Helpdesk Research Report: Post-conflict Rehabilitation of Education Services
Date: 30/01/09

> **Query:** Please identify literature on the rehabilitation of basic services delivery and governance - particularly education governance - in post-2005 Aceh and/or in other post-conflict environments.
>
> **Enquirer:** AusAID

1. Overview
2. Key documents
3. Additional resources
4. Additional information

1. Overview

Education systems can contribute to conflict. In Rwanda, for example, the education system was used as an instrument in fomenting exclusion and hate. In many post-conflict settings, rehabilitation of the education sector requires not re-establishing the system that existed prior to the conflict but rather reforming the whole system. Education rehabilitation goes beyond rebuilding infrastructure and restoring basic education to rebuilding the social fabric of society and developing inclusive education systems. As such conflict-sensitivity must be incorporated into rehabilitation efforts.

While there is a good degree of literature that exists on reintegration of former combatants in education, training and livelihood services in Aceh, there is a dearth of literature on broader education rehabilitation in Aceh. As such, this helpdesk research report draws exclusively on literature from other post-conflict contexts. The following are key lessons and recommendations drawn from the literature:

> ➢ **Broad consultation and participation:** education reform is a long term process which must be lead within the country. Much of the literature recommends the establishment of decentralised decision making structures that facilitate the involvement of local communities, school and education officials (including teachers), local authorities and stakeholders. In addition, active community organisations should be set up, such as community education committees and parent teacher associations. Efforts must be made to ensure that marginalised groups are consulted and their views included.
> ➢ **Governance:** inclusive participatory arrangements will also contribute to ensuring accountability in education programming and transparency in decision making. In addition, attention must be paid to developing appropriate expenditure frameworks and budgeting processes.
> ➢ **Teachers:** there is often a shortage of teachers in post-conflict settings and a tremendous gap in teacher training. In-service training (to address the backlog in teacher training) and pre-service training (to train a new cadre of teachers) are critical

priorities that must be immediately addressed. Attention must be paid to recruiting teachers that are representative, including men and women of varying ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Schools in post-conflict settings are often a space for psycho-social counselling. Teachers often require assistance for their own trauma healing and also training in how to create a safe and nurturing classroom environment that allows for discussion of trauma and sensitive topics. In addition, post-conflict education curriculums often include new 'special content', such as human rights education, post-traumatic stress syndrome, peace education and civic education. Teachers also require training to teach these topics effectively.

- ➢ **Language of instruction:** there is a debate concerning whether bilingual and/or multilingual instruction is conflict sensitive. Some consider it to be critical to social cohesion and inclusiveness, and thus, to conflict prevention. However, others find that it can create tensions if some minority group languages are left out; or that it can eventually lead to segregated education. Vocabulary selection is also an issue in post-conflict education systems as they can construct a particular reality for children, for example, the use of the terms 'freedom fighter' or 'terrorist'.

- ➢ **Curriculum:** reform of the curriculum must begin early in the process. It is a long term process, however, and an important national undertaking involving broad consultation. One of the key curriculum changes sited in the literature is a movement away from the 'transmission of knowledge' (which has allowed in the past the transmission of particular political ideologies) toward 'learning outcomes' (e.g. the development of 'life skills', such as communication and critical thinking, and attitudes as well as factual knowledge). Textbook policy is a part of curriculum reform and is also often a time consuming process. Some immediate modifications to textbooks may have to be made, however, particularly the removal of inflammatory language, bias and prejudices. The decision of what is considered offensive, and who makes such decisions, is often controversial.

- ➢ **Sector-wide approach:** the restoration and reform of basic education is often the priority in post-conflict contexts. However, basic education should be incorporated into a sector-wide approach that looks at pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education, which are all integral to the education system. In addition, attention must be paid to alternative forms of education, such as accelerated learning programs/ 'catch up' classes and vocational and livelihoods training. These forms of education are of shorter duration and alleviate some of the backlog pressures in the education system. In addition, the training programs aim to contribute to income-generation and the development of human capital [see helpdesk research report on Reintegration for more information on accelerated learning programs and vocational/livelihoods training].

- ➢ **Monitoring and evaluation:** education reforms require constant, meticulous supervision under a continuous improvement system. Teachers must be trained to continuously assess student's performance. The development of independent school assessment systems has been effective in evaluating the progress of schools.

2. Key documents

Buckland, P, 2005, Reshaping the Future: Education and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, World Bank, Washington, DC
http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/SODA-6C57V8/$file/Reshaping_the_Future.pdf?openelement

This study presents findings on education and post-conflict reconstruction drawn from research, country studies and literature review. It finds that the education system can be a contributory factor in conflict, by reproducing skills, values, attitudes and social relations of dominant groups in society. A key challenge in post-conflict environments is the need not

only to reconstruct schools and education systems, but often also to reform them. The study suggests four important starting points:

- ➢ "First, focus on the basics to get the system functioning so that the return of children and youth to school can be seen as an early "peace dividend" that will help to shore up support for peace.
- ➢ Second, acknowledge the importance of symbolism in education and ensure some bold symbolic actions (such as purging textbooks) signaling that, while much about the system remains unchanged, the reform has started.
- ➢ Third, build recognition that reform of education is an incremental and ongoing process that takes decades and must be led from within the country as consensus develops on the wider development vision of that society.
- ➢ Fourth, focus from the beginning on building capacity for reform, which includes supporting the participation of communities, local authorities, and other stakeholders.

