



**Policy Brief**

# Government Engagement for Scaling Humanitarian Education Innovations

This policy brief brings together evidence from the Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA) and learnings from HEA grantees on government engagement for scaling humanitarian education innovations.

## Why is engaging with national governments important for scaling humanitarian education innovations?

Education is one of the most highly regulated humanitarian sectors, and rightly so, given the fundamental role it has in shaping, empowering and protecting future generations. As a result, moving from piloting to scaling a humanitarian education innovation cannot happen in most countries without effective collaboration with, and sign off from, the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Collaborative partnerships with MoEs are especially important within the context of education in emergencies and crises, and for marginalized communities. Parallel systems where schools have been set up and run by outside actors have proven to be largely unsustainable, particularly in protracted crises. These systems can suffer from insufficient resources in the long term or at the other end of the spectrum can cause parents to pull their children out of formal schooling, when they see significant investment and better conditions in a non-formal setting. Moreover, parallel systems often cause issues regarding recognition and accreditation of qualifications, impacting onward education and employment opportunities.



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UNHCR's Education Strategy focuses on ensuring that all children and youth (refugee, internally displaced and host) access accredited education through inclusion within national systems.

Inclusion within national systems ensures:

- Access to accredited education, through the continuum of education (from pre-primary to university level), which results in recognized qualifications;
- A well-regulated, protective environment for all children and youth, including the most vulnerable;
- Sustainability – strengthening national systems for the inclusion of refugees is a long term, sustainable investment that also supports host communities beyond the lifetime of individual crises, facilitating the transition from emergency approaches to durable solutions.

Whilst challenging in some contexts, due to the politicized nature of inclusion of refugees in national systems, **supportive and sustained collaboration with MoEs is a crucial part of ensuring the inclusion of all children and youth** within safe, regulated and accredited national education systems.

**Respect for the role and expertise of the MoE, as well as a detailed understanding of their educational priorities, strategy and financial needs, in addition to wider national education systems, is therefore vital;** for successful and sustainable engagement, as well as planning for scale.

Knowledge of national education systems, MoE priorities and capacity lays the groundwork for a strong partnership and also **helps in assessing whether it is possible for an innovation in its current form to be integrated into the national education system.** This is an important assessment to make early on in planning for scale, as it can have a direct impact upon an innovation's sustainability or chosen direction.

In addition, **MoEs are not only the education experts and regulators in a given education context, but should also be recognised as valuable 'customers' for innovations.** MoEs offer an effective potential mechanism for sustainable scale and an extended reach to support increased numbers of learners. The crucial role of education in recovery and development additionally means that **partnerships with MoEs, which support national systems building, have the potential to lead to long term positive change within that context.**

## CASE STUDY

Can't Wait to Learn (CWTL)  
in Jordan

HEA grantee, War Child Holland's CWTL programme, is a tablet based educational gaming application, co-created with children and MoEs, using national curricula.

Government engagement is therefore a key component of the CWTL approach. This case study looks at their engagement with the national government in Jordan, sharing valuable insights on building a sustainable partnership with a MoE.

## Approach:

### 1. Assess the needs:

War Child began the process of developing their partnership with the Jordanian MoE by conducting a needs assessment and mapping exercise, together with the MoE and Field Directorates, to identify the key challenges for education in Jordan and understand how to engage.

### 2. Identify required support:

Following the needs assessment, a workshop was held with the MoE to discuss the findings and collaboratively identify what kind of support would be needed to begin working together to implement CWTL in Jordan. This included technical and maintenance support for the tech element of the programme, as well as training for teachers using the CWTL learning tool.

### 3. Create forums and committees for collaboration:

Once these points of support were identified, technical teams and committees were formed, including representation from relevant Ministry departments, from the Field Directorates (responsible for coordinating teacher training) and from War Child, to create a common understanding of the programme and how it should work in Jordan. As the work progressed, engagement in the committees was expanded to include school level representation (teachers and parents), in order to ensure school and community level buy-in.

### 4. Continuous, close liaison and discussion:

A didactic framework was created, based upon outcomes of the workshops, in addition to continuous liaison with the MoE regarding the concepts within the educational game, the methodological tools, the teaching strategies needed, the story line, imagery and world of the game. The Ministry reviewed all content, ensuring that it not only reflected the national curriculum and/or learning outcomes but also the cultural context of Jordan.

### 5. Proof of concept:

Once the content of the game had been developed in collaboration with the MoE, a proof of concept exercise was carried out over a four month period in two schools, to ensure it worked for students and was aligned with the teaching context within the classroom.

### 6. Feedback and adaptation:

Following the proof of concept stage, a further forum was held with the Ministry to discuss feedback from the teachers, students and parents, and enhancements or adaptations were made to the game, hardware provision and logistical procedures.

## 7. Research phase and next steps for scale:

Following the proof of concept, a research phase was undertaken with 35 schools, for one semester, including a comparison group. This phase was concluded with a further forum, including teachers, students, decision makers in the Ministry, all teams involved in technical implementation and maintenance related to CWTL, to collect feedback and identify next steps for scaling.

