Bridging the Gap for Education in Crisis and Conflict

From Preparedness through Recovery and Development
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INTRODUCTION

While progress has been made in reducing the number of out-of-school children around the world, millions of children and youth living in countries affected by conflict and emergencies are missing out on an education. In conflict areas, 30 million children and 20 million adolescents remain out of school in conflict areas, with an additional 8.5 million children out of school due to natural disasters. The proportion of out-of-school children is on the rise – from 42% in 2008 to 50% in 2011.

Children and youth trapped in areas of conflict or natural disaster face many barriers to education. These range from schools simply not being available in the worst-affected areas of the country, to the difficulty of recruiting sufficient numbers of teachers. As schools close, children may be recruited and forced to fight as child soldiers, and are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. If children are able to attend school, the quality of education is severely diminished as a result of poor learning environments, disrupted attendance, limited supplies of instructional materials, and ongoing psychosocial effects of the crisis.

With conflicts lasting an average of 12 years, and with refugees and IDPs displaced for an average of 17 and 20 years respectively, generations of young people risk missing out on an education and the opportunity to fulfill their potential. Children and youth simply cannot wait until the end of a conflict or crisis to resume their education.

The educational needs in countries, specifically developing countries, affected by emergencies extend beyond formal basic education with a need to provide safe, progressive, and comprehensive educational opportunities to children and youth of all ages from early childhood through to youth and young adulthood. This briefing paper discusses some of the lessons learned in delivering education in emergencies, highlights efforts currently underway, and provides recommendations for the future.

“We had to leave behind all of our possessions. The only thing we could bring with us is what we have in our heads, what we have been taught – our education.

Education is the only thing that cannot be taken from us.”

--A female refugee going from Darfur to Chad
ROLE OF EDUCATION

The provision of education in emergencies is among the best ways to mitigate the impact of the crisis on children while building hope for the future. Ensuring quality education in emergencies provides children and youth with a sense of hope and normalcy when their lives have been disrupted, promotes their psychosocial well-being and cognitive development, and lessens the risk that they will be recruited into dangerous activities. In addition, ensuring the continuation of education in emergencies helps protect prior investments made in the education sector and ensures a stronger future for individual students as well as the communities and nations within which they live.

Child Protection: Education plays a real and significant role in protecting children from physical harm, forced recruitment or trafficking, and psychosocial distress. The continuation and expansion of educational services during crisis decreases future vulnerabilities, decreases drop-outs, and provides positive and productive activities for children and youth who may otherwise be engaged in destructive activities such as gangs, armed factions, and trafficking.

Security: Researchers have found that low educational attainment is a significant factor in predicting the outbreak and continuation of conflict. With over 60% of the population in many conflict-affected countries under age 25, the combination of a ‘youth bulge’ and failures in education represent a risk of future conflict and instability. However, every additional year of formal schooling for males reduces the risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20%. A country which has 10% more of its youth in school reduces the risk of conflict by about 4%. As noted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), “the provision of non-formal education, skills training or accelerated learning services prevents recruitment into military or criminal activities and contributes to demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration.”

Stability: Education can build peace and stability by limiting existing disparities and helping to strengthen social inclusion. In post-conflict reconstruction, education is key to facilitating economic recovery and sustainable development. People of voting age with a primary education are 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than people with no education, rising to 3 times more likely for someone with a secondary education.

Economic Growth: Large numbers of displaced and out-of-school children and youth with weakened support systems or social/cultural “checks” on activities have less ability to engage in formal market employment opportunities or earn wages. Research has shown an individual’s earnings increase by 10% on average for each year of school completed, which in turn will lead to a more stable community and aid in reconstruction.

