

INEE Minimum Standards: A Tool for Education Quality Assessment in Afghan Refugee Schools in Pakistan

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Abstract

This article details a pilot Minimum Standards assessment in Afghan refugee schools supported by the International Rescue Committee's Female Education Program in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. A set of specifically selected, contextualized indicators, based on the global INEE Minimum Standards, served as a tool for teachers and school administrators to look holistically at the quality of education in their schools and as a stimulus for developing actions to further improve the quality of learning for Afghan refugee children in Pakistan.

1. Introduction

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has a long history of supporting Afghan refugees in Pakistan. IRC's Female Education Program (FEP) improves the quality of life for conflict-affected Afghan populations living in Pakistan, especially girls and women, by providing access to effective and relevant educational services. In line with the recognized good practices of education in emergency contexts and refugee education (International Institute for Educational Planning-UNESCO, 2006; INEE, 2004; Sinclair, 2002; Sommers, 2001; for example), FEP seeks to maintain access to basic education, particularly for girls, while at the same time supporting students' and teachers' repatriation and subsequent reintegration into schools inside Afghanistan, thereby harmonizing refugee education in Pakistan with the reconstruction of education inside Afghanistan. Furthermore, IRC/FEP seeks to leverage key tools, methodologies, and strategies developed in the refugee setting in Pakistan as the refugees begin to repatriate to Afghanistan (IRC-FEP, 2007).

IRC's Female Education Program, which has been running since 1992, currently supports 22 schools, for a total of 13000 refugee students and 500 teachers in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP): 65% of students and 72% of teachers are girls and women (IRC-FEP, 2007a). These primary and secondary schools vary in size and structure. They are in camp settings and urban locations in and around Peshawar city. Some are simple, purpose-built structures in the camps, while others are converted residential premises. In a context of ongoing insecurities, political uncertainty for Afghan refugees, dwindling donor attention and resources for refugee education, and a history of tribalism, patriarchy and repression of girls and women, FEP faces multiple challenges in providing quality education and training for women and girls. Comprehensive teacher training, together with the full accreditation of students' learning by the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan, are key successes of the program. Training and professional development for teachers is designed to address the strategic needs of girl students (for quality teaching in the classroom) and women teachers (for professional experience, income and community status).

In 2004, FEP school and office staff and community members participated in consultations to develop the global Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction. Since their launch, FEP staff members have received additional training on the Minimum Standards and have been planning ways of using them at the school level to engage school community members in self-assessment and quality development. In a recent exercise, FEP used the Standards as a tool to collaboratively review and assess the quality of education provision from the perspectives of the school community in FEP-supported schools, to identify gaps and make suggestions for further improvements. This process complements the ongoing project monitoring and evaluation activities, which are more specifically tied to donor project indicators and activities. Furthermore, they do not necessarily engage the teachers, school administrators, and FEP staff in holistic reflection on the entire education program, or on the progress made over time. In the context of Afghanistan's history of oppression of women, gender is a critical element of all FEP programming, which has a strong focus on providing quality education for girls and on capacity building for women teachers, trainers and administrators. Although there are some explicitly gender-focused indicators, gender is a crosscutting theme through the Minimum Standards: as the examples below illustrate, gender issues were at the forefront throughout the FEP Minimum Standards assessment process.

This article first describes the self-assessment process undertaken in FEP-supported schools and then documents some of the findings from the pilot initiative. It is written from the perspective of FEP office-based staff who facilitated a self-assessment process for the teachers and school administrators in FEP-supported schools and who will support the schools in their follow up. The examples and opinions presented in the text come from the assessment discussions that took place in the schools, with a focus on the indicators which stimulated the most interesting responses at the school level. The article ends with reflections on lessons learned from the process and provides recommendations for other agencies and organizations conducting a similar review.

2. The Assessment Process

FEP began by contextualizing the INEE global standards to the FEP realities, identifying the most relevant Standards and tailoring these to develop FEP-specific indicators. FEP's Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) team led this contextualization and indicator selection process, which involved all the resource trainers. In order to engage fully with the Dari-speaking Afghan teachers and administrators, who speak little or no English, the standards and indicators first had to be translated into Dari language, a challenging process. The M&E team doing the translation made efforts to include some FEP-schools-related examples to clarify some unfamiliar terms (for example 'Education Committee'), but even for them, there were very technical and new terms and concepts that required further external clarification. A total of 25 indicators across the different Categories and Standards were selected as being the most relevant to the FEP school-level setting: the emergency phase indicators were not included in the field assessment, nor were those related to sector coordination. Rather, the most pertinent indicators were those in the categories of Access and Learning Environment, Teaching and Learning, and Teachers and other Education Personnel. Some of the indicators were relevant as written, while others were adapted slightly (see Appendix 1 for list of Selected Indicators).

