

# Global Education Cluster

## Haiti Education Cluster

### Key Advocacy Messages

Last modified: 19 March

These are advocacy messages for use by members of the Education Cluster in Haiti and global partners.

#### Communication Goals:

1. To prioritize education as vital to emergency response and recovery.
2. Create awareness about the vital role of education for Haiti's children and youth and the future of the country,
3. Step up awareness and advocacy not only to return children "back to school," but to ensure it is also an opportunity to get "all in school."
4. Address misconceptions that education in the aftermath of an emergency is not just about reconstructing classrooms, but first and foremost about ensuring continued opportunities for learning and development in safe, child-friendly spaces.



**Haitian children and its youth are eager to go back to school and university as quickly as possible – they want to learn, see their friends, and have a chance to focus on the future.**

- Thousands of children are living in harsh conditions in camps and other temporary shelters. Many say that the thought of going back to school soon is their prime goal and motivation. School is where they will be able to experience a sense of normalcy, see their friends and concentrate on their future.

**Education is a right and key to children's long-term survival and life opportunities, and therefore schools and temporary learning spaces need to be accessible to all Haitian children.**

- Restarting school gives children a sense of routine and normalcy in their lives that replaces the chaos around them. It also allows children to access much needed psychosocial support and life-saving information on health, hygiene and protection.

**Interruption to children and youth' education should be minimized to reduce risk of drop-out and lost learning. The establishment of temporary learning spaces in affected areas is essential to maintaining continuity.**

- Full time education supports children's cognitive and emotional development and prepares them to become responsible and compassionate adults. Temporary schooling is an important way to reduce interruptions to children's education.
- The Ministry of Education (MENFP) is planning to reopen schools on 1 April, in order to allow children to complete the school year by mid-August. This is a major challenge. The immediate establishment of temporary learning spaces is vital to ensure that children are able to resume learning. During the Rapid Joint Needs Assessment, children expressed concerns about their exams and a strong desire not to lose this school year.

**More than 50% of school aged children did not attend school prior to the earthquake. The education actors working in Haiti must campaign beyond going "back to school", and campaign instead for "Ann Nou Ale Lekol" or all in school".**

- Many children who did not go to school before the earthquake say that what they want more than anything is to go to school to help "fix the country"<sup>1</sup>
- For a generation of children that will most likely "mark time" by this cataclysmic event, it is important that they remember the "post-quake" era as not just one of recovery but one of development.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF situation update 12 February 2010

## **The reconstruction of the Haitian education system is key to a sustainable future.**

- UNICEF's Executive Director, who visited Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the aftermath of the earthquake, has said that "investing in Education is an investment in the future of the country."
- Nearly half of the people in Haiti are under 18 and nearly 40% are under the age of 14. Educating half of the overall population is no doubt the way forward, not just for a return to normalcy for Haiti, but as a step towards national growth and development.

## **Disaster risk reduction is essential both in re-building efforts and in learning content.**

- In a country such as Haiti, which is vulnerable to a number of different hazards, it is crucial to rebuild schools that are more resilient and able to withstand the impact of future disasters. Further loss of life can be prevented by building safer schools and retrofitting existing unsafe schools.
- Disaster risk reduction also involves simple but life-saving activities, such as developing emergency preparedness plans and drills for schools, and ensuring that learning materials include basic messages on how to stay safe in a disaster-prone country such as Haiti.
- Developing a culture of safety through education goes beyond just being safe at school but spreads the message to households and communities at large..

## **Re-establishing education at all levels in Haiti is dependent on a coordinated effort between actors, particularly those working on shelter, water sanitation, psychosocial support and protection.**

- Schools are a place where children can feel safe and benefit from services that they might not otherwise be able to access such as shelter, food, water, sanitation, supplies, and toys. Linking up across sectors is important to ensure that plans and activities are synchronized and children can go back to school knowing that their needs will be met.
- Emergency education presents a window of opportunity for agencies to promote basic life saving skills such as hygiene, health, HIV/AIDS prevention, protection from violence and abuse and conflict resolution.

## **Resource mobilization, both in human, technical and financial terms, is important to re-building the education sector and will require immediate and long-term investment. In the recent Flash Appeal, global and local partners have identified needs totalling more than US\$76 million for the education sector in the first year.**

- The education sector is known to be one of the least funded sectors in emergencies, yet it is such a crucial one. As of 10 March, the education sector is only 45% covered.

### **Education Baseline Figures**

- **48 %** of the population is under 18
- **39 %** of the population is under 14
- Number of children in primary school before the earthquake: **2 106 805**
- Number of primary school aged children out of school before the earthquake : **400 000**
- Number of primary and secondary schools before the earthquake: **15 268**
- Number of primary teachers before the earthquake: **41 160**
- Number of children without access to primary school in Haiti today (in affected areas AND non affected areas): **2 506 805** (figure based on 2008 UNICEF EPRP assessment of schools)
- Number of schools affected: **5 000** (MENFP, education cluster, 6 February)
- To date **no** schools have reopened in Port au Prince

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