

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EDUCATION STRATEGY DEBATE: NOTES FROM A MEETING OF NGOS

Note: This paper derives from a meeting 14.06.02 of representatives of several NGOs which was coordinated by LINS

Present: Bjørn Rongevær og Svend Søyland, PLAN Norge, Pia Reiersen, Strømmestiftelsen, , Turid Dahl og Berit Bakkane, SOS Barnebyer, Birgit Villumstad, Kirkens Nødhjelp, Ane Haaland, Scanteam, Synneva Vestheim og Inger Marit Nygaard, Frelsesarméen, Robert Smith og Guro Nesbakken, LINS

Apologies: Eldrid Midttun, Flyktningerådet, Anne Pedersen og Tove Nagell, Redd Barna, Graham Dyson, CCM, Kathrine Blyverket, Utdanningsforbundet.

INTRODUCTION

It was emphasised by the NGO representatives that the **goal of education should be to build capacity for empowerment**. Each organisation working in partnership with NORAD should have its own specialities, thus allowing for **organisational priorities and diversity**. A particular need was seen for more educational support for **life skills and vocational initiatives**, both formal and informal. The needs of girls and of those who had never been to school were also priority areas. The use of the **Log Frame as a planning device should be reconsidered**; it is inflexible and out-dated. Greater **flexibility should also be built into funding arrangements**; local conditions should determine modalities and **five-year engagements** should be the norm. Project proposals are often locally designed but with **NORAD's published policies in mind**, thus eroding recipient responsibility. Instead of using a set of criteria for project submissions, NORAD should consider the **set of core values** NGO partners demonstrate in their work. Various **types of sustainability** should also be considered by NORAD – project sustainability, institutional sustainability and sustainability of impact were as important as financial sustainability. There was a real need for the **relationship between NORAD and the NGO community** in Norway to be built up through regular consultations, seminars and other joint activities.

FUNCTIONS OF NGOs

Under this heading a number of functions appropriate to NGOs were listed:

- ◆ Bridging function between NGO and government, between government and communities, between donors and communities
- ◆ Piloting and testing out of procedures (e.g. local adaptations of curricula, teacher development etc)
- ◆ Needs analysis at local levels
- ◆ Development of new methodologies/modalities for delivering education
- ◆ Testing of cost-effectiveness
- ◆ Acting as a critical friend to government/donor partners
- ◆ Promoting the human rights dimension of educational and social provision
- ◆ Supplementing and complementing mainstream government provision
- ◆ Using networks to publicise and disseminate innovation, success stories
- ◆ Provide education in emergencies

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES OF NGOs

Among the more prominent advantages demonstrated by NGOs are:

- ◆ More holistic and integrated approaches to education may be developed with local communities

- ◆ Well developed networks at the grassroots level for sensitization on such issues as HIV/AIDS, gender etc.
- ◆ Neutral facilitators able to act as ‘honest brokers’
- ◆ Able to provide skills for the poor to be heard
- ◆ Innovative and creative small-scale programmes possible through NGO networks
- ◆ Access to key groups outside the government system for capacity building
- ◆ Capacity to make provision for marginalized, children at risk etc
- ◆ Capacity to respond well to localized needs
- ◆ Capacity to implement quickly and effectively at the local level
- ◆ Capacity for action research and other forms of enquiry
- ◆ Capacity to lobby in Norway for support to worthwhile causes
- ◆ Capacity to work under challenging circumstances, e.g. in emergencies
- ◆ Able to raise their own finances in many cases

SUPPORT TO SECTORAL PROGRAMMES IN EDUCATION

It was noted that NGOs had the following contributions to make to sectoral programmes:

- ◆ Coordination and linking of programme components at the decentralised levels
- ◆ Validating the effectiveness of change and reform at the grass roots level
- ◆ Sensitizing communities to change and reform
- ◆ Training communities for new responsibilities (e.g. in decentralised control)
- ◆ Contributing to needs analysis
- ◆ Provision of complementary services in difficult or remote areas

COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS

NGOs have the following capacities in this area:

- ◆ Experience with working with all partners from village community level to multi-lateral donor level
- ◆ Skills developed in working out mutually beneficial partnership arrangements
- ◆ Cooperation agreements are often based on very long-term experience with local partners
- ◆ Neutral standpoint of NGO often assists in developing more authentic partnerships
- ◆ Real engagement of civil society more likely through NGO partnerships

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