

# Education in emergencies

Around 40 million children in the world are currently out of school. The out-of-school children live in countries affected by conflict while millions more are affected by natural hazards. In order to ensure that children who are experiencing crises do not continue to miss out on vital schooling, the University of Nairobi (UoN), with technical support from the International Rescue Committee (IRC), is now offering students interested in pursuing graduate study, the opportunity to specialize in Education in Emergencies.

According to the programme coordinator, Dr. Loise Gichuhi, the programme which was rolled out in October, 2010, has already enrolled 3 groups-regular, evening and school based; the programme is a unique collaboration to develop human resource capacity among enrolled students and education practitioners working in East Africa, in order to prepare them to provide quality education programming in emergency and post-crisis settings in developing countries.

Through coursework, internships and research projects, students examine the range of educational activities and the related challenges that take place in the field of education in emergencies. A sample of these activities include: establishing safe learning spaces for children in the midst of conflict; collaborating with international organizations and education authorities to ensure recognition



An outdoor school at the Dadaab Somali refugee camp in Kenya. Photo courtesy of Brian Thomas

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of student and teacher certifications acquired during displacement; tailoring educational and vocational programs to the needs of out-of-school children and youth; assisting ministries of education to rebuild and strengthen their in-service teacher training system after a conflict; and drafting emergency preparedness plans for the education sector in anticipation of natural hazards such as floods and droughts, as well as political and economic instability.

Upon completion of the M.Ed, and depending on previous work experience, students may: work with aid agencies or other international organizations on their education teams; join the ministry of education and build capacity to deliver inclusive and quality education in emergency situations; or, infuse their work in schools as teachers or administrators with an enhanced understanding of education in emergencies.

The University of Nairobi also plans to offer additional study options in the future, including diploma, certificate and short study courses. As the University and IRC continue to refine the curriculum and carry out capacity building activities for the faculty, several areas of collaboration for local and international partners are emerging. These areas include: contributing materials to the EiE Resource Centre including posters, articles, reports, maps and multimedia resources; and scholarships for students.

Meanwhile, the Centre is seeking to expand the scholarship base to needy students who are interested in this innovative program but lack the financial capability.