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The role of communities in protecting education

The limited amount of research that has been undertaken on programmes to protect education suggests that communities have a crucial role to play in preventing and responding to attacks.[228] However, less is known about the outcomes of community engagement or the conditions for its success. This chapter summarizes key findings across a range of protection measures – such as physical protection, monitoring, advocacy and negotiation – in which communities have played an active part. Different approaches to engaging with communities are analysed and lessons are drawn with the aim of improving support for the protection of education at the local level

Communities have an important role to play in protecting education from attack.[229] In many conflict-affected countries in particular, governments may lack the capacity or will to fully protect education.[230] For example, in northern Liberia, where attacks on students and schools continued to occur after the conflict, some communities organized student escorts and provided unarmed guards at schools to improve their physical security.[231] Communities in Afghanistan have protected schools in instances where they know and are able to negotiate with the perpetrators of attack.[232] Often, national and international actors can support community action. In Nepal, for example, NGO investments in capacity-building ensured that school management committees were more representative of the community and reportedly reduced threats to education. However, a community-based approach can present certain risks to the individuals involved. In eastern DRC and Nepal, community members monitoring attacks have reported being threatened.[233]

Despite the worldwide engagement of communities in protecting education, very little research, either quantitative or qualitative, has taken place on the outcomes of these actions.[234] This essay summarizes available documentation on this topic, based on a review of existing literature and selected programme documents as well as practitioner experience. The analysis draws on the Interagency Learning Initiative's (ILI) typology of ways of engaging communities in activities to achieve children's well-being.[235] The four-category typology of community participation in protection interventions proposed by the ILI has been adapted and used for this review: community-initiated, community-implemented, community-inspired and community-involved. The analysis of community action presented draws, in particular, upon two in-depth case studies of the Philippines and Afghanistan prepared for this chapter. Based on the review, suggestions are offered on ways that national or international actors can support community action.

Community action to prevent and respond to attack

Communities are engaged in preventive, damage-mitigating and responsive actions designed to ensure continued safe access to education. These actions can be undertaken independently or with varying degrees of support from government, civil society or international organizations. Work at the community level is facilitated through national-level education policies that are conflict-sensitive and through curriculum reform to remove bias and build students' capacity for conflict resolution. The present chapter, however, examines only modalities of action specifically at community level.

Forms of education protection in which communities are engaged

Preventive actions, such as:

- strengthening management of education
- negotiation to prevent attacks
- establishing 'Codes of Conduct'/'Schools as Zones of Peace' with the objective of long-term prevention of attacks
- awareness-raising on the value of education
- roll-out of, and awareness-raising on, national legislation
- advocacy
- adaptation of education delivery
- physical strengthening of schools, construction and reconstruction
- night guards/day guards/security
- protests

Damage mitigation, such as:

- contingency planning
- safety and first aid training
- extinguishing fires in case of arson attacks
- early warning systems: Short Message Service (SMS) warning teachers and students of attack

Response actions, such as:

- facilitating speedy resumption of education when safety permits
- support for temporary learning spaces and psychosocial support
- monitoring and reporting
- capturing lessons learned in order to be able to carry out further preventive action
- negotiation – e.g. for the clearing of school buildings used by armed groups and state armed forces, or the release of teachers or students
- reconstruction and repairs

Preventive actions

Strengthening management

In many countries, school management often includes not only senior education staff but also a school management committee composed of community representatives. However, particularly in unstable settings, school management may be politicized or biased, discriminating against members of certain cultural, linguistic, ethnic or religious minorities, thereby potentially making schools more vulnerable to attack.[236] Ensuring the full participation of excluded groups in school management committees may reduce threats to schools, teachers and students.[237] In Nepal, there seemed to be a correlation between democratic elections to select committee members and reduced threat of attack.[238] In Afghanistan, community involvement in the management of schools encouraged greater vigilance against attack.[239] In addition, representative management structures may more effectively implement other protective actions outlined below. However, the voluntary nature of these committees can lead to slow progress, high turnover or lack of willingness to participate.[240]