Some other important overarching lessons that emerged from the study are as follows:
- ➢ Make use of interim arrangements and transitional mechanisms.
- ➢ Prioritize basic education within a system-wide approach.
- ➢ Demonstrate early and visible impact.
- ➢ Decentralize the system to encourage parental involvement in school governance.
- ➢ Build the capacity of the central authorities to ensure an enabling environment for decentralization.
- ➢ Build effective partnerships and work closely with interagency coordination mechanisms.
- ➢ Recognize the contribution that returning refugees, and especially youth, can make to the process of education reconstruction" (xvii).

Key areas for reconstruction and reform in post conflict societies include:
- ➢ Teacher shortage, development and training: conflicts take a great toll on teachers, many of whom or killed or flee. In addition, teacher development and training is largely neglected during conflict and the system has to address this training backlog. Development agencies and NGOs have provided many short courses (often 3-5 days). It is unclear whether this has had an impact on teaching practice; however, they have been notably successful in building teacher morale.
- ➢ Curriculum, textbooks and reform: curriculum reform is a major national undertaking that requires much consultation and expertise and cannot be rushed. However, some changes may be required more immediately, e.g. the removal or modification of textbooks that reflect bias, prejudice or distorted interpretations.
- ➢ Governance: corruption and transparency in education governance is often a problem in post-conflict societies.
- ➢ Financing: in addition to one-off capital expenditures, countries require international support for recurrent expenditures to keep the education system running. Education fees may also be reduced in order to promote access and equity, but efforts must be made to ensure that quality is not compromised.

The study finds that the challenges that youth face in post-conflict environments often overlap with those faced by youth in other development contexts. The following are key principles and lessons learned from other development contexts, in trying to achieve the MDGs:
- ➢ "Sound policies and committed leadership at the country level, supported by appropriate expenditure frameworks, effective budget execution, and good governance.
- ➢ Adequate operational capacity at all levels, including capacity of communities to participate effectively, and the right incentives, so that countries can translate sound policies and strong leadership into effective action.
- ➢ Financial resources to scale up programs that work and measures to ensure that these reach the service delivery level.

➢ Relentless focus on results and accountability for learning and outcomes, so that policies and programs are built on the bases of empirical evidence of problems and solutions that work" (p. 29-30).

The study suggests four additional principles that relate more specifically to post-conflict reconstruction of the education sector:

➢ "Education is a development activity. While education and schooling may be an important "fourth pillar" of humanitarian assistance and critical for child and social protection, it is also from the beginning a development activity and should be oriented toward social, economic, and political development, and the longer term interests of the learners and the society.

➢ Education reconstruction begins at the earliest stages of a crisis. It is undertaken concurrently with humanitarian relief, assuming an increasing share of activities as the polity, civil society, administrative capacity, and access to resources develop. Education reconstruction has no sharp distinction between a humanitarian phase and a reconstruction phase.

➢ Post-conflict education reconstruction is centrally concerned with conflict prevention to ensure that education does not contribute to the likelihood of relapse into violence and actively builds social cohesion to help prevent it. The lessons from post-conflict education reconstruction should be applied in countries at risk of conflict and countries currently affected by conflict. One of the most significant contributions education can make is to help to reduce the risk of violence in at-risk countries.

➢ Post-conflict reconstruction in education calls for a prioritized approach within a broad sector-wide framework. The focus on basic education that is strongly reflected in this study and in the literature is based on the recognition that primary education is the basis of the entire system and therefore warrants high priority. However, the clear evidence from this study is that without systematic focus on all subsectors (pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary) and delivery modes (such as formal, nonformal, and distance), there is a danger that post-conflict reconstruction will introduce or exacerbate imbalances in the system. Apart from the system and development logic underlying this argument is the simple fact that the recovery of the basic education system requires teachers who are produced in the secondary and tertiary subsectors" (pp. 30-31). Accelerated learning programs, "catch-up classes" and summer schools can help alleviate some of the pressures in the backlog of education and training.

UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2007, 'Education for Livelihoods and Civic Participation in Post-Conflict Countries: Conceptualizing a Holistic Approach to TVET Planning and Programming in Sub-Saharan Africa', Discussion Paper Series, no. 3, UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Bonn
http://www.unevoc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/IntLib_DiscP_PostConf.pdf

This report examines the role that skills training, vocational education and technical learning can play in post-conflict reconstruction processes. The Conflict and Education Research Group (CERG) adopts a holistic definition of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) holistically: "a learning system in which both "soft" and "hard" skills are developed within a 'joined-up', integrated development and delivery framework that seeks to improve livelihoods, promote inclusion into the world of work and that supports community and individual agency" (p. 2). It notes that primary education usually receives most of the attention in conflict and development discourse and states, however, that vocational and livelihoods training should also be prominent. TVET and livelihood skills training are important for economic reintegration of ex-combatants; for psychosocial purposes in that such programs provide people with a purpose; for the development of human capital required for national reconstruction; and to bridge the relief-to-development continuum by providing training that can pave the way for more comprehensive socio-economic development

planning. In addition, while many populations in war-affected environments want a formal education, TVET is a new educational opportunity that was unavailable before and that offers some advantages over formal education: "TVET programs introduce shorter alternatives to the primary schooling cycle. While formal education still enjoys a more prestigious position than non-formal education, young men and women often do not have the time, due to current or future family obligations, to devote to completing a primary or secondary schooling cycle, and even the rarely-available accelerated schooling programs only cut the required time in half. Skills training programs are shorter and, theoretically, provide an immediate return in terms of income" (pp. 7-8). Still, the time required for TVET programming (daily attendance for months or years, which removes participants from earning income during that time) are a deterrent and obstacle to access.