Peace Building: Education programs should be designed to be conflict sensitive in order to negate the causes of conflict, inequality and prejudice within the education system, as well as aggressively pursue measures to ensure the inclusion and protection of children and education personnel. While education has the power to build peace, it also has the power to exacerbate instability. When implemented improperly, education can contribute to conflict through practices that intensify the deep underlying disparities which exist in fragile countries. “This occurred in the fragmented education provision and unequal access in Bosnia Herzegovina during the post-war period after 1995, as well as in Afghanistan in the 1980s-90s through the printing and distribution of textbooks with violent content.” Therefore, education programming must be carefully developed, with consideration of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) guidance, to harness the power of education to build a lasting peace.
CHALLENGES

While there are many reasons to support education in emergencies, there are four key barriers that must be overcome:

**Education in emergencies is underfunded.**
One of the greatest limiting factors of achieving the goal of protecting both communities and investments is the disconnect between need and funding. Internationally, education is consistently and grossly underfunded with only 1.4% of all humanitarian funding in 2012 being allocated to education. No other sector consistently ranks as the least-funded sector or has a smaller share of humanitarian appeals funded.

Humanitarian funding from the United States government targets many of the countries affected by conflict and natural hazards, however, there is little to no acknowledgement of the education needs in this context. In addition, traditional basic education funding for these countries has decreased by 19% from fiscal year 2013 and 59% since fiscal year 2010. (See Appendix 1) The absence of funding for the education sector has an immediate and longer-term impact on the ability of an individual, a community, country and region to survive both the immediate crisis and thrive in the future.

**There is a gap between humanitarian response and development phases.**
Currently, the provision of education is divided by the type of funding received: humanitarian assistance or development funding. One of the biggest challenges to overcome is bridging the gap between the two phases to ensure each child receives continuous access to education. The implications and impact of the lack of continued and consistent support on the education sector, recovery of a nation, and continued development of a country and region are significant and bear consideration by those with strategic short- and long-term interests in countries and regions.

**Education sector plans and budgets are ‘emergency blind.’**
Few education sector plans and budgets address disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness, response and recovery. This lack of plans, capacity and resources makes it harder for schools to keep children and youth safe and continue to hold classes when a crisis strikes, to inform communities of risks and actions to take, and for education systems to recover after a crisis.

**Attacks on schools, children and teachers are widespread.**
The number of recorded attacks on education is on the rise. Schools are bombed, looted and occupied by armed groups or used for political purposes. For many learners and their teachers, it is dangerous to travel to and attend school. On October 9, 2012, Taliban militants climbed aboard a school bus in Mingora in the Swat Valley of Pakistan and shot Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old secondary school girl, in the head for her support for girls’ education. Malala’s story is just one example of this disturbing trend.

- In 2012, there were 3,643 incidents of reported attacks against education in 15 countries.
- In Afghanistan, between 2006 and 2008, there were 1,153 reported attacks on education, including damage or destruction of schools by arson, grenades, mines and rockets; threats to teachers and officials; killing of children and staff; and looting.
In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) was largely responsible for rendering 250 schools out of use in 2012, either as a result of occupation for military purposes or looting.

In Mali, following widespread attacks on schools from 2012-2013, more than 1,500 schools in the north of the country are in need of repair, new equipment and removal of weapons.

By January 2013 an estimated 3,900 schools in Syria had been destroyed or occupied for purposes other than education. A local human rights group estimates that 640 educational staff have been killed, and 1,300 arrested by government forces.²⁰

Each attack has widespread and substantial impact on both children and the education system. Attacks against schools, students and teachers are gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, amounting to war crimes.

**Missed Opportunities**

In areas of conflict and fragility, millions of children and youth are uneducated, marginalized and without hope for gainful employment. A lack of education programming will lead to a generation of children and youth at risk for exploitation and without the skills necessary to aid in reconstruction, furthering the risk of future instability in the region.

**Mali: No Funding, No School.** Currently, Mali is in the midst of a vast and complex humanitarian crisis. Unfortunately, Mali’s education system has suffered greatly and has been financially neglected in comparison with other sectors such as food security, access to water, and hygiene. UNICEF has estimated that the education of over 700,000 children has been disrupted over the last year, with many of them at risk of missing two full years of schooling. To date, the education sector has received only 18% of its requested funding, which severely limits the capacity of the Education Cluster and its partners. For the situation to improve, 1) countries that have pledged financial support must strive to meet their donation targets, 2) programming efforts must be more integrated, and 3) there must be further collaboration between the Malian Ministry of Education and the Education Cluster.

