

The Politics of Education Aid in Yemen: From Emergency Response to National Ownership

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Abstract

The war in Yemen has devastated the country's education system, leaving more than two million children out of school and millions more dependent on emergency educational provision (UNICEF, 2021). While humanitarian and development actors have prevented the complete collapse of schooling, they have also entrenched a fragmented landscape in which parallel systems, rival authorities, and donor-driven interventions substitute for national governance. This paper examines Yemen's education crisis through an institutional lens, arguing that political and administrative fragmentation constitute the central barrier to sustainable sector recovery. Drawing on international frameworks, including the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards and the OECD Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States, the analysis contrasts normative expectations for coordinated, nationally owned education systems with Yemen's empirical trajectory. The paper combines historical and policy analysis with qualitative evidence from interviews with humanitarian officials, multilateral partners, and Yemeni education authorities to trace the evolution of governance arrangements since 2014. It identifies two plausible political scenarios—deepening fragmentation and partial stabilization without full settlement—and assesses their implications for education governance. Building on the more optimistic but still constrained scenario of partial stabilization, the paper proposes the establishment of a Yemeni National Education Platform (Y-NEP), a digital education management and coordination system led by the Ministry of Education under the internationally recognized government. The platform is designed to rebuild informational capacity, strengthen donor harmonization, and create a realistic pathway for restoring national ownership under conditions of ongoing political uncertainty. The paper concludes that although education cannot by itself resolve Yemen's conflict, it can serve as an early and feasible domain for cooperative institutional recovery if reforms prioritize governance functions, data systems, and coordinated sectoral planning.

Keywords

Yemen, education governance, fragile states, humanitarian aid, digital platforms, education in emergencies.