NRC NORWEGIAN REFUGEE COUNCIL

2018-2020
GLOBAL EDUCATION CORE COMPETENCY STRATEGY

1 INTRODUCTION

NRC aims to ensure that children and youth affected by displacement enjoy quality education that is relevant to their psychosocial, emotional and cognitive development, across all phases of displacement (NRC Programme Policy 2017). This Global Education Strategy provides an overview of how NRC, building upon the status of our education programming today, will ensure the greatest likelihood of success in achieving this aim in 2018–2020.

The strategy aligns with global education policy and frameworks including Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education. At the same time, the strategy articulates how the Education Core Competency will contribute to NRC's Global Strategy 2018–2020, and particularly NRC's four main ambitions:

This strategy follows on the *One Million Learning in Emergencies Initiative*, a 2015–2017 initiative to increase access to quality education for children and youth affected by displacement. As a result of this organisation-wide effort, the number of education services provided by NRC more than tripled between 2016 and 2017. By building on this growth and the lessons learned, the strategy deepens the One Million framework, reiterating the centrality of quality education that leads to actual learning. The strategy also aims to define more clearly how NRC provides quality education in conflict and crisis – what is *the NRC way*?

The strategy, based on a thorough assessment of needs, is expected to guide the education work of all Area Offices, Country Offices, Regional Offices, Representational Offices and Head Office.

❶ **BE THE LEADING DISPLACEMENT ORGANISATION IN HARD-TO-REACH AREAS**, by providing access to quality education for the most marginalised crisis-affected children and youth;

❷ **BE A CHAMPION FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS**, by prioritising recognised certification of learning so that displaced children and youth can continue their education and utilise their skills in cases of local integration, resettlement or return;

❸ **BECOME A LEADER IN USING DATA AND TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER BETTER**, through education technology solutions that enhance the reach and quality of education programmes; and

❹ **BE A GREAT ORGANISATION TO WORK FOR**, by consolidating our programme structure, guidance and capacity so education teams are well supported in the delivery of quality programming.

NRC
Global Strategy
2018–2020

2 STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGY

NRC provides opportunities for school-aged children (6 to 18 years old) to complete a full cycle of basic education, and diverse learning pathways across the education continuum for youth (15 to 24 years old)[1]. Our core target group consists of children and youth who are out of school or have had their education interrupted. We only provide early childhood care where it supports access to, and retention in, NRC's programmes.

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Within these parameters, NRC engages in four **Strategic Response Areas** of the Education Core Competency:

❶ Support to formal basic education
❷ First phase education response
❸ Alternative education
❹ Youth education & training

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In order to achieve the necessary quality within these Strategic Response Areas, in 2018–2020, NRC will prioritise four **Foundations**, areas of work that are a prerequisite for quality implementation:

❶ Safe and inclusive learning
❷ Teacher professional development
❸ Influencing policy and practice
❹ Education expertise

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Lastly, in support of NRC's global strategic initiatives, priority programme development areas and main ambitions for 2018–2020, we will focus particularly on three **Programmatic Modalities** within our education programmes:

❶ Integrated programming
❷ Cash-based education interventions
❸ Education technology (EdTech)

This strategy does not intend to cover all education activities implemented by Country Offices. Rather, it intends to focus on areas of work that require particular attention in order to achieve the Education Core Competency's Programme Policy objective. The Programme Policy remains the framework that defines the scope of the Education Core Competency. The local context and country strategies will guide which of the Strategic Response Areas and Programmatic Modalities Country Offices engage in, while all Country Offices will be working on the four Foundations.

The Strategic Response Areas, Foundations and Programmatic Modalities are explained below. Separate framing papers, which elaborate on a Response Area, Foundation or Modality from a technical point of view, will complement this strategy.

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[1]   Both age groups can be contextualised according to country policy and conditions.

3 STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREAS

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SUPPORT TO FORMAL BASIC EDUCATION

As described in the Programme Policy, NRC promotes and supports the inclusion of out-of-school displacement affected children and youth into formal education systems. This is our first priority, in line with the global policy shift towards mainstreaming refugees into national education systems reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal 4 Framework for Action (2015) and the New York Declaration (2016). Only when this is not possible or appropriate (in cases where government policy, age of learners, etc. are barriers), NRC engages in alternative learning opportunities. Basic education is defined in line with national policy and may include both primary and secondary education.

