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The Child Centred Approach to Education in Emergencies

Best practices for supporting children's learning, overall development and well-being

People in Need, January 2020

Alliance 2015

towards the eradication of poverty

WHAT IS THE CHILD CENTRED APPROACH?

In emergencies, all children are affected in some way. Emergencies can create **new barriers** to access and quality of education and **increase existing barriers** or **turn existing issues into barriers** (for example, poverty may increase during a disaster and create a financial barrier to education).

Children require cohesive support from multiple levels of influence in order to be able to fully develop and succeed in their education (see Diagram 1). Their academic learning also requires overall wellbeing (see Diagram 2).

Diagram 1: Levels of influence on a child

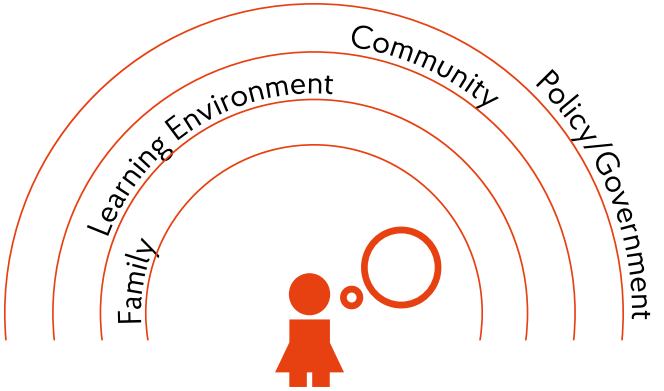
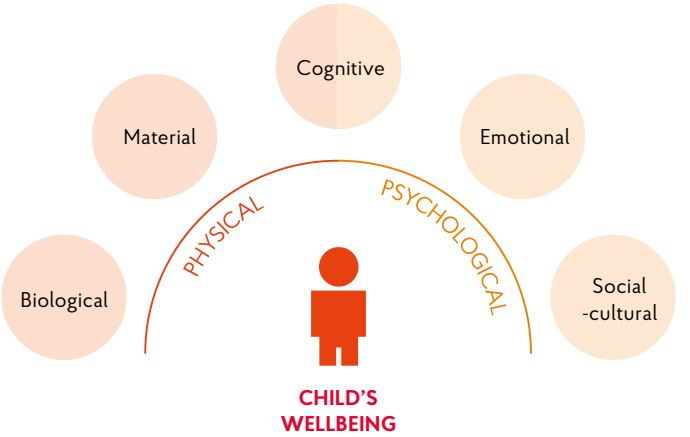
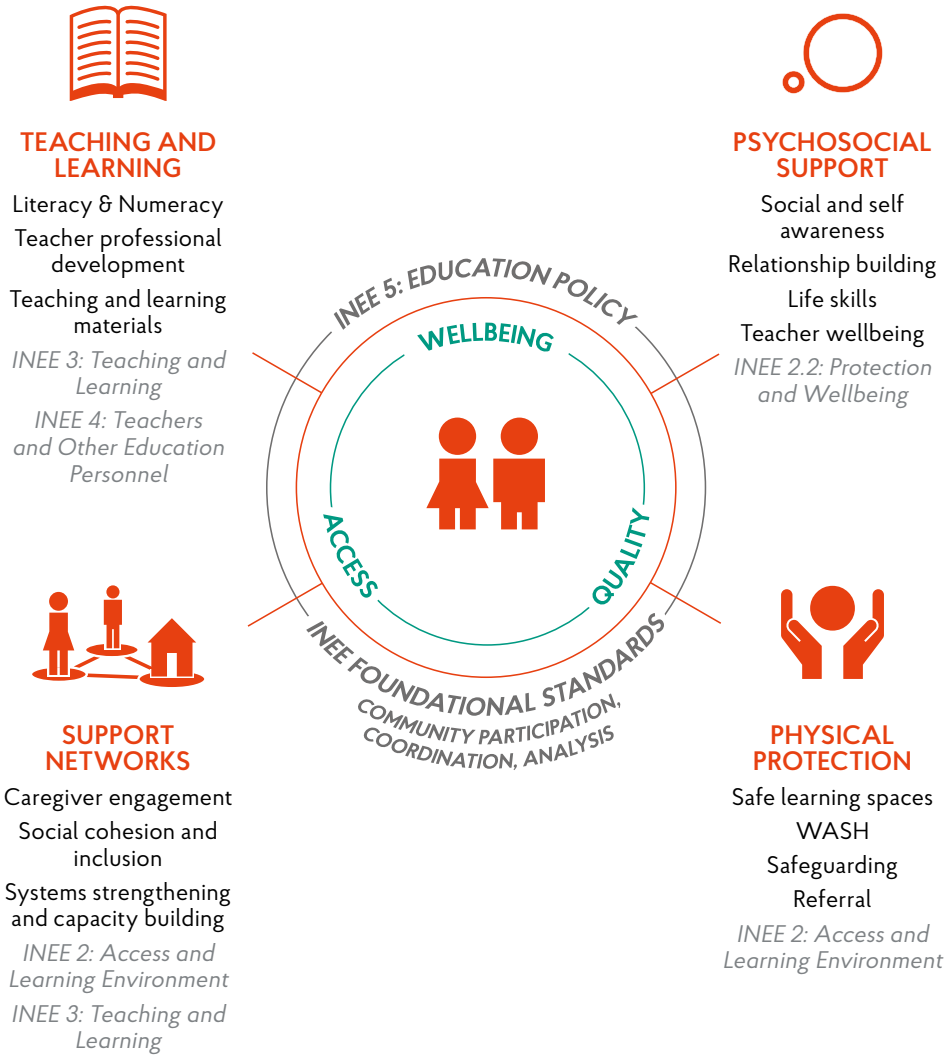


