

Application of Project Management Techniques in Education Empowering Projects for Emergency / War-Affected Regions

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The communities confronted with disaster, destruction, and displacement in any part of the world are faced with numerous challenges, which are in turn affected by that particular community's socio-economic, cultural, health, and educational issues. In most cases, the impact of disaster is greatest for women and children, second only to the destruction of civic infrastructure. The launching of relief projects that include well planned and organized education projects not only assist in enhancing the educational level and skill development of children, but also reduce the their psychological trauma.

Many countries are absorbing the shocks of natural and man-made calamities in various forms and magnitude, by means of such endeavors as Internally Displaced People (IDPs) camps of Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Pakistan, etc. The education projects are usually launched to accommodate the affected people of the area, and cover a wide range of application areas including the establishment of make-shift schools for the continuation of education for

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children. Project management techniques definitely help to channel the work into a coordinated effort, so as to optimize the output of such projects. In this paper, we discuss education-empowering projects for emergency / war affected areas.

Affects of Emergency / War On Educational Infrastructure

Natural or man-made disaster always leaves behind its imprint in the form of the damage done to the education infrastructure.

Significant impacts on educational infrastructure include the following:

- Total or partial destruction of educational institutions
- Destruction of students/ teachers' hostels
- Damage to science labs
- Destruction of students/teaching staff documents
- Damage to the allied paraphernalia (water and power supplies)

Categorization of Relief Projects

The categorization of relief work is principally based on the quantum of damages, but also on the emergency support and rehabilitation phase in which the work occurs:

Short-term Measures / Emergency Support

This phase starts immediately after the occurrence of the disaster, and the initial task in this phase is restoration of basic prerequisites for education in IDPs Camps. To provide immediate relief to the community children, the disaster management authorities evaluate losses based on:

- Number, level and profile of displaced students and teachers
- Capacity of the local school system and its ability to cater for IDPs
- Obstacles experienced by IDPs (legal, socio-economic and cultural, etc.)
- Proper documentation
- Livelihood activities to be generated through makeshift arrangements

Mid-term Measures

This phase has the following objectives: _

- *Semi-Structured Education.* Work with the community to provide children and adolescents with semi-structured prescribed education in a safe and child-friendly environment.
- *Gender Sensitive.* Such activities should be age- and gender-sensitive and be designed, planned, and implemented together with the displaced community.
- *Skill Development Training.* Displaced teachers including community heads, parents, and youth may be given proficiency training within limited resources.
- *Mobile Library Services.* Initiation of mobile library service may help to boost the individual's awareness.

Long-term Measures

This phase begins when the situation of dislocated areas become comparatively stable and the relief operations are associated as per normal routine. The restoration projects can assist the relevant authorities to build the capacity of the national education system in order to facilitate the integration of the internally displaced persons at the earliest opportunity (within 6 to 12 months maximum). This may include:

- Providing support for the rehabilitation of existing institutions and/or the building of new schools and educational facilities
- Providing or supporting the development of educational materials/generating activities
- Supporting measures aimed to ensure learning environments
- Providing requisite training to teachers

Implementation/Rehabilitation Phase

The implementation phase is of crucial importance. It involves properly evaluating the ongoing education activities, both formal and informal, on a regular basis through participatory methods involving students, parents, and teachers by community development projects. This consists of ensuring the following:

- *Equal Access.* Both the displaced and the local population should have full and equal access to education, and all education activities should thus target the community as a whole. The creation of parallel or separate institutions or activities ought to be avoided if possible. Distribution of school kits, school materials, and financial support for educational purposes should likewise be made available.
- *Community-Based Approach.* The participation of the displaced and the host community, including students, parents, and teachers, is essential to create a sense of "ownership" of the education project and to ensure that activities are tailored to the local cultural and social context. The community should participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of education activities, and form part of the decision-making process at all stages. The community can, for example, organize alternative childcare centers enabling girls to attend school, provide escort to and from school, and define codes of conduct for education staff. Students can also play an active role through child-to-child support.
- *Keeping Children Safe.* Schools and other learning places must be safe and secure. In order to prevent exposing children and adolescents to violence, exploitation, and other security risks, the following measures should be ensured:
 - Schools and their surroundings, including restrooms and playgrounds, should be safe, gender-sensitive, and child-friendly.
 - All education staff, both local and foreign, should have decent working conditions, respect a certain code of conduct, and receive basic training on topics such as teaching methodology, human rights, prevention of sexual harassment/violence and exploitation, and psychosocial support and positive discipline. The recruitment of female teachers and assistants should be promoted.
 - The curriculum and teaching methodology should be participatory and constructive, and aim to promote peace and reconciliation.