Our strategic outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: Children and youth are supported to enrol and progress through formal basic education, resulting in accreditation.

Sample intervention areas for integration and retention include enrolment support for out-of-school children and youth, including support to obtain civil and education documentation; financial/material support for students like school materials, vouchers and school feeding; academic support like remedial classes; language support where the language of instruction is not the students' mother tongue; and psychosocial support training for teachers. Schools can be supported through grants, classroom construction or rehabilitation, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions or teacher incentives.

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FIRST PHASE EDUCATION RESPONSE

The Programme Policy explains that NRC country operations must ensure that they are able to provide frontline responses to new crises that may arise. In countries with an existing education programme, this includes providing relevant education from the start of a new emergency.

Sample intervention areas include the development of an NRC approach to a first phase education response – all the way from assessment to transition. We will also explore Education Technology approaches that are suitable for a first phase response.

Our strategic outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: As soon as possible in an emergency, children and youth are provided with protective education that prepares them for transition into longer term learning pathways.

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STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREA 3

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

The Programme Policy points out that not all out-of-school children and youth are able to participate in formal education. Barriers might include government policy or age of learners. In response, NRC provides alternative learning opportunities.

Alternative education includes, but is not limited to:

- **Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP):** A flexible, age-appropriate programme, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth. The goal is to provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education using effective teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity.

- **Catch-up programmes:** A short-term transitional education programme for children and youth who had been actively attending school prior to an educational disruption, which provides students with the opportunity to learn content missed because of the disruption and supports their re-entry to the formal system.

- **Bridging programmes:** A short-term, targeted preparation course that supports students' success, taking various forms such as language acquisition and/or other existing differences between home and host education curricula and systems for entry into a different type of certified education[2].

> **The strategic outcome for this Strategic Response Area is:** Out-of-school children and youth benefit from flexible and preferably accredited alternative learning opportunities.

Sample intervention areas include Accelerated Education Programmes that implement the Ten principles for effective practice recommended by the inter-agency Accelerated Education Working Group, catch-up programmes, bridging programmes, literacy and numeracy programmes, Non Formal Education etc. At the global level, we will invest in establishing an NRC approach to measuring learning outcomes.

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[2]   Alternative Education definitions are drawn from the Key Programme Definitions of the Accelerated Education Working Group.

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STRATEGIC RESPONSE AREA 4

YOUTH EDUCATION & TRAINING

NRC recognises the potential of youth[3]; we believe that they have the skills, energy and capacity to become engaged members of their communities.

Youth are calling for more linkages between education, training and employment – innovative education solutions that include academic, employability and soft skills. For NRC's youth programmes, this means moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach with a heavy focus on vocational skills, to offering diverse, accredited learning pathways across the education continuum (including secondary and higher education), with a focus on social and emotional development. Young mothers and fathers are supported to access and remain in education through the provision of childcare.

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[3] Youth is globally defined as those between the ages of 15 and 24 years. While NRC adopts this definition as a general guideline, country programmes should take into account context-specific political, economic and policy considerations for the identification of beneficiaries.

In order to incentivise employers to hire youth once they have acquired skills, NRC develops programmes based on a deep understanding of job markets. In collaboration with NRC's Livelihood capacity and partners, programmes are designed to reflect the needs of both existing and new markets.

NRC aims for youth to participate in key programme decisions from design to implementation and monitoring. To support youth in obtaining the skills needed to meet the demands of life as well as the job market, our programmes offer:

- Skills for life (the competencies, behaviours and attitudes that help youth navigate life and work)

- Numeracy and literacy courses

- A wide range of technical skills that are complemented with business skills

The three long-term outcomes of these programmes are:

- Social engagement (young peoples' capacities for civic engagement, collective organisation, tolerance and respect for others)

- Enhanced livelihoods

- Transition into further education or training

The strategic outcome for this Strategic Response Area is: Youth become active and engaged members of their community and are supported to choose their transition into educational pathways or livelihoods opportunities.