Negotiation

Many instances have shown that local actors, including school management committees, community and religious leaders, and village elders, may be effective at negotiating with potential perpetrators of attacks, particularly when the attackers are trying to gain the community's support or are community members themselves. Religious leaders and religious groups may also have greater success in negotiating with parties to conflict when they draw from similar belief systems.[241]

In one case in Nepal, a Village Development Council successfully lobbied to locate election booths in community buildings instead of schools to ensure that education facilities retained a politically neutral profile.[242]

The approach taken to negotiations depends upon the perpetrators and motives of attack. At times, transparent and public negotiations may be most effective since they ensure awareness of agreements, for example, through public ceremonies.[243] Alternatively, back-door negotiations may be more appropriate where discussion with certain parties to the conflict would present a risk for negotiators. For example, in Nepal, secret negotiations took place with Maoist rebels so that individuals – mostly women – involved in discussions on the subject of Schools as Zones of Peace would not be put in jeopardy.[244]

Codes of Conduct/Zones of Peace

Codes of Conduct are a particular type of negotiation that can be long-term and prevent school attacks. 'Schools as Zones of Peace' (SZOP) have been established in many areas and international organizations can play a major role in encouraging communities to engage in such a process. A mid-term evaluation by Save the Children noted 12 of 16 of their project schools in Nepal had Codes of Conduct regarding SZoP.[245]

UN agencies and NGOs promoting SZOPs have often found it beneficial to work through local partners, whose staff speak local languages and understand the context, enabling long-term relationship-building, meaningful participation from all stakeholders, including schools and their communities, and contextual relevance.[246] The negotiation process may be lengthy and requires patience, flexibility and trust. In Baglung, Nepal, for example, Maoists initially rejected a declaration of the school as a SZOP, but allowed it as they became more integrated into the community.[247]

Additionally, including clauses that target all participants' behaviour – not just armed groups and forces – has been effective in places like Nepal. There, clauses covered concerns such as armed activities and weapons in school; use of children in political activities; abduction; use of inappropriate language; and use of alcohol and tobacco.[248]

Adaptation of education delivery

Schools may be targets for attack because they are large physical structures, are a source for human resources or have symbolic meaning. Consequently, changes in physical set-up or content may be protective; for example, reducing visibility by means of boundary walls, relocating schools or holding classes

in homes or community premises, or changing curriculum, staffing or teaching. However, these changes must be made with an awareness of how they might adversely affect education quality.[249]

Guards/security

Armed or unarmed guards may provide security, reduce the risk of attack or enable rapid response to attack. Because government provision of security can attract attacks in some cases, community guards may be a logical alternative. In Liberia, the community viewed unarmed guards as a relatively cost-effective and sustainable protection mechanism that helped teachers and students feel safe.[250] However, depending on the context, having community guards may simply transfer the risk.

Protest

Community protests against attacks on education have occurred in several countries including Pakistan, Yemen and India. For example, in India, students and teachers in Jharkhand organized a protest after Maoists blew up a school in 2011.[251] While protests draw attention to threats to education, they can present considerable risks for communities, subjecting them to further violence. External actors, therefore, should not initiate community protest though they can support wider awareness of the issues being raised.

Response actions

Promoting continuity of education provision

Because of their immediate proximity, communities can be first responders for restoring access to education and mitigating the impact of attacks, for example, by repairing damaged buildings. NGOs may also engage community members in the process of fundraising, and provision of materials and labour to rebuild. Save the Children's global programme for education in conflict-affected states included the mobilization of communities in locations such as Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Iraq and Nepal to repair damaged school buildings or build new structures, leading to increased access to education.[252] Doing so may instil a sense of community ownership of the school, further protecting education. However, standards need to be in place to ensure that buildings constructed are safe.

