

# CATALYST

for Education and Gender Equality

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**AFGHANISTAN:** Girls at a community-based tent school in the village of Borghason in the central Bamyan Province. There is no permanent school in this remote area, but one is currently being built. See p. 6 for more on education in Afghanistan.

## FEATURE ESSAY

### A Pivotal Moment

In December 2006, the idea that education has a crucial role to play in times of emergency came of age when the Government of the Netherlands announced it had pledged more than \$200 million to UNICEF for Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition Countries. The single largest earmarked donation in UNICEF's history – and a subsequent pledge of £20 million by the UK Government Department for International Development – represents an increased awareness that education is not an optional service in the wake of conflict or natural disaster that must wait until food, water and medicine are prioritized; rather, education can be a vital pivot upon which a nation turns when the future is in doubt.

Despite this support, education as an intervention in emergencies, especially during post-crisis transition periods, remains underfunded and inadequately conceptualized. If the conceptual gap is addressed, perhaps the funding gaps could be closed. To foster better understanding, it is worth noting five rationales for prioritizing education in emergencies.

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First, children's right to education is inviolable. The most important time to protect and nurture any right is when it is most at risk, and with roughly half the world's out-of-school population living in conflict-affected fragile states, safeguarding education could not be more urgent for millions of children. Therefore, education in emergencies is crucial from a rights-based perspective.

The rights-based perspective goes deeper, however. Education can assist in both assuaging the wounds of war and preventing a slide back into conflict. In recent years, there has been a pervasive change in the nature of warfare: Civilians are deliberately targeted for attack, and children are inexorably drawn into violence through forced recruitment, kidnapping, rape and drug-fuelled indoctrination by armed groups and forces. Lack of economic opportunity can also push young people into associating with armed groups and forces. Children's experiences in this context include physical injury and extreme physical danger, bearing witness to violence and death, the loss of one or both parents, the loss of one's home, becoming a refugee or internally displaced person, forceful recruitment into the military, and especially in the case of girls, gender-based violence, rape, sex slavery, and child trafficking and prostitution. The impact of conflict on children constitutes a full-blown and ongoing human rights crisis. Providing education both in the wake of warfare and as a bulwark against future violence protects children's rights broadly, beyond the right to education.

Second, if countries are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, reaching those millions of children who are living in emergency situations is essential.

**PAKISTAN:** "I wanted to see my own image so I took this picture to see what I look like," said Zubair, 8. He was one of 160 children participating in the EYE SEE II project for children affected by the earthquake of 8 October 2005.



Inherent in the Millennium Agenda is the idea that gender equality and universal access to education will have cascading benefits for social development and poverty reduction. One cannot attain universal access to education without reaching the hardest-to-reach children, who to a great degree are those living in conflict-affected countries. So, education in emergencies is critical from the perspective of reducing poverty.

Third, education works as a humanitarian aid intervention in times of emergency. When the lives of individuals and communities are severely disrupted, schools can be a safe environment for children. They also serve as essential nodes for disseminating aid, psychosocial care, emergency information and other basic services. For children, returning to the routine of school lessens the disruption of their lives and grants them some therapeutic normalcy – even as it affords parents some time away from childcare to respond to the fallout from crisis. Getting children back to school helps restore the rhythm of daily life for communities and may have a positive effect on other institutions. Therefore, investment in education is a cost-effective intervention from a pragmatic humanitarian aid perspective.

Fourth, education can be a tangible early peace dividend as society emerges from civil conflict. Back-to-school campaigns help mobilize communities around the hopeful cause of educating the young, with all the implications such endeavors have for the future. Former opposing parties may have a chance to work together and turn their attention from conflict to resource mobilization on behalf of children; narrow or sectarian identities may take a back seat in the drive to educate children to a broader sense of national identity – and from this perspective, education in post-conflict countries has the potential to play an early and visible role in refocusing a country on development and nation-building.

This brings us to a fifth rationale for closing the funding gap for education in emergencies and post-crisis transition countries, one concerning public policy and reform. It is an irony of emergency, especially conflict, that it affords a window of opportunity for education system reform. It has been generally acknowledged that education can be complicit in conflict when schools sow the seeds of division through curricula that inculcate negative messages about social minorities. Schools can "reproduce the skills, values, attitudes and social relations of dominant groups," as Peter Buckland has written. And curricula can range from exclusionary to downright inflammatory. In cases where the education sector plays a divisive role, its destabilization in times of

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## “Every Child in School is a Victory for Iraqi Families...”

*Helping educate a generation weaned on war*

Catalyst conducted an e-forum with two key education officers from UNICEF Iraq to gauge obstacles facing development professionals working to provide education to Iraqi youth coming of age in a time of protracted war. **Marike Klappe** is an Education Specialist for Iraq stationed in Amman, Jordan. **Khawla Khanekah** is an Education Officer in the Erbil, Iraq, office.

**E**mergency: The word implies a temporary state, a nightmare that will pass. Providing education in emergencies suggests that there will come a subsequent rebuilding of the education system; the daily routines of communities and schools will be restored, normalcy will return. But what about children coming of age during a period of protracted conflict? A child of six or seven in Iraq likely has little memory of life before the current war. Maybe the notion of an emergency as temporary doesn't capture the situation from a child's perspective. As the bloodshed in Iraq nears the five-year mark, the toll on that nation's children becomes less an emergency and more a way of life.

“Learning is only possible if children feel safe,” says Khawla Khanekah from her office in Erbil. “The government is trying to provide some protection measures at schools and on the way to school, especially during the exams. But there isn't the capacity to cater to all schools that need protection.” This insecurity is reflected in attendance rates and exam figures. Only 28 per cent of Iraq's graduation-aged youth managed to take their exams last year. One in six children was out of primary school in 2005, according to a government survey, and that was before the waves of violence and displacement that have swept the country since 2006. Current community reports suggest that attendance in many areas has suffered further declines due to increased insecurity, security clamp-downs and the threat of direct attacks on schools and teachers. “Parents are not sending their children to school because of the danger, and many teachers are staying home for the same reason,” explains Marike Klappe from Amman.

