners, links with WASH to improve the water and sanitation and hygiene promotion in priority schools can all help to mitigate future emergencies.

THE SECTOR AS A WHOLE NEEDS TO BETTER ARTICULATE HOW IN A CHRONICALLY DROUGHT PRONE CONTEXT EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES IS DIFFERENT THAN DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSES TO OTHER EMERGENCIES.

Until the role of EiE in drought is more clearly and convincingly articulated and understood within the sector actors should be wary of releasing poorly informed and generic advocacy pieces which do little to strengthen the case.

ENROLMENT RATES SURPASSED WHAT THE CLUSTER EXPECTED IN SOMALIA (EXCEEDING THEIR CAP TARGET), DEMONSTRATING A CLEAR PRIORITIZATION OF EDUCATION BY FAMILIES. THIS IS POWERFUL EVIDENCE THAT SHOULD BE SYSTEMATICALLY CAPTURED, SHARED AND USED FOR FURTHER ADVOCACY.

Recommendations

DONORS

A flexible funding model for organizations implementing development education programs is recommended. This would allow development actors who regularly respond to seasonal droughts and who are in the best position to know the short and long term coping mechanisms of the communities, to be able to quickly alter spending on emergency related programming when there are spikes in drought. There could also be reserve funds available to these programs for use in areas that experience more severe droughts and are characterized by higher migration patterns. Funding for established development actors could prove the most rapid, effective and cost-effective way to respond in chronically emergency-prone areas, and needs to be encouraged and supported by the Cluster and its strategy.³

³ Ethiopia Education Cluster. Education in Emergencies – A Strategy for Ethiopia in 2012.

CLUSTER COORDINATORS AT ALL LEVELS

Gather specific evidence from the field of positive achievements and the increases in enrolment and retention of students in a drought context. Use this evidence to craft more convincing advocacy messages and proposals.

SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE DIFFERENT CLUSTER LEAD AGENCIES

Work with Cluster coordinators on advocacy, and use influence with higher-ranking officials in the government and OCHA. For example, provide back up support to the Cluster Coordinator in Somalia who wrote a letter to the HC after Education was omitted from the HRF.

ADVOCACY MESSAGES WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE FUTURE

- *Education can provide an ideal platform for integrating other lifesaving and life-sustaining humanitarian interventions such as Child Protection mechanism, WASH facilities and messaging, Health or Nutrition programs. Schools are centrally positioned and are an excellent resource to launch a holistic response for an entire community.*
- *Education is a fundamental way to build resilience within the community to prepare for and respond to future shocks. Incorporating life-saving messages about DRR into curricula can help children and their families' better cope in the future. Teachers are oftentimes the most learned people in the community and can be used to reach the wider community.*
- *The Education sector can show signs of distress before children become malnourished, before cattle die, even before the government declares an emergency. The seasonal failure can affect education in the form of increased dropouts even before a national crisis is declared. Education indicators can help serve as a warning for an escalated emergency and should be shared and addressed early.*
- *The unexpected increase in enrolments in certain areas demonstrates community's prioritization of education especially during times of drought. As many pastoralists lost their entire livelihoods, investment in their children's education was seen as a critical step for their future.*