EDUCATION

Topham Picturepoint/UNEP

Conflict Resolution Skills

One of the more innovative forms of non-formal education is emerging as a result of increasing violence in the city streets. The Community Building in Grinnell, USA, has been successful in enabling a more open and productive environment for decision-making by reducing anger, stress and violence. The primary goal was to offer new options for conflict resolution through peer mediation programs, community mediation and a restorative justice approach to crime. The aims of the initiative were two-fold: to change young people's and adults' perception of and responses to conflict within the community, and development of dispute resolution techniques. In the long term, this initiative aims for a dispute resolution system for the city, based on the needs of a broad range of constituencies within the community.

Education, Cities and Development

Historically, cities have been the centres of education and magnets for an educated population. Many studies investigating the reasons for rural to urban migration in developing countries starting three to four decades ago, reveal that, after finding jobs, educating the children has been one of the main migration motives. The extent to which children and adults in cities attain literacy or education varies among regions depending on the period in which the initial tides of mass migration started relative to the availability of formal or non-formal education services.

In a sample of African cities, where the education services are not widespread and where rural-urban migration is a relatively recent phenomenon, overall literacy levels and school enrolment ratios at primary, secondary and tertiary levels still remain too low to lead to general social mobility. Enrolment ratios are also too low to strengthen the input of human capital to economic development. Only one out of every ten eligible females is able to enroll in the tertiary level. Similar patterns are valid for the sample cities of the Arab States, although the proportion of students graduating from high school is slightly higher than in Africa. In the sample cities of the Asia-Pacific region, school enrolment

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Gender inequalities in adult literacy are higher in African and Arab Cities
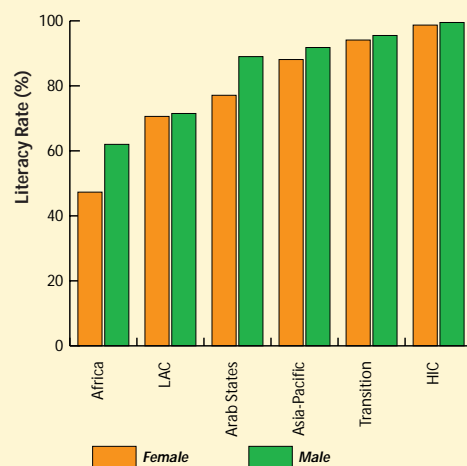
rates are even higher than those of the highly industrialized countries, accounting partially for the Asian economic development levels by increasing the skills of the labour force in general, and of the service sector in particular. A typical example is South Korea where levels of education were elevated in a matter of two decades because the government implemented a policy of improving the quality of education in gen-

Tomaszow Enterprise Incubator Foundation, Poland

In an effort to improve local vocational training capacity and reduce unemployment, a local employment forum undertook coordination and reorganization of vocational training programmes based on a needs assessment, and built a database on local training needs, training capacity and training graduates. The forum expanded to included representatives of training organizations and public officials from 10 countries, while employers and unemployed persons cooperated to improve local information flows, to develop better training courses and to match newly trained individuals with potential employers.

eral. Primary and secondary education enrolment rates for Latin American countries fall somewhere in the middle. Yet, the proportion of children enrolled in tertiary education is still comparatively low. High basic education levels in transition countries are largely due to the legacy of the previous socialist regime that had compulsory, free and gender-equal basic education among its development priorities.

In view of recent trends in the developing countries, it could be said that urbanization and access to education are not always parallel phenomena, as it may have been historically. Instead, two patterns emerge in the cities of the developing world. One is that access to education comes with a time lag; that is, attainment of education becomes possible only with the second or third generation after migration to the city. Or, vast numbers of rural migrants and their children and grandchildren remain illiterate or uneducated throughout their lives, even as city residents. This has direct implications on the social and economic development level of the cities in general, because basic education of children and, especially of mothers has an impact on family welfare. Investing in education is important to development, as cost-benefit surveys by the World Bank on investments in education reveal that social rates of return on investment for primary, secondary and tertiary education are 23, 17 and 13 percent, respectively.

Support to the Disabled, Portugal

A local initiative in Ponte de Lima promoted the integration of disabled persons into the labour market and provided access to specialized information. Promoting common and technical assistance to eliminate physical barriers and to modify workplaces allowed more disabled persons to get jobs.

Social Change through Non-Formal Education

Social change and social mobility are linked to the ability of the education system to furnish a population with life skills and, hence, employment. Aside from lack of access, general low quality and irrelevance of formal education are barriers to effective social change. As urban economies become more globalized and the service sector more diversified, occupations become more specialized, and the variety of knowledge required to deal with the modern world increases rapidly. Basic knowledge and problem solving skills are essential, as are new mechanisms and partnerships to provide diversity and flexibility in education.

A complementary mixture of urban formal and non-formal education, provided through partnerships among the state, municipality, and the civil society - including the private sector - is needed. Analysis shows that 1/5 of the recognized best practices in sustainable urban development is built upon the non-formal education realized through such partnerships. Non-formal education can be: technical training (e.g., how to produce a commodity or a service); oriented to leadership skills development and conflict resolution; geared to the needs of special groups; or focused on issues, such as safety and health. Some skills are needed simply for survival and coping with low incomes.

While economic specialization increases the demand for more sophisticated expertise, non-formal education can be effective in complementing existing skills and diversifying an individual's knowledge base. For example, producers need persons adept at accounting or computing to manage their businesses. These are skills that can be acquired through non-formal education, often provided by the producers, themselves.

Another function of urban non-formal education has been to enable the socio-economic inclusion of the special and generally marginal groups, such as street children, the disabled, unemployed youth, single mothers, and refugees into the mainstream of the city.

Common elements of non-formal education initiatives are needs assessments, provision of supportive mechanisms to give utility to the education itself, employment information and networking and adaptation of work places.

The Role of City and State

The delivery of multi-pronged approaches is only possible within a framework of partnership, including the state, municipalities, NGOs, the private sector and individual citizens. Governments and municipalities have a role in creating an environment conducive to the initiation and effective operation of such partnerships. Cities must be prepared to host educational facilities and programmes that will be useful not just locally but to the whole nation. Governments then have an important role in supporting and facilitating access to basic education, both formal and non-formal, not only as the primary media for transmitting a society's values and knowledge from one generation to the next, but as the main mechanisms for social mobility and overall development.

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Gender inequalities in school enrolment in cities

Primary level

Secondary and tertiary levels

www.unicef.org/programme
www.unicef.org/teachers
www.electrician.com/articles/dlearn.htm