The violence has become embedded – in the fabric of daily life and in the psychological development of a generation. This poses particular challenges to those striving to provide support to war-torn youth.



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**IRAQ:** A four-year-old girl in the old section of the southern city of Basra.

“The greatest challenge we face is the psychosocial impact of war,” says Klappe. “Most children are emotionally affected by the conflict.” Have the Iraqi government and humanitarian agencies been able to implement psychosocial care through the school system? Klappe says that there are hardly any school-based psychosocial interventions supported by the government. In response, WHO and UNICEF have begun psychosocial training for teachers and health workers. And, she says, emergency Early Childhood Development kits are being procured and distributed. “The ECD kits have play and development materials for children 0–8 years old, and training materials for caregivers on psychosocial interventions, the importance of play to release tension from traumatic experiences and the importance of using therapeutic language to encourage children to express their feelings.”

Khanekah feels that a stigma exists around psychosocial needs, even for children. “There is a common view in Iraqi society that counselling is only for persons who are not mentally sound,” she claims. “There were psychosocial support centres established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, one in each governorate. But these efforts were not school-based, and they were handed over to the Ministry of Health two years ago – a further indication of the association

between asking for psychosocial help and being considered mentally ill."

The lack of access to psychosocial care is especially evident among preschool age children – in part due to a social bias that has historically failed to embrace early childhood education, according to Khanekah. "The value of preschool education has not yet been established in the community," she observes, "leaving aside the impact of traumas on the child in the early years of life." Klappe agrees, noting that "low enrolment in kindergarten means few children have the opportunity to develop and to find release from the tension of traumatic experiences. This affects school readiness both mentally and emotionally." Net enrolment rates in kindergarten were only 5 per cent in 2003 – 2004, and shrank to 2.5 per cent by 2005 – 2006.

Both Klappe and Khanekah cite the destruction of school facilities as another pervasive problem. "Schools are often occupied by the Multi-National Force or militias," Klappe says. "They are damaged during the conflict or not well maintained due to lack of funds and an enormous increase in prices for construction materials." The crisis in infrastructure has accelerated, but actually predates the current war, according to Khanekah. "The shortage of school buildings is a problem that has been growing for the past 40 years," she says. "In an Iraq that has been involved in at least five major wars – some internal, some involving neighbors or superpowers – there has been a total negligence of the education system and the requirements for school buildings."

Intensifying all these difficulties is the rising tide of displacement. "Schooling is interrupted for internally displaced children. Host communities and their schools come under enormous pressure, with overcrowded classes and multiple shifts," Klappe explains. And displaced teachers face delays in receiving permission to teach in other governorates. "Especially in the Kurdistan region, displaced teachers are putting pressure on the salary budget for the region."

Yet despite the many challenges – the low government capacity, the violence and insecurity, the ruined schools and the increasingly steady stream of internally displaced people – the story of education in Iraq is also one of hope and perseverance. Klappe points out that the Iraqi government is constructing and rehabilitating school facilities in partnership with humanitarian agencies to deal with the influx of displaced children. And, she says, "teaching and learning materials are being supplied to displaced

children and the host communities, based on displacement estimates in several areas."

At the start of October 2007, nearly 6 million Iraqi children made their way back to school – a testament to the powerful commitment of Iraqi families to educate their children, and those children's singular bravery. As Mette Nordstrand, Chief of Education and Development for UNICEF Iraq, has said: "Every child in school is a victory for Iraqi families." Those small victories are also a sign that relief and development professionals like Klappe and Khanekah are doing their jobs.



## EDUCATION AS PEACE DIVIDEND

### *Restoring the future in Southern Sudan*

*The accomplishments of these past two years in Southern Sudan show how quickly despair can turn into hope in the realm of education in emergencies and post-crisis transition. A history of underdevelopment followed by two decades of war devastated Southern Sudan's education sector and severely limited opportunities for the next generation. In the wake of the 2005 peace agreement, however, children are getting another chance at the future they deserve.*

**Sibeso Luswata**, UNICEF's chief of Education for Southern Sudan, reports:

In 2005, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement opened a unique window of opportunity for reconstruction and development, with education specifically identified in opinion surveys as the highest priority for communities across Southern Sudan. Capitalizing on this momentum, **the 'Go to School' initiative**, a major campaign to rebuild the education system and bring 1.6 million children into the classroom by the end of 2007, was launched in April 2006 by the Government of Southern Sudan with UNICEF support.

As a marker of how badly war and neglect have ravaged the education system, nearly one million children are estimated to be out of school, and girls make up only one third of total enrolment. Until recently, there has been no unified curriculum, calendar or examination system, and schools have been staffed almost entirely by volunteers. A 2006 survey of learning spaces found that open-air classrooms are the most common type of learning facility in Southern Sudan.

Although bolstering enrolment is crucial, the **Go to School initiative** is intended to do more than simply bring children into school. It is designed to address a whole continuum of education issues relevant to Southern Sudan's transition out of crisis and toward development. Among its objectives, the initiative is designed to expand access, improve quality and provide for documentation and evidence-based evaluation.

In the first year of the initiative, a major drive to boost enrolment numbers took centre stage. The initiative's first priority was to ensure a rapid increase in the number of children attending classes – and enrolment figures soared in 2006. In 2003, the last wartime year with available data, only 343,000 children were estimated to be in school. At the end of 2006, enrolment stood at approximately 850,000. Enrolment figures for 2007 are encouraging, currently estimated at over 1.2 million children.

In February 2007, the initiative expanded its focus to promoting quality education, with the goals of increasing retention and completion rates and improving learning attainment for girls and boys. A crucial aspect of retention is making schools relevant to children's real lives; if education is not interesting and meaningful, they will quickly drop out. And if children do not achieve meaningful learning outcomes, the enthusiasm for education in Southern Sudan will quickly fade. To keep this from happening, quality- and capacity-building efforts include organizational development, teacher training and continuous professional development, developing child-friendly learning environments, Alternative Education Systems and consistently monitoring learning outcomes. The plan calls for these to remain key areas of focus throughout 2008 and 2009.