One of the key failures of TVET programs in post-conflict environments has been the disconnect between training and employment opportunities. Often, as in the case of programs in Sub-Saharan Africa, curricula are frequently outdated in terms of industry and economic needs. They are also often focused on construction-related industries, which provide short-term employment opportunities in post-conflict environments, but limited longer-term livelihoods. Instead, a close examination of current and future market opportunities must be conducted and must feed into which skills are taught. Even where there is market demand for a certain trade, the vast number of TVET graduates that have learned the same skill hinders their absorption. In order to be more effective, this paper advocates for "horizontal" and "vertical" structures in the design of TVET programs. "Horizontal" refers to incorporating psychological counselling, occupational therapy and support to the larger community. "Vertical" refers to community-based labour market information systems and vocational counselling (upstream); and job placements, micro-credit projects and general economic integration (downstream). Programs must be integrative and ensure a continuum between training, social cohesion, and employment education: "As with formal education, the post-conflict period offers an opportunity to ensure that the newly created education and training schemes have a democratising effect and do not exacerbate conflict" (p. 23).

See also:
TVET and Countries in Post-Conflict Situations: website with additional resources
http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/2.0.html?&no_cache=1&tx_drwiki_pi1[keyword]=Post-Conflict

CARE, Inc., 2004, 'Education in Crisis and Transitional Settings', Working Paper, no. 6, USAID and EQUIP1
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-CommonProgrammingFeatures.pdf

This paper analyses sixteen conflict-sensitive education programs designed to enhance access to and quality of education in crisis and post-crisis (rehabilitation) contexts. It finds that the most successful programs use a multiplicity of interventions that work in tandem. Further, the study outlines five key prescriptions that emerge from the case studies:

1. "*Understanding of local political and socio-cultural context is critical in order to ensure the use of best approaches for implementing education programs that can transcend the crisis phase and that can be used as the foundation for education programming during the transitional (reconstruction/ rehabilitation) and development phases.* Programs that reflect local cultural traditions, customs, and institutions that respect the positive practices, belief systems, and needs of the community, and integrate them into the curriculum and teaching approaches have had the most success.

2. *Using a holistic approach to build a comprehensive and inclusive human resource base among key stakeholders, e.g., community members, school/education officials, civil society, etc., is essential to ensure effective and efficient delivery of education services.* Research has shown that the use of a community-based participatory approach, with an emphasis on capacity building, is advantageous, and the programs profiled demonstrate that community participation and mobilization are essential elements in encouraging indigenous development processes. Community

participation (e.g. community education committees, village education committee, parent-teacher associations) revitalizes the traditional mechanisms and systems of authority on the part of the community and stresses productive relationships among the community, the teacher in the classroom, and local authorities. In addition, building the broader capacity of community-based organisations is critical for the collective social development efforts, as a lack of sufficient local capacity for the planning and management of education threatens their long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

3. *Promoting rights. Enhancing individual and community engagement in power structures is imperative* if education systems are to be transformed with increased ownership and accountability at the community levels. Communities, particularly those experiencing mid- to long-term conflict situations, have limited understanding of their rights and how to engage productively with power structures (e.g., local authorities). For example, in southern Sudan the education initiative focuses on rebuilding civil society, and demonstrates the importance of helping individuals, communities learn of their rights, and how their 'voices' and concerns about the education environment may be channeled upward to local authorities and/or de facto national education officials.

4. *Importance of complementary education programs. Educational interventions in crisis settings should not only impart children with basic reading, writing, arithmetic, and critical thinking skills but should also promote the protection, mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners.* Examples include school-based trauma healing and psychosocial counseling services, programs that promote survival skills such as landmine and HIV/AIDS awareness, education for peace, reconciliation and conflict management, and health and hygiene. These assist in transforming interventions from individual to community concerns. In addition, the learning environs become inclusive and take into consideration critical social aspects to improve access and quality of education. For example, positive attitudes about students with disabilities from land mines, HIV/AIDS, blindness, deafness, mental disabilities, or otherwise and the contributions they can make to society are fostered.

5. *Putting in place mechanisms that allow for systemic advocacy and sharing of experiences and lessons across a broad spectrum is vital.* Strengthening and developing strong indigenous forum(s) that allow communities and schools/education programs to work collectively to share lessons learned, coordinate resources (human, financial, and material), and promote grass-roots advocacy, is an effective catalyst for developing a quality learning environment. This works best in conjunction with understanding individual and community rights" (pp.5-6).