After selection and contextualization of indicators, a set of guiding questions was developed to facilitate a self-assessment process in each of the four pilot schools. The M&E team developed questions as a means to elicit input from teachers, principals and headmasters on the content of each of the selected indicators, and to facilitate a self-assessment process for the teachers and

administrators in each school. The guiding questions maintained consistency of approach by the FEP team and enabled the staff to draw out different factors relevant to each indicator. Along with the guiding questions, each of the FEP facilitators had as reference a set of Minimum Standards definitions. The FEP staff facilitated the assessment process for teachers and administrators. Each assessment took approximately five hours in each school during which teachers and administrators in the FEP schools engaged in a comprehensive, rigorous discussion involving both critical reflection and taking pride in progress made. After the assessments were completed, the FEP M&E team met to reflect on the process, to share what they learned, and to discuss plans for future school support.

Below are the key findings of the assessment, organized according to the Minimum Standards categories, with the FEP-contextualized indicators that seemed to resonate most at the school level and to stimulate the most interesting discussions. This article discusses information shared, examples given, and suggestions made by participants in the assessment sessions in the four pilot schools.

3. Self-Assessment Outcomes

3.1 Minimum Standards Category: Community Participation

Indicator: Children and youth are involved in the development and implementation of education activities.

The active participation of students in activities and decisions affecting their lives is a key commitment of the FEP program and one which is challenging to implement in a context in which authority and decision-making power usually lies with elders, and especially male elders. Assessing achievements using this indicator was therefore considered a priority.

Participants in the assessment process in each school asserted that students' participation in educational activities has included: students undertaking different activities as active members of School Management Committees (SMCs), for example, male students raising community awareness about the importance of education and encouraging parents to send their girls to school; male students being involved in security patrols around the school to make sure that the younger students are safe when going to school and back home; all students participating in class competitions in health and hygiene-related activities and in sports competitions, including - although to a lesser extent due to cultural barriers - girls; and all students participating in making class rules in the beginning of each academic year.

Whilst an opportunity to celebrate some of the achievements of the teachers and the progress made in creating student-centred schools, and to promote student-centered teaching and learning, the assessment also pushed stakeholders to acknowledge that students are not really involved in school administration and management and have no opportunities to make suggestions outside of the classroom. This is because the school principals feel that while the school administration members are trained specifically for the roles and responsibilities of school administration and management, students are not, and this lack of knowledge and experience in administrative tasks precludes student involvement in school improvement.

Child rights have not been integrated into the curriculum so far, and were only explicitly addressed through peace education training for teachers from 1999-2001 provided by a local NGO. After discussion of the full meaning and implications of the Standards and the importance of giving

learners rights to make suggestions for improvement of their own education and learning, the teachers in the four schools resolved to take steps to increase student participation: they asserted their belief that peace and child rights education is particularly important now that Afghanistan is in a reconstruction phase.

Indicator: The community education committee holds public meetings to conduct social audits of education activities and their budgets.

Indicator: All stakeholders, including marginalized groups, community education committees, national and local education officials, teachers and learners, are included in evaluation activities

These indicators, regarding the engagement of the community in education, are especially important for the FEP in the current context of repatriation to Afghanistan and the need to ensure sustainability of education in locations where the formal system may be very weak.

None of the FEP-supported schools currently have a formal education committee. Small committees of teachers, students, and a few other community members in each school include Cultural, Financial, Environment, Discipline, Health, Competitions groups and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). However, after assessing the indicators and their importance, the school administrators are now planning to form formal education committees involving more community members and parents to promote relationships with influential religious leaders and elders and to ensure school sustainability. The challenges of women's participation in such committees were also discussed. For example, in one camp in which FEP supports a school, the community has a Shora e Aali (community high council) where the school principal discusses school-related issues; the council consists of religious leaders and other influential elders but does not include women.