The drive to expand access to education has succeeded largely because the **Go to School initiative** has been able to provide learning materials to nearly every learning space in Southern Sudan, thereby eliminating one of the major secondary costs that prevent families

from sending children to school. Southern Sudan-specific kits have been adapted for students, teachers and head teachers. Supplies have been distributed to nearly every school in Southern Sudan, scaling up coverage from an estimated 13 per cent to nearly 100 per cent today. These materials have been distributed in an environment that presents tremendous logistical challenges – using trucks, river barges and even helicopters in remote and hard-to-reach areas. Over 4,000 metric tons of learning materials were moved into Southern Sudan in 2006, and stocks are being replenished throughout 2007.

While the improved statistics are cause for celebration, girls' enrolment and participation in education continue to be subjects of particular concern. The 2006 RALS survey estimated that 34 per cent of schoolchildren were female, a proportion that has not changed significantly in the newly released figures for 2007. In several states, the flood of new enrollees appears to have diminished girls' enrolment as a percentage of the total. However, this represents a significant improvement over girls' wartime enrolment in 2003, which was estimated at between 11 and 14 per cent.

The **Go to School initiative** is contributing to the development of an Education Management Information System, which will provide annual statistics and help measure retention rates. In the meantime, reports from the field indicate that girls are at greater risk of leaving the education system as they progress through primary school. To help forestall these losses, several grassroots activities aim to keep young people in school, including school clubs developed through the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) and life skills courses. GEM has brought thousands of peers to school, mentoring those who are likely to drop out and making schools friendly places for girls and boys (for more on GEM, see Uganda, p. 10).

Efforts to reach the hardest-to-reach children – such as girls, orphans and vulnerable children, demobilized children used in armed conflict, internally displaced children and returnees – have focused on developing the Alternative Education System. This includes Community Girls' Schools for girls too young to walk long distances to regular primary school; it also includes the Accelerated Learning Programme, a second chance for older boys and girls that compresses the eight-year primary curriculum into a four-year programme.

Reports at the Education Reconstruction and Development Forum of Southern Sudan in July 2007 revealed that there are many more demobilized children used in armed conflict than can currently be enrolled at the

few special learning centres set up on their behalf. Thousands of young people are waiting to enroll in one Learning Centre in Rumbek set up for demobilized youth. The message seems clear: Young people want education and peace.

## THE FRAGILITY OF PROGRESS

### *Afghanistan's trajectory from crisis to hope to...?*

*When it comes to education, Afghanistan was a post-crisis success story – with a caveat: the crises never fully subsided. **Fazlul Haque** is Chief of Education for UNICEF Afghanistan. He shared his perspective with Catalyst this October.*

By the end of the 1990s, Afghanistan's education system ranked among the world's worst, with a massive gender gap and wide rural-urban disparities. The estimated gross enrolment rate in primary education was 58 per cent for boys and only 5 per cent for girls. But a government commitment in the wake of the Taliban's fall instilled hope that Afghan children might get the education they deserved.

"There was a surge of energy," says Fazlul Haque. "Those first two post-Taliban years, 2002 and 2003, net enrolment rates showed marked increases, especially for girls. The new government mounted a Back-to-School campaign, which resulted in the enrolment of approximately 4 million primary-school-age children in 2003, four times the number of children estimated to be in school just two years earlier when the Taliban fell. And the Constitution of 2003 mandated free and compulsory education from grade 1 to grade 9 and a free education to the completion of grade 12."

It is as if a tremendous pent-up demand for education was unleashed. The most significant factor driving progress on education in Afghanistan, according to Haque, is coming from communities: "Communities have demonstrated their desire to educate their children. More children than ever before are now enrolled in schools – 66.8 per cent of boys and almost 40 per cent of girls aged 7 to 13 years are now enrolled in school. The question," he says, "is how the education sector as a whole can build on and maintain this positive commitment on the part of both parents and students." But there may be no easy answer to that question. "The Ministry of Education is challenged by weak institutional capacity," Haque observes, "making it difficult to provide quality primary education for

the rising number of children in need of it." Capacity building for education has been unevenly distributed throughout the country, creating a patchwork effect that leaves many children's futures unsure. "Afghanistan can be labeled differently from province to province," Haque says. "Some provinces are in a conflict situation and the education sector could be labeled as in emergency. Where the government has little control, it could be labeled as fragile state. In some other provinces there is a return to the development path." It doesn't help capacity-building efforts that not just government troops but schools, teachers and children themselves are increasingly under deliberate and violent attack, closing one-third of the school in the conflict-wracked southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul (see 'Books or bullets', Catalyst no. 1, September 2007). In the first six months of 2007, at least 30 schools were attacked and more were threatened with "night letters" – leaving parents with the bleak choice between schooling and survival.

Unfortunately, the pace of children returning to school has stalled and, in some areas, reversed. Afghanistan's girls are at risk of losing the promising gains of a few years ago. Their enrolment rates are particularly low compared with global estimates: only 35 per cent of girls attend primary school. And girls are much less likely than boys to make the transition to secondary school. "Besides concerns of basic physical security, there is an absence of separate school facilities for girls," says Haque. "There are not enough schools in close distance from home; existing school facilities are inadequate, especially lacking clean water and adequate sanitation facilities; girls are needed to help families as domestic help or wage earners; there is a shortage of female school teachers; and there is a cultural bias that education is not necessary for girls and some feel ashamed of sending their daughters to school."

The government is still trying to maintain forward motion on education. "The Ministry of Education last year adopted a primary and secondary sub-sector-wide approach, the Afghanistan National Education Strategic Plan for 2006-2010," Haque explains. "The plan was developed through a consultative process that included representatives from all departments of the Ministry of Education, provincial and district-level educational representatives, members of civil society and members of the international community, both UN and NGO. The plan incorporates the views of multiples stakeholders and is an important step for education in Afghanistan," he says. "But it must be seen as part of a longer-term process and part of a sometimes unstable and ever-changing context." ♦

# Too Much, Too Young

*Interviews with children of conflict reveal the toll of violence on youth*

The following words come from extensive interviews, focus groups and forums with 1,385 young people across 18 conflict-affected countries, conducted in preparation of **Will You Listen? Young voices from conflict zones**, the Youth Report companion to the Machel Study 10-year Strategic Review, **Children and Conflict in a Changing World**. Access the Youth Report at <[www.unicef.org/voy/media/Will\\_You\\_Listen\\_090607.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/voy/media/Will_You_Listen_090607.pdf)>.

