Launch Event for Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG)
Talking Points by Dr. Mary Mendenhall

In the 10+ years that I have been part of the education in emergencies field, we have talked many times about the educational needs of youth and how to better support them. Overall, it has proven particularly difficult to advance this area of work. It is wonderful to see how the urgency and importance of this work have galvanized various member organizations of the AEWG to come together, to develop these materials and to chart a course for further work.

With my time today, I'd like to focus my comments around three key aspects of this work:

1. Inter-agency collaboration
2. The importance of teachers
3. The learning agenda

1. Inter-agency collaboration
   - Given my role as a co-chair of INEE's Teachers in Crisis Contexts Working Group, a different example of what I would also deem a successful inter-agency collaboration, I see many parallels worth noting as well as opportunities for continued expansion of these collaborative approaches.
     - For those who might be new to the TiCCWG, we are a diverse group of actors who have been working together to develop training, coaching, and M&E materials in our efforts to provide continuous quality professional development to teachers working in these contexts.
   - Similar to the TICC, the AEWG is striving to provide guidance, standards, and harmonization across actors—in this case, working to provide alternative education opportunities to youth.
   - Whether we are collectively working together to develop the INEE Minimum Standards, Conflict Sensitive Education tools, teacher PD materials, or the AE materials we are learning about today, the inter-agency approach provides important opportunities:
     - To bring together diverse actors with different sets of skills, experiences, and expertise.
     - To pilot and field-test new materials in different contexts and to bring that learning back to the more global frameworks and guidelines.
     - To learn how to contextualize the materials for local settings, as we know these materials and approaches are not meant to be prescriptive or applied wholesale to every context. Both groups are passing through these interesting processes of contextualizing, de-contextualizing, and then re-contextualizing, which takes time, but ultimately leads to a much stronger set of tools at the end of the process.

- Once we have these more "global tools" in place, I do think it's incumbent upon groups like ours to provide and/or share guidance about how policies and programs are adapted in specific field sites so that everyone can benefit and so that we can be sure to create more inclusive opportunities for partners and stakeholders on the ground to authentically engage in this work.
- I also see huge potential for exploring and expanding the collaboration across Working Groups. The AEWG has already cited the TICC training pack as a potential resource for supporting teachers. Although we originally designed the TiCC for the primary-school level, we got a lot of feedback about how much of its contents are relevant for other teacher profiles and/or could benefit from complementary or supplemental resources. We can think through what that might look like for AE programming and teachers' needs, which leads me to my next point.

2. The importance of teachers and providing continuous professional development support
   - The important role of teachers cannot be underestimated for the success of AE approaches:
     - Teachers need to be trained and supported over a longer period of time to provide a *condensed curriculum*.
     - Teachers need to have opportunities to build skills that bring together the most relevant aspects of *pedagogy* (for children and adolescents) and *andragogy* (for adults) in order to respond to the needs of the 10–18-year-olds that the AE materials are designed for.
     - It's great to see the emphasis on the psycho-social well-being of learners participating in AE programming, but the well-being of the teachers supporting them cannot be underestimated and is also tied to their TPD needs.
     - Providing support to these teachers is critical for the implementation of the program, but also the public and community perceptions of the program and the value that is ultimately placed on AE programming. AE needs to be painted in a positive light, and when and if teachers are haphazardly recruited and thrown into AE classrooms, there is a risk that the value of these opportunities for youth could be undermined or minimized.
     - With that, we need to encourage those using these new tools to be mindful of the principles outlined that involve teachers.

3. The learning agenda
   - As we all face pressure to build the evidence base for the work we are doing, the AEWG has developed a learning agenda that nicely balances the focus on policies, programming, students' experiences and well-being, and key questions about effectiveness.
     - While it's important to ask questions about value for money, which will need resources to see through an entire cycle of AE programming and then some, we still have a lot to learn about AE programming.

- o I alluded to how we might teach AE by building on pedagogy and andragogy, but we don't exactly know what this looks like at the moment. There are no easy equivalents of this type of accelerated education, which means that we have a unique opportunity to conduct research and shape a conceptual framework for this approach in the EiE field.
- There are also exciting opportunities to do this work through academic-practitioner partnerships that help further strengthen the work.

I look forward to seeing how the AE work continues to evolve. Congratulations on what the AEWG has already done to date!