## 8. Building MoE ownership:

War Child's goal during this in-depth process of collaboration and engagement was to ensure that the MoE was supported to feel ownership of the programme. A key part of this process included training a core team in the MoE to facilitate and coordinate the ongoing training of other teachers, supervisors or school principals for the implementation of CWTL in classrooms across Jordan, under the technical supervision of War Child experts.

## Navigating challenges:

### Resistance to something new:

It is crucial to be able to explain, ideally through evidence, the benefits of your innovation, especially when it requires a new methodology and/or approach, or the use of technology that is unfamiliar in a given context. This needs to happen first and foremost at the MoE level, in order to get official buy-in and reach the school and community level. Similarly, teachers need to

know how this new programme will help and support them in their role. Carrying out just one training is not enough. It is for this reason, War Child worked intensively with the MoE and Field Directorates from the start, as well as supporting with coaches, who work with the teachers inside and outside the classroom to build their understanding and confidence using CWTL. War Child also worked with 'Champions' from the teaching staff to informally support other teaching staff with CWTL.

## Key components for success:

### Approach the relationship as a mutually supportive partnership:

MoEs offer a rich resource of knowledge and expertise. It is important to be guided by and work collaboratively with the MoE and its experts, supporting their work and aligning with their systems and priorities. "Humanitarian organizations need to approach the MoE as an expert partner and talk to them at the same level. You need to help them but also sometimes you need to learn from them too. Understanding that is an important first step." *Dr Ziad Twissi, Education Advisor, War Child Jordan*

### Engage at every relevant level:

In a given context, there may be multiple levels and departments within a MoE that will play a key role in programme implementation on the ground. Having an understanding of the system and which key stakeholders are involved within the local and national government structures is a key part of planning engagement. Engagement must then be continuous and coordinated at every level.

### Present the MoE with a clear, results based plan:

"Your planning with the MoE needs to be a results based plan, with actions and results, showing who has responsibility for each part and also proposing a clear timeline. I've seen plans that are more like a memo, with a vague timeline, without responsibilities and it's simply not clear enough to work effectively." *Dr Ziad Twissi, Education Advisor, War Child Jordan*

### Build local experts into your team:

Local experts, especially those who have an existing relationship with and understanding of the Ministry, its personnel and priorities can be worth their weight in gold as members of your team; opening doors, facilitating conversations and ensuring cultural and even language considerations are met. Institutionalizing these relationships within the organization is a key piece of the puzzle.

### Be prepared for delays and build in time:

The complexity that comes with operating within a government structure means that engagement will not always result in quick action. Patience and flexibility is key, as is regular follow up, to ensure that communication is open and effective.



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## HEA learnings and recommendations

The HEA has collated the below key learnings and recommendations regarding government engagement, based upon the experiences of our innovation teams:

### Start early:

Engaging with MoE staff at all levels prior to implementation can help to build a strong partnership, identify opportunities to provide key support and develop ownership. Taking time to get to know the MoE structure, strategy and priorities, as well as building relationships with key contacts in the MoE can make it easier to implement and scale humanitarian education innovations, whilst also supporting continuous capacity building of the MoE.

A key lesson learned was that conversations on how the government will sustain programming and options for financing, are important factors for effective scale up. Consideration should be given to this future planning and government investment during the early stages of engagement.

### Invest time in understanding systems and priorities & align your approach with them:

Understanding different Ministries' priorities and strategies should guide innovations' interactions with governments. Aligning your approach to these priorities and strategies is crucial if the innovation is to be taken up by the national government.

### Clearly communicate the innovation's unique selling point:

It is important for innovations to differentiate their programmes from others and when technology is involved, emphasize that the programme provides more than just the device itself. The content, training and methodology for using the innovation need to be made clear in order for the government to recognise the value add of that particular innovation, particularly in terms of how it supports and contributes to national priorities.

### Rigorous evidence & multi-level engagement supports buy-in:

When approaching potential government partners, it is important to have evidence of effectiveness to secure MoE buy-in and develop a strong relationship.

Introducing innovations into national systems often requires mindset shifts, including adopting new teaching methodologies and styles. Depending on the innovation, **a multi-level holistic approach to engagement is needed** – engaging at the MoE, teacher training college and school levels – to be able to scale effectively. Again, providing clear evidence on the new methodology is crucial to ensuring the innovation gets the required understanding and approval from the MoE in order to move forward.

### Recognize it is a long-term relationship and promote MoE ownership:

Government relationships require maintenance and may evolve over time, due to changing policies and priorities. It is important to make efforts to interact regularly with government counterparts and keep them updated on progress.

### Build flexibility into timeline to account for challenges and complexity:

The need to secure multiple government approvals can be challenging and lead to implementation delays. Understanding and flexibility is therefore needed not only within a programme itself but also from **donors, especially in terms of funding, when implementation timelines have to be shifted.**

## Learn more

To discover more about the learnings coming out of the HEA, please visit our Medium publication, the HEA Learning Series at <https://medium.com/hea-learning-series> or contact us on: [kenrhea@unhcr.org](mailto:kenrhea@unhcr.org).

# Humanitarian Education Accelerator

The Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA) is a UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded partnership between the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The HEA was created to build understanding on how to transform successful pilot projects into scalable educational initiatives for refugees and displaced communities worldwide. By developing a cohort of successful humanitarian innovators, we hope to build a strong evidence base of effective methods to scale and evaluate programmes for refugee education.



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