Rose, P. and Greeley M., 2006, 'Education in Fragile States, Capturing Lessons and Identifying Good Practice', Prepared for the DAC Fragile States Group, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
http://www.ineesite.org/core_references/Education_in_Fragile_States.pdf

This paper examines how access to education and governance can be improved in various types of fragile states. It highlights the following as key priorities in these contexts:

➢ "Teacher training: (1) an immediate roll-out of basic teacher training workshops and (2) first steps to build a teacher training system;
➢ Learning materials (1) immediate delivery of whatever useful materials are available for teachers and students, and (2) first steps to build a relevant curriculum and quality textbook procurement and distribution system;
➢ Community support: (1) immediate measures to reconnect families and communities with their schools and (2) first steps to institutionalize school-community relationships;
➢ Learning spaces: (1) immediate help to communities in finding safe and healthy places to teach, even if temporary and (2) first steps to map schools and set construction standards and procedures.

The best strategies will combine activities to meet these four priority objectives simultaneously. Once progress toward these objectives is certain and if additional resources are available, a second set of priorities would include the following:

> Management training: (1) Hands-on guidance in how to manage people and resources and (2) continuing management training on-the-job as well as in short, just-in-time courses for ministry staff and NGOs;
> Planning and budgeting: (1) immediate technical support to the ministry in assessing the availability of funds and other resources and planning their most advantageous use and (2) building a planning and budgeting process and system that is integrated with extraministerial agencies;
> Monitoring and evaluation: (1) immediate technical support to help teachers and schools continuously assess students' performance and (2) first steps toward a comprehensive system of exams for students and a system that monitors the performance of schools.

Finally, there are longer-term challenges that must eventually be met if the ministry of education is to function effectively in a sustained way. These include:

> Personnel procedures, salary adjustments and payroll processes;
> Recruitment, deployment, management system;
> A pre-service training system;
> Relationships with decentralized, local governance institutions and teachers unions;
> A school construction program;
> An education management information system to support the planning system" (p. 8).

The paper stresses that these priorities indicate that schooling can still be effective with little expense in the short-term. For example, while appropriate learning spaces are needed, this does not have to entail expensive school buildings and other infrastructure (which takes time to develop) and existing textbooks can be used selectively, so long as any inflammatory text is removed. The most important aspects of schooling, the paper argues, are teachers and a curriculum to teach – and ensuring that both are dedicated to promoting peace and stability. Curriculum must be a state responsibility in post-conflict settings, involving different stakeholders, including teachers. Choice of language of instruction also requires careful consideration: while, instruction in local language can promote social cohesion, it can also heighten tension if it excludes minority groups. Teachers are important not only for their teaching skills but also for supporting development within the education sector. Careful attention must be paid to addressing the needs for both in-service training, to upgrade skills, and pre-service training, to introduce a new cadre of teachers. In addition, the promotion of female teachers is considered important to create a secure environment for girls and, more generally, to support gender relations.

Smith, A. and Vaux, T., 2003, 'Education, Conflict and International Development', Department for International Development (DFID), London
http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Pubs/files/edconflictdev.pdf

The paper discusses the relationship between education and conflict and various reforms that may contribute to the promotion of peace in post-conflict environments. It stresses that reconstruction is not only about rebuilding the physical infrastructure of schools, but also about rebuilding the social fabric of society and developing inclusive education systems. As such, systematic, conflict analysis is extremely important in order to aim for the longer term development of conflict-sensitive education systems.   In addition more system-wide approaches and strategic donor coordination is essential. More specifically, the paper looks at these various aspects of the education system:

> **Governance** is an important issue at all levels of the education system. Arrangements for representation and participation in consultation, decision-making

and governance can be sources of conflict or for inclusion and resolution of grievances.

➢ **Decentralisation** has become a common feature of education reform proposals. While this can be a way of improving the quality of education by increasing participation, ownership and accountability, there are potential downsides. For example, decentralisation of education may result in partisan decision-making influenced by local politics and runs the risk of excluding the views of women and minority groups.

➢ **Curriculum** has often been based on narrow conceptions based on the transmission of knowledge. This can result in the promotion of particular political ideologies, religious practices or cultural values and traditions, which can have a bearing on conflict. A more recent trend has been to define curriculum in terms of 'learning outcomes', which refer to skills, attitudes and values as well as factual knowledge. Learning 'life skills', such as communication and critical thinking, can also be helpful in peacebuilding processes. More generally, aspects of curriculum that require particular attention in their relation to conflict are: identity issues such as language, religion and culture; and the role of traditional subject areas such as the arts, music, literature, history and geography.

➢ **Language** of instruction is also an issue: there is an ongoing struggle between the need for a common language to promote national unity and a more diverse and inclusive language policy. Whereas mother tongue instruction and bilingual or multilingual education is advocated by UNESCO as a means to enhance educational quality, and promote social equality and understanding between different groups, the paper notes that it can also be a means to promote separate education. Vocabulary usage is also an issue and words can also carry different connotations and construct varying views (e.g. 'rebels', 'freedom fighters' or 'terrorists').

➢ **Culture, history, geography** teaching can also be a potential source of conflict if the cultural heritage and traditions of a majority group dominate the curriculum. The teaching of history is especially significant and can be subject to charges of bias and prejudice, especially if based on a single text that tells the national story.

