

INEE Minimum Standards Case Study: Non-formal Education in Haiti

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Background and Context

On January 12, 2010, a strong earthquake, measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale, struck Haiti. The earthquake's epicenter was around 17 km south-west of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, which suffered extensive damage along with other areas to the west and south of the capital. More than 1.3 million people were displaced. The Education Cluster reports that as many as 1.26 million children were directly affected by the earthquake, with over 700,000 school-age children unable to attend school immediately after the event.

As part of a Post Disaster Needs Assessment conducted by Plan International in partnership with UNICEF, close to 1,000 children and young people participated in a consultation process throughout Haiti before the reopening of schools. This needs assessment revealed that many children and youth in the camps and communities were severely affected by the earthquake and expressed returning to school as a key priority area for the government.

Before the official reopening of schools in April 2010, Plan Haiti supported Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) to provide children in communities affected by the earthquake with psychosocial support and recreational activities. After assessing the situation in the camps, in the South-East, Plan Haiti anticipated that children attending the CFS could benefit from non-formal education activities. Two types of non-formal education activities were implemented: Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) program, providing age-appropriate pre-school and recreational activities for children three to five, and an After School Program (ASP) that served children in grades one through six. These programs were established so that school-aged children in the camps could benefit positively from extra-educational activities in the afternoons to help reinforce their coursework. Moreover, in the West Department, the Ministry of Education, Training and Professional Development (MENFP) and the Education Cluster nominated Plan Haiti to support ECCD programming in the Corail and Santo 17 IDP camps.

Application

INEE's mission to promote education as a "fundamental human right for all people" serves as the underlying justification for implementing non-formal education activities to complement the psychosocial support and recreational programs offered in the CFS, especially since education in Haiti was significantly disrupted for displaced children in the earthquake-affected communities. "In acute crises, CFS or safe spaces are often the

first response while formal education is being established or reactivated” (INEE Minimum Standards, 2010, p. 57). Our non-formal education programs encompass three main INEE Minimum Standards Domains: a) Foundational Standards, b) Access and Learning Environment and c) Teachers and Other Education Personnel.

The INEE Foundational Standards for Community Participation are at the heart of all of Plan’s programming. Plan uses a Child Centered Community Development approach to implementation. Plan Haiti had a positive presence in communities before the earthquake; the strong existing ties between Plan and the community permitted Plan to act quickly post-earthquake and elicit community participation in the selection of CFS sites. After sites were operational, Plan Haiti’s Education Team collaborated with Camp Management Committees and Community Councils to present the project to parents and community members so that Plan could offer and explain the community participation component necessary for the project’s success. For the ECCD program, community participation was essential in order to identify qualified community members that could serve as teaching aids. For the ASP, Plan enlisted community participation to identify teachers living in the camps. This participatory approach to teacher recruitment aligns with INEE Minimum Standards Domain 4: Teachers and Other Education Personnel, Standard 1: Recruitment and Selection. It was important to hire both teachers from Plan Partner Schools who had been trained in cooperative learning methodologies as well as teachers that lived in the camps in order to ensure that the program was contextualized to the needs of learners that lived in the camps. It was also important for parents to have teachers that understood their realities. Using a participatory approach allowed Plan to establish trust with the parents.

Equal Access to the ECCD and ASP interventions administered through the CFS was an implicit goal when Plan presented projects to the communities and was evident in the enrollment. All children in the camps and earthquake-affected communities where Plan worked were welcome to enroll in the non-formal education programs. The ECCD and ASP staff received ongoing training on psychosocial support and child rights themes. While the CFS structures offered a learning space with minimal amenities, the CFS, ECCD and ASP staff always employed keen creativity to offer quality learning interventions.

Challenges

ASP in Portal de Léogane

In one of the camps, Plan Haiti staff found a child in a full leg cast that had wanted to access the CFS programs but could not reach the center. Wannique’s family revealed that his cast had kept him away from school for three months. Plan worked with a local NGO partner Community Coalition for Haiti and a physical therapist at a partner special needs school, Pazapa, to ensure that Wannique received an age-appropriate wheelchair and proper physical therapy to ensure his participation. Wannique’s enrollment in the ASP prompted an internal evaluation of Plan’s infrastructure interventions in order to ensure that all CFS and classrooms be built with ramps to ensure equal access for all. The INEE Minimum Standards on Access and the INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education served as an important tool to promote inclusive access and appropriate infrastructure, as well as to encourage WASH teams within Plan to ensure accessibility for all children in all of their interventions in both CFS and schools.

ECCD Program in Raquette

Raquette is an impoverished neighborhood in Jacmel Center that was severely affected by the earthquake. The CFS enrollment at Raquette demonstrated a high percentage of children under five years old. Thanks to a donation of ECCD kits from UNICEF, Plan was able to implement an ECCD program that operated out of the CFS in the mornings. Teachers assigned to Raquette expressed that many of the children who had experienced the trauma of the earthquake exhibited behavior problems such as fighting with other children, depression, and inability to sleep at night, which resulted in sleeping during the ECCD activities. While these behaviors posed a challenge in the ECCD programming, the teachers and aids worked relentlessly with the children. During an end of the year sharing session, many parents revealed that their children showed improvements in behavior. Parents also shared that their children’s social skills improved from the ECCD program. In sum, the ECCD program served as both an educational as well as psychosocial support intervention. The INEE Minimum Standards served as a guidance and advocacy tool to ensure that the implementation of psychosocial and recreation activities offered to children in the ECCD program were providing safe and secure learning environments.

Outcomes

The pilot ECCD and ASP interventions demonstrated that within only a few months, large groups of out-of-school children can benefit from non-formal education activities. The program strongly supports children in camps, as they benefit from the psychosocial support activities and recreational games, which help children and communities return to a sense of normalcy and provide a break from the stress of camp life. The non-formal education activities became complementary, and a successful addition, to all other programming offered through the CFS. The CFS provided a venue where students from camps and communities that were severely affected by the earthquake could come together in the afternoons and prepare for the end-of-the-year exams. Thanks to the ECCD programming, administered in the mornings before the ASP, mothers and caretakers were able to conduct their economical activities during the day without having to worry about the safety of their children. Many Plan National Offices and donors have shown great interest in our non-formal education programs administered through our CFS. For the 2010-2011, thanks to funding from the Plan Canada National Office, the South-East was able to expand from three to six sites. Plan Haiti was also able to implement the program in three CFS sites in the West department.

Due to its continued presence in Haiti since 1973, Plan was able to react quickly post-catastrophe because the staff had strong ties with local leaders and because Plan had a long-term commitment to the communities. As Plan Haiti moves forward into early recovery, the organization is moving away from being the direct implementer of activities and looking to provide institutional support to local partners in order to build their capacity to take over long-term implementation of interventions. In the South-East, Plan Haiti is in the process of working with long-time local partner, Service de Gestion des Centres Préscolaires de Jacmel (SGCPJ), to re-direct the children in Plan's non-formal ECCD programs into the existing ECD centers in Jacmel. A local partner in the West department has also been identified for taking over ECCD programs in the Corail and Santo 17 IDP camps. In addition, Plan Haiti is searching for a local partner to take over the ASP to ensure it becomes a more sustainable, community-based program.

Furthermore, in thinking of long-term planning, the educational needs of vulnerable displaced children has been highlighted as an important advocacy point that Plan Haiti is promoting in coordination meetings with the Government of Haiti and INGO partners. The INEE Minimum Standards serve as an essential advocacy tool in this process.

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