

## **UNGEI *GirlsEd-Net* eDiscussion #7: Addressing Gender Inequalities in and through Education in Emergencies, Post-Crisis and Contexts of Fragility**

Details of this eDiscussion can be found here: [http://www.ungei.org/listserve/index\\_1981.html](http://www.ungei.org/listserve/index_1981.html)

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Dear Participants,

*This e-Discussion is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Jackie Kirk, a significant contributor to research and dialogue on education, gender and fragility and a tireless advocate for gender equality and the right to education. Dr. Kirk, IRC Technical Advisor, and convener of the INEE Gender Task Team and IASC Education Cluster Gender Working Group, was tragically killed with three IRC colleagues in Afghanistan in August 2008.*

Facts:

- There are approximately 300 million young people under 25 living in countries affected by armed conflict. 130 million are girls.
- Thousands of girls and young women - no-one knows exactly how many - have suffered gender-based violence in times of war and it is often used as a deliberate tactic in ethnic or religious conflict.
- Over 39 million children do not have access to education in conflict-affected fragile states. More than half of these are girls.

The reality of emergencies, conflict, post-conflict, and contexts of fragility is that gender disparities are usually augmented and exploited. The traditional or stereotypical gender roles of women, men, boys and girls often change or intensify during and after conflict. Girls can be subject to grave human rights violations through forced recruitment into fighting forces, sexual violence and exploitation, abduction, forced marriage at an early age, early pregnancy, and increased exposure to HIV/AIDS. In the aftermath of conflict or in the context of a fragile state, girls may be required to head a household at a very young age and to leave school for providing income for her family. During conflict, young boys may be expected to participate in killing and maiming and may also be subject to sexual violence and exploitation.

Gender responsive education is often referred to as a “window of opportunity” in emergencies, conflict, post-conflict and in contexts of fragility. Education can offer protection from violence, including sexual and gender based violence, psycho-social support and emotional well-being for children who may have been traumatized, improved health and benefits to the community by developing the foundation for economic growth and political stability.

Educational needs change as does the ability of girls and boys to attend school in emergencies, conflict, post-conflict and in contexts of fragility. Girls are often the first to be taken out of school because the distance to and from school puts them at risk of sexual violence & exploitation or because they are required to take on a disproportionate amount of responsibilities in the home. Similarly boys may be recruited to join fighting forces on their way to and from school. Moreover, in many countries, boys' education is often prioritized over a girl's in the same family.

On September 16-18, 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland, a workshop on Addressing Gender Inequalities in and through Education in Emergencies, Post-Crisis and Contexts of Fragility was co-organized by IRC, INEE Gender Task Team/IASC Education Cluster Gender Working Group, UNGEI and UNICEF to discuss some of the issues mentioned above. This workshop brought together participants representing government ministries, UN agencies, international NGOs and

donor agencies from diverse contexts with a wide range of experience. The workshop allowed participants to deepen their personal understandings of gender, and consider the gender dynamics created by emergencies and how this impacts on educational opportunities and experiences, while introducing a number of new tools, strategies and processes for addressing gender disparities in and through education. (For more details on the workshop visit [www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org).)

The purpose of this UNGEI eDiscussion is to **examine the interplay between gender, education and emergencies, conflict, post-conflict and fragility; continue the dialogue and momentum created at the workshop by increasing the scope of participants; and collect and document the best practices, strategies, and lessons learnt shared by you.**

Let's get started with the first question for discussion!

It has been demonstrated that education improves economic growth, health and well-being, political stability and provides protection. As countries rebuild and recover there are opportunities for systemic change in national systems and in communities to increase gender equality in and through education.

**What has been your experience (strategies, lessons learned and good practices) advocating with governments for the importance of girls' education in emergencies, conflict, post-conflict and contexts of fragility?**

**Kara Mitchell, Analyst, Canadian International Development Agency**  
INEE Gender Task Team  
*Moderator for this eDiscussion*

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