

A successful theme day

Children and Youth in Crisis: Education in Emergencies

On 16 November 2017, up to 80 people met at the Berne University of Teacher Education to discuss the issue of education in emergencies. The event was organized by the Swiss Network of Education and International Cooperation RECI, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and Swiss Solidarity.

First, the presentations on the relevance of education by the two main partners - Andreas Huber, SDC and Ernst Lüber, Swiss Solidarity - provided an introduction into the theme of the day. The two following presentations had a technical focus: Laura Davison, representing the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies INEE, explored the basic standards aimed at strengthening quality also in crisis situations; these standards have been developed by INEE and are recognised worldwide. In the second presentation under the title «Learning in Times of Crises» Beatrice Rutishauser of Caritas Switzerland explored the question of what crises, disasters and traumatising experiences may cause in children and how their learning ability can thus be affected and impaired. She showed how combining learning contents with psycho-social activities can retrieve the child's learning ability.

In the subsequent workshops the participants focused on issues of their choice. In two workshops, RECI members looked at specific situations of humanitarian crises following natural disasters¹ as well as at war and post-war situations². In the two other workshops they presented project initiatives specifically focusing on either children³ or youth⁴, whereby the latter also includes future economic perspectives.

In the following panel, the participants – Sabina Handschin, SDC; Wiltrud Weidinger, PH Zurich; Geoffrey Loane, ICRC; Laura Davison, INEE – discussed how to connect operational experiences with the strategic and political level, and which are the roles to play by the various actors involved; and in particular, what it needs to strengthen the awareness for the relevance of education in emergencies among decision makers and the population and hence, how to mobilise support accordingly.

As a side event to the conference there was an exhibition where a number of organisations – RECI members and partners – presented their projects and concrete experiences in the field of education in emergencies.

The theme day offered the participants relevant insights into challenges and specific experiences in the fields of education in emergencies; the result was a series of findings:

¹ Presented by Aide et Action and Terres des Hommes Suisse

² Save the Children and Vivamos Mejor

³ Caritas Switzerland

⁴ IPE University of Teacher Education Zurich and RET

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Education of children and youth in emergencies has to be recognised as a priority on the level of politics, finance and action. Despite growing awareness of education in emergencies worldwide and its integration in the agenda education 2030 it has not yet the necessary support. In 2016 only 2.7% of global humanitarian funds have been allocated to education. 75 million of children affected by crises cannot complete their education and continue living in extremely vulnerability (exposed to violence and other risks). The collective effort of state and non-state actors is still needed in order to generate the necessary recognition and the financial means required.

Education in emergencies calls for high flexibility and always must be contextualized in the different situations. Hence, the main principles for high-quality education remain the same also in situations of crises; in other words, it is important that all parties concerned participate or that a comprehensive approach of education is adopted reaching beyond a mere learning-outcome orientation; equally, life skills, social components as well as aspects of preparedness and prevention must be included.

There should be less differences between development and humanitarian aid, especially in the field of education. On the one hand, because we are increasingly facing long-lasting emergencies; on the other, because education even in «short-term crises» always needs to be oriented to medium- and long-term perspectives. Accordingly, the cooperation between humanitarian and development programmes is highly needed, and consequently, these programmes should not be dealt with separately.

Finally, education in emergencies is not only an issue in war-torn regions or fragile countries. Precisely in the field of migration, also Switzerland is called upon to educate and train minor asylum seekers. Here, Swiss and international stakeholders could definitely complement each other and benefit from their mutual experiences and knowledge.

The event in Berne gave insight into an important issue, on needs and challenges and also on the important engagement of Swiss actors in this field. For the first time in Switzerland, civil society, state parties and international organisations were all included in a debate on the issue of education in emergencies and opportunities were shown how the different players can cooperate and develop common synergies.

Working group planning the theme day: Corinna Borer, IPE PH Zürich; Sofyen Khalfaoui, Save the Children; Marina Lopez-Anselme, RET; Sabine Maier, Vivamos Mejor; Beatrice Rutishauser-Ramm, Caritas Suisse.

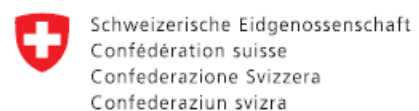
Moderation: Daniela Toupane, Chaine de Bonheur.

Exhibition, logistics and administration: Tonja Iten, RECI

General coordination: Ruth Daellenbach, RECI

RECI / November 23 2017

A theme day of RECI, in cooperation with



**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**