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Supporting Non-state Providers in Basic Education

Service Delivery

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CREATE PATHWAYS TO ACCESS

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Summary

Basic education is commonly regarded as a state responsibility. However, in reality, non-state providers (NSPs) have always been involved in basic education service delivery, and there is often a blurring of boundaries between state and non-state roles with respect to financing, ownership, management, and regulation. In recent years, the focus on the role of non-state providers (NSPs) has intensified within the context of the move towards achieving Education for All (EFA). The paper considers this shift, with particular attention towards service delivery to 'underserved groups', defined as those for whom access to affordable government services of appropriate quality is most problematic. In some cases, this refers to particular sub-groups of a population within a country. In other cases (notably fragile states), it can refer to large sections of the country's population. The paper indicates the wide range of NSPs that exist to serve different underserved groups. It notes that NSPs are commonly viewed as having a comparative advantage over state provision - in terms of quality, cost-effectiveness, choice, accountability to citizens etc. However, in reality there is very limited robust analysis to support some of these claims.

The paper then considers the ways in which non-state providers engage with the state in education service delivery, including with respect to contracting, policy dialogue, and regulation - and the role that donors play in this relationship. The paper concludes that relations between NSPs and the state are not straightforward given the range of different providers involved in education service delivery, with those serving the better-off tending to dominate engagement with government. This can be at the expense of smaller-scale, informal providers aiming to support those otherwise under-served by government provision. As such, the paper argues that there is a need for 'real' on-going dialogue which recognises the diversity amongst NSPs, to ensure collaboration between NSPs and government benefits the underserved and so assists in moving towards the achievement of EFA goals.

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