In situations where schools are attacked, communities may also establish temporary learning spaces. In the Central African Republic (CAR), amid ongoing violence and insecurity, communities set up 'bush schools'[253] in makeshift shelters or under trees to continue education when fighting forced them to flee. Teachers received training and then worked for in-kind payment from the community.[254]

With temporary learning spaces or non-formal education sites, it is vital to ensure that children's learning and qualifications are recognized in order to facilitate integration into formal education or vocational training.[255] This requires that the stakeholders, including international organizations that are often involved, advocate with the Ministry of Education and other key decision-making bodies to recognize adapted forms of schooling. Although CAR's bush schools were initially intended to be temporary, the Ministry of Education eventually recognized them, which allowed for students' and teachers' future success in formal education.[256]

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms

School management committees, parent teacher associations, community groups and children's clubs can monitor and report cases of attack, facilitating analysis that informs prevention and response actions, supports advocacy and increases accountability.

Communities, schools and governments can set up independent monitoring systems. They can also contribute alerts to the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on children and armed conflict (MRM), which records grave violations of children's rights in certain conflict-affected countries. Ideally, local organizations should be involved in monitoring from the outset to ensure that data collection is sensitive to protection issues. In parts of eastern DRC, focal points from school management committees and parent teacher associations report violations of children's rights and children's clubs are encouraged to participate.[257] In the Philippines, it was found that the creation and ongoing presence of a volunteer-run community monitoring group (not initially linked with

the MRM) reduced attacks because armed non-state actors were aware of permanent observation.[258]

Reports from DRC and Nepal indicate that community-based NGOs involved in the MRM have been threatened and intimidated.[259] Close communication with community groups and regular evaluation and adaptation of monitoring mechanisms according to community feedback are important for improving data collection and reducing the risks to locally-appointed MRM Monitors.[260]

Overview of community action to prevent and respond to attack

To ensure suitable response strategies, stakeholders should conduct an in-depth analysis of the nature of attacks on education, community awareness and attitudes to education, and existing community action. Context is very important. For example, in places like Nepal, where Maoists used schools to gain support, community negotiation and pressure from civil society and international actors on government, political leaders or armed groups may protect education. In other circumstances, such as in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, physical strengthening of premises or use of guards may be more appropriate.

Levels of community engagement

As noted above, community actions to protect education from attack can be mapped using a framework of four interconnected - and in some instances overlapping - levels of community engagement: community-initiated, community-implemented, community-inspired and community-involved. Which level is most effective may depend on the resourcing and design of the protection activities and on-the-ground realities. Additionally, interventions may start off being 'community-initiated', and then be emulated by external actors who introduce them into other communities where they become 'community-involved' actions. Furthermore, within one community or programme it is possible that several different actions are carried out with differing levels of engagement. The typology may help programme planners when considering various options for community engagement prior to implementing programmes.

1. Community-initiated: Community members conceive, define, manage, implement and resource these initiatives. Continuing community motivation is essential to maintain action.

CASE EXAMPLE: In the eastern part of Myanmar, conflict between armed non-state actors and state armed forces resulted in burning of schools, forced relocation, and abduction and recruitment of children on their way to school. Because strict government controls blocked international access to conflict-affected areas, communities responded entirely alone. They frequently rebuilt schools or provided education in temporary facilities during displacement. Local organizations monitored the incidence of attacks and conducted advocacy. These efforts were initiated and maintained without external support.[261]

2. Community-implemented: Groups external to the community design these interventions but rely on community members to manage, support or resource activities. The assumption is that community volunteerism will maintain actions beyond the life of the project when external funding ends.

CASE EXAMPLES: School management committees in DRC variously initiated by UN agencies, NGOs and the Ministry of Education fall into this category. In Afghanistan, community guards, initially supported by the government, became the responsibility of communities themselves in many locations.

3. Community-inspired: Community groups conceive or develop these actions but rely upon some form of external support (human resources, skills, knowledge, advocacy or funding).

CASE EXAMPLE: Malala Yousafzai's campaign for girls' education may be seen as 'community-inspired' action. She and the community in which she lived may not have been able to raise the same level of awareness without collaboration with international media and UN agencies.