**Somalia: Lost Opportunities.** Somalia is a country that has endured a violent civil war stretching over two decades. Unfortunately, funding for education in Somalia was, and continues to be, shockingly low, which has led to unemployment for the majority of its youth population. A variety of youth-focused educational initiatives have been launched, such as the Education Development Center’s (EDC) Shaqodoon project. This project has aimed to provide skills training and employment opportunities for targeted youth. However, they face an uphill battle as the majority of youth have no educational foundation due to underfunding. This highlights the importance of investing in education during times of crisis, as it will make long-term goals like those of the Shaqodoon project more feasible and attainable. Ways forward include increased investment in education in emergencies, expanded research efforts to showcase the importance of education in emergencies, and further education of donors about the importance of education in emergencies.

**South Sudan: Not a High Priority.** After years of famine and ethnic conflict, the emergency in South Sudan hit a peak in 2011. In response, the South Sudan Education Cluster attempted to provide temporary learning spaces, teaching and learning materials, and teacher training programs. However, a major obstacle to their work was the decreasing priority given to the education sector by donors and the subsequent lack of funding. In 2011, the Education Cluster appealed for $39.6 million in the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) and received $17.4 million from donors and $3.6 million disbursed in the first round of the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF). Unfortunately, the Education Cluster received no funding in round 2, and several key areas of the emergency response were not able to progress as quickly as needed. In one territory alone, over 16,000 displaced school children
lacked access to education. There must be further advocacy to promote the necessary prioritization of education in emergencies and to showcase the positive impacts of educational interventions in emergencies.²¹

**Making an Impact**

As the world continues to struggle with instability and global poverty, investing in basic education is one of the best ways to ensure that countries can rebuild, peace can be sustained, and future conflicts can be avoided. Through education, we can strengthen security and stability in fragile states, build civil societies, and equip populations with the skills and capacities to shape their own lives.

**Haiti: Quick Response.** Prior to the 2010 earthquake, Haiti suffered from many challenges including the lack of an adequate education system. The earthquake completely destroyed the infrastructure and operations of the education system. Fortunately, Save the Children was able to quickly supply tents, furniture, and educational supplies; provide psychosocial support with their Healing and Education through Art (HEART) program; and train 2,300 teachers in disaster risk reduction in the event of another earthquake. In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 270 schools were supported and more than 45,000 children were able to return to school. None of this would have been possible without adequate funding.

**Egypt: Education System Support.** Egypt is in the midst of a very complex transitional process towards democratization and reform. Education in general – and specifically the quality of educational services – is at the heart of popular unrest. Due to being a very centralized, authoritative, and underfunded system for years, the Egyptian education system is lagging behind when it comes to educational outcomes and preparing children and youth for life. The American Institutes for Research has partnered with the Egyptian Ministry of Education through the Education Support Program (ESP) to strengthen the local educational structures that support teacher professional development and community involvement in educational decision-making and quality improvement. ESP also seeks to work with the Ministry to augment its capacity to develop and manage local level crisis contingency planning so that the negative impacts of future political and social disruptions to the school system and ongoing delivery of educational services can be reduced greatly. Since September 2011, ESP has trained over 100,000 assistant teachers in “teaching applications for the classroom,” which has been certified as part of the education system’s licensing process for new teachers. In addition, 25,000 boards of trustees have been trained on their roles and responsibilities in matters of school governance, community participation, and resource mobilization, thus creating a system that is more effective in addressing community level school needs and responding to current and future education system fragility.