- Students should be well-versed in their rights (and responsibilities), and be familiar with available monitoring, mechanisms, and demeanor leading the work of teachers and other educational staff.
- Healthy activities should be provided for children, and should include the involvement of the parents
- Parents-teacher associations should be involved in keeping their children safe and secure.
- *Comprehensive Approach.* Education cannot be provided in isolation, and important linkages must be forged with other sectors, such as health, food, nutrition and community services, in order to address the root causes of lack of access to education and to reduce the disparities in the community.
- *Recreational Activities.* These activities (e.g., sport, music, games and art work) should be aimed at alleviating suffering and psycho-social distress.
- *Awareness of Disease.* Children must be encouraged to adopt basic good hygiene habits and methods, and should be made aware of the risks of poor hygiene.
- The division of sectors and subsectors should be commensurate with the allocated resources
- The scope of work must be premeditated for each sector/ sub sector
- The requirement of resources for each sector/subsector should be ascertained, keeping in consideration the damage caused and nature of the project
- Resources should be allocated to each sector/subsector, with clearly defined responsibility and authority
- The enrollment of the teaching staff should be in accordance with the requirement of each sector/subsector
- The number of students must be calculated for each subdivision
- The logistics and procurement must be planned according to the need of each sector/subsector

Project Management in Education Projects

Project management is the key to success for all projects, including education-empowering projects for emergency- and war-affected areas. Proper application of project management techniques facilitate in managing the project work efficiently even in the worst environment or that hardest-hit by war or other disaster.

Chartering of the Project

The projects are chartered just after the commencement of relief or establishment of IDP Camps and Government/ NGO groups, including UN missions, and are constituted as a part of a wider relief program. Having clear objectives, the projects are formally chartered, and groups are assigned specific objectives that need to be accomplished within a specific time frame. The time frame is an important entity because in many cases projects are usually inter-reliant (rely on each other) and therefore may ultimately have impact on other projects as well.

Planning Considerations

In the case of education-empowering projects, the following specific considerations should be addressed:

- Emergency- and war-affected areas must be divided into sectors and subsectors, keeping in mind the population and infrastructure

Project Execution

During the execution of education projects, the following need to be considered:

Project work is generally categorized into the following groups:

- Repair/maintenance of school buildings along with the establishment of labs.
- Undertaking construction of new buildings.
- Recruitment of teaching staff as per requirement of each sector/subsector.

In these cases, project work is executed by project teams within their respective sector/subsectors, under the overall supervision/direction of a centralized body, which is responsible for entire projects.

A centralized body ensures:

- Management and integration of project work
- Responsibilities demarcation
- Reconstruction / repair of school buildings
- Enrollment of new teaching staff including advance appointments
- Logistics and procurement management
- Inventory management
- Construction of playgrounds for children
- Resolving issues amicably and the creation of work-arounds

The successful completion of education projects normally depends upon the expertise of team members. Due care must be exercised in achieving long-term and quality construction/ repair work under changing environment. Make- shift science

labs must be established under expert supervisory staff, and computerized database must be maintained on Geographical Information System (GIS) for each sector/subsector, so as to ensure smooth execution of the project.

Monitoring and Controlling

The importance of monitoring and controlling the project work greatly increases in education projects undertaken in emergency- and war-affected areas, having limited skilled team members. The central body is to ensure the following:

- Judicious sector/sub sectorwise progress on construction/repair of the buildings
- Employment of teaching staff according to requisite qualifications/requirements of each sector/subsector
- Establishment of labs along with the required scientific instruments
- Verification at each phase gate through physical survey/audit of buildings and allied facilities
- Forecast is maintained through earned value techniques/indices—i.e., ETC, EAC, SPI, and CPI, etc.
- Changes are controlled sectorwise through GIS, to ensure better management of the project

Conclusion

Natural and man-made disasters and emergencies are not a new phenomenon. The relief education projects are launched to rebuild education infrastructure in emergency- and war-affected areas, which improve the

status of women and children in the society. Women and children's participation is critical in postemergency recovery, reconstruction, and peace-building efforts. Responsive education programs provide children with the opportunities to learn the skills and develop the confidence to pave their way in this process. Formal and informal education programs established by Government, UN Agencies, international NGOs, or community-based organizations ensure protective environment to meet the needs of all displaced children. The average standard must represent a significant step forward and should contribute to enhancing quality education. These programs include guidelines on child-based education and intervention in a humanitarian setting and on mental health and psychological well-being. Such projects also contribute significantly towards professional grooming/polishing of project teams along with a sense of achievement.

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About the Author

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