4. Community-involved: In these activities, external organizations, donors or governments use participatory processes to solicit community perspectives to shape the design, monitoring and evaluation of the

programme, but implementation is not in the community's hands. Actions continue as long as the external funding stream is available. This often occurs in rapid onset emergencies, when international agencies have access to the affected population and support education as a short-term gap-filling measure.

CASE EXAMPLE: During the post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011, armed groups attacked large numbers of villages, causing forced displacement, and used schools. In response, NGOs set up temporary learning spaces in camp settings.[262] The speed at which programmes providing temporary learning spaces are established may limit the level of community participation in programme design, but NGOs do solicit community perspectives in the monitoring process. When camps close down, the programme may move with the population or close if formal education has been reinstated. The role of the community would become critical at this stage.

Overview of community engagement

Many of the forms of education protection cited earlier can be implemented at any of the four different levels within this typology – with some exceptions. Different forms of support may be more or less realistic or effective depending on the context, the nature of attacks and community views of education. Programme initiatives within a country may span the full range of levels of engagement, depending on site-specific realities. While community-initiated activities may be better adapted to context and considered more cost-effective than community-involved ones, they are not feasible in all contexts. Furthermore, some initially community-organized actions, such as protests, may only achieve large-scale outcomes once they gain support from NGOs, UN agencies or the media.

Case studies of community prevention and response action

Two country case studies, on the Philippines and Afghanistan, are presented here to demonstrate the range of activities in which communities can engage within a given context. They also show how national and international actors may support communities to achieve protection for education.

The Philippines: Zones of Peace, and monitoring and reporting

For the past thirty years, Mindanao, in the southern Philippines, has experienced conflict between government forces and a range of non-state actors. Fighting between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government alone has cost 60,000 lives and driven a million people from their homes.[263] These conflicts have been accompanied by recurrent attacks on education throughout Mindanao, including burning and occupation of school buildings, kidnapping of teachers, planting of explosive devices, forced evacuations and physical attacks on school buildings during fighting. In some cases, teachers were targeted while performing election duties. The MRM taskforce identified both state forces and armed non-state groups as perpetrators.[264]

Initiatives engaging community groups in protection of education

Learning Institutions as Zones of Peace

The Learning Institutions as Zones of Peace (LIZOP) programme started in 2011, influenced by previous national and international initiatives in zones of peace, and established spaces that care for the welfare of all children, prioritizing their rights to protection and education.[265] UNICEF is supporting the expansion of this programme in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao in collaboration with several NGOs, the Department of Education and community groups. The objective is to engage stakeholders – community leaders, parents, teachers, state agencies and parties to the conflict – to enable children in conflict-affected areas to access safe education. Stakeholders in four pilot communities participated in a process of developing a 'declaration' to recognize schools as 'Zones of Peace'.[266] The project is now being rolled out in eight additional communities.

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms

The Mindanao Peoples Caucus (MPC), formed in January 2003, has trained 3,500 local volunteers, called the Bantay Ceasefire group, to monitor and

report violations of the ceasefire agreement between the MILF and the government, including attacks on schools.[267] The Bantay Ceasefire group has shared information and reports of child rights violations with the UN MRM in place in the Philippines since 2007.

Awareness-raising

In addition, the MPC runs the Youth Volunteers for Peace Action Network. They seek to generate support for the peace process among youth through advocacy campaigns.[268] UN agencies and NGOs also engage communities in a process of awareness-raising on existing legislation.

National and international support for community action

These community actions and the LIZOP process build upon, and are underpinned by, government legislation to protect education. Key legislation supports education for all, prohibits the military use of schools and promotes protection of children in conflict.[269]

Reported outcomes

The village of Tina, in the province of Maguindanao in Mindanao, has shown positive results of community and agency efforts. As of 2008, conflict forced the entire population to evacuate the village, resulting in its occupation by the MILF. In late 2010, when the community started to return, UNICEF began working with the community and other key stakeholders to implement the LIZOP model enabling Tina Primary School to reopen with 104 pupils in 2011. Members of the armed forces and the MILF all decided that they would not carry firearms in the vicinity of the school and other learning spaces and agreed not to allow their own children to carry firearms at school.[270]