**Horn of Africa: Emergency School Feeding.** The positive impact of funding education has been quite evident in the horn of Africa (Ethiopia and Kenya) and the Sahel region (Burkina Faso,
Mali and Mauritania). Education has been part of an integrated approach, enabling it to be used as a vessel to enhance humanitarian relief for children. Malnourished children will struggle to reach full physical and cognitive potential—suffering lifelong consequences. School-based nutrition programs provide emergency feeding to assist children and families during the ‘hunger gaps,’ discourage dropout, and equip teachers to identify and refer at-risk students to appropriate clinics. Education also provides psychosocial support, fostering resilience in children and enabling faster recovery from traumatic experiences as was seen in Dollo Ado refugee camp in Ethiopia and the Dadaab camp in Kenya.

**Afghanistan: Improving Women’s Rights.** By the end of the Taliban regime in 2001, after 25 years of internal conflict, Afghanistan had one of the worst education systems in the world with a literacy rate of around 28%. In some areas, over 60% of children and 80% of girls were not attending school. Almost 80% of the country’s 6,900 schools were damaged, and less than half of the existing teachers had attended high school. Working with Afghanistan’s Ministry of Education to improve the quality of education throughout the country, the Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) program implemented by Creative Associates International Inc. works to strengthen teacher training and support and build capacity for administrative and teacher education staff, ensuring the educational environment supports the ambitions of future generations of Afghan women. The program benefited over 2.7 million Afghan students and improved the capabilities of over 80,000 teachers. The program also worked to improve the gender gap by increasing the number of qualified female teachers, raising girls’ school attendance and working directly with the Ministry of Education to help create gender sensitive policies and procedures.

**Philippines: Opportunities for Youth.** Since the late 1960s, the confrontations between Muslim separatists in Mindanao and the Philippine government have resulted in the deaths of more than 120,000 people and the displacement of more than 2 million people. The conflict has led to widespread poverty in war-torn areas, an increase in clan-based conflict and criminal activity, including widespread banditry, rampant kidnap-for-ransom activities, and other crimes resulting from unstable security. EDC has implemented the Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills Project, Phase 2 (EQuALLS2), which has worked to train more than 35,000 out-of-school youth and provided alternative basic education courses to 70,000 youth. EDC and its partners have provided safe and productive options for children and youth, thus helping to stabilize some of the most fragile communities.

**El Salvador: Progress in DRR.** In 2007, Plan International partnered with the Ministry of Education in El Salvador to support the development of ‘School Protection Plans.’ The project mainstreamed disaster risk reduction into school infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum. Additionally, the school protection plans also provided a framework for the implementation of complementary projects on environmental management and risk reduction. As of July 2007, over 5,000 school centers had prepared school protection plans. Assessments show that the program greatly decreased the population’s risk to danger and improved both their resiliency and capacity in responding to emergency disaster situations.

**Sierra Leone: Tools to Rebuild.** Sierra Leone is still recovering from a ruthless 10-year civil war that ended in 2002. Tens of thousands of lives were lost and approximately a third of the population was displaced. To assist the post-war healing process, ChildFund International is working with community partners to reintegrate thousands of children and adults into communities. More than 1,000 adults have been trained to support children’s rights and psychosocial education. In addition, vocational training has been provided for unaccompanied and internally displaced children, children of adult amputees, teenage mothers and unemployed boys. ChildFund has provided skills training and income-generation projects for more
than 400 ex-soldiers and youth in 16 communities in 100 villages. Because education is undervalued, the programs work to raise awareness of the importance of literacy and skills training and create informal schools to ensure children have access to learning.

GLOBAL RESPONSE

The international community has increasingly become aware of the long-term benefits of education in conflict and crisis situations. A number of key initiatives over the past decade have built a solid foundation for increased programming from early recovery to long-term development.

Internationally Agreed Upon Right: In 2010, the United Nations adopted a resolution on “The Right to Education in Emergencies” acknowledging both the need for continued access to education regardless of the context as well as the need to address the impact of emergencies on the education system and the ability of children and youth to engage in educational opportunities.