## CONFLICT THROUGH YOUNG EYES

"I was scared in the night when a rocket knocked down our neighbour. All the children were awake all the night and screaming. My mother told us to sleep, but we could not sleep because of the noise of the weapons."  
– *Somalia, girls, 10–13 years old*

"Since they kill people like me, I can't trust people around me anymore."  
– *Indonesia, young woman, 19 years old*

"We are always under pressure, and really, this is not a kind of life that any human being should live."  
– *Occupied Palestinian Territory, gender unspecified, 17 years old*

"I don't go to the streets because people get killed there ... My mom doesn't allow us to go outside."  
– *Somalia, boys, 10–13 years old*

"The youth are all the time thinking about war so we cannot concentrate on one thing. Anything can happen, anytime." – *Sri Lanka, girl, 18 years old*

"Violence is available everywhere. I wish I'm not born in this country." – *Occupied Palestinian Territory, gender unspecified, 17 years old*

## WITNESSES TO WAR

"During the war between Taliban and American forces I lost my 10 years old brother and 14 years old sister. Our house was damaged and with very difficulty we repaired it again. My father died and now my elder brother works. I go to school and after school I go to work with my brother."  
– *Afghanistan, girl, 15 years old*

"I was sick, confused and drunk in myself, I can't eat, I see my brother in my dreams, I was bleeding with blood so many times and was very sick. No medicine. Everybody was running here and there."  
– *Liberia, girl after witnessing her brother's murder, 10 years old*



**SRI LANKA:** A girl reads from a textbook she found at Ayesha Girls College, a makeshift camp for people displaced by the conflict, in the town of Kantale in Trincomalee District in North-Eastern Province.

"Orphans and street children join militias at clan checkpoints to rape, loot and kill the people. They are security guards of the warlords; the oldest of them is 17 years old. If you try to advise them they will kill you. We see them taking drugs before they go to fight and the possibility to escape from them is rare."  
– *Somalia, girls 14–17 years old*

## WANTING TO LEARN

"I was in fifth grade when the war came to my village 10 years ago. Since then, I have not gone back to school. I cannot go back now and sit in the same class; I am too old for that. But I still want to learn."  
– *Liberia, young woman, 22 years old*

"There is no proper school in the area for girls to go. They also can't attend schools due to some family restrictions. The male members of the family think that if girls go to school it is a shame for us and what will people think of us!" – *Afghanistan, young woman, 15 years old*

"I cannot sit exams as my close relatives died in the shelling. I am too restless to sit in exams. When I read the papers about other shelling it comes back to me and



© UNICEF Liberia/2007/Pirozzi

**LIBERIA:** A student in an Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) at the Elizabeth Tubman Public School outside Liberia's capital, Monrovia.

I cannot think of anything else."

– Sri Lanka, boy, 17 years old

"If there is no work, there is no money for children to go to school. Many people took up violence because there was nothing else, so they were ready to work for rich people who asked them to fight for them." – Haiti, boys and girls, 15–19 years old

"There is a permanent school here, but we are often sitting outside it in the sun due to there being no space." – Sri Lanka, girl, 12 years old

#### DISPLACED

"The war had a very negative effect on our life. I lost my father during the fighting and we were displaced. My father was the supporter of our family and after losing him we felt we had lost everything. I could not go to school after that and my education is still incomplete." – Afghanistan, girl, 14 years old

"When we were displaced from Mogadishu because of the war, on the road to Baidoa our car was fired by bandits. A mother of four children died in the car. When we came to Baidoa the four children were left outside. Nobody could know them."

– Somalia, girls, 14–17 years old

"When conflict broke out in our community, we fled our homes, and it felt like bullets were chasing us through the woods." – Philippines, girl, 17 years old  
"We are getting sick from the sun [due to lack of proper shelter] and we have no shoes."

– Sri Lanka, girl, 13 years old

#### ARMED

"Yes, we are afraid of the militias, they kill you, they are not human, they worship gun. They don't have sisters and brothers, they only have a gun."

– Somalia, girls, 14–17 years old

"Militias call us to collect money from them at the illegal militia checkpoints. They give us miraa [khat] leaves and cigarettes. Children stay with them all the day." – Somalia, boys, 14–17 years old

"I live in Nepal, and you should know that there isn't a lack of child soldiers here. At all. Resolutions have come and gone, but the basic facts are the same: children still turn into soldiers and, I feel, for a good reason. Resolutions only ban youths from becoming soldiers, but very little has been done to feed them for survival. If I were given a choice between starving to death and earning food as a soldier, which do you think I would choose? I don't even consider it a choice."

– Nepal, girl, 16 years old

"We see girls and boys being trained with guns and fighting." – Philippines, young woman, 21 years old

"The boys might be facing great danger and fear to be in war as young as six years old, but the girls are facing prodigious future of being killed and slaughtered as animals and also as slave to the ugliness of human beings."

– Malaysia, young woman, 21 years old

#### VIOLATED

"The attackers tied me and raped me because I was fighting. Almost five of them did the same thing to me until one of their commanders who knew my father came and stopped them, but also took me to his house to make me his wife. I just accepted him because of fear and don't want to say no because he might do the same thing to me too."

– Liberia, girl, raped when 11 years old

"Because of the scourge of HIV/AIDS, when you are a girl, you think you'd better die of a bullet rather than AIDS. So we go fight next to our brothers."

– Burundi, girl, 17 years old

"For us girls, I'm not really sure whether we should choose to live after losing our virginity and pride or just a 'rest in peace' death."