The Bantay Ceasefire group is also perceived to have made parties to conflict more cautious because they know a civilian-led monitoring team is reporting on their actions.[271]

Key lessons learned

Although external actors are initiating and rolling out LIZOP, the model borrows heavily from the two decades-old Philippine practice of establishing community-wide zones of peace.[272] Research on zones of peace initiatives has found that the process of establishing community-wide peace agreements was most successful and sustainable when engaging a range of stakeholders – including government, local and international organizations, church groups[273] and the community.[274] Community engagement in monitoring compliance with peace agreements enabled permanent surveillance with low resource investment. Further, it proved helpful to engage with parties to the conflict as parents, rather than as armed individuals. Overall, it may be seen that, out of the four approaches outlined in the typology of community engagement, only 'community-involvement' appears absent or insignificant in the Philippines context.

Afghanistan: Negotiation and adaptation

Education was a point of contention in Afghanistan's conflicts long before the Taliban.[275] Since the change of government in 2001, schools have experienced violent attacks,[276] including arson, explosions and grenades, as well as threats to teachers and the killing and injury of students, teachers and other education personnel. While the common depiction in the media was that a majority of incidents emanated from Taliban opposition to girls' education, the reasons were more complex. These additionally included schools' symbolic value as government entities, their association with international military forces, ideological opposition to any education offered outside of madrassas (Islamic schools), local disputes or ethnic rivalries, and opposition to the central government and the rule of law by criminal groups.[277]

Initiatives engaging community groups in protection of education

Communities in Afghanistan help manage and protect schools[278] through negotiation, physical strengthening, guards and adaptation of education delivery. Some examples of community action are outlined below.

School management committees, school protection committees, school security shuras and community protection shuras – defence groups focused either on schools or the community as a whole – and parent teacher associations were established, covering over 8,000 schools by 2009[279] with support from NGOs, UN agencies and the MoE. While the arrangements are

different, a common thread is participation of community members to support education. To protect education, these groups may: involve religious leaders in reviewing or modifying school curricula; improve governance; or establish lines of communication with potential attackers for purposes of negotiation.

Government, NGOs and UN agencies have supported and rolled out schools located inside communities.[280] This may reduce the likelihood of attacks on children, teachers or physical spaces by reducing distance to school, attracting less attention and making it harder for intruders to approach unnoticed. The schools also tend to have stronger ties with their respective communities which, in turn, work harder to protect them.[281]

Communities also provide night guards for their schools to prevent attack. School guards or whole communities have put out fires caused by arson attacks, reducing damage and enabling education activities to resume more quickly.

National and international support for community action

Local-level community successes in negotiation must be assessed against a backdrop of national-level action. Attacks on students, teachers and school buildings are criminal offences under Afghan law.[282] The Ministry of Education has sought to prevent attacks and reopen schools closed due to conflict, including through negotiation with local-level Taliban leaders on ways to adapt education to make it more acceptable to all parties. In March 2009, following these government initiatives, 161 schools re-opened compared to 35 in 2007-2008.[283] Between late 2010 and early 2011, negotiations between the Ministry of Education and top-level Taliban leaders started, while local-level negotiations also accelerated.[284] The number of schools re-opening grew while the number of attacks dropped substantially in the second half of 2010 and even more so in 2011[285] However, the following year, the discussions stalled and the trend of re-opening schools was partially reversed, even though the Ministry of Education continued to report overall progress in terms of decreasing violence and increased re-opening of schools.[286]

Similarly, the success of adapting education delivery at a local level must in part be attributed to central ministry-level support and the resourcing and promotion of this approach by international NGOs such as Save the Children, CARE and Catholic Relief Services.[287]

Reported outcomes

A number of successful site-specific processes of negotiation between the Taliban and education committees or village elders have led to the release of teachers and the re-opening of schools.[288] In some cases, local communities agreed to adaptation, such as curriculum changes or the hiring of Taliban-approved religious teachers.[289] A randomized controlled trial study of community schools in Ghor province found that these schools have increased access, completion rates and learning outcomes and addressed gender constraints.[290]

However, according to field research by CARE in 2009, only 4 per cent of respondents indicated that attacks had been prevented in the past. Although this figure is very low, communities believe their involvement in prevention and response is important.[291] The lack of statistical proof of impact of community efforts may reflect the difficulty of measuring prevention (compared with response actions) and the challenges in monitoring and reporting attacks in general, rather than indicate that community engagement has limited outcomes.

