CONCEPT NOTE

REGIONAL CONSULTATION MEETING ON EDUCATION AND RESILIENCE IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: DEVELOPING GUIDANCE FOR PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL COHESION AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY
4 – 7 NOVEMBER 2014
SEAMEO INNOTECH, QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES

1. PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION

Many countries of East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) are facing significant challenges of reducing conflict and building peace, while at the same time addressing natural hazards and the effects of climate change. Ministries of education and other education agencies and stakeholders have a central role to play in helping prevent and reduce the impact of these challenges. This regional consultation meeting will address how education policy, planning and programmes can strengthen the resilience of children, schools, communities, and education systems through comprehensive school safety and social cohesion approaches. Participants will make recommendations for regional guidelines and how existing and new networks, platforms and tools can advance the role of education in strengthening resilience.

2. CONTEXT

Intra-state conflict or serious inter-communal violence has affected a number of countries in the region. Examples of some of the regions' conflicts include Indonesia's 29-year separatist conflict in Aceh, which came to an end in 2007 in a settlement that granted the region greater autonomy. Myanmar is slowly emerging from four decades of insurgencies with agreements reached with nine insurgent groups. Two longstanding conflicts have persisted in Mindanao, the Philippines, over land and autonomy issues, with a recent agreement reached with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Thailand and Papua New Guinea (PNG) have experienced protracted separatist conflicts. Likewise, Pacific Island countries such as Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji have faced civic and inter-communal conflicts. Meanwhile political unrest is a common occurrence in many countries, including Cambodia, Indonesia, PNG, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, and most recently Thailand.

In addition to the impacts of conflict, the EAP is the most natural disaster-affected region in the world, threatening human life, health, livelihoods and security in many of the region's countries. In 2013 alone, several countries have been affected by cyclones, earthquakes and floods, including the Philippines, where the super typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda struck in November 2013. The Pacific Island countries are the most affected in the world, with average annual losses estimated for Vanuatu and Tonga at 6.6 per cent and 4.4 per cent of GDP respectively.[1] These disasters disproportionately affect the poor, the vulnerable and the most marginalized, especially children and women. Each time disaster strikes, it has led not only to human losses, but also to set backs in development gains in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals.

There is considerable evidence that natural disasters tend to further exacerbate – or increase the risk of – conflict and inter-communal violence. Environmentally stressed countries are at risk for political instability; and many countries lack the capacity to meet the challenges of conflict, natural disasters

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[1] World Bank, 2013.

and climate change. Conflict and environmental stresses contribute to fragility, lack of capacity of governments to respond, and the disproportionate impact on the poorest and most vulnerable populations.

Despite advances in development in recent years, the benefits of rapid economic growth have not been shared equally in EAP. Problems of poverty, income inequality, high unemployment, social exclusion and marginalization, particularly among ethnic minorities and rural populations, have been experienced by many countries. EAP is also under overwhelming pressure to adapt to new challenges caused by rapid urbanization and migration. As a result of these stressors, many countries are at risk for instability and social unrest, if not outright violent conflict.

Governance and political issues have played a key role in the degree to which social exclusion, marginalization, natural disaster and conflict have been experienced in EAP countries. Discriminatory legislation, lack of transparency, inadequate political participation, and inequitable resource distribution and economic opportunity contribute to conflict. Myanmar, for instance, has been held back from its development potential despite its endowment in natural and human resources. In the Deep South of Thailand and in Mindanao in the Philippines, where options for peaceful redress are complex, the ground has been fertile for prolonged conflict.

3. REGIONAL FOCUS ON LINKAGES BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COHESION, SCHOOL SAFETY, AND RESILIENCE

In recognition of the inter-connected risks that impact the lives of children, there has been growing attention in UNICEF, UNESCO and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), on the need to incorporate considerations of 'all risks' in their programming and strategic plans, particularly in the education sector. Such risks include urbanization, climate change, natural hazard and disaster, conflict and economic volatility. The overall aim is to strengthen the resilience of children, their families and communities as well as the systems that exist to protect them.