– Indonesia, young woman, 19 years old

#### FORGOTTEN

"The burden is so huge that children have to carry some of it."

– Occupied Palestinian Territory, girl, 15 years old

"Some people want you to think like them. They do not listen with tolerance, when you think different from them. People do not like each other, do not respect each other, and are not happy to see others happy.... Children are forgotten and very sad."

– Democratic Republic of the Congo, boy, 6 years old ❖

## Education on the Front Lines of Aid

*Dyan Mazurana on children, conflict and education*

**Dyan Mazurana** is research director of the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University and an associate professor at Tufts's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Her field work, focusing on women's human rights, war-affected children and youth, armed conflict and peacekeeping, has taken her to Afghanistan, the Balkans and southern, west and east Africa. She also works with a variety of governments, UN agencies and human rights and child protection organizations that assist youth and women affected by armed conflict, including those associated with fighting forces. In conjunction with international human rights groups, she wrote materials now widely used in documenting human rights abuses against women and girls during conflict and post-conflict reconstruction periods.

Dr. Mazurana's research in emergency and post-crisis transition countries includes some discussed in this issue of *Catalyst*, including Northern Uganda, Southern Sudan and Afghanistan, as well as Sierra Leone and Mozambique. She was recently interviewed by UNICEF for a series of radio discussions on education in emergencies and post-crisis transition countries, offering her insights into questions of gender, children and the increased targeting of children in war.

"A lot of conflicts are drawing in armed opposition groups that don't have strong political agendas, that don't have a base of support," Mazurana explains. "So we're seeing forced recruitment from civilian populations, and when adults won't do it, children make excellent targets. The kind of sick logic of the violence is that if you're going to have a captive or forced army, you can't have 20 or 30 per cent of your hard core commanders guarding the other 70 per cent of your army; you have to make sure that they are indoctrinated, that they feel there is nowhere for them to return – and that means you are targeting children."

Mazurana stresses the key difference between two potential responses to these grave new conflicts: humanitarian aid and genuine political action. "There has to be political will to help resolve these conflicts or even prevent them," she argues. For example, she cites the regional impact of increasing tensions between Northern and Southern Sudan. "We know that South Sudan is hosting the Juba Peace Talks to try to end the 21-year civil war in Northern Uganda. So if North

and South Sudan's relationship continues to crumble, will the South be able to continue to host the Juba Talks, which is the best chance in 20 years to end the conflict? If we see what's happening now in Sudan, this is the time for a lot of diplomacy."

These hard lessons from her broad experience around the globe have permeated her teaching as well. "At Tufts, I always tell the students, 'Humanitarian assistance will never be the solution. The solutions have to be political.'"

Mazurana has consulted with agencies and NGOs on reintegrating child combatants. What happens to young people who have been drawn into conflicts when a country at war manages to move toward peace?

"Much of the reintegration process (for demobilized child soldiers) is itself very militarized," she says. "The entry points for getting assistance are through the military, through commanders putting forward lists of who is going to qualify for assistance." This has a particularly discouraging effect on girls and young women, who, according to Mazurana, tend to forego the process and therefore miss out on potential services. "If we look at the gender dimensions of what's going on with demobilization programmes, every country in the world where it's been carried out fails girls miserably. So the vast majority of girls associated with fighting forces don't ever access any kind of assistance through an official demobilization programme, primarily because the entry routes are highly militarized, but also because fighters often don't want to give up these female captives who they consider their prizes, their property, their 'wives.'"

The threat of physical risk – harm upon harm in many cases – also prevents girls from accessing what services exist. "The cantonment sites are not safe for them: there's not adequate space for them, there's not adequate lighting. And so the vast majority of girls associated with fighting forces do what we call 'spontaneous reintegration', that is, they go back to either their own communities or other communities and try to just move into civilian life. And as a result, they don't get assistance."

What do girls want once the wars are over? "Girls that we've talked to in countries around the world all stress

that they want education," she says. "But one of the things we're finding is that when girls come out of the armed forces, if they have children they are eight times less likely to be able to ever return to school. In most of the countries where these conflicts are being fought, the vast majority of girls never get to secondary school; they're lucky to get to Primary 6."

This leads Mazurana to the subject of education's place in emergencies. "I see it as absolutely essential. As agencies would provide water, health care, sanitation, absolutely emergency education has to be right in there as part of that foundation. I don't think that you can

separate it. These conflicts are lasting for years, and children have a right to their education." She sees the importance in such moments of life skills education: "Schools can be a platform for delivering all kinds of information – on help with sanitation, on help with health care, on help with how to stay safe." But the thirst for education among children goes deeper than that, in her experience. "In the countries where I've worked where the conflicts have been going on for decades, it's the children's number one priority. In some cases they wear World Food Program food sacks to school because they have no clothes, but those kids are there to go to school. It's got to be part of that front line service." ❖

## GROUNDINGS

### "Children Saw Education as a Way Out..."

*Filmmaker Ina Hume documents post-conflict education at work*

*Ina Hume has just completed a film, Rebuilding Children's Lives Through Education in Uganda, which can be seen at [www.youtube.com/profile?user=VanishingRites](http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=VanishingRites). Catalyst reached Hume by e-mail to discuss her experience with the children and youth of northern Uganda.*

**Catalyst:** Tell us about your work in Uganda this year.

**Ina Hume:** I travelled to north and north-east Uganda in April 2007 to work with UNICEF and the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) to document the Go to School, Back to School, Stay in School (GBS) campaign, spearheaded by the Government of Uganda, supported by several national and international NGOs and UN agencies. Children in these regions were particularly at risk of dropping out from school and had their education greatly affected and interrupted due to the conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

I worked with young people from GEM to document launches in Soroti, Kitgum, Amuru and Gulu districts – areas badly affected during the conflict. The vast majority of people there were displaced and have been living in camps. It is only in the last year or two, since the cessation of hostilities between the Government and the LRA, that there has been a glimmer of peace

and people have started to return to their lands. A launch day was held as part of the GBS campaign in the districts, with local leaders, the community and guests of honour attending. Children were often given the role of MCs for the day, and they would introduce the performances of dance, songs, poetry and speeches.