Teachers and administrators at well-established FEP-supported schools are used to a certain routine and find it difficult to move away from traditional teaching practices and from school management and governance practices that have become established over time. In their prior experience of education, such concepts have not been prioritized, and until now community participation has been considered mostly in terms of financial support. Although some participants found it difficult to accept greater involvement of community members in educational activities and school related matters, others were impressed by the Minimum Standards' idea of an Education Committee, and identified various activities for such committees beyond just fund-raising. More challenging, however, was the idea of involving community members in the management of school finances, because to date, according to FEP monitoring reports from the schools, there are no community members on any school financial committees, which are usually comprised of only a small number of teachers and headteachers.

Indicator: Training and capacity-building opportunities exist for community members, including children and youth, to manage education activities.

According to the Minimum Standards, communities may require training to meaningfully participate in educational activities . FEP-supported schools have conducted training on social organization, community mobilization, and communication to a few of their school community members involved with different committees. However, participants in the assessment processes acknowledged that they had not conducted any other trainings or sessions to enhance community participation in educational processes. They started to discuss the possibility of providing more

training in, for example, community participation, administrative & management, human rights, and children's rights. Although teachers and administrators first look to FEP to conduct this training for them, they also committed to looking for other sources like local training centers to provide initial training for trainers. At the same time, though, schools were uncertain if they could manage to train larger and different community groups or invite them to regular meetings on school-related issues because of work schedules, especially the work schedules of those seeking income outside the home. For example, one of the school principals said "We have not worked with a lot of community members so far, so we are not sure if a large number of community members would agree to come to a community participation training if we plan one for them.... A large number of our students come from poor families, so even when we invite parents to attend PTA meetings, some of them do not come saying that they have jobs to do to for income. So mostly this is why community members have little or no involvement in school activities."

As highlighted in the INEE Minimum Standards, community ownership of and participation in their children's education is a key factor in ensuring sustainability. To encourage this type of engagement, community members need to be involved in different activities and decision-making at the school. It has to be acknowledged, however, that working in such ways, and reaching out to communities, may require a considerable shift in the mindsets of teachers and school administrators, who are used to operating without such community involvement. This is particularly true with staff in FEP-supported schools that are used to a far less inclusive model of school governance and management.

At the design stage of the FEP program in 1991, community members and school administrators were involved in an initial needs assessment. In further discussion of community participation, however, teachers highlighted how, although parents are informally involved in assessment of schools through their personal evaluation of their children's education and by attending some meetings, parents or other community members do not visit schools during class time, nor do they share ideas about any changes they want to see in teachers' performance. Through the assessment process, participants in the pilot schools decided that they should include such activities in the terms of reference for the future Education Committee.

FEP staff members pay regular supervision and monitoring visits to support teacher development. School headteachers also observe teachers' performance, however, not in a regular or systematic manner. Moreover, students are not directly given a chance to evaluate the educational activities in their schools. FEP staff members understand that in Pakistani and Afghan contexts, parents' involvement in their children's education through, for example, paying visits to school, can help increase parental trust in schools and therefore help to ensure children stay in school. Parental involvement in and understanding of educational activities can also contribute to improvements in students' performance. As highlighted in the Minimum Standards, as direct beneficiaries of educational activities, students' active involvement in monitoring and evaluation can be very positive in terms of bringing their perspectives to bear on decisions being made as well as ensuring that they feel their views on how they can learn better and on what positive changes can be made are respected. The assessment discussions around these issues highlighted the need for FEP school administrators to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation activities, and also to include parents and students in such activities.

Additionally, during discussions of wider involvement in education evaluation and decision-making, teachers requested increased opportunities to give their ideas to their schools' administration for the development and improvement of education. The headteachers and

principals seemed happy to consider ways to implement this suggestion; however, there might be some challenges in creating this change in the administrative system, and FEP has to be prepared to support the process. Headteachers and principals are trained in school management and administrative tasks, and teachers trained in pedagogy and subject content may not be considered as capable of being involved in overall educational and management activities. FEP therefore plans to conduct sessions for principals encouraging them to involve teachers in all aspects of school development and improvement and may also develop training for teachers on leadership and school-level advocacy and engagement.

