

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES



RESTORING A SENSE OF NORMALCY

Education in emergencies aims to restore and provide quality education in emergency and post-crisis situations. UNICEF works with partners to 'build back better' by restoring key services for the development of viable education systems.

Schools are particularly vulnerable in emergencies and conflicts, making education an integral component of the humanitarian response. Education plays an important role in the rehabilitation and protection of children after a natural disaster, as seen in the countries affected by 2004's Indian Ocean tsunami and the earthquake-devastated parts of India, Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

During armed conflict, and in the aftermath, education can offer structure, stability and hope for the future in such countries as Afghanistan, Angola and Liberia, particularly for children and adolescents. Rebuilding the education sector also provides essential building blocks for economic stability.

"Education needs to be provided within safe environments that offer a wide range of support for children's needs – including nutrition, psychosocial care and support, health checks and protection – which cannot be properly met when institutions, agencies and governance systems are affected by crisis."

Cream Wright,
Global Chief of Education, UNICEF

Key Messages

- In emergency situations, education should be rapidly restored to help provide psychosocial support and a sense of normalcy and stability to children affected by conflict or disasters. Education also helps heal traumatic experiences by building skills and supporting conflict resolution and peace-building techniques.
- Education is a tool for protecting children against exploitation and harm in emergencies, especially girls. Schools can publicize key survival messages, such as landmine safety and HIV/AIDS prevention. Supporting education systems in emergencies protects the well-being of individuals and communities, fosters community-wide learning opportunities, and nurtures the overall development of people affected by conflicts and disasters.
- Education has a crucial preventive and rehabilitative function in meeting the needs and ensuring the rights of children before, during and after conflict. Education within safe environments offers a wide range of support for children's needs – including nutrition, psychosocial care and support, health checks and protection – that cannot be properly met when governance systems are affected.



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Recent Activities

When the October 2005 earthquake destroyed thousands of schools and killed, seriously injured or displaced some 2,000 teachers, education was a priority for UNICEF and its partners in northern Pakistan. The goal is to get every quake-affected child back into school, while enrolling other children for the first time, especially girls. To begin rebuilding the education system, UNICEF will complete construction of hundreds of permanent schools – all earthquake-resistant and child friendly – by the end of 2007.

In Southern Sudan, where the education system was ruined by a two-decade civil war, the 'Go-to-School' initiative was launched in April 2006. The Government of Southern Sudan, with support from donors and partners, plans to enrol 1.6 million out-of-school children by the end of 2007. The initiative includes provision of essential materials for teachers and students, social mobilization efforts, development of learning spaces and teacher training to improve the quality of education, and support to the public

sector to manage the education system. Children are now allowed to attend school in temporary compounds while permanent structures are being constructed in Aceh, Indonesia – which was devastated in the December 2004 tsunami – and on the North Sumatran island of Nias, hit by a major earthquake in March 2005. UNICEF is committed to developing education systems in two Indonesian provinces and to making new schools more earthquake-resistant and child friendly.

Partnerships

Partnerships are central to UNICEF's work in restoring education in emergencies. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Care International, Save the Children Alliance, UNESCO, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Norwegian Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee are some of the partners working to ensure that children's right to an education is not denied in times of emergency.