➢ **Textbook policy** is also relevant. The decision to use a single textbook may guarantee 'minimum entitlements'; however, questions may arise as to who decides the textbook. Translation of one textbook into other languages in linguistically diverse communities can also be problematic as in Sri Lanka, where inaccuracies in the translation of a Sinhalese textbook were identified by Tamil teachers. The removal of 'offensive material' from textbooks can also be problematic as it raises issues of who decides what is considered offensive.

➢ **Teachers and teacher education** are very important as they have a large role to play in promoting peace and social cohesion. Teachers may be expected to teach human rights education and other relevant areas in post-conflict environments that may not have previously been part of the curriculum, and must receive proper training in order to do this effectively. In addition, the adoption of conflict-sensitive recruitment and deployment policies is also important to ensure that there is adequate recruitment of male and female teachers from different ethnic and linguistic groups.

See also:
Smith, A., 2005, 'Education in the Twenty-first Century: Conflict, Reconstruction and Reconciliation', Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 373-391
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057920500331397

Carlson, C. et al., n.d., 'Improving the Delivery of Health and Education Services in Difficult Environments: Lessons from Case Studies' DFID Health Systems Resource Centre, London
http://gsdrc.ids.ac.uk/docs/open/cc91.pdf

Obura, A., 2003, 'Never Again: Educational Reconstruction in Rwanda', UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning, Paris
www.unesco.org/iiep/PDF/pubs/Rwanda_Neveragain.pdf

This report discusses at length educational reform and reconstruction in Rwanda after the genocide, looking at emergency, reconstruction and development phases. The education system in Rwanda was used in the past as an instrument for fomenting exclusion and hate. The report stresses the importance of moving from tinkering with syllabuses to curriculum overhaul early in the process; and in promoting equity in educational content and processes. It also highlights the importance of teacher-training programs, which did not receive sufficient attention. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the report notes that approximately 50 per cent of primary school-aged children were not at school. This was due to lack of supply, distance from school, or the fact that children were too poor or too busy working to go to school. The paper stresses the importance of increasing the number of small feeders schools nearer home and setting up accelerated learning classes for young adolescents. However, adult education and development of alternative and innovative programs for children, in Rwanda, were hindered due to the continual restructuring of ministries, shifting of departments and setting up of new ministries.

Eventually, the first programs for accelerated courses ('catch-up' programs) for over-age children began in 2002. They were free of charge and did not require children to buy writing materials nor uniforms. The plan was to cover the six-year primary program in three years, in classes of 30 children, with well supported, specially oriented teachers and sufficient materials. Demand was overwhelming and the field managers responded by accepting every applicant, which resulted in neglect of the carefully thought out plan. Instead, the paper states: classes were allowed to grow beyond the well-set limits; the ages of children were not monitored; nor were the children allocated to classes or streamed according to their previous schooling experience. Classes opened before the teachers had been oriented and before the teaching and learning materials reached the centres" (p. 138). Since then, other independent actors have followed the Ministry of Education's decision to provide 'catch up' programs and it is hoped that this will be a key instrument in providing education for all. The paper stresses the need though for the Ministry to produce and tighten recommended guidelines to providers on planning and implementing catch-up programs.

Marques, J. and Bannon, I., 2003, 'Central America: Education Reform in a Post-Conflict Setting, Opportunities and Challenges', Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (CPR), Working Paper, no. 4, World Bank, Washington, DC
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRANETSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/214578-1111661180807/20488027/CPRWPNo4.pdf

This report examines the post-conflict education reconstruction and reform in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. In all three countries, education was seen as a key aspect of rebuilding coexistence and developing a peace culture. It was also considered critical to expand coverage and provide access to parts of the population that had lacked education services, as well as to greatly improve education quality. Education rehabilitation is considered positive in all three countries: education systems have become more participatory and classrooms are more democratic; students and parents have a greater influence on education quality and classroom environments; there are more community-managed schools and more bilingual education services; independent school achievement assessment systems have become more widespread and education ministries modernized; and civil society is taking a greater interest in the school system and pressing for improvements. The following are lessons learned from the three experiences:
> *"Build consensuses and foster dialogue to move forward with reconciliation and reforms, including education reform.* Once the peace accords were in place, country

decisions to reach agreement on specific major national issues set the stage for public consensus-building processes to decide on the basic thrust of the education reforms, policy priorities and map out action plans to carry out the reforms.

> *Tackle "taboo" issues openly.* The conflicts in the three countries reviewed and the political negotiations that ultimately led to peace brought hitherto taboo topics out into the open, including: inequality, racial and cultural discrimination, cultural hegemony, the situation and rights of indigenous peoples in Guatemala and in Nicaragua's Atlantic Regions, the distribution of land and wealth, and other concerns that found their way onto national debates. These issues could, for the first time, be openly discussed as these societies struggled to understand the root causes of their respective conflicts. Some of these issues, although now openly debated, still remain to be fully addressed and continue to pose major challenges for sustainable and more equitable development in the three Central American countries.

> *Decentralize the system and encourage parental involvement.* One has only to look at the conditions in which education services were (or were not) being delivered during the period of hostilities to see the importance of decentralizing functions, authority, funding, management and decision-making capacity to schools; of deconcentrating ministerial core functions to regional or area levels; and of involving the education community to create an enabling environment for community based school management. The decentralization and community-based management approaches imbedded in programs such as EDUCO and PRONADE, if supported and fiscally sustained, are unquestionably the most impressive gains of the reforms.