Key lessons learned

The majority of communities that CARE was able to survey in its 2009 study felt that responsibility for decision-making and implementation of mechanisms to protect education from attack must remain local.[292] Respondents believed that communities may play numerous roles based on the type of attack and perpetrators responsible. For example, respondents reported that, when attacks were linked to armed conflict as opposed to criminal activity, the community was more likely to know the attackers or be better able to open a line of communication with them.[293] Popular opinion also appeared to play a role. An Afghanistan Analysts Network report suggests that the Taliban were aware of the need to interact positively with local

communities and therefore may have been more responsive to their efforts to re-open or protect schools.[294]

As a result of these factors some communities were able to more effectively engage in actions like negotiating curriculum, undertaking dialogue with armed groups or hiring local staff.[295] Engaging communities to negotiate for girls' education may prove more difficult in some situations, however, if perpetrators of attacks on girls' schools come from within the community or have support there, which the CARE study found sometimes to be the case.[296] This suggests it may be important to take into account potential opposition to girls' education within the community when considering negotiation as a protection measure.

Community members reported to CARE that they were less likely to know or be able to negotiate with criminal or outsider perpetrators. In these cases, activities like investing in physical security, hiring guards and increasing school patrols may be more appropriate.[297]

The CARE study also found that schools may be less targeted where the community itself requested the school or was deeply involved before establishing the school.[298] The association of schools with certain international donors or military forces may place schools at increased risk in the specific context of Afghanistan.[299]

Evidence from Afghanistan shows that community engagement must be tailored to each locale in order to protect education most effectively. Therefore, the flexibility of programme strategies, objectives and implementation plans is critical. Overall, the 'community-involved' type of approach appears to hold little, if any, sway in the Afghan context, while complex and site-specific permutations of the other three approaches are evident.

Challenges of working with community groups

The advantages of working with communities may include: lower costs, ensuring actions taken are tailored to context, achieving sustainability and gaining credibility with parties to the conflict.

However, there are also a number of challenges, including the following:

- Donor funding in conflict settings tends to be short-term, seeking quick impact. This is often incompatible with the long-term relationship-building that working with communities often requires.
- Variation in the composition of communities means that one model of response might not fit all contexts.
- Communities are not internally homogeneous. Wider buy-in depends on working with a full range of community members. However, there may be language barriers between group members or power dynamics that may slow down activity implementation. Conversely, more homogeneous communities may be less likely to recognize the value of improved relations since they interact less frequently with members of the 'other' group. Therefore, they may be less willing to collaborate with other communities or minority groups.[300]
- Ethnic or religious divisions between agency or government staff and community-level groups may reflect the divisions that are at the heart of the conflict.
- Language barriers may exist between international and national staff and the community groups they are working with, especially in more isolated communities. Furthermore, literacy rates in many countries affected by conflict tend to be low, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach locations. This may limit both physical and written outreach.[301]
- Relying on community volunteerism may mean that initial programme costs are low. However, this is not always sustainable. Over time, it may lead to reduced community support, increased costs or a halt in activities.[302]
- Community engagement may also transfer both the responsibility for, and risk of, protecting schools and providing security from state actors to communities themselves. This may be necessary in a conflict situation where the state

has been weakened and is unable to provide security for its citizens in vast geographical areas within its territory or because the state may be a perpetrator of violence affecting communities. However, care should be taken to ensure that the community having sole responsibility for protecting education is viewed only as a short-term, gap-filling strategy. Ideally, the state should be responsible for providing security and protection to its citizens.