Resilience, according to UNICEF, is defined as "the ability of children, households, communities, and systems to anticipate, prevent, adapt to, withstand, and overcome stresses and shocks in ways which advance the rights of every child, with special attention to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children." Social cohesion has been described by the World Bank "as the glue that bonds society together, promoting harmony, a sense of community, and a degree of commitment to promoting the common good".[2] The Council of Europe defines social cohesion as "the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization. Similarly, the UNDP (2004) describes a cohesive society as a mutually supportive community of free individuals pursuing these common goals by democratic means".

According to the World Bank, the stronger the social cohesion, the more likely a society is to be resilient, and thus possess the inclusive mechanisms necessary for mediating and managing conflict.[3] Education can play a very significant role in fostering resilience, strengthening social cohesion and building peace. Given education's transformative role, it can touch every child and citizen, female and male, when it is equitable, available, of good quality, relevant and conflict-sensitive. It has also been shown that education can help societies transform and rebuild, or "build back better" after a crisis and an emergency.

On the other hand, education can be a force for social exclusion and conflict. Inequitable provision of services or biased curriculum and teaching methods can reinforce existing exclusion and stereotypes. Education can manipulate history and textbook content for political purposes or inculcate attitudes of superiority on behalf of elite groups. Moreover, equal access to education can be denied, either

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[2] Colletta et al., 2012: 2.
[3] World Bank, 2000: 4.

through unequal funding mechanisms, discrimination or as a weapon of war, which can fuel grievances and lead to conflict.

Thus, education needs to be delivered effectively, equitably and in a conflict sensitive manner to ensure that it is a driver of peace rather than of war. By building enabling, resilient, peaceful education systems and learning environments children will have a chance to thrive instead of just survive.

UNESCO has implemented a range of curricular and programmatic initiatives collectively called 'learning to live together' (LTLT). LTLT has addressed the relationship between education and social cohesion, attempted to validate current approaches used by countries in implementing programme models, and set forth guidelines for designing and evaluating programmes. In 1996, the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (ICE) identified LTLT as one of four pillars of education, defining it as "the development of an understanding of other people in a spirit of pluralism, respect for differences and peace. Its principal focus is the development of an appreciation of the growing interdependence (ecological, economic and social) of individuals, communities and nations in a small, fragile and connected world".[4]

While educational approaches to conflict and natural disasters are quite distinct, responses to these events have many features in common. Within this context, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO), UNESCO Bangkok and SEAMEO are collaborating to develop Regional Guidelines for Education Programmes and Policies that Promote Social Cohesion and Comprehensive School Safety. This initiative is supported by a UNICEF's Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) global programme, also known as the 'Learning for Peace' initiative. This programme, funded by the Government of the Netherlands, aims to provide a more systematic approach to addressing all risks faced by children, both natural hazards as well as violent conflict risks.

The recent response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines provides a good lesson learned in this regard. Six months after the typhoon hit, the "back to learning" campaign, which UNICEF together with other education cluster partners have been supporting the Government of the Philippines, has not only helped to provide over 470,000 affected pre-school and school-aged children access to safe and secure quality education – with the overall target to reach 500,000 affected children – but also access to psychosocial support that contributes to reducing risks and strengthening resilience. Through integrated efforts, the campaign has also ensured that children returning to school have access to safe water and adequate sanitation for both boys and girls, together with hygiene education in their learning environment. Moreover, some 900 education service providers have been trained on emergency-related subjects including disaster risk reduction and continuing education during emergencies.

UNICEF and UNESCO have also been supporting countries in the region in mapping natural hazards and their vulnerability to them, as well as helping them introduce disaster risk reduction (DRR) and Education in Emergencies (EiE) components in their education systems. For example, UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2014-2017) has given priority to strengthening the organization's involvement in systemic reduction of vulnerability to disaster and conflicts through risk-informed country programmes that help build resilience. With the aim of ensuring all children have access to safe learning facilities in the face of humanitarian crises, the Strategic Plan also emphasizes the importance of mainstreaming DRR and disaster management in education sector development plans and planning processes.

