9. Education

Sectoral activities

Minimum Prevention and Response Interventions

9.1 Ensure girls’ and boys’ access to safe education
Background

Women and children, especially girls, in emergencies face the threat of sexual violence, including rape, sexual exploitation/abuse, prostitution, trafficking, and forced pregnancy. Ensuring that girls can go to school in protective learning environments in emergency situations may help to protect them from sexual violence and other abuses. It is crucial to promote quality educational activities on life skills issues, with specific mention of the prevention of sexual violence.

Schools can and should provide a protective environment for girls and boys. The normality and routine provided by daily schooling is a stabilising and crucial factor for children’s development. Children and young people who are in school are more likely to delay the age of first sex — particularly if they get support and learn skills to postpone starting sexual activity. Schools are places not only for the teaching of traditional academic subjects, but also for the dissemination of life-saving and life-sustaining messages. Schools are effective sites for education on such issues as HIV/AIDS, landmines, human rights, tolerance, and non-violent conflict resolution, as well as other issues. Children who go to school are also less likely to join the military and armed groups.

Key Actions

The following actions apply to the education sector. The education sector identifies a focal point who participates regularly in the GBV working group and reports on the sector’s achievement of the key actions. The focal point participates in cross-cutting functions led by the GBV coordinating agencies and working groups, as described in Action Sheets for Coordination, Assessment and monitoring, Human resources, and Information education communication.

1. Plan education programmes using guidance from the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies.

2. Keep children, particularly those at the primary school level, in school or create new schooling venues when schools do not exist. Some effective strategies that may be appropriate, depending on the setting, include:
   - Link humanitarian services (such as special food packages for families tied to attendance) with schools.
   - Monitor drop-out through assistance lists to determine if and why children are leaving school.
   - If children are dropping out of school because of lack of food, provide school feeding.
   - Provide assistance with school fees, materials, and uniforms.
   - Offer flexible school hours to accommodate children who cannot attend school all day due to other responsibilities, such as a child caring for an ailing parent or a child who has been orphaned.

3. Prevent sexual violence and maximise child survivors’/victims’ access to helping services by raising awareness among students and teachers about sexual violence and implementing prevention strategies in schools.
   - Inform teachers about sexual violence, prevention strategies, potential after-effects for children, and how to access help and sexual violence services in the community.
   - Actively recruit female teachers.
   - Include discussion of sexual violence in life-skills training for teachers, girls, and boys in all educational settings.
   - Ensure all teachers sign codes of conduct which prohibit sex with children and young people.
   - Establish prevention and monitoring systems to identify risks in schools and prevent opportunities for teachers to sexually exploit or abuse students.
   - Provide materials to assist teachers (for example, “School in a box” and recreation kits that include information on gender-based violence and care for survivors).
   - Provide psychosocial support to teachers who are coping with their own psychosocial issues as well as those of their students. Such support may help reduce negative or destructive coping behaviours.
4. Establish community-based protection activities and mechanisms in places where children gather for education to prevent abuses such as sexual violence and/or recruitment by armed groups.
   • Provide facilities for recreation, games, and sports at school and ensure access and use by both boys and girls. Be sensitive to the community’s cultural practices and preferences related to gender.
   • Gain community support for school-based sexual violence programming by communicating with parent groups and communities about sexual violence (see Action Sheet 10.1, Inform community about sexual violence and services available) and the risks for girls in emergencies.
   • Ensure parents and the community knows about teachers’ codes of conduct.

Key Reference Materials

   http://www.ineesite.org/standards/default.asp

2. Global Information Networks in Education:
   www.ginie.org

3. UNICEF Life skills website: www.unicef.org/programme

4. UNICEF School in a box and Recreation in a box. To order: unicef@unicef.org