We documented the campaign and the perspectives of young people and the community. We interviewed children who had been abducted and gathered their stories and experiences. These provided a unique insight into life in the conflict-affected north and also to the resilience and generosity of the Acholi people.

Young GEM members trained schoolchildren as peer educators, carrying out activities such as community mapping. GEM members were excellent role models, as they showed young men and women working together, supporting each other. Many of the GEM members are also from disadvantaged backgrounds and have had to struggle to get an education.

**Catalyst:** How were children affected by the conflict?  
**IH:** In a conflict where children have been disproportionately affected, it is essential their voices are heard by development partners and decision makers. As in most



“ The importance of education in emergency situations was recognized by children, aid workers and communities alike. ”

conflicts, children suffered the impacts of violence, displacement, food shortage and lack of basic services. Children were abducted and recruited into the LRA. The reliance on children to swell the ranks led to schools being targeted in the hostilities. Both young girls and boys were abducted. Both were trained as soldiers. Girls were also given as ‘wives’ to commanders and higher ranks of the LRA.

The children in the north had experienced terrible things as a consequence of the war. Nearly 1.7 million people were displaced, and many children have known nothing but the harsh reality of camp life. This life is unhygienic, diseases are rampant, and overcrowding is prevalent. Living in camps over many years, with little access to their original lands for farming, has left the communities very poor and reliant on food aid. Children may only eat once a day through school feeding programmes. The poverty has also had other consequences, especially on the girls. Girls have become a commodity and source of income in these extreme times. Girls are married early to bring in a dowry. Little value is placed on their education, and some negative views still remain that girls who go to school are at risk of becoming prostitutes or pregnant. There is also the additional burden of housework and chores that girls traditionally carry out, such as cleaning, cooking, collecting water and firewood, caring for younger siblings. Education must compete even harder against these uses of girls’ time.

I spoke to several girls who had babies. A common story was that of a young girl, alone in the camps, with no parents and no one to protect or look after her. She may have been offered some form of protection by a man, but in return he would expect her to sleep with him. These girls receive little or no support from the fathers of the children, and in some cases the paternity

is denied. These young girls need to work in gardens or selling things in order to earn money. Sometimes they may turn to low-level prostitution.

Since the cessation of hostilities, many children have returned to their homes. However, with the peace talks ongoing in Juba, Southern Sudan, and the ICC case against five of the LRA leadership, it would seem an opportune time to involve those so directly affected by the conflict in peace-building initiatives.

Children are not traditionally involved in such processes, and it is not surprising they are not widely consulted in northern Uganda. But, as they are the ones who have been involved in every facet of the conflict, I think it is essential they are consulted and participate in its resolution and in building their societies in the coming years. Not just as helpless victims but also as participants, however unwilling, in a very violent conflict.

**Catalyst:** Did you have a sense of the community’s reaction to education as part of post-conflict response?

**IH:** The importance of education in emergency situations was something recognized by children, aid workers and communities alike. Children saw education as a way out and a path to a brighter future. Aid workers realized that education is unique among emergency provision, as it is something that remains with the child and can never be taken away. And communities realize that after the 20-year conflict, there has been terrible impact on the society and culture in the north and that the younger generation must find their own culture now – and education is an integral part of moving their society forward in development once again.

*To learn more about Hume’s work and to view her photos and films, visit [www.vanishingrites.com](http://www.vanishingrites.com).*

## SILVER LINING IN THE PHILIPPINES?

### *After 2006 typhoons, disaster risk reduction and the Safe School Program*

A series of typhoons swept the Philippines in 2006, affecting 5,600 schools in the Southern Luzon area. The storms hit the Bicol region particularly hard, affecting more than 357,400 children at primary and secondary school levels and accounting for 79 per cent of the estimated US\$65.2 million in damages. Children's education was interrupted as classes were suspended; educational supplies, teaching and learning materials and furniture in schools and daycare centers were washed away, destroyed or heavily damaged.

The 2006 disaster sparked an agency-government partnership around disaster risk reduction and the education sector called the Safe School Program. The programme offers an example of the work that can be done in the wake of disaster to harmonize existing programs, leverage the relative strengths of various state and civil society bodies and international humanitarian agencies, and to integrate lessons learned and best practices in policy formulation upstream. The damage to the Bicol region's schools offered an opportunity to build them back better – an objective of education in emergencies work in both disasters and post-conflict settings.

The Safe School Program is an emergency-preparedness project covering both structural and non-structural issues. It takes as a touchstone the World Disaster Reduction Campaign 2006–2007, spearheaded by the UN/International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) secretariat. The programme harmonizes several ongoing emergency preparedness and disaster

**PHILIPPINES:** A seven-year-old boy on the rubble-filled main street of Barangay San Isidro in the province of Albay on south-eastern Luzon Island.

response efforts within the Department of Education, including programmes for structural assessment of school buildings; the Disaster Preparedness through Educational Multi-Media project; initiatives to mainstream risk reduction measures in development policy, planning and implementation (as well as in the secondary school curriculum); the preparation and dissemination of an operations manual; and an advocacy campaign.

The programme has two components: structural initiatives, including construction of new schools and repair of damaged facilities, and non-structural initiatives that focus on educational inputs and the integration of disaster management and risk reduction into curricula. Structural work on classrooms and school buildings is especially important, because public schools are mandated by law to be used as evacuation centres in emergencies. Therefore, water facilities, kitchen facilities, waste disposal and latrines are all getting new attention – an example, perhaps, of the pragmatic approach of this kind of aid.

On the non-structural side, the Safe School Program provides packs with basic supplies and hygiene kits, plus school education packages containing instructional materials like a 100-library-book set, globes and maps. There is also a pilot project targeting 30 school communities for emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction activities, tailored for local contexts. This is designed to foster children's participation in emergency preparedness and risk reduction and to increase community involvement in disaster risk management. The program blends community-based projects and local skill building, while paying marked attention to upstream work, including lobbying at the policy level for the adoption of stronger guidelines on emergency preparedness.