Diagram 2: Children's diverse needs:



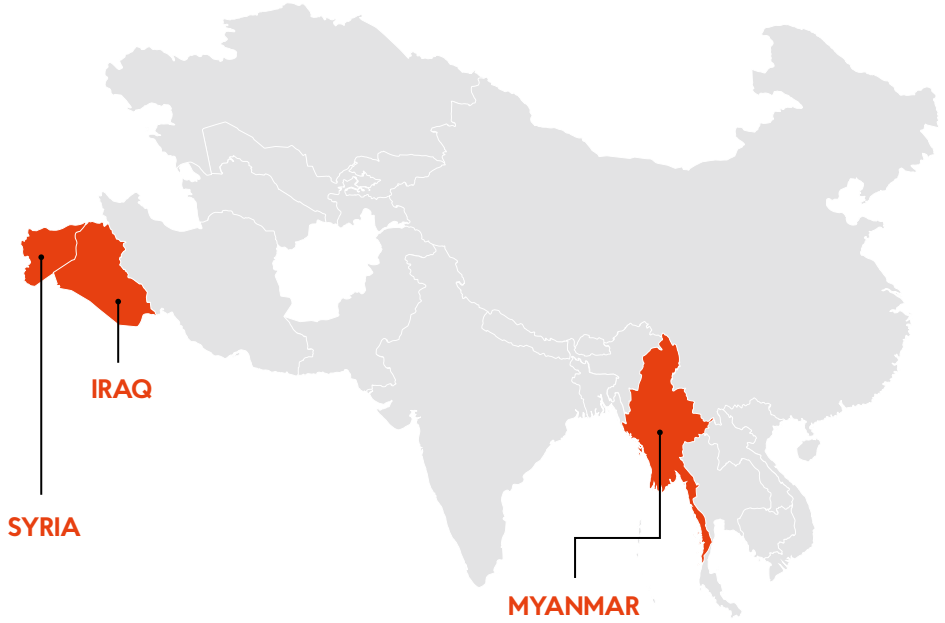
→ People in Need (PIN) responds to these needs by putting the child at the center of its work. This means (i) supporting children's diverse needs, (ii) engaging all levels of influence and (iii) promoting children's right to participation. This approach not only supports children's academic learning, but also ensures they are protected and able to develop social and emotional skills in a supportive environment.

Diagram 3: PIN's Child Centred Approach:



PIN AND THE CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

The approach is used in all PIN's EiE programmes (see map below). PIN has been developing its EiE approach since 2012, engaging over 10 years of experience of education in development settings around the world to ensure that quality and overall development are not overlooked in emergencies.



IN 2019, PIN SUPPORTED:

over 61 700 children

to continue their education and start to build back their lives and confidence

2 051 teachers

with financial support and skills to more fully engage children in the learning process so that they are able to participate, learn and succeed

IMPACT OF THE APPROACH

The benefits of child centred-education and community development are manifold, with wide literature in support of the approach.

