

Guidance Notes on Using Schools as Collective Centres¹

February 2014

Key messages

- Education is a basic human right and can be life-saving and life-sustaining in crisis contexts.
- Using school buildings as collective centers to host displaced populations should be avoided unless schools are not functioning. However, if unavoidable, steps must be taken to mitigate negative impacts

Access to safe and quality education for all people affected by displacement is a basic human right and learning spaces provide essential protection for children and youth in crisis contexts. In South Sudan, prior to the crisis, the country was already facing large scale displacement as a result of seasonal flooding and inter-communal violence.

The Education Cluster, including the Ministry of Education must work with colleagues in the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM), Shelter Cluster, WASH Cluster, Protection Cluster and the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) to ensure that the right to education and the rights of displaced persons, as well as host communities, are respected throughout the ongoing crisis.

Where schools or other learning facilities are being used as collective shelters, precautions should be taken to mitigate the disruption caused for learners and the education system in both the short and long term.

Ideally, school buildings should not be used as collective shelters. Prior identification of alternative locations to be used as shelters should be undertaken in order to ensure that schools are only used as a last resort.

Where using schools as shelters is unavoidable, Education Cluster, CCCM Cluster, Shelter Cluster and other sector partners should work with those managing the schools to minimize the negative impacts of using schools as collective shelters. Some good practice strategies are recommended:

- **Avoid the dual use of a building for education and collective shelter.** Where a school is being used as a collective shelter, an alternative site for the school must be quickly identified. Establishment of Temporary Learning Spaces near the school should be considered. The reduction or cancellation of education as a result of displacement must be avoided and as much as possible both the displaced students and students from host communities education needs should be accommodated

¹ Collective shelters or collective centres are pre-existing buildings and structures used for collective and communal settlement of the displaced population in the event of conflict or natural disasters (Source: Collective Centre Guidelines 2010).

- If coexistence of shelter and schooling cannot be avoided, there must be a **clear separation** between the rooms being used for education and those being used for shelter. The host school and displaced population should agree on sharing of water and sanitation facilities, ensuring priority of access for school children to water and sanitation during the school day.
- The coexistence of education and collective shelters can result in new and **serious protection risks** for children and youth. Identifying and managing these risks is important, for example, by ensuring that unknown adults are not in contact with school children.
- **School property must be protected** so that it is not damaged during the use of the building as a collective shelter. Moving books, files, desks, chairs and moveable blackboards into a place designated for storage such as locked classroom or other safe space, will avoid potential damage and destruction of school materials.
- **At no time should forcible eviction of schools** take place – displaced communities living in schools should not be evicted, secondary displacement will further weaken the coping capacity if the displaced population, increasing their vulnerability. Similarly, if the school is in operation, teachers and students should not be forced to leave.
- If a school is being used as a collective shelter there should be joint work between the Education, CCCM and Shelter Cluster actors, including State Level Ministries to ensure that an **alternative learning space will be established**, and that the school building will be in a reasonable state when it is returned to its intended use. When established, Temporary Learning Spaces should include host community, returnee² and displaced community children.
- Education and CCCM Cluster partners should work with WASH Cluster colleagues to ensure that **the latrines and water sources** at schools being used as shelters are repaired if they are damaged as a result of heavy use.
- **Collective efforts shall be made by all stakeholders at the outset to identify an alternative option taking into account the rights of IDPs and the right to education.** Efforts should be made by Education, CCCM and Shelter partners to prevent displaced population from living indefinitely in education facilities long after the crisis occurred.
- Where possible, the education community should be involved in the administration of a school occupied as a Collective Shelter. Education actors can work with the Site Manager (or Site Monitoring agency) to provide activities to improve the quality of life of IDP children.

For more information about the work of the Education Cluster, please contact:

Esther Akumu Achire, Director
Development Partner Coordination, MoEST
akumuachire@yahoo.com
0922605069

Amson Simbolon
Education Cluster Coordinator
edclusterjuba.un@gmail.com
0954439104

Malaravan Sivalingam
Education Cluster Co-Coordinator
edclusterjuba.ngo@gmail.com
0922417296

² Over 1.7 million returnees have arrived in South Sudan since 2007, though no large scale returns are anticipated in the first half of 2014, it is important to ensure that returnees, who are already within South Sudan, have access to basic services, including education.