3.2 Minimum Standards Category: Access and Learning Environment

3.2.1 Protection and Wellbeing

Indicator: Teachers and other education personnel are provided with the skills to give psychosocial support to promote learners' emotional well-being.

Indicator: Curricula address the psychosocial well-being needs of teachers and learners in order for them to be better able to cope with life during and after the emergency.

To date, many FEP teachers have benefited from the IRC's psychosocial training, which is especially designed to train teachers to teach war-affected children and to help them cope with their psychosocial issues. They are supported in the classroom level by the FEP trainers. In 2003, FEP developed a training manual specifically on psychosocial well-being that has subsequently been shared widely with and used by different programs in Pakistan, Afghanistan and IRC Kenya. Rather than following a specific psychosocial curriculum, teachers are encouraged to be constantly attentive to the well-being of their students and to integrate activities which provide psychosocial support into different subject areas. All teachers have also been explicitly trained on 'Avoiding Corporal Punishment', and the teachers' and headteachers' perspectives on the impacts of this recent training were discussed at length during the Minimum Standards assessments. Although there is no concrete, comparable pre- and post-training data available, it was acknowledged by the participants that although corporal punishment and other types of demeaning punishments have been reduced, it remains an issue that requires more attention in the future from the FEP technical support staff as well as from the school administration. Teachers described how, despite the trainings, sometimes even the best trained teachers find it difficult to handle students' mistakes and bad behavior. FEP is planning to revise and re-conduct the corporal punishment training for all school personnel and will be working with the school administrators to ensure school-level follow up.

3.3 Minimum Standards Category: Teaching and Learning

Indicator: *Sufficient teaching and learning materials are provided, as needed, in a timely manner to support relevant education activities. Preference is given to locally available materials for sustainability*

Indicator: *Training, including follow-up monitoring, encourages the teacher to be a facilitator in the learning environment, promotes participatory methods of teaching, and demonstrates the use of teaching aids.*

Because of FEP's focus on teacher training and professional development and the FEP team's experience in teacher education curriculum development and delivery, indicators related to teacher training were also prioritized for school level discussion.

For many years, FEP has been purchasing and providing schools with teaching aids such as world maps, alphabet letters, charts, stationary, and flip-charts each academic year. In pedagogy trainings, teachers learn how to use locally available materials as teaching aids. Consequently, now such teaching aides, both commercial and homemade, are widely used in all FEP-supported Afghan refugee schools. Teachers asserted that students, community members and parents also participate in the provision of local materials. For example, in science lessons, students make models of machines such as fans and atoms using local materials, and geography teachers work with students to make models of islands and volcanoes. Such examples, highlighted by the teachers and principals in the assessment discussions, are validated by evidence from regular monthly monitoring visits by FEP trainers and M&E persons and during the celebrations of science day that they attend annually in the schools. The assessment discussions highlighted the importance of the appropriateness of the teaching aids to the communities' culture and norms. For example, teachers prefer to use pictures of girls with head covers (*chadar*), and of familiar places like mosques, schools, or simple houses. When performing puppet shows for primary grades, teachers present puppets in local clothing styles.

FEP conducts teacher trainings using participatory methods which teachers can more easily apply in class once they have experienced these methods themselves. On a monthly basis, FEP trainers pay supervisory visits to schools to help teachers properly utilize the skills they learn in the seminars and to ensure that active learning is taking place in all classes. During the Minimum Standards assessment, it was discussed that during the supervisory visits, it is observed that the teachers do not respond uniformly to training. For example, some teachers still do not apply some teaching methods effectively: some still do not have well written lesson plans or do not utilize teaching aids effectively. Such teachers receive constructive feedback from FEP trainers, have the opportunity to share their concerns or ideas, and are then observed the following month. Teachers usually appreciate the training and supervision, but for a few, there is limited classroom-level change. Trainers sometimes face participants who have much experience and knowledge in their specific field of teaching and are unwilling to accept updates regarding the subject or teaching skills and methods.