According to Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) assessments, PIN-supported schools in Iraq saw a clear **increase in literacy and numeracy levels**, with 43% and 60% of students improving their literacy and numeracy scores, respectively, over the project duration.

Wellbeing assessments in displacement camps in north east Syria showed **significant improvements in children's social skills**. At the beginning of PIN's intervention, 61% of children (between 6-17 years old) demonstrated very high prosocial difficulties (difficulties considering other people's feelings, sharing, being helpful and kind).

After five months of attending psychosocial support (PSS) activities in child friendly spaces (CFS), only 14% of children demonstrated these difficulties. Results also show a significant decrease (from 75% to 12%) in numbers of children experiencing serious difficulties with emotions, conduct, hyperactivity and peer relations.

Results in Iraq showed that **85% of children improved their wellbeing** over the 9 months project duration. The overall aim of PSS activities is to bring children's 'difficulties' from a raised or high level towards an 'average' level. Of children included in wellbeing assessments, 96% showed a 'close to average' score at the end of the project, compared to only 46% at the project outset.

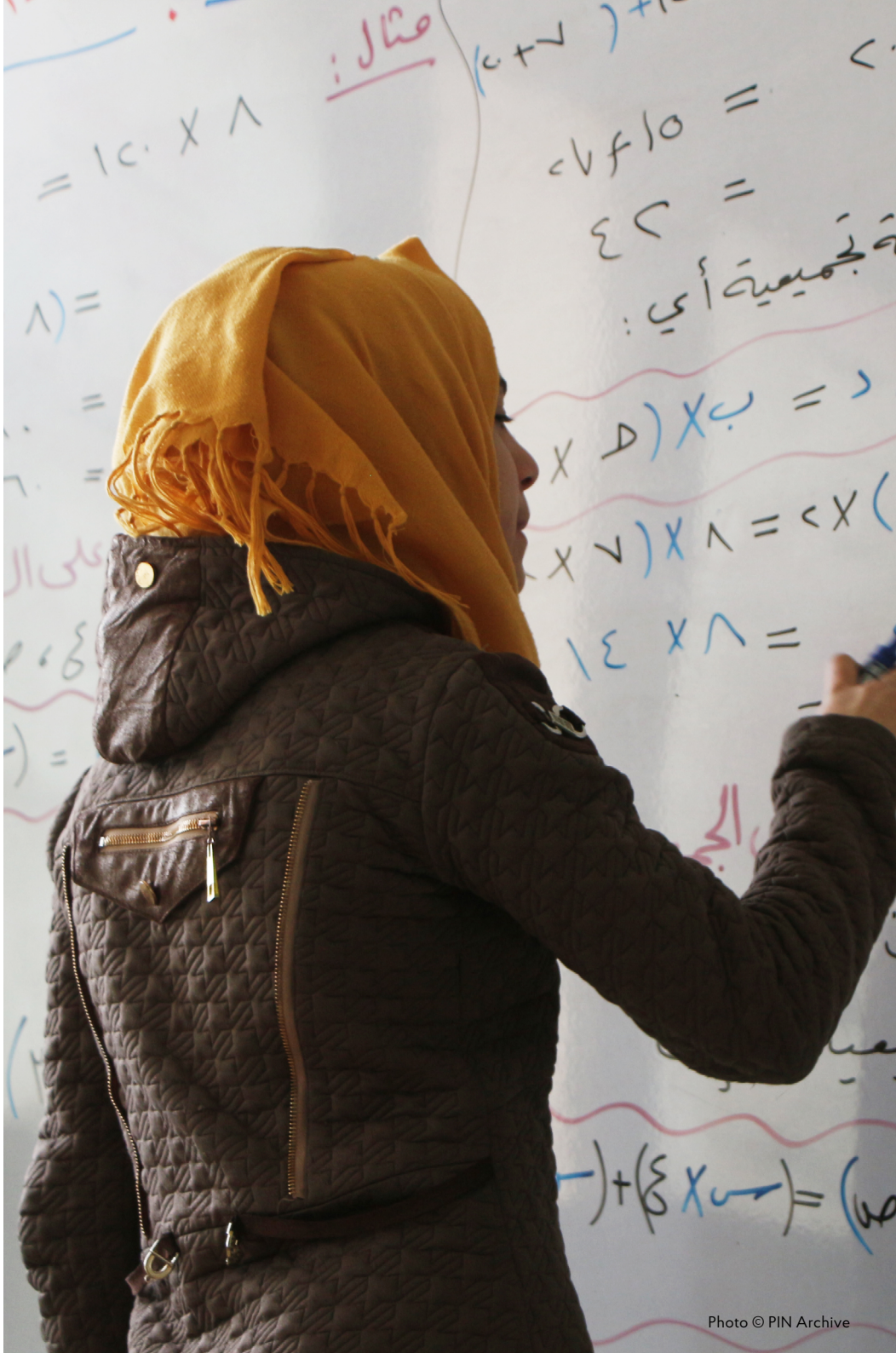
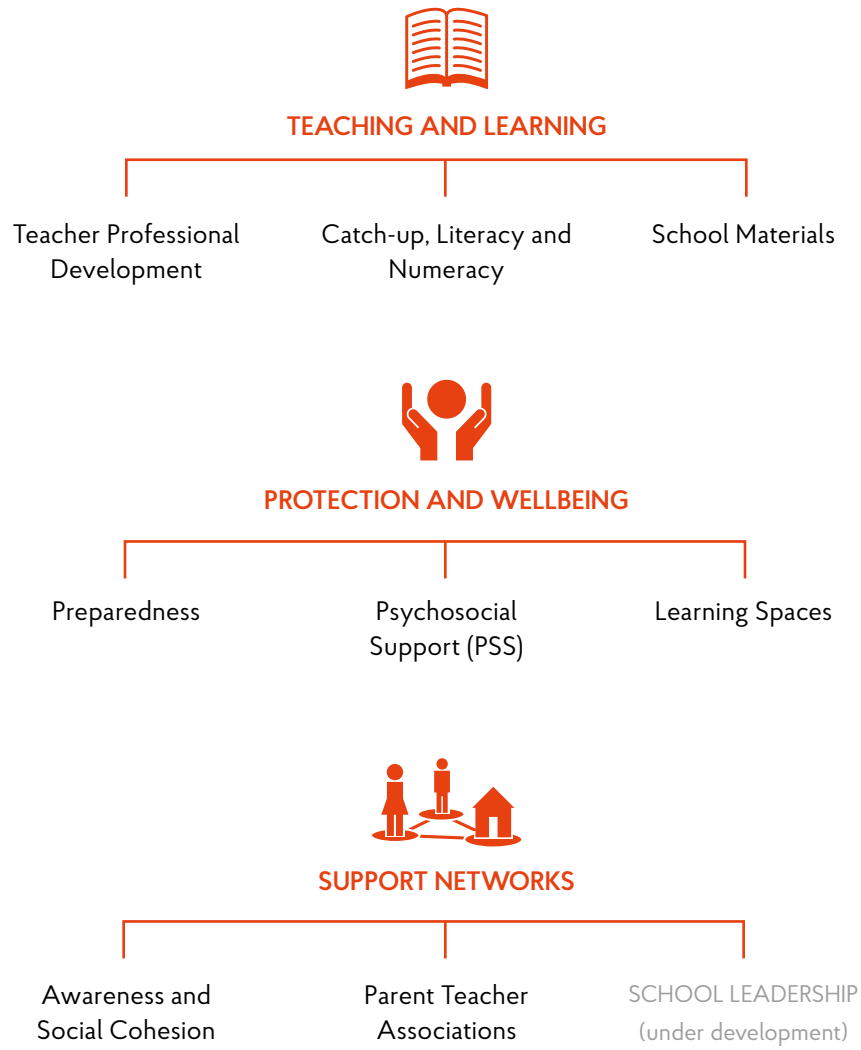


Photo © PIN Archive

→ PIN's EiE interventions are made up of at least one activity from each of the below categories, ensuring that different aspects of children's educational, psychosocial and developmental needs are met.

Diagram 4: Holistic Support through Varied Activities



THIS IS WHAT WE PROVIDE IN MORE DETAIL

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teacher Professional Development

Training and continuous support (i.e. peer learning, mentoring/coaching) to enable teachers to:

- → create inclusive, child-friendly, safe, protective environment;
- → plan lessons that correspond to curriculum;
- → adopt child-centred teaching methodologies;
- → manage a classroom & engage positive discipline
- → manage own wellbeing

Catch-up, Literacy and Numeracy support

is provided through in-school and after-school sessions with trained teachers or facilitators. Sessions may take place in Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) or Learning Centres where school facilities are not available. Where needed, PIN also support catch-up or remedial classes in specific subjects on a needs basis (i.e. where children require additional support to stay up-to-date with or to catch-up on key subject knowledge and competencies).