> *Increase education spending as military funding needs diminished.* The fiscal space afforded by the end of the conflicts and the reductions in defense spending, however, appear insufficient to sustain the reform process. A greater domestic revenue mobilization effort is clearly needed, especially in Guatemala but also in El Salvador, with their weak tax bases, to ensure appropriate funding levels as coverage expands and to fund quality improvements" (p. 19).

El Salvador is considered to be the most successful of the three countries in their education rehabilitation. Reforms were advanced more swiftly, probably due to the country's ability to forge a national consensus on the reforms' importance and priority. Annex 1, reproduced here, provides Do's and Don't's, and lessons learned from the experience of El Salvador.

Do's:
> *Develop a clear vision on education reforms, forge a strong political commitment to see the reforms carried through and, to the extent possible, avoid breaks in continuity of authorities tasked with implementing change, or as a minimum the basic priorities, policies and aims of the reforms.* Detailed peace-accord targets, particularly if imposed from outside, are no substitute for the vision or political resolve required to propel education reform, as experiences in El Salvador and Guatemala can attest.

> *Start the technical preparation of the reforms as early as feasible.* The design of strategies, policies and programs is a complex technical undertaking that should be based on a thorough diagnosis of the state of the education system, and should clearly evaluate costs and options. This work need not wait for a formal end to the conflict, especially since the window of opportunity to implement bold reforms is likely to be brief.

> *Build a broad-based consensus on education reforms, depoliticize education systems* (rewriting teacher statutes if necessary) and build on and learn from successful experiences regardless of their origin.

> *Pay attention to the dialogue and consensus-building process.* Consultation and discussions are not sufficient if participants feel the process is not serious, or that they have little chance to influence the strategy and goals of the proposed reforms. Equally important, government officials and the champions of the reform must believe in the process and play an active and constructive role—it is not enough that they merely show up at large meetings, they must be seen to engage and respond to

concerns and suggestions. Too many consultation and consensus-building processes fail because they are seen as mere public relations exercises.

➢ *Move swiftly to earn trust and secure the support of critical stakeholders.* This is particularly important when education systems are highly politicized or controlled by teachers' unions opposed to reforms that threaten, or are perceived to threaten, their privileges. Countries should take advantage of the window of opportunity afforded by the peace process before pressure groups regroup to defend their interests against the reforms.

➢ *Decentralize education systems and involve parents in their children's education, not just to help with homework but also to empower them to improve the classroom environment and academic performance.* To make empowerment meaningful, transfer resources to schools and parents, for schools to manage their day-to-day operations, but also for parents to have more control over the coverage and quality of their children's education. Without genuine decentralization it will be far more difficult, if not impossible, to elicit broad support for education reforms and make sure they are not hijacked by teachers and/or bureaucrats bent on protecting their own interests.

➢ *Modernization and effective decentralization of the Ministry of Education are essential to complement the transfer of resources and responsibilities to schools and parents.* This is often the forgotten ingredient of education reform programs, which if not effectively addressed, risks derailing or delaying the reform process, thus closing off the brief window of opportunity that bold reform programs need to succeed in post-conflict settings.

➢ *Decentralization—to empower parents and communities, and to modernize the Ministry of Education—is essential, but avoid getting caught in wider and more philosophical debates on national decentralization strategies, especially if driven by donors.* In the context of small countries such as those in Central American, decentralization essentially amounts to municipalization, which risks obscuring or delaying more urgent decentralization needs in the education sector, while actors wait for the debates to be resolved. El Salvador was able to move effectively on education decentralization while resisting political and donor calls for more comprehensive, national decentralization strategies. Nicaragua's lack of progress during most of the 1990s in decentralizing the education sector, arguably, may have been influenced, or at the very least not helped by, an ongoing debate, nationally and with the donor community, on the need for and elements of a national decentralization strategy.

➢ *Using a variety of economic levers, target education spending to help the vast disadvantaged sectors of the population.* The combination of well-targeted public funds and decentralized management approaches can do much to increase enrollment rates in a relatively short space of time. Among the initiatives that have had some success in boosting enrollments and attendance are nutrition and school lunch programs, the "Glass of Milk" program, and schemes that offer grants or allowances to help poor families keep their children in school.

➢ *In multicultural societies, encourage bilingual education as a major inducement to children and young people to attend school.* Just as important, perhaps more so, the education these students receive needs to be culturally relevant and may be especially important where there are ethno-cultural dimensions to the conflict and the exclusion that preceded it. Multicultural education can thus become an important tool to reweave the social fabric torn apart by the conflict" (pp. 20-21).

Don'ts:

➢ "*Do not ask more of an education system than it can deliver or assign it dauntingly difficult tasks.* In Nicaragua the Sandinistas attempted to wield education as a tool to transform society by creating the "new man" and "new woman", which they saw as essential to escape underdevelopment and quickly achieve a more egalitarian society. This meant putting on the back burner more modest goals such as increasing coverage to previously excluded groups, improving efficiency, equipping

students with basic literacy and numeracy skills, and teaching students how to think critically and absorb knowledge.