Sample interventions include: youth participation in designing programmes; engagement in community projects; learning support to secondary, tertiary and vocational training; access to recognised digital literacy courses and online education platforms; joint market assessments with livelihoods, cash and market expertise; and support in securing and retaining work (especially female youth).

4 FOUNDATIONS

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SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING

Protection is a priority programme development area for NRC; protection risk reduction and implementation of safe programming principles are essential components of education programming. In line with NRC's Child Safeguarding policy, ensuring children and youth are safe and free from harm or abuse under NRC's care is a legal obligation and part of our accountability to affected populations. In addition, a feeling of safety and well-being is widely recognised as a pre-condition for learning. NRC does not, however, engage in child protection case management, but refers children in need within its education programmes to qualified partners.

Three domains support a comprehensive approach to establishing and maintaining safe and inclusive learning:

- **Safety:** children and youth are physically and emotionally safe in our learning spaces, free from harm, violence or abuse.

- **Well-being:** children and youth affected by conflict, violence and displacement are provided with psychosocial support, so they can begin to recover.

- **Inclusion:** all children and youth, irrespective of their gender, background and abilities, are able to participate in learning and play in our programmes and learning spaces.

> **Our strategic outcome for this Foundation is:** Children and youth are able to participate in NRC supported education programmes irrespective of their gender, background and abilities, and are physically and emotionally safe, so they can learn and thrive.

Sample intervention areas include the provision of safe and accessible learning facilities; child safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (P-SEA) training for education staff; psychosocial support and inclusion training for teachers; and actions to address barriers to education for girls and young women, children and youth with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

FOUNDATION 2

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Programme Policy stresses that teachers are key to the achievement of quality education; teachers are also central actors in ensuring safe and inclusive learning environments. Consequently, teacher management and development are critical areas for attention. Teachers should be recruited through a fair and transparent process and receive appropriate compensation and supervision.

In conflict and crisis contexts, NRC often has no choice but to engage unqualified teachers. Therefore, we need to invest in specialised, dedicated expertise to implement continuous teacher professional development programmes. This means moving away from a short-term, workshop-based, cascade model of training, towards long-term programmes that provide teachers with ongoing training as well as classroom-based support to facilitate changes in their practice. Teacher management and professional development practices should be harmonised with partners and aligned with national systems whenever possible.

The strategic outcome of this Foundation is: Teachers are equipped with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to be effective facilitators of learning through continuous teacher professional development using qualified teacher trainers, peer learning and mentorship.

Sample interventions include strengthening teacher recruitment and supervision policies and processes, investment in teacher development expertise in NRC education teams, development of continuous teacher development programmes, and engaging national teacher education institutions or inter-agency harmonised approaches where possible.

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INFLUENCING POLICY AND PRACTICE

Displaced children and youth experience many barriers that prevent them from accessing education or benefitting fully from education that is relevant to their needs. In addition to addressing these barriers through programming, NRC advocates for national, regional and global ways to strengthen policies and practice. As highlighted in the Programme Policy, this advocacy is informed by our programming and engagement with our beneficiaries.

The strategic outcome of this Foundation is: Local, national and international policy and strategic priorities meet the needs of our beneficiaries.

Influencing policy and practice includes three main streams of work: 1) Working with authorities, 2) Inter-agency coordination, and 3) External engagement with other education actors (universities, donors, etc). All three streams typically take place at different levels, from the local to the global, and bring together policy-makers, donors, education practitioners and researchers.

Sample interventions include coordination and technical collaboration with national authorities; secondment of NRC staff to Ministries of Education; engagement in the Education Cluster, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and other technical working groups; the development of evidence-based advocacy and key messages to promote in national, regional and/or global fora; and collaboration with research institutes to provide an evidence-based approach for programming.

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EDUCATION EXPERTISE

According to the Programme Policy, solid technical expertise and specific sectorial knowledge are at the root of NRC's programmes, which aim for the highest possible quality. Being a leading actor in education in conflict and crisis, and meeting the ambitions of this strategy, require targeted recruitment and the continuous development of the needed expertise.