FEP trainers recognize that changes in beliefs and actions happen gradually. Hence, they try to show patience and respect to teachers and always prepare for questions or disagreements. They have developed ways to work with resistance by, for example, sharing the rationale behind any new discoveries/information with the training participants, and discussing the positive and negative sides of old teaching methods or familiar activities with concrete and clear examples. As highlighted in the Minimum Standards, and as is particularly important in the Afghan communities with which FEP works, methods and activities used in schools must respect communities' traditions and sensitivities. An example provided by an FEP resource trainer in the assessment discussions was that in the more conservative camps, puppet shows were at first not accepted because teachers believed that puppets are not allowed in Islam, so the session on puppets was initially excluded from the pedagogy seminar. Experiences in the FEP schools have shown that subjects such as health education for primary grades are more effectively taught through the use of puppets and similar teaching aids which make the sometimes abstract concepts easier for students to grasp. Because the FEP trainers felt committed to the value of teachers working with puppets, they conducted meetings and discussions with headteachers and teachers and, after

much discussion, teachers finally understood the positive aspects of the session and accepted that puppets are allowed in Islam outside of worship.

Indicator: Parents and community leaders understand and accept the learning content and teaching methods used.

Discussion of this indicator – linked to discussions described earlier on parents’ role in the schools – was very thought-provoking, engaging the assessment participants in considering roles and responsibilities of parents in the school that had never been discussed previously. It was agreed that so far, parents have accepted the educational content and teaching methods in the FEP-supported schools, as the students take their textbooks home and – for some students at least – parents (especially in the city schools where the education levels of fathers is relatively good) are directly involved in their children’s learning, assisting them at home. Indeed the FEP-supported schools are well-known and respected amongst the refugee community. The curriculum used in schools is approved and used by the Ministry of Education inside Afghanistan, a fact that is important to families. Students’ parents also attend PTA meetings where they share concerns regarding their children’s education. However, parents and community members do not visit schools or monitor classes during class time. Teachers and school administrators welcomed the idea of receiving monitoring visits from students’ parents and are now planning to follow up on this, especially through the formation of Education Committees.

Indicator: Assessment and evaluation methods are considered fair, reliable and non-threatening to the Learner.

Apart from the ongoing, informal assessment of students’ learning conducted by the teachers in their own classes, more formal examinations are administered in all FEP-supported schools according to the guidelines received from the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan, through the Afghan Consulate education sector in Peshawar. In pedagogy seminars teachers are trained on the provision of a safe and protective atmosphere during examinations. Opinions shared during the assessment process were that, for the most part, teachers establish appropriate examination conditions: students are not preferred or discriminated against, as with nepotism for example. All are treated equally. Again, these sentiments were corroborated by evidence from the monthly monitoring visits of schools by FEP trainers.

In-depth discussion of this indicator, however, revealed that in the two urban schools teachers sometimes react harshly to weak students during examinations. For example, they get angry when students request extra time or if they ask a lot of questions. Once, one of the teachers in a city school asked a student for a gift in return for good marks. Hence, principals and headteachers closely monitor the examination process in each class to ensure that students are not subjected to any threats or pressure. They also check the examination questions a week before the examination to make sure questions are relevant and appropriate for each particular class. There are clearly challenges and inconsistencies, however, and frank discussion between teachers and headteachers of the challenges of examination and the difficulties in maintaining consistency in positive teacher behavior may not have taken place without the stimulus of the Minimum Standards self-assessment activity.

3.4 Minimum Standards Category: Teachers and Other Education Personnel

Indicator: A selection committee, including community representatives, selects teachers based on a transparent assessment of candidates' competencies and considerations of gender, diversity and acceptance by the community.

As the FEP-supported schools become more autonomous and self-governing, teacher selection is an important task that has to be conducted by the school community, especially given the imperative to work within certain cultural, community norms. This indicator was therefore selected as a critical one.

There is no formal job announcement procedure at the FEP-supported schools. Job vacancies are disseminated verbally through school staff and students to the communities. Currently, teachers apply directly to the schools and then the schools provide a letter from the principal for the applicants to go to the IRC-FEP for a screening test and interview. The selection criteria are a passing score in the screening test and acceptance of the teacher by the school community. Any teacher not in good standing in the community would not be hired by the school, although in some cases, when no other teacher is available, schools may convince community members to accept the applicant under verbal agreement to certain conditions of conduct.