Consistent with the organization's Medium-Term Strategy (2014-2021), UNESCO Bangkok has been implementing activities to promote DRR in education in the Asia-Pacific region through the Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT)'s "Education in Emergency for Sustainable Development" project (Phase I and II). To date, the project has helped build the capacity of UNESCO's member states in dealing with emergencies, managing hazards and risks, and building resilience to disasters by targeting education

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[4] UNESCO, 2003: 28.

policymakers, civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant education stakeholders. UNESCO is also working with some member states in the region, as part of the EiE project, to implement a self-monitoring and reporting mechanism tool, jointly developed by UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) to assess the degree as well as the progress to which states have developed education sector planning strategies for disaster and conflict prevention and mitigation.

SEAMEO, through its various centres across Southeast Asia, has likewise been implementing DRR and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) related activities. For instance, from 2012 to 2014, the organization has been giving out the SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award[5] to schools that had carried out the best activities encompassing themes such as "Education for DRR" and "Values Education". The aim of this project is to promote and share best practices in ESD in schools and to raise awareness and promote positive human values among both teachers and students across the Southeast Asian region.

Another example is the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology or SEAMEO INNOTECH. Through its "Building Disaster Resilient School Communities" project, SEAMEO INNOTECH in partnership with SEAMEO RECSAM[6], has developed a Toolkit on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management, while SEAMEO RECSAM has produced a guidebook on integrating climate change in basic education curriculum, for school heads, teachers and other school stakeholders to help them in developing and managing a comprehensive school-based response programme for high disaster-risk communities in the region. The project aims to empower teachers, students, families, and communities to prepare for disasters and prevent, minimise or respond to the immediate impacts of such disasters on their lives.

Meanwhile, there is growing momentum in support of the Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) Framework and its three pillars – which include 1) safe learning facilities; 2) school disaster management; and 3) risk reduction and resilience education – to serve as a bridge between development and humanitarian actions in the education sector.[7] Equally, there are attempts to link social cohesion and quality education, or child-friendly education more strongly and in a system-wide way, in order to make child-friendly schooling more aligned to social cohesion and peacebuilding goals. In addition, UNICEF is pursuing ways to integrate resilience into its programming by focusing on strengthening capacity at all levels, from child-centred and systems levels. This represents a shift from its focus on vulnerabilities to natural hazards, climate change and conflicts towards strengthening human capacities at all levels from the child and individual to the national and systemic levels.

Since 2012, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has also led the development of the ASEAN School Safety Initiative (ASSI), as part of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) work programme 2012-2015. An AADMER Partnership Group (APG)[8] has been formed to support ASEAN and its member states in the people-oriented implementation of the school safety framework. The aim of APG is to ensure children's safety by making schools safe.

In addition, the Asian Coalition for School Safety (ACSS) was established in 2012. This technical group is comprised of representatives of NGOs and UN agencies with regional presence and involved

[5] This project was jointly supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan (MEXT) in cooperation with UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, Ltd.
[6] SEAMEO Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics
[7] The Framework has been developed cooperatively by school safety advocates working globally and is endorsed by UNESCO, UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, and the Coalition for Global School Safety, among others. The goals of the CSS are: 1. to protect learners and education workers from death, injury, and harm in schools; 2. to plan for educational continuity in the face of expected hazards; 3. to safeguard education sector investments; and 4. to strengthen climate-smart disaster resilience through education.
[8] The APG is composed of Child Fund International, Help Age International, Mercy Malaysia, Oxfam, Plan International, Save the Children, and World Vision International.

in providing technical support to country offices in implementing the CSS Framework.[9] The group aims to create a space at the regional level for discussion and sharing of technical resources, good practices, lesson learned and model policies on safe schools to minimize the impacts of disasters on children's education. Another objective of the group is to coordinate and promote advocacy for comprehensive school safety.