While all our programmes should be based on a sound analysis of local needs, the new Education Strategy 2018-2020 envisions a more coherent, consistent NRC way of doing education programming. This will be consolidated in a range of framing papers, guidance and tools, which will be key resources for all education staff. Through improved knowledge management, we will ensure that resources and cross-country experience are easily available and capitalised on, encouraging peer to peer learning. Recognising the challenges with cascade trainings, we want to use alternative learning opportunities and structured follow up

and support to help all education staff confidently develop and implement quality education programmes.

The strategic outcome of this Foundation is: NRC education staff have the required expertise for quality, safe education programmes, and are continuously engaged in strengthening their knowledge and skills.

Sample interventions include the development of technical guidance and tools to support the implementation of this strategy; setting up an Office 365-based education library; developing a structured internal communication flow between country, regional and head office level; the identification of effective capacity development models for programme roll out; targeted recruitment of technical staff; and an education induction package.

5 PROGRAMMATIC MODALITIES

PROGRAMMATIC MODALITY 1

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INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING

NRC's Programme Policy promotes an integrated approach involving all core competencies, as this is required to effectively ensure that individuals, households and communities are protected, that they receive appropriate assistance, and that they enjoy their social and economic rights. Consequently, integrated programming is defined as intentionally combining one or more sectoral interventions to improve humanitarian outcomes.

> **The strategic outcome of this Modality is:** Education teams work jointly with other NRC core competencies to address barriers to education and ensure high quality, safe services.

Key areas of multi-sectoral collaboration include:

- Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA) and Education teams work together to identify and address civil documentation requirements that act as barriers to access to education, examinations and other services.

- Livelihoods and Food Security teams work with Education on school feeding and school garden programmes, and partner to ensure enhanced livelihood opportunities for youth education and training programme graduates.

- Shelter and Education collaboration is essential for safe, accessible school construction and rehabilitation aimed at offering conducive learning environments.

- WASH and Education programming ensure that all students and teachers have access to safe, functioning, and dignified water and sanitation facilities at school, and include complimentary hygiene education activities as needed.