The selection of teachers is a particularly critical issue in the FEP-supported schools because the Afghan refugee community is very protective of their daughters and keen that they be taught by female teachers. As 65% of FEP-supported students are girls, (IRC-FEP, 2007b), hiring female teachers is prioritized, although, as the school principals highlighted, in some locations there is flexibility, especially when there are no female teachers available. At one city-based school, where parents are considered to be better educated and less conservative, there is one male science teacher due to the unavailability of a female science teacher. An older man has been hired because parents will not accept young male teachers. Moreover, many of the girls in the community attend English Language centers where there are male teachers. In one of the camp-based schools some secondary classes are taught by male teachers because there are no qualified female teachers in that camp. Participants in the assessment of this school agreed that it is the parents' very strong trust in the principal that makes it possible for the girls to study up to grade 12. In other camp and city schools, however, communities are unwilling to let their daughters be taught by male teachers. Therefore, there was further concurrence between assessment participants on the need for enhanced community participation in aspects of school governance and management, such as teacher selection, which had not previously been considered.

Indicator: The code of conduct is signed and followed by education personnel, and appropriate measures are documented and applied in cases of misconduct and/or violation of the code of conduct

This indicator is another one that is fundamental to the FEP commitment to providing safe, quality learning opportunities for vulnerable girls, and one on which there have been numerous activities. In line with the IRC's global Mandatory Reporting Policies (MRP), a general code of conduct is signed between IRC-FEP and the teachers. This code of conduct highlights IRC policies on sexual abuse and exploitation and also insists on the responsibility of all individuals to report misconduct.

However, no local, school-based code of conduct has yet been developed. Rather, when hiring any new teacher, principals verbally communicate the school's expectations in terms of professional

conduct and informally monitor teacher conduct. Discussing this indicator, especially with progress towards increasing autonomy of the FEP-supported schools, principals reflected on the importance of a school-level code of conduct, and decided to establish a consultative process to develop one. Participants envisaged a code of conduct to be signed between teachers and school principals and the future formation of Education Committees. FEP staff will further discuss how teacher accountability could be more related to the community than to the individual headteachers.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Our text provides an example of the sort of discussion topics and outcomes that may be stimulated by the selection and contextualization of Minimum Standards indicators for school-based application. The self-assessment exercise that was stimulated by the Minimum Standards in these four schools will need to be followed up by technical support to the teachers and school administrators to help them implement some of the new commitments that were made. For example, enhanced community participation in new areas such as teacher selection and in school accounts requires careful planning and perhaps additional training and coaching for school administrators. The self-assessment process as facilitated by the FEP staff was clearly only one step in an ongoing process of school development and improvement. The Minimum Standards served as a means to introduce some new ideas into the school communities and as a stimulus for new reflections, critical thinking and planning for future initiatives.

Overall, the assessment process in the four FEP-supported schools was evaluated as useful and effective for FEP office staff, school administrators and teachers. For the first time, teachers and school administrators were engaged in self-assessment and in critical, holistic reflection on the achievements of the FEP-supported schools and on areas to further develop the quality and relevance of education. Through discussion of relevant, contextualized Standards from the categories Community Participation, Access and Learning Environment, Teaching and Learning, and Teachers and Other Education Personnel, teachers and school administrators identified gaps and areas for improvement. Some of the solutions were discussed and concrete decisions taken both by FEP and the schools. Through follow up visits, FEP staff will support the application of the different undertakings of the schools. Moreover, the same assessment is planned for all the remaining FEP-supported schools.

This year, as a move towards the FEP program's goal of educational sustainability, FEP handed over two camp-based schools to communities. The results of this pilot will enable the FEP to determine how best to hand over the remaining 20 schools. The Minimum Standards assessment process, as undertaken in the four schools, aligns with this process of gradually building capacity at the school level to ensure quality education and shifting responsibilities to inclusive, community-based management. Adapted to the local context, a sub-set of particularly relevant Standards and indicators serve as a tool for school-level assessment and prioritization of future directions. All school staff members involved were in agreement that application of the Minimum Standards at the school level can help them to work towards quality educational provision.

That is not to say the process was without its challenges: FEP has also learned much about how to use the global indicators meaningfully in the context of Afghan refugee educators. With future assessments, the FEP will certainly allocate more time for the assessment process at each school, and will also ensure that community members are involved; possibilities will be explored for students to also participate in the process. In terms of the process, other recommendations for organizations considering a similar exercise include:

Internal assessment and contextualization of indicators before application of the assessment at field site

This is a critical step in the application of the Minimum Standards that requires a relatively high level of technical expertise and input

Translation of the Standards, Indicators and Guidance Notes in local languages

This is also a critical step and one for which time is required as well as technical support. The language of the Standards is dense and complex and should preferably be handled by a translator who is knowledgeable about education.