School Materials include:

1. teacher kits
2. student kits
3. recreational and/or PSS kits
4. furniture
5. other relevant educational equipment

Materials are provided according to priority needs identified or ongoing monitoring.

→ All PIN's EiE activities are underlain by strong foundations of community participation, coordination and analysis.

PROTECTION AND WELLBEING

Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction

PIN support schools to establish emergency preparedness plans and provide them with relevant tools and skills to be able to better protect children and education personnel and better prepare for emergencies.

Psychosocial Support (PSS)

is provided through regular and structured activities designed to build life skills and coping mechanisms, led and monitored by trained facilitators in schools or CFS. Group and individual support is provided where necessary. Sessions can be used to identify children in need of specialised support, such as health care or case management. Such cases are monitored and referred to specialist service providers.PSS is extended to teachers and parents, where possible, to develop coping strategies and strengthen parenting and teaching skills.

Learning Spaces include

existing schools or tented classrooms or temporary learning spaces (TLS) made from locally sourced materials. Needs are assessed and structures established/renovated to meet contextualized INEE Minimum Standards (MS). Spaces can be retrofitted to improve safety and WASH facilities improved to ensure disability and gender sensitivity and an inclusive school environment.

SUPPORT NETWORKS

Awareness, Outreach and Social Cohesion

Awareness: share key messages through varied approaches (i.e. posters, leaflets, TV and radio, events, plays, art sessions). Outreach: engage specifically identified vulnerable groups. Social cohesion: community or school-based events to bring people together to improve tolerance, collaboration and understanding. Includes vertical dimension (i.e. relationships between government and communities). PIN's **Learn and Share Together (LST)** curriculum is used where possible.

Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)

is a group of teachers, parents, community members and students that **meet regularly, discuss key topics** related to the operation, quality and environment of the school and to plan **for ways to improve** the quality of education and wellbeing of students and teachers. PTAs are **owned by schools and communities**. As needed, PIN support the initial set up and planning and preparing for meetings.

School Leadership

(under development)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPROACH

Step 1: Needs Assessment

A Needs Assessment is adapted to each specific context and aims to find out the following:

	Questions to consider	Theme
1.	What is the impact of the emergency on access to and quality of education? Think about: → What are the physical needs (buildings/ materials)? → Are children in school actually learning (and if not, why not)? → What are the other needs (i.e. health, protection etc) that could be affected by education? → How has children's safety or wellbeing been affected?	INFRASTRUCTURE LEARNING OUTCOMES INTER-SECTOR CHILD PROTECTION AND WELLBEING
2.	Who is and is not accessing education and who are the most vulnerable?	ACCESS TO EDUCATION, ATTENDANCE VULNERABILITY
3.	Why are children (boys and girls of different ages) not accessing education? Who might drop out of school?	
4.	What is the quality of education like?	QUALITY OF EDUCATION
5.	What capacities exist to support education?	LOCAL RESOURCES AND CAPACITIES
6.	What do stakeholders think is the most urgent priority?	STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
7.	What support networks do children have and how can they be engaged?	SUPPORT NETWORKS
8.	Is there any way that we can use the emergency situation to improve pre-existing education?	BUILD BACK BETTER

Step 2: Targeting and Awareness

Before designing activities, **selection criteria** are developed to decide *who* the project will support. This might include criteria for (i) communities/schools to be supported or (ii) individual beneficiaries. Projects also engage awareness raising initiatives to promote key education and wellbeing messaging.

Step 3: Design the Activities

Activities are designed according to identified needs and keeping the Child-centred approach in mind (see Table 1).

Step 4: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)

PIN monitors activities and gathers data so that we can (a) ensure activities are continuously aligned with the specific and changing needs of children, (b) measure the impact of our programming and (c) learn and improve our programming and, where possible, also inform other relevant actors and policy makers on how to be more child-centred.