The programme is being supported by the Government of the Netherlands as part of its contribution to education in emergencies work. It is proceeding in the spirit of partnership that is becoming the hallmark of educational aid and development, where government takes the lead and several agencies and NGOs bring their relative strengths to bear on various facets of an issue. Programmatic work is driven by the Department of Education, as UNICEF is collaborating with child-centered NGOs working in the affected areas, including Plan International, the International Save the Children Alliance and CARE Philippines, and with international organizations and UN agencies working on disaster management and disaster risk reduction in the region.

The typhoons of 2006 left ruin in their wake, but they may have laid the groundwork for the Philippines to weather future storms. ❖



national crisis also presents an opportunity for reform: Capacity-building and quality issues can be addressed anew. In short, the post-crisis transition moment is opportune for building the education system back better than it was.

In countries affected by long-term conflict, not only buildings, furniture, equipment and individual lives have been destroyed. More significant is the loss of key institutions, systems and human capacities that are so decisive for a functioning society and for restoring economic development. These are the very conditions that consign countries to the status of 'donor orphans'. The space between relief aid and funding for development is a socially precarious one, that renders the transition from emergency to development difficult, because donors tend to shy away from the challenging, high-risk conditions inherent to post-crisis situations.

This is exacerbated by a lacuna in the current architecture of humanitarian aid: In the wake of the Paris Declaration of 2005, country ownership of programmatic activity is emphasized. Governments are directed to take sector-wide approaches to education strategies and to nest their education sector plans within broader poverty reduction strategies. These are noble goals, but they become difficult to implement in post-crisis states, where capacity is weak and national institutions are fragile.

UNICEF has developed a programme on education in emergencies and post-crisis transition countries that seeks to address precisely these precarious conditions, where the stakes are high and the needs great. The programme, funded by the Dutch Government and now receiving significant funding from the UK Department for International Development as well, is designed to be innovative and pragmatic. It seeks to help countries build capacity and move towards sector-wide approaches and broad poverty reduction strategies, to help move back into position to access international aid frameworks for development, such as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. By building capacity, these countries will be less likely to slip back into armed conflict or be overwhelmed by the next disaster.

The programme attempts to address urgent priorities in the present in a coordinated and harmonized way – for example, the restoration of schooling in a crisis – while keeping an eye on the future by developing sustainable mechanisms required for long-term progress in education – blurring the line between relief and development. The programme has four broad objectives to be pursued simultaneously: invest in education provision; strengthen the education system; increase the education sector's contribution to national stability

and reduced fragility; and enhance the quality of all educational interventions.

If this programme is to demonstrate the importance of providing education in emergencies, it will require partnership and innovation. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee – the primary mechanism for coordination of humanitarian assistance among the key humanitarian partners within and outside the United Nations system – sought to address gaps in capacity and response in emergencies by extending its 'cluster approach' to the education sector in 2006, with UNICEF and the International Save the Children Alliance as co-leads. The cluster approach seeks to leverage the relative strengths and capacities of a range of agencies and non-governmental organizations. The approach holds much promise as an organizing principle for education in emergencies and post-crisis transition countries because it encourages a holistic view of social transformation and can foster a dynamic relationship across sectors of society. Whereas responses to crises have often been ad hoc, with overlapping contributions and even competition among agencies, the cluster approach seeks to streamline humanitarian response, prioritize resources, clarify the division of labour among organizations and better define the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations within the sectors. This approach is not without its challenges: Harmonization may be difficult at times, because efforts to pull in the same direction without duplication of work – let alone competition for the spotlight – may run against the grain of agency and NGO culture. But it is in the pragmatic and innovative spirit of this programme to work towards just such partnerships.

This issue of *Catalyst for Education and Gender Equality* offers a partial survey of the work being undertaken in the field. In these pages we'll hear from several education professionals working in various stages of emergency, conflict and post-crisis transition (see an expanded 'Voices from the Field', beginning on page 3). They'll speak about the struggle to provide education in the midst of a complicated international war in Iraq; about efforts to consolidate gains amid the uncertainty and simmering violence of Afghanistan; and about the energetic strides being made in post-conflict Southern Sudan. A documentary film-maker describes work at the grass-roots level in northern Uganda to integrate youth participation and media work into a post-conflict school campaign; and we'll also learn about work in the Philippines to integrate disaster management and risk reduction techniques into the education sector, in a context where the risk of natural disasters is perennially at a low boil (see 'Groundings', page 11). Finally, it is crucial to bear in mind that the young are having their childhoods washed away by the flood of violence that

is surging through so much of the world (see 'Girls' Voices', page 7). Their voices should inspire action – the simple accident of a child's birth into a fragile state should never isolate that child from the support that the international community can offer.

For children surrounded by conflict, for individual countries struggling to find their way out of crisis, and for the community of nations seeking to promote peace and development, the pivotal moment is right now. ❖

*Note: This essay draws on the following sources: The UNICEF Education Section, A Strategic Approach towards Strengthening Education Support in Emergencies, Post-Crisis Transitions and Fragile States (2007); The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (2004); and The World Bank, Reshaping the Future: Education and Postconflict Reconstruction (2005).*

## Dig Deeper

### *A selective survey of key resources for teaching and research*

The theme of education in emergencies and post-crisis transition opens a window onto the questions at the heart of development: Are human rights and economic development mutually reinforcing? Should some rights be prioritized ahead of others? How can various agencies, with their separate cultures and bureaucracies, work together to best provide aid to countries with weak institutional capacity and scant history of transparency? These are addressed in a growing literature on conflict, poverty, development and the role of education. The work of Paul Collier has emerged as the touchstone for serious discussion of poverty, conflict and development. In ***The Bottom Billion: Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it*** (2007), he identifies conflict as one of four traps that consign countries to poverty. He also cites bad governance and being landlocked with bad neighbours. A recent paper that takes his perspective as its starting point is ***Africa's Missing Billions: International arms flows and the cost of conflict*** (2007), prepared by the International Action Network on Small Arms, Oxfam International and Saferworld. The paper traces the way wars, civil wars and insurgencies have leached 23 African nations of funds for development by distorting national priorities and sapping already meagre government coffers. Beyond such direct costs as massive military expenditures, medical expenses, ruined infrastructure and caring for the displaced, indirect costs include unemployment, ruined economies, inflation, debt and reduced investment from both internal and foreign sources. The trauma and disease that afflict the populace further contribute to a crushing economic downturn and have repercussions after hostilities cease. The authors conservatively reckon these costs at \$284 billion since 1990, or \$18 billion a year. As Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson says in her foreword to the report, "The price that Africa is paying could cover the cost of solving the HIV and AIDS crisis in Africa, or provide education, water and prevention and treatment for TB and malaria." As President Sirleaf-Johnson likely knows

too well, money lost to conflict and its fallout is money taken away from development.