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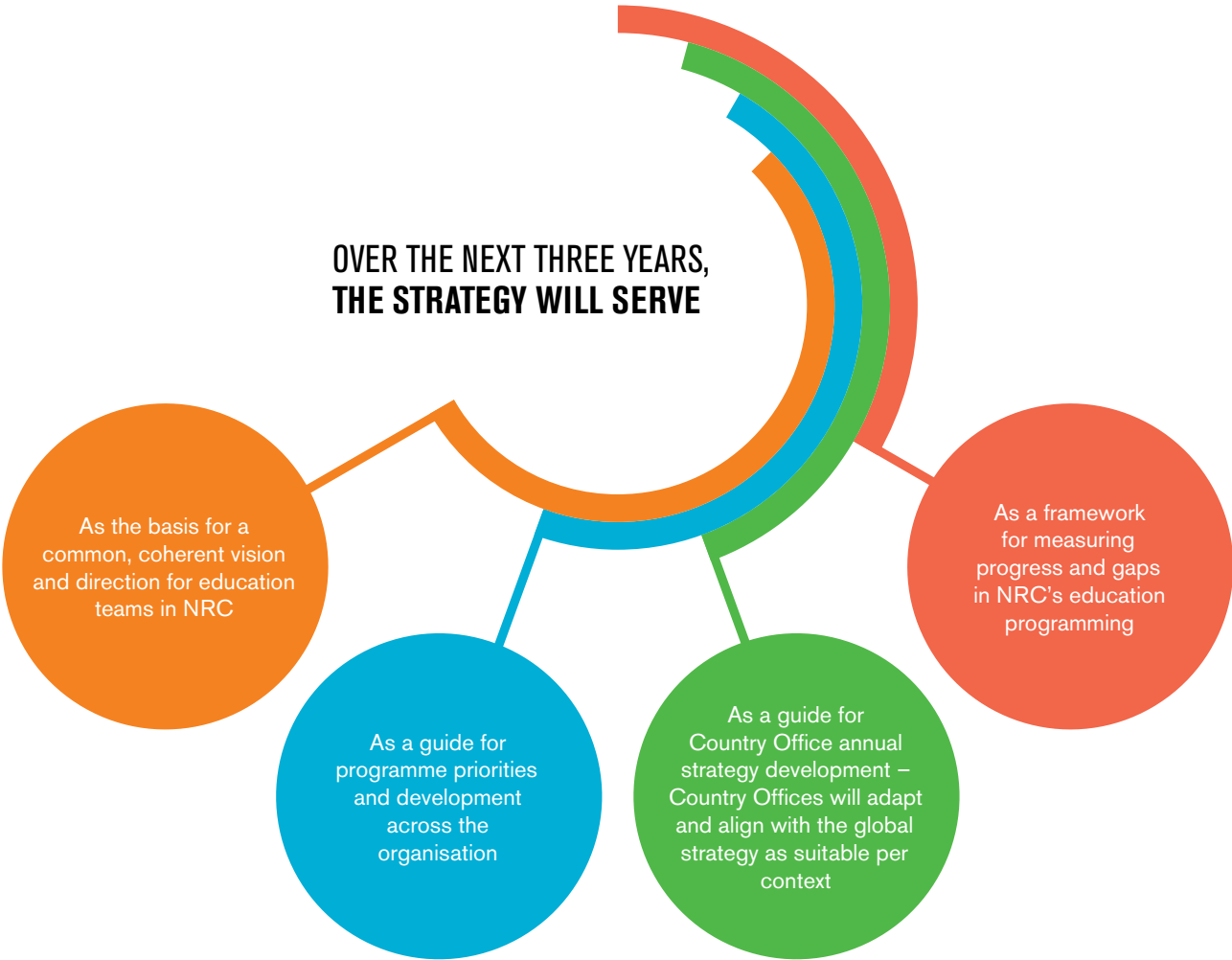
EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY (EDTECH)

Information and communications technology (ICT) plays an increasingly important role in the provision of education in conflict and crisis. As large numbers of children and youth are out of school, and access is unpredictable, traditional education responses are not always adequate. There is an urgent need to develop innovative, flexible and mobile modalities to deliver and enhance education in crisis contexts. EdTech can provide access to education and better learning outcomes where teachers are less qualified and experienced. NRC will seek to expand the use of ICTs in this strategic period, where it is cost-effective and increases access, quality, and relevance of skills taught. Wherever possible, we will do so in partnership with others.

The strategic outcome for this Modality is: Through accessing ICT-based programmes, children and youth, including in hard-to-reach areas, have improved access to education and enhanced learning outcomes.

Sample interventions include the digitalisation of local stories, the development of an ICT-based first phase education response, the digitalisation of a self-learning platform, EdTech accessible for people with disabilities, basic and advanced IT skills development, and blended learning approaches with the integration of ICT into mainstream programmes.

CASH-BASED EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

The use of cash-based interventions is a priority programme development area for NRC. We already have good experience using cash to promote access to education, though there is potential for more programmes to include cash components, whether through conditional cash, grants to institutions or soft programming around multi-purpose cash assistance to promote access to education.

The strategic outcome of this Modality is: Where appropriate to the context, needs and market conditions, NRC education programmes include cash components.

Sample interventions include the development of cash in education guidance, activities to increase NRC staff capacity on cash programming, and the inclusion of cash components in proposals and projects.

6 WAY FORWARD

The Global Education Strategy will be followed by a series of technical framing papers which elaborate on each of the Strategic Response Areas, Foundations and Modalities, as well as technical guidance and tools to support programme development. NRC's mandatory indicators will be revised in 2019 to facilitate measurement of progress towards strategic outcomes.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS,
THE STRATEGY WILL SERVE

As the basis for a common, coherent vision and direction for education teams in NRC

As a guide for programme priorities and development across the organisation

As a guide for Country Office annual strategy development – Country Offices will adapt and align with the global strategy as suitable per context

As a framework for measuring progress and gaps in NRC's education programming

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