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Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises in sub-Saharan Africa

Developing Inclusive, Responsive, Resilient Education Services for All

SUMMARY

Over 87 million primary school-age children and secondary school-age adolescents and youth in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) remained out of school in 2014 (UIS, 2014). Globally, nearly half of all out-of-school children and adolescents in conflict-affected countries in 2013 were found in SSA (UNESCO, 2013). The region is prone to insecurity and violence within and across borders, and to severe vulnerability resulting from climate change, chronic poverty and under-investment in basic social services. The combined effect of these conditions, paired with conflict, natural disasters and epidemics, creates complex humanitarian and development challenges.

In recognition of the significant challenges in crisis situations to achieving the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4](#) (that is, to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning”), the international community has emphasised the need to develop more relevant and resilient education systems. One of the recent responses is the Education Cannot Wait fund, which was launched at the first [World Humanitarian Summit](#) in May 2016 to support the delivery of quality education to all children in emergencies and protracted crises by 2030 with an initial commitment of \$90 million. Leaders gathered at the Summit pledged to create livelihood and educational opportunities for displaced people and committed more predictable multi-year funding to meet immediate humanitarian needs and longer-term development outcomes.

Improving education in emergencies and protracted crises will help contribute to the overall achievement of all seven [SDG4 targets and three means of implementation](#). Policymakers in SSA and development partners are called upon to meet their commitments to develop more inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems by:

1. Better education planning for emergencies and protracted crises.
2. Responding to the unique challenges and educational needs of marginalized groups.
3. Ensuring timely and efficient coordination between humanitarian and development aid for education.

Education is a basic human right, as enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2000, education in crisis and emergency situations has been given increasing attention in the international development agenda. Protracted conflict situations, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Nigeria, have led to prolonged negative developmental consequences, ranging from forced displacements and reduced foreign investment to increased health problems (UNESCO, 2015a). The SSA Regional Ministerial Conference on Education Post-2015 held in February 2015 (Kigali, Rwanda) identified armed conflicts, natural disasters, and health crises, among others, as major conditions that have disrupted education for children across the continent (UNESCO, 2015b).

 **Armed conflicts** in SSA countries have resulted in the breakdown of education services in affected areas, often assuming a pattern of targeted attacks on schools, teachers, and students, or the military use and occupation of schools by armed forces. Out-of-school children, both boys and girls, in conflict settings are vulnerable to recruitment by armed forces and at risk of sexual violence and attack.

 **Natural disasters** such as the 2011 drought crisis in the Horn of Africa, affecting Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia, have been responsible for mass displacement. Together with the drought in Niger the same year, these environmental emergencies resulted in an estimated 8.5 million children missing out on schooling (UNESCO, 2015b).

Education 2030 Framework for Action on Education in Crises

Paragraph 9: “Many of the largest education gaps are found in conflict and emergency situations. It is, therefore, critical to develop education systems that are more resilient and responsive in the face of conflict, social unrest and natural hazards – and to ensure that education is maintained during emergency, conflict and post-conflict situations”.



 **Child soldiers and combatants** are often victims of physical abuse, malnutrition, drug abuse and HIV infections. Many adolescent boys under 18 were recruited as soldiers in civil combat during the 1990s. Both boys and girls have been forcibly recruited to fight or to provide militias with services, including carrying, cooking and sexual services (UNICEF, 2015b).

 **Educational inequality** widens in conflict-affected countries. In these countries, 39% of the poorest children completed primary school, compared with 77% of the richest; and for the secondary school, the rate of completion is 17% and 37%, respectively. For example, in Ethiopia, children in conflict-affected areas are 15% more likely to have never attended school and 21% less likely to have completed primary school than those living in conflict-free areas (UNESCO, 2015c).

EDUCATION RESPONSES

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)

INEE was conceived in 2000, during the Strategy Session on Education in Emergencies held at the 2000 World Education Forum. As a result, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR, committing to advancing Strategy Five of the Dakar Framework for Action, convened the first Global Consultation on Education in Emergencies (Geneva, November 2000) with representatives from WFP, UNDP, the World Bank, bilateral donors and over 20 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) engaged in education in emergencies programming. In this forum, participants acknowledged the need to learn from successes and failures, share resources, develop guidelines and work collectively to uphold the right to a quality education in crises and emergencies¹.