➤ *Do not disregard the education gains achieved by previous administrations, whatever their political or ideological bent.* In Nicaragua a government intent on dismantling the system inherited from the Sandinistas then faced the daunting task of rebuilding the system virtually from the ground up. El Salvador chose a different route, capitalizing on the *Escuelas Populares* experiment to design and launch its EDUCO program.

➤ *Do not politicize education contents or the thrust of education reforms.* A key step in charting any such reform is to involve respected citizens, experts or individuals known to have a keen interest in education, and do not let political considerations stand in the way of fully tapping the critical mass and expertise of technical teams involved in the reforms.

➤ *Do not try to implement reforms before the people who will have to make them work on the ground—primarily teachers, school administrators and parents—have been properly consulted and involved in setting the reforms' guiding principles.* Technical and financial support from external donors can play a vital role in helping to implement the reforms, but it cannot substitute for a national consensus and country ownership.

➤ *Do not forget how much teachers can do to improve education efficiency.* No education system can operate well without qualified and motivated teachers whose pay, to the extent possible, should be commensurate with their academic background, experience and effort.

➤ *Do not create conflict and fragmentation within the education system, undermining the consistency and integration that must prevail throughout the various levels of the system.* Problems in one level will affect the other parts of the system. All the levels of the education system—universities, technical, secondary, primary and pre-primary—need to be integrated and seen as a whole; they all have a role in proposing and implementing solutions.

➤ *Do not put through programs or projects that are not comprehensive, financially sustainable, carefully planned*, and ready to launch on the academic, pedagogical and administrative sides.

➤ *Do not ignore or neglect to look into neighbouring countries' experiences,* successful or not, to save time and resources when implementing innovative programs and projects. Bolster horizontal technical assistance (pp. 21-22)

Lessons from El Salvador's Education Reform Process:
"The following are suggested reform ingredients based on El Salvador's successful education reform:

➤ **Political backing**: A key step in any education reform is to win political backing at the highest level, engage the President and social-sector ministers and, above all, involve the opposition, by way of committees and specific actions. This is critical for the success of the reforms themselves and to chart the future course of education in the country.

➤ **Education is the answer**: This slogan of education reform in El Salvador was coined to instill a respect for education across all segments of society. Education reform is not just the job of the Ministry of Education—it will work only if all stakeholders in society are given a voice and can be heard.

➤ **Reform begins in the classroom**: Bureaucracies, political debates and national and international funding aside, real reform starts in the classroom. This is why it is so important that the education community, spearheaded by each school's principal, teaching staff and parents, take ownership and work hard once the system gives them a real entrée into school affairs. The impetus for this must come from the highest echelons of the Ministry of Education. At the top of the list of necessary changes is a paradigm shift in the focus of education toward the student and student learning, systematically tackling the leading causes of school failure—repetition and dropout rates, and student and teacher absenteeism. Reforms need to be

constructive, putting the student front and centre and, when the circumstances are right, giving students some say in their own schooling.

➢ *Cut education red tape*: One of the greatest and most enduring enemies of education reform is the bureaucratic culture that suffuses government structures. Reams of paperwork, signatures and sign-offs, long, cumbersome procedures—this kind of bureaucracy needs to be banished. Fortunately, today's rapidly evolving information and communications technologies are there to help.

➢ *Democratize education*: One core tenet and working principle of El Salvador's education reform was the need to democratize education, both the vision and the praxis. Democratic values entail consensus-building, managing dissent, dialogue, participation, transparency, freedom with accountability, and universal access. The EDUCO program is a stellar example of education democratization in action.

➢ *Consult, deliberate, then decide*: "Decision making" and "must decide" have long been policy buzzwords, but a necessary prelude to "doing" is to consult and reflect, to make sure the ultimate decision will be the right one. One feature of El Salvador's education reform was a series of genuine broad-based consultations across many quarters. From this process emerged the guiding principles and prime focus of the reform effort—enrollments, quality, modernization, and values.

➢ *Information for transformation*: Today, as always, continued timely information is a key element in successful education reform. Through ethical and strategic alliances the media can be enlisted to support the reform process, involving them in specific tasks. Information, one of the paradigms of the emerging global society, has never been more important.

➢ *Education first, then education administration*: In the classic debate between educators and administrators the latter camp mistakenly argue that, without their support and without money, no teaching can take place. As the centerpiece and *raison d'être* of an education system, educating should **always** come first. Administration is important, to be sure, but it should be at the service of education delivery.

➢ *Education policy = national or state policy, not government or party policy*: The great error of many countries, and the reason why their poverty and wealth gaps are not narrowing, is a tendency to take the short-term view and prize government policies over state policy. Revamping an education system is a long-term venture that needs to be underpinned by policies that can move it forward. It takes more than half a decade or a decade for the changes to be felt. As we well know from the political tradition of countries such as El Salvador, a change of administration has sometimes meant starting from scratch with projects and programs to imprint on them the incoming government's stamp. On occasion a new administration puts its own interests and priorities ahead of concerns about continuity with previous gains, initiatives already under way, and whatever efforts are achieving changes for the better.

➢ *The sum and the parts*: In education the whole matters more than the parts. Too close a focus on one need or program may mean neglecting another—hence the importance of a holistic vision and comprehensive strategic planning for the reform to work in every sector. The recent trend is to emphasize rural and basic education, particularly to address education needs in post-conflict environments, but urban school systems, high schools and post-secondary education need attention as well.