In 2012, as a demonstration of education’s integral role in recovery and peace building, the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the European Union was allocated to supporting children affected by conflict, with education as the key sector supported.

Global Collaboration: The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Education Cluster are two key mechanisms through which the profile of education in emergencies has been raised and the sector provided solid, clear and progressive framework and standards for preparedness for and response to crises. Both are globally recognized coordination mechanisms through which organizations, including USAID and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), non-profit and for-profit education actors engage with humanitarian and emergency response actors.

With the UN Secretary General’s recent Global Education First Initiative and INEE’s Education Cannot Wait Call to Action, released in September 2012, global leaders in both the humanitarian and education sectors have taken a step forward together seeking both immediate and longer-term commitments and strategies to increasing access to quality education in all contexts and mitigating the impact of emergencies on those most vulnerable, the world’s children and youth.

In addition, many governments, global agencies, and donors have raised their voices to acknowledge that through collective burden sharing, a difference can be made. The Global Partnership for Education has pledged to raise an additional $500 million to help educate children who live in countries experiencing war and violence, floods, earthquakes or other humanitarian emergencies. Through Goal 3 of the USAID Education Strategy, The U.S. government has pledged to improve equitable access to education for 15 million learners by 2015, focusing on the most vulnerable children, such as displaced populations, ethnic minorities and war-affected youth.

Together we are making great strides in reaching the millions of children who remain out of school, but much remains to be done.
“Every child - no matter how poor, no matter how difficult his or her circumstances-deserves an education so they can have hope for their future. Educating children - especially girls - increases their incomes, improves their health and nutrition, and it literally saves lives.”
- Carol Bellamy, Former Chair, Global Partnership for Education & Former Executive Director, UNICEF

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Education for children and youth living in the midst of crises cannot wait. The Basic Education Coalition urges the US government to align policies and practices of financing and programming to support the global collective effort to force real, sustainable, and effective change for the benefit of children in crisis-affected countries. Specifically, we recommend:

- The necessary level of funding should be allocated to development and humanitarian budgets to adequately address the needs of fragile and conflict-affected states to mitigate the negative long-term consequences on economic and human development. In addition, levels of funding should be based on country need.

- The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance should include and track education in its emergency response and work with traditional basic education programs to provide a continuum of support from early interventions through recovery.

- The U.S. government should work to strengthen existing policies, specifically the USAID Education Strategy, to support protective and relevant quality education during humanitarian responses and include the recommendations of the INEE and the UN Secretary General.
### APPENDIX 1: U.S. PRESIDENTIAL BUDGET REQUEST FOR COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY CONFLICT FROM 2002-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total ($ in Thousands)</th>
<th>Request FY2010</th>
<th>Request FY2013</th>
<th>Request FY2014</th>
<th>$ Change from FY13 to FY14</th>
<th>% Change from FY13 to FY14</th>
<th>$ Change from FY10 to FY14</th>
<th>% Change from FY10 to FY14</th>
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<td>-</td>
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References

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4 Save the Children, “Attacks on Education: The Impact of Conflict and Grave Violations on Children’s Futures.” 2013
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11 INEE, Video on Conflict Sensitive Education. http://vimeo.com/63413312
12 “Context Paper: What is the Role of Education as It Relates to Reducing Fragility?” USAID.
16 INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education.
18 The UN Secretary General’s report includes 19 situations which address education-related violations, including schools bombed, shelled, and razed by warring parties, and students and education personnel threatened, abducted, and killed. The report mentions attacks on education in Lebanon and Cote d’Ivoire but does not specify a reported figure. See http://protectingeducation.org/news/gcpea-priorities-protection-schoolteachers-and-students-2013-security-council-debate-children.
19 Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Occupied Palestinian Territory/Israel, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Colombia, India, Pakistan, Philippines and Thailand and the Lord’s Resistance Army in the Central African region
20 Save the Children, “Attacks on Education: The Impact of Conflict and Grave Violations on Children’s Futures.” 2013