 **Epidemics**, such as the 2014 Ebola crisis, resulted in school closures for the better half of a year in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. More than 28,000 Ebola cases and 11,000 deaths (estimated) were reported in the three countries as of March 2016 (WHO, 2016).

Vulnerable populations risk further marginalisation during crisis. In SSA, the following groups are particularly at risk of being educationally excluded during emergencies and crises.

 **Refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs):** Refugee children and adolescents are five times more likely to be out-of-school than their non-refugee counterparts globally; and 50% of primary school-age refugee children and 75% of adolescent refugees at secondary level are out-of-school (UNESCO & UNHCR, 2016).

 **Young and adolescent girls** are almost 2.5 times more likely to be out-of-school if they live in conflict-affected countries, and young women are nearly 90% more likely to be out-of-secondary-school than their counterparts in conflict-free countries (UNESCO, 2015c). During times of crisis, girls may suffer trauma from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), face higher levels of malnutrition than boys, and are often denied access to education (UNHCR, 2016). There are also dangers for girls in school in conflict situations (for example, the kidnapping of more than 200 Nigerian girls in 2014).

 **Children with disabilities** become even more vulnerable and face higher risks of becoming victims of injuries, abuse and neglect during times of crisis. They encounter daily discrimination in the form of negative attitudes, lack of adequate policies, and legislation that bars them from accessing education and health services (UNICEF, 2015a).

Education Cannot Wait

The first World Humanitarian Summit, held in May 2016, made the pledge to leave no one behind, and highlighted the needs of IDPs and refugees to be met by immediate humanitarian and longer-term development assistance. To bring this vision to action, the Education Cannot Wait fund was launched at the Summit to support the delivery of quality education to all children in crises by 2030 (World Humanitarian Summit, 2016). Based on a global consultation led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), a roadmap was proposed in three phases to reach: 1.4 million children in Year 1; 13.6 million children by Year 5 by increased investment; and 75 million children by Year 15 by accelerating investments including through innovative financing mechanisms (ODI, 2016a & 2016b).

Creating safe schools for children and youth

Due to the complexity of the emergencies in West and Central Africa (WCA), UNICEF has developed WCA Regional Safe School Strategy (SSS) which aims at reducing the loss of life and infrastructure in case of attacks on schools and villages.

The 'Safe Schools' model proposed for the contexts of high insecurity:

- promotes learning, health and protection of children;

¹ INEE's Conflict Sensitive Education Pack can be found at: <http://www.ineesite.org/en/conflict-sensitive-education>

- has a strong component of Conflict and Disaster Risk Reduction (C/DRR) at school/community levels;
- has a strong link with Child Protection systems inside the classroom (curriculum/education/behavioural change) and around the school (mapping/referral);
- prioritizes psychosocial support in the classroom (UNICEF, 2015b & 2015c).

Similarly, in 2011-2012, UNHCR started implementing three global strategies on protection of children, education, and prevention and response to SGBV. Despite expanded services, enrolment rates in primary and secondary education for displaced persons in priority countries showed a steady decrease over the last three years, partly because of increased numbers of displaced persons and also an improvement in the quality of data (UNHCR, 2015). Further efforts are needed to meet the education needs of forcibly displaced people.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education 2030 agenda demands that internally displaced, refugee and stateless children and youth are visible and accounted for in the next 15 years of education sector planning, development and monitoring at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels. It places a strong focus on countries affected by adverse situations and urges governments to put in place robust and responsive policies, strategies, and systems to ensure quality education in challenging contexts, and calls upon the international community to 'build back better' by providing coordinated support and investing where education needs are the most acute. The following recommendations aim to address barriers to access to, retention in and quality of education in crisis and disaster affected countries:

1. Planning for emergencies and protected crisis

Strengthen data and information management

Without accurate data on displaced and vulnerable populations and education service provision, planning in emergencies is not possible or incomplete. These groups are often invisible in national education sector plans, and therefore, their education is under-funded or has no budget allocation. Reliable data is critical to inform education planners. For example, OpenEMIS Refugees, a joint

project with UNESCO and Community Systems Foundation, uses an open source web-based application to facilitate the collection of school, student and staff data on a regular basis. This system should be extended to SSA (UNESCO & UNCHR, 2016).