The Regional Consultation on Education and Resilience, jointly organized by UNICEF EAPRO, UNESCO Bangkok and SEAMEO, is part of this broader regional initiative. It is an initial step in an effort to strengthen the awareness and institutional capacities of EAP countries towards developing and adopting a more systematic approach to addressing risks and vulnerabilities faced by children in a comprehensive and holistic manner through the education sector, in collaboration with other sectors.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

The meeting's main objectives are to:

1) **Exchange ideas** on appropriate and effective ways to equip EAP countries, particularly their education systems, with the capacities to address "all risks" faced by children, both natural hazards and conflict risks.
2) **Assess** the extent to which governments, communities and partners have effective systems, policies and programmes in place to address all risks, and **identify** good practice at policy and programme level, and the merits and limitations of current strategies.
3) **Strengthen regional knowledge networks** and generate better understanding of the role of education for resilience, broadly, and related concepts, such as conflict sensitivity, 'do no harm', social cohesion, peacebuilding, Global Citizenship Education (GCE), Comprehensive School Safety, DRR, and climate change adaptation (CCA), through the sharing of experiences and best practices, paying particular attention to the potential of enhancing south-south collaboration and horizontal learning.
4) **Contribute to regional guidance** to assist governments, ministries of education, education agencies and communities to operationalize the concepts of education and social cohesion and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework into strategies, policies and programmes.

5. METHODOLOGY

The regional consultation will bring together practitioners, academics, education sector leaders and policymakers to advance understanding about the role of education for resilience and social cohesion. Presentations and panel discussions will focus on the complexities of education and resilience, and will include analysis, research, evidence-based practice, policies, and planning approaches. A range of interactive methods will be used, including group exercises, mapping, dialogue, and panel presentations to highlight and build on existing experiences from within the EAP region and beyond.

The meeting will focus on the most fundamental aspects of education that will equip children, their families and communities with the skills to better prevent, cope, mitigate and response to an emergency situation – be it natural hazard or violent conflict. It will emphasize the crucial role of government officials and educators for fostering safe and secure environments for children, their families and communities. In addition, it will explore the relationship between education, conflict and peacebuilding/social cohesion, addressing how education may contribute to as well as mitigate problems related to social cohesion and conflict.

Key ideas in education for peace will be explored, including conflict sensitivity; 'do no harm'; education access, delivery, content and governance; GCE and 'learning to live together'. With regard to DRR/CSS, topics covered will include a review of existing regional guidelines and

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[9] The ACSS consists of UNESCO, UNICEF, SEAMEO, IFRC, Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision and Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre.

recommendations in education policy and programme, and the extent to which countries are developing policies and programmes to achieve these goals, along with education infrastructure and climate change education. Multi-sectoral approaches will be examined, and a critical assessment of the capacity and limitations of the education sector to build resilience, reduce risk and contribute to sustainability will be explored. The role of civil society, communities, families, the private sector, and other stakeholders in protecting the most vulnerable and building social cohesion and resilience will also be highlighted.

6. OUTCOMES

The meeting aims to achieve the following outcomes:
- **New knowledge, tools and platforms**. Governments, UNICEF and UNESCO Country Offices and practitioners are equipped with new knowledge, perspectives, tools and platforms to better address the risks and vulnerabilities faced by children and youth in the region and in their respective countries, based on the sharing of experience from countries which have recently responded to significant natural disasters or violent conflict. This will strengthen regional knowledge networks in the relevant thematic areas.
- **Regional guidance**. An initial outline for high quality Regional Guidance on Education and Resilience is drafted, including recommendations for education planning strategies for disaster prevention and mitigation, and response to conflict and post-conflict situations.

7. TARGET AUDIENCE

Approximately 80-100 participants from governments (particularly Ministries of Education and National Disaster Management Offices), UNICEF and UNESCO Country Offices and their counterparts (maximum of 5 people/country), UNICEF Regional Offices, the PBEA Programme Management Team from UNICEF Headquarters, other UN agencies, NGOs, research institutions, and members of the Asian Coalition for School Safety (ACSS).

8. DATE AND LOCATION

The meeting will be held from **4 – 7 November 2014 at the SEAMEO INNOTECH in Quezon City, Philippines**. The meeting will be supported primarily through UNICEF EAPRO's PBEA funds, with additional contributions from UNESCO Bangkok, SEAMEO Secretariat and SEAMEO INNOTECH and will be facilitated by an expert consultant with a team of key resource persons from UNICEF, UNESCO, SEAMEO and the ACSS.