The paper draws on Collier's concept of 'traps' in pointing out the negative impact of any country's internal conflict on neighbouring countries and entire regions. Where the authors diverge from Collier is in their central prescription: Collier argues that post-conflict societies generally require extended stays by external peacekeeping forces and pooled infusions of aid to build capacity and provide services. The authors of *Africa's Missing Billions* emphasize arms control, arguing that the passage of international restrictions on arms transfers – a strong Arms Trade Treaty – is essential to bringing conflict-affected African nations off of high boil.

While *Africa's Missing Billions* builds on Collier's work to advocate international arms control, work at the World Bank has also built on Collier's foundation, but to argue persuasively for the prioritization of education in post-conflict situations as vital to steering countries back towards the development path. The World Bank study ***Reshaping the Future: Education and postconflict reconstruction*** (2005) maintains that national education systems often play a determinative role in fanning the flames of conflict, and that the post-conflict moment – fleeting as it can be – is crucial for rebuilding and reorienting education systems away from social intolerance. Because post-conflict governments are weak, they tend to rely on aid organizations and external assistance in their reconstruction efforts. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the aid community to focus on the education sector in these countries because the conditions are in place for real reform – for 'building back better'.

#### **MORE RESOURCES**

Interviewed in this issue, Dr. Dyan Mazurana infuses the conversation about conflict and development with a well-researched focus on gender – both in terms of the experiences

of girls and women in conflict situations, and the role that gender relations play in conflict-affected countries. Her work on Africa, *Where Are the Girls? Girls in fighting forces in northern Uganda, Sierra Leone and Mozambique – Their lives during and after war* (2004), which she co-wrote with Susan McKay, provides an important complement to Collier's perspective. The UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) publishes a series of case studies on education in emergencies and post-crisis transition, the most recent being Susan Nicolai's detailed study, *Fragmented Foundations: Education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2007). For development practitioners, or scholars seeking greater insight into the perspective on the ground, two publications stand out: the **IIEP Guidebook for Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction** (2006), available in PDF format at [www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/](http://www.unesco.org/iiep/eng/)

[focus/emergency/guidebook.htm](http://focus/emergency/guidebook.htm); and **Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction**, from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and available [www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org).

Finally, UNICEF is producing a series of podcasts on education in emergencies and post-crisis transition countries, **Beyond School Books**, hosted by Amy Costello, a former correspondent for Public Radio International and an Emmy Award nominee for her coverage of Sudan. Podcast participants include: New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof; author and former child soldier Ishmael Beah; Gene Sperling, Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations; and Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The series is accessible from [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

## News and Notes

### UNICEF, Dutch Government and partners mark first year of work

As this issue was going to press, UNICEF was preparing to host the first **Progress Review Seminar and Multimedia Exhibit on Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition Countries**, marking one year since the Government of the Netherlands donated more than \$200 million to UNICEF, targeted for innovative work in emergency and post-crisis transition countries. The agenda includes presentations on four crucial themes: 'Education as Service Delivery' and the transition to education for rebuilding systems and reducing fragility, featuring presentations on Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sudan and Zimbabwe; 'Needs Assessment, Financing Modalities and Capacity Cultivation for Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition Countries'; 'Partnerships and the Emerging Aid Architecture for Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition Countries'; and 'Quality of Education for Prediction, Prevention and Transformation'. Guest presenters included former national economic adviser Gene Sperling of the Council on Foreign Relations, whose current work examines ways to extend education to displaced children and those living in emergency situations.

### Call for papers

*Comparative Education Review*, the journal of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), will publish a special issue on **'Education and Conflict/Postconflict Societies'** in November 2008. To be considered for publication, manuscripts should be submitted via email

to the editorial office at [cer@psu.edu](mailto:cer@psu.edu) by 30 November 2007. The guest co-editors will be Lynn Davies of the University of Birmingham, UK, and Chris Talbot, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO. See [www.journals.uchicago.edu/CER/special.html](http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/CER/special.html) for more information.

### Conferences and events

**The 2008 Comparative and International Education Society Conference** will be held 17–21 March 2008, hosted by Teachers College, Columbia University, in New York City. This year's conference is devoted to the theme 'Gaining Educational Equity Around the World'. The meetings will emphasize the topic of educational equity within and among regions and countries, focusing on the impact of such factors as gender, race, ethnicity, income, wealth, disability and urbanization. Proposals that address the measurement, extent, origins and solutions for gaining educational equity on a local, national, regional and international scale are particularly encouraged. See [www.tc.edu/academic/ITS/CIES/](http://www.tc.edu/academic/ITS/CIES/) for more information.

**The Seventh Meeting of the High-Level Group on Education for All (EFA)** will be held in Dakar, Senegal, 11–13 December 2007, and hosted by UNESCO. The email address for more information is [efa@unesco.org](mailto:efa@unesco.org).

**The Global Advisory Committee of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)** will meet in Paris, 12–13 November 2007. The Global Advisory Committee consists of key partners who share planning, decision-making, guidance and accountability for the entire partnership.



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**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:** A young woman and her baby were among more than 20,000 displaced people living in a camp near the village of Tche in the Eastern region of Ituri in 2005. The tarpaulin-covered shelters of the camp spread across several hillsides behind this young mother and child.

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