Develop Transitional Education Plans (TEPs) where relevant. A TEP is meant to be a national policy instrument developed under the leadership of government authorities at national or regional level. In situations where longer-term planning or the implementation of a regular Education Sector Plan (ESP) is compromised by contextual uncertainties, a TEP can enable the country and its partners to develop a structured plan that will ensure progress towards longer-term education goals. The TEP period is shorter than that of an ESP, being generally a three-year plan. A TEP seeks to address immediate needs, and reduce the risk of future crises by focusing on strengthening system capacity. TEPs will be most useful if they are inspired by a long-term vision of education system development, while focusing on issues that are immediate threats to achieving longer-term development (IIEP & GPE, 2016).

Address safety, resilience, and social cohesion in planning processes. The prevalence of conflicts and other crises in the world indicates the increased need for education sector planning to address issues related to: safety of learners, education staff and assets; education resilience that provides continuous education regardless of the situation; and protection of social cohesion through equitable access to quality education and curriculum. Crisis-sensitive education content can save lives and resources (IIEP, 2015).

2. Responding to the unique challenges of disadvantaged groups

Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda.

In crisis situations, national authorities, communities and international stakeholders should work together to ensure equitable education services and structures for refugees and IDPs, adolescents, girls, children and youth with disabilities and ex-soldiers and combatants. There needs to be specific commitments in policy and funding to support these groups. Additionally, information and communication technologies (ICTs), supplemented with in-person training, support and counselling, are insufficiently leveraged means that can help address limited access to and quality of education for disadvantaged groups.

Ensure displaced children's access to safe learning environments. In a situation of displacement (influx of displaced children into a community) governments are encouraged to open the classrooms to the new students, and when communities do not have the space, or the capacity, additional infrastructures should be built. The integration of the displaced in host schools provides an opportunity to promote peaceful coexistence between communities and further improve the local education systems. Schools and classrooms in crisis contexts are the places where children as small as 3 years can immediately feel better and heal. It is critical to offer access to school for the displaced children, even those who have never

been to school before in their place of origin: they are in need of protection, and school has a role to play to ensure that they do not carry the heavy burden of psychosocial distress for long.

Provide quality teacher training in crisis situations.

In emergencies, qualified teachers are often unavailable, ill-prepared or are themselves suffering from the physical and psychological effects of the crisis. Rapid recruitment of teachers and other unqualified education personnel from among community members may be necessary; teacher training and support are needed to prepare teachers to address the specific needs of crisis-affected children. The Education 2030 Agenda expresses strong commitment to quality education and to improving learning outcomes, which requires that teachers and educators are empowered, well-trained, motivated and supported, including in crisis situations. Furthermore, in countries experiencing protracted crises, the topic of education in emergencies should be included in initial teacher training curricula and in continuous professional development for teachers and education managers. The Teacher Professional Development resources in the INEE Toolkit outline a set of good practices in high-quality professional development for teachers who work in crisis situations (INEE, 2016).

3. Meeting international agreements in respect of effective coordination mechanisms

Governments of asylum countries are obliged under international conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child to promote the access of refugee children to education in the country of asylum. In accordance with international commitments, governments should establish appropriate arrangements, including recognition of studies for refugees, whereby education ministries

recognise and validate studies undertaken by refugees and other displaced populations (UNESCO, 2014)². UNICEF also advocates for the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration by all governments in the region.

At the stage of post-conflict reconstruction, there is often a confused situation, with various humanitarian and development agencies offering assistance in an uncoordinated manner. When a national education ministry is ill-equipped to coordinate them, problems abound and become complex. There is a need for special attention to effective coordination among agencies, including coordinated support for the return of displaced persons to their homes and the re-establishment of basic services and livelihoods in returnee-receiving areas. Agencies with a mandate for education in emergencies should further improve coordination of their humanitarian assistance with organisations working towards longer-term development (UNESCO, 2015a).

Conflict-affected countries are spending far below the recommended levels on education. In 2012, just 3.2% of national income was spent on education in 21 of these countries – far below the global average of 5% or the recommended target of between 4% and 6% of national income. With so many of the world's out-of-school children and adolescents living in conflict affected countries, investing in education should be a priority. But many countries in protracted crises do not receive enough humanitarian and development aid, especially in education (UNESCO, 2015b). For SSA to reach the Education 2030 goal, aid to education needs to rise considerably and better coordination between humanitarian and development funding needs to be established.

² On higher education, see "Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States"

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