➢ *New teachers, new ideas*: Any decision not to actively involve teacher training centres in education reforms can have unhappy consequences down the road, since these institutions are the lifeblood of the system—on them depend the moulding of dedicated educators and the sustainability of future changes. Input from these institutions regarding curriculum reform, textbook publishing and education materials, and changes in teaching methods is particularly important.

➢ *Capitalize on in-country capacity*: There is a widespread tendency to put greater trust in international consultants or prestigious foreign universities and institutes than in homegrown resources. Although outside experts and institutions are vital to help

an education ministry, and the country at large, build and upgrade technical capacity, the country's own resources and institutions should not be overlooked. To ignore those assets is to foster dependence and forfeit the opportunity to develop and embed the requisite critical consciousness in the local counterparts.

➢ . ***Constantly supervise the use of educational development tools***: Once a country on the road to education reform has made it through the most critical phases it could be tempted to sideline other activities that might seem like minor concerns at the time. Education reforms demand constant, meticulous supervision under a continuous improvement system. By way of example, too sporadic supervision of how teacher training is being put to use or of the education materials schools are receiving can provide fuel for future critics and set the stage for failure.

➢ . ***Work on both tangibles and intangibles***: At times of upheaval there is a tendency to focus on improving intangibles, which may seem like the obvious place to begin, but the physical underpinnings of education systems is important as well. When attention is focusing on existing schools there needs to be more room in reform initiatives for urgently needed expansion and rehabilitation of school infrastructure, to provide children and young people with decent facilities in which to study and learn.

➢ . ***Reward merit and teaching performance***: When broaching the critical issue of rewrites of legislation governing teacher salary and benefits it is very important to establish, from the outset, mechanisms that prize and reward good performance and academic merit over seniority considerations or past union gains, even if this means tougher efforts to work out political agreements between education ministries and teachers' unions.

➢ . ***Reforms take teamwork***: In countries such as El Salvador with widespread poverty and exclusion, government social-sector agencies need to plan and work in concert. Examples of such joint endeavours in El Salvador are the Healthy Schools (*Escuelas Saludables*) program, a combined venture of the education, public health, public works and environment ministries; the Family Secretariat's school lunch program; initiatives by National Water and Sanitation Administration and the Social Investment Fund for Local Development, which are learning from each another and pulling together with the schools to heighten impacts on the education system.

➢ . ***Tap direct sources in the reform process***: The proper point of departure when designing and fine-tuning reforms is a good understanding of the actual needs and circumstances of the schools and communities themselves. While studies and research can help, it is important to be directly in touch with parents and school communities—only they know just what effect the changes are having. Written reports and officials sitting in offices cannot fully assess the impact of reforms or say for certain whether they are working on the ground" (pp. 23-25).

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3. Additional Resources

Refugee Studies Centre, 2006, 'Education and Conflict: Research, Policy and Practice', Forced Migration Review, Supplement
http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/EducationSupplement/full.pdf

This supplement of Forced Migration Review provides brief articles on a range of education and conflict issues. The following are of particular relevance to this query:

➢ Buckland, P., 'Post-conflict Education: Time for a Reality Check?', pp. 7-8
➢ Hart, J., 'Putting Children in the Picture', pp. 9-10
➢ Greeley, M. and Rose, P., 'Learning to Deliver Education in Fragile States', pp. 14-15
➢ Spink, J., 'Education, Reconstruction and State building in Afghanistan', pp. 15-16
➢ Quick, D., 'Rebuilding Education from Scratch in Liberia', pp. 18-19
➢ Nicolai, S., 'Rebuilding Timor-Leste's Education System', pp. 23

The following are a series of country case studies published by the Education Quality Improvement Program (USAID).

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Community Organised Primary Education: Afghanistan', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Afghanistan.pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Support Program for Traumatised Children in Kosovo', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Kosovo.pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Community Based Psychosocial Program (Phase 2): Kosovo', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Kosovo(CBPP).pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Education Renewal Project: Sierra Leone', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-SierraLeone(PLAN).pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Support to Primary School Education: Somaliland', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Somalia.pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Rebuilding Education and Civil Society (RECS): Southern Sudan (8 primary schools)', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Sudan(RECS).pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Sudan Transitional Assistance for Rehabilitation (STAR): Southern Sudan', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Sudan(STAR).pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Improving Basic Education (IBET) in Tajikistan', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Tajikistan(IBET).pdf

EQUIP1, 2005, 'Participation, Education, and Knowledge Strengthening (PEAKS) in Central Asia: Tajikistan', Crisis Education Project Profile, Educational Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)
http://www.equip123.net/docs/CrisisProfile-Tajikistan(PEAKS).pdf

4. Additional information

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Websites visited

Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC), Clingendael, Conflict and Development Program: Aceh, Conflict and Education Research Group (University of Oxford), Conflictrecovery.org, EQUIP, Forced Migration Review, GFN-SSR, Google, Google Scholar, GTZ, International Crisis Group, International Labour Office, Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), International Organisation for Migration, Peacewomen.org, Save the Children, Transition International, UNESCO, UNEVOC, UNIFEM, USAID, World Bank

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