- Community engagement may be difficult where certain communities or groups oppose specific aspects of education.

Only by recognizing and addressing these challenges can programme collaborations with communities be successful. Programming must be adaptable and solutions must be found jointly with community members.

Conclusion and recommendations

Evidence exists that communities participate in a broad variety of protective actions ranging from prevention to response. Most protective action can be implemented with communities at any of the four levels of engagement – community-initiated, community-implemented, community-inspired and community-involved. Each has value depending on the setting-specific needs. For example, external actors often support and advise the establishment of Zones of Peace or school management committees. In other situations, communities themselves have appointed unarmed guards or altered education delivery mechanisms. And it may be inappropriate and risky for external actors to initiate some activities, such as protest and one-to-one negotiation with armed non-state actors.

Before developing policies or programmes, external actors, in collaboration with the communities they seek to assist, should carry out in-depth analysis of the nature of attacks on education, an assessment of community attitudes to education and a mapping of existing community action. These may inform their decisions on how best to engage different communities.

Governments, donors, NGOs and UN agencies typically assume that it is beneficial to engage communities in protecting education. However, there is very limited quantitative or qualitative data on the impact of these actions. Further research should explore the advantages and disadvantages of community action and assess what forms of action achieve the greatest impact while minimizing physical risks or negative impacts on education quality.

While there are significant advantages to working with communities, there are also challenges. These include a possible lack of awareness of the value of education, low literacy levels and intra-community tensions that may hamper actions to protect education from attack. Strong participatory monitoring systems need to be in place to identify these issues early and mitigate any negative effects on programming.

Finally, while community engagement has value, it is also important not to forget that the state is the ultimate duty-bearer with regards to education and the protection of citizens. All programmes should seek to support governments to implement durable protective mechanisms once the context enables them to do so.

Recommendations

For governments

- Encourage and invest in the development of community-based mechanisms to protect education. Incorporate these into education sector plans and ensure that they are in line with national policies and standards. These may include: school management committees, contingency plans, education awareness campaigns, etc.
- Coordinate external actions and provide recognition for agreed alternative forms of education that are common and reportedly effective measures for protecting education in certain settings such as community-based schools and temporary learning spaces.
- Where appropriate, conduct a conflict risk assessment to ensure that activities do not heighten risk to education.

For institutional donors

- Increase the flexibility of funding streams (including the time horizon for implementation) in order to be able to better tailor programmes to the context of specific communities and types of attacks on education, and to facilitate community engagement and ownership.
- Apply more nuanced conditionality to funding streams. Conditions that restrict contact between grant recipients and particular actors that may perpetrate attacks on education can inhibit certain protective measures, such as undertaking or facilitating negotiations with armed groups or military forces.

For UN agencies and NGOs

- With engagement from communities, conduct a context and conflict analysis to inform response design, including:
  - assessment of the nature of attacks on education in relation to the history of the conflict;
  - consideration of whether external assistance can increase the risk that education may be attacked;
  - analysis of community power structures, knowledge, attitudes and practices that may exacerbate threats to education or affect programme implementation; and
  - mapping community actions to protect education.
- Carefully consider the role of the national government in community protection projects with attention to conflict dynamics, since, in some situations, government involvement can heighten the risk of attack or governments themselves may be perpetrators. Where appropriate, elicit government participation in project development, planning and implementation.
- Based on the initial mapping, determine the appropriate level of community engagement in all phases of project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Use varied methods to engage all community members, including those from marginalized groups, so as not to exacerbate any existing tensions.
- Ensure that staff have the relevant cultural knowledge and background and are accepted as neutral parties.
- Consider long-term sustainability to ensure that risk to education does not return once the programme ends. Long-term programming, with due consideration for sustainability, is vital when seeking community engagement in activities. For interventions like community schools, this may include lobbying the relevant line ministries to support the training of paraprofessionals, integrate them into the formal system, endorse the curricula and strengthen facilities.