



UNESCO initiative on sustaining the quality of teaching and learning in the context of the Syrian crisis

Scope: The initiative seeks to respond to the need of sustaining the quality of teaching and learning in the context of the Syrian crisis by focusing on teacher support and professional development to address the following challenges:

- Since the onset of the civil war in Syria, thousands of teachers have fled the country. Some of them found shelter in refugee camps and continued working in refugee, camp-based schools, while others could be integrated in the national systems of host countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey.
- Refugee teacher, as well as host country teachers dealing with Syrian refugee learners, face the challenge of implementing curricula (i.e. the host country curriculum and/or the Syrian or a “blended” curriculum) in difficult circumstances such as large classes and/or double/triple shifts.
- They also need support for providing psycho-social scaffolding to learners while being themselves in the need of psycho-social support.
- Teachers still working in Syria face daily hardships in the context of disruptive schooling activities caused by the lack of stability in the country. This leads to major difficulties in monitoring and sustaining the quality of teaching and learning processes, while also hindering professional development opportunities for Syrian teachers.
- Syrian teachers that work in the neighboring countries, as well as host country teachers dealing with Syrian refugee learners, face equally the challenge of delivering learning content for certification in the context of different national systems whose curricula and evaluation procedures may differ from those used in Syria.
- Syrian teachers in both their homeland and refugee contexts lack appropriate professional development opportunities to sustain and improve their competencies in fostering quality teaching and learning.
- Homeland teachers of the host countries that teach Syrian refugee learners need capacity development to deal with education in emergency, which includes adjusting to new curriculum arrangements. At the same time, pending on circumstances, new teachers may need to be trained in response to the increased flux of refugee learners in countries neighboring Syria.

UNESCO's added value: UNESCO's educational work in Post-Conflict Post-Disaster settings (PCPD) is founded on the principle of securing access for all children, youth and adult learners, in an inclusive manner, to education of the highest possible quality. A rights-based approach underpins this work, rooted in international human rights standards, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989). Central to this rights-based approach is the understanding that the right to education is both an end in itself and an enabling right; access to good quality education enables people to realize and fully enjoy other fundamental rights. In order to make the right to education meaningful in PCPD situations, UNESCO is committed to promoting educational equity and non-discrimination, notably in terms of socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, nationality, religious belief, political affiliation, disability and geographic location.

UNESCO's added value in PCPD response stems from its holistic mandate and system-wide approach, both in terms of education levels and the time span of commitment, which stretches from relief to recovery and development. The scope of the work of the UNESCO Education Sector in PCPD settings thus covers all sub-sectors and delivery modes of an education system, formal and non-formal educational activities and structures and open and distance learning.

Over the last decade, UNESCO expanded its work substantively in PCPD contexts and conflict-affected societies, such as Iraq and Palestine in the Arab Region. It gained significant experience in the realm of Teacher Policy and Practice based on enhancing collaboration among its offices in the Region (i.e. Beirut, Amman, Iraq, Ramallah), as well as through engaging in productive partnerships with the Ministries of Education of the Arab countries.

To date, UNESCO disposes of an important portfolio in dealing with teacher education and training in the Arab Region based on up-to-date teacher policies and practice, as part of UNESCO's focus on teachers as a Regional and international priority. UNESCO's Teacher portfolio clearly illustrates the necessary links between forward-looking teacher policies and the appropriate levers of translating policies into quality daily practice.

Given its international mandate in education as a high-level intellectual forum and standard setter, that is complemented by important capacity development functions, UNESCO's advice and collaboration is also requested on a regular basis by other international agencies working in PCPD, such as UNHCR and UNICEF, which contributes to enhanced synergies among international education stakeholders and partners.

Specific interventions:

The aforementioned challenges to quality teaching and learning will be addressed through three (3) complementary interventions:

Component 1: Fostering teacher professional development in the context of education in emergency (EiE)

Implementing customized training and professional development packages. UNESCO (i.e. UNESCO Beirut, in collaboration with UNESCO Amman and UNESCO Doha), launched in 2012 a Regional Teacher initiative for the Arab states that focuses on the development of a *Teacher Policy Framework and Resource Pack* relevant for the Arab Region. Following the latest Regional workshop in Doha (28-29 November 2013), *Education in Emergencies (EiE)* was added as an important pillar. Based on the overall guidance offered by the aforementioned *Teacher Policy Framework and Resource Pack*, customized training and professional development packages will be produced and implemented. Such packages will address several important aspects of Education in Emergency (EiE), such as:

- psycho-social support for both teachers and learners;
- using curricula flexibly by focusing on competency development;
- integrating cross-cutting issues, such as peace education, intercultural understanding, gender equality, entrepreneurship and skills development for life and work, and sustainable development;
- working with large classes;
- working in shifts;
- promoting whole-school approaches (WSA) in order to enhance the quality of learning processes and outcomes;
- using learning resources creatively and effectively;
- developing new learning materials to supplement/replace the existing (lacking) resources;
- dealing with diversity constructively, without interfering in partisan politics.

The initiative will capitalize on existing training and professional development packages produced by UNESCO (such as on effective school and classroom management and teacher leadership) and INEE (i.e. *Minimum Standards for education in emergencies* and the *Guidance Notes for Teaching and Learning*). At the same time, it will enrich the basis for effective teacher training and professional development in the Region from an Education in Emergency (EiE) perspective that may benefit other countries in the Arab Region equally.

Component 2: Supporting teachers in implementing effective pathways for learner certification

Regional Framework for certification of learning outcomes in the context of Education in Emergency.

Following the *Education in Emergency Regional Conference* held in Beirut (11-12 December 2013), UNESCO Office in Beirut is preparing the ground for the development of a Regional Framework for certification of learning outcomes in the context of Education in Emergencies. Teachers, headmasters, as well as other education stakeholders and partners are called upon to implement different effective pathways leading to certification of learning outcomes in the context of Education in Emergency in order to maximize the learner chances to receive appropriate recognition of their studies as a basis for engaging in higher levels of education, as well as for being integrated in the world of work. The development of such a Regional Framework for certification of learning outcomes in the context of Education in Emergency implies both political agreements among education decision makers and stakeholders in the Region, as well as a variety of technical solutions that teachers, headmasters and other education stakeholders, such as parents, should be aware of and able to address effectively.

Component 3: Advocacy for engagement in supporting Syrian teachers

Advocacy for quality. UNESCO will engage in advocacy activities to make transparent the teacher competencies needed for delivery of quality education in Education in Emergency, as well the different types of support teachers may benefit from for their continuous professional development.

Advocacy for funding. UNESCO will equally engage in advocacy activities with regard to funding different initiatives for teacher professional development in emergency situations, while also facilitating information on professional development opportunities through customized platforms.