MONITORING ALWAYS:

→ follows the full data cycle
→ involves meaningful beneficiary participation
→ includes rigorous data management
→ links to the planning process for future stages of the project/future projects

SYRIA

Being more inclusive

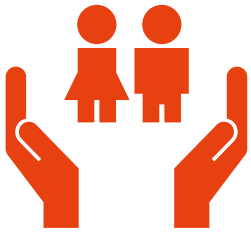
Azzam is five years old. He was injured in an airstrike and has been in a wheelchair since. He lives in a camp for displaced families in northern Syria. There were no formal schools in the area, so PIN established a self-learning centre where children attend classes in maths, English and Arabic and participate in psychosocial and recreational activities. Teachers have received training on inclusive education. According to his uncle, "Azzam goes to school every day and the teachers are happy that he is learning well." At the centre, the children have learnt about inclusion and, according to the head teacher "lately [Azzam's friends] have started competing over helping him to do things like getting to class and going out".

Photo © Omar Khattab

The benefits of psychosocial support

Before attending psychosocial support (PSS) activities at Child Friendly Spaces (CFS), Moataz, and other PIN CFS Facilitators "saw that they [children in displacement camps] were suffering from introversion and shame." Before the start of the project, Moataz explains, "the children were imitating the war in their games. Their games were weapons and machine guns made of wood. They simulated soldiers fighting. The boys fought among themselves and threw stones at each other."

Not only are the centre's activities designed to help with this—through learning to interact with peers in healthier ways and respect authority—but the simple act of attending every second day provides children with a sense of routine and return to "normalcy", in a space protected from further violence and abuse. "Now," says Moataz, proudly, "when we visit the camps, we see that their games have changed."



IRAQ

Outreach to bring children back to school

Photo © Archiv PIN

Azal is ten years old, and loves coming to school each morning. But the first time she tried school, at age six, she had to leave after two years. "I felt like I didn't know anything," she explained. Discouraged, Azal may never have tried again, except for a campaign run by volunteers to try and reach children just like her. There were games in the school courtyard, and volunteers went door-to-door to talk with parents. "I got to join my friends in the school," she told us, smiling. "And that made me very happy." For the first time, school felt like a place she could be welcomed, and supported. This is a big shift in approach for the schools in her area of Iraq, especially after being under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for three years. Many parents withdrew their children from school during this time, worried about what was being taught there; many others fled the area altogether.

MYANMAR

Becoming a better teacher

Photo © Archiv PIN

"At first, I was not [interested in teaching]. I never imagined I would be a teacher or teach kids at a school for the displaced like this in my life... I want to be responsible in my duty and do it the best way I can. I always learn and ask my colleagues who attended teacher training about how to teach and how to deal with students. They transferred their knowledge and teaching strategies to us and now I am happy in this teaching field... [PIN's support] is really great. The teachers and community alone have no capability to support the schools and students. This kind of support helps the school and students to continue the education and children's well-being"

A 21 year-old volunteer teacher from Kachin State, Myanmar.

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Access

- Conduct needs **assessment** and **barriers** analysis to understand what inhibits access to education for different groups *(girls, boys, persons with disabilities, different ethnicities, religious groups or language speakers).*
- Design activities to address barriers and support vulnerable groups.
- Conduct outreach and awareness about importance of education, children's diverse needs and holistic development.
- Support education authorities to develop and implement policies that support children's holistic development. *For example: Increasing **#female teachers** so girls feel represented and supported.*
- Make sure beneficiaries and stakeholders know their rights.

The Learning Environment

- Construct or rehabilitate learning spaces to be accessible and safe.
- Provide teaching and learning materials (including mobility or learning aids for persons with disabilities or special education needs) that support children's development and learning.

Teaching

- Mainstream life skills, inclusion, diversity and tolerance in curriculum and training.
- Conduct Teacher Learning Circles to encourage teachers to share ideas on how to support children more holistically.

Participation and Data

- Engage wide range of stakeholders in design, implementation, monitoring and review of projects.
- Divide data by gender, age and disability to better understand who is being left behind and why.
- Do not only collect data on enrolment, but also on achievement (i.e. learning outcomes) and wellbeing.
- Use data to inform changes so that needs of all children are addressed.

Coordination

- Be a platform for other services. For example: coordinate vaccinations or school feeding.
- Link or refer beneficiaries to other services. For example: health or mental health, cash for work, food or livelihood support to parents with low-income.
- Jointly design and implement interventions. For example: child protection training to teachers, case worker visits to schools, WASH in schools.

For more information, please contact PIN's

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