Allocation of enough time for the whole process including preparation

The process was time-consuming during both the preparation and the school level assessments. At the school too, each indicator selected can stimulate a rich discussion, for which time should be available, especially as some of the indicators are challenging and it may take time to identify ways for the school community to work towards its achievement.

Initial training on the INEE Minimum Standards

The assessment process made sense to the participants because there was a relatively high level of awareness and understanding of the basis and principles of the Minimum Standards.

Inclusive process both internally and at school level

In the spirit of the Standards, involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in the assessment is important. The discussions will be richer with the inclusion of the different voices and any decisions made will be grounded in consensus. This is clearly challenging, especially where, as in some of the FEP-supported schools, there are doubts as to the communities' and students' capacity to contribute to educational discussions. Nonetheless, the importance of inclusiveness and participatory process should be stressed.

Documentation to facilitate the follow-up

In order to be able to follow up from the assessment, a comprehensive record of the discussions as well as any decisions taken is important. Reflection on points raised in discussions will help to ensure that technical follow up can address challenges and resistance.

Notes

- [1]. Also acknowledged is the important contribution of FEP M&E team members, Fahima Rahimpur, Fariha Popal, Humaira Jalali, Khadija Raufi, Gulghutai Waizi, Hosay Zadran, Shazia Nayebkhil, Ramzia, Noorulhaya, Fatima Wardak, Nooria Wardak as well as other FEP staff, teachers and school personnel who contributed to the assessment process and this article
- [2]. Community Participation Standard 1: Participation
Emergency-affected community members actively participate in assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the education programme.
Key indicator: Training and capacity-building opportunities exists for community members, including children and youth, to manage education activities.

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Appendix 1: Selected Indicators for FEP School-Level Assessments

1. Children and youth are involved in the development and implementation of education activities.
2. The community education committee holds public meetings to conduct social audits of education activities and their budgets
3. Training and capacity-building opportunities exist for community members, including children and youth, to manage education activities.
4. Communities, education personnel and learners identify education resources in the community.
5. An initial rapid education assessment is undertaken as soon as possible, taking into account security and safety.
6. All stakeholders, including marginalized groups, community education committees, national and local education officials, teachers and learners, are included in evaluation activities
7. No individual is denied access to education and learning opportunities because of discrimination.
8. Through training and sensitization, communities become increasingly involved in ensuring the rights of all members to a quality and relevant education.
9. The learning environment is free from dangers that may cause harm to learners.
10. Teachers and other education personnel are provided with the skills to give psychosocial support to promote learners' emotional well-being.
11. Curricula address the psychosocial well-being needs of teachers and learners in order for them to be better able to cope with life during and after the emergency.

12. The physical structure used for the learning site is appropriate for the situation and includes adequate space for classes and administration, recreation and sanitation facilities
13. Communities participate in the construction and maintenance of the learning environment.
14. Basic health and hygiene are promoted in the learning environment.
15. Adequate sanitation facilities are provided, taking account of age, gender and special education needs and considerations, including access for persons with disabilities.
16. Adequate quantities of safe drinking water and water for personal hygiene are available at the learning site.
17. Sufficient teaching and learning materials are provided, as needed, in a timely manner to support relevant education activities. Preference is given to locally available materials for sustainability
18. Training, including follow-up monitoring, encourages the teacher to be a facilitator in the learning environment, promotes participatory methods of teaching, and demonstrates the use of teaching aids.
19. Learners are provided with opportunities to be actively engaged in their own learning.
20. Participatory methods are used to facilitate learner involvement in their own learning and to improve the learning environment.
21. Parents and community leaders understand and accept the learning content and teaching methods used.
22. Assessment and evaluation methods are considered fair, reliable and non-threatening to the Learner.
23. A selection committee, including community representatives, selects teachers based on a transparent assessment of candidates' competencies and considerations of gender, diversity and acceptance by the community.
24. The code of conduct is signed and followed by education personnel, and appropriate measures are documented and applied in cases of misconduct and/or violation of the code of conduct
25. Staff performance appraisals are conducted, written up and discussed with the individual(s) concerned on a regular basis.