

EDUCATION

AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Every year, conflict and natural disasters put millions of children and young people at risk. During such emergencies, community services and normal support mechanisms are disrupted. Children and their families face dangerous and rapidly changing situations. Education can be a protective, life-saving and life sustaining intervention in this environment.

Yet, access to education continues to be denied to many children who need it most.

42% of the world's out-of-school children, (over 28 million) are found in conflict-affected states. For the coming decade it is estimated that on average, approximately 175 million children will be affected each year by natural disasters, and are likely to experience some level of disruption to their schooling. This is especially true for girls, who tend to be disproportionately affected in emergency situations.

Education provides children with stability and structure throughout an emergency, and protects them from risks and dangers. It also ensures that young people can continue to learn. Learning cannot and should not be put aside in times of crisis as education is crucial to children and young people's future.

Children, parents and their communities often prioritise education highly. Schools are universal institutions which families see as key to providing their children with stability and hope. Parents want continued investment in their children's education, no matter the challenges involved.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Education Cluster serves to strengthen the capacity and preparedness of humanitarian personnel and government authorities to plan, coordinate and manage good quality educational programmes in emergencies. The Education Cluster brings education actors together to assess needs, identify priorities, coordinate responses and to promote education as a key first response in humanitarian crises.



Part of humanitarian action

The cluster approach was adopted in 2005 to coordinate inter-agency responses to emergencies more effectively. In 2006, education was added to the cluster system, led globally by UNICEF and Save the Children. Since then, the Education Cluster has been involved in all large-scale emergencies across many different countries. More than 25 organisations are currently involved with the Education Cluster worldwide. Many more, including Ministries of Education and national civil society organisations, are participating at the country level.

Continuity toward development

Disasters and chronic crises often reverse the progress made towards achieving *Education for All* and the *Millennium Development Goals*. Many countries affected by emergencies and protracted crises will fail to meet these significant international targets.

The humanitarian community is therefore critical to ensuring that progress towards development targets doesn't stall or become reversed during emergencies. From the first few days of a humanitarian response, humanitarian actors play a central role in building a strong base for education and putting in place sustainable solutions that guarantee children and young people access to continued learning.

Securing the right to education in emergencies

Access to good quality education is a fundamental right for all children and young people, and all states are obliged to provide education. This continues to be just as important during and after an emergency.

When a humanitarian crisis strikes, governments are sometimes not able or willing to provide education and other basic services. It then becomes the international community's responsibility, via humanitarian agencies, to ensure that people's rights are protected and their needs met.

The 2010 UN General Assembly Resolution on the right to education in emergency situations established an important implementation framework for all states, humanitarian actors and UN agencies (UN Resolution A/64/L.58).

The UN Security Council endorsed the importance of protecting education from attack through SC Resolution 1998, adopted in June 2011.

Education interventions can:	
Protect	Schools and child-friendly spaces protect children both physically and psychologically during an emergency. They offer protection against exploitation and harm, and create a sense of normality and routine which is crucial to the healing process following distressing experiences.
Save lives	Schools and safe places provide a structure to deliver other lifesaving interventions, such as food, water, sanitation and health services. School staff can communicate key messages about safety, provide vital life skills and information about health and hygiene, and raise awareness of the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO).
Sustain communities	Education programmes help children and young people to continue learning and reduce interruption to their schooling. Having schooling in place aids early recovery, creates greater stability in communities, and nurtures hope for the future among children and their families.
Build knowledge	Education helps children develop core life skills such as problem solving and decision-making, and working and living alongside others. Young people can learn useful new skills through vocational training and be given the opportunity to catch up on missed schooling.
Strengthen resilience	Education programmes mitigate the impact of humanitarian crises by building resilience among children, young people and their communities. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes in education curricula and preparedness plans equip and strengthen children's ability to deal with emergencies, and mitigate the impact of future disasters. In conflict situations, peace education can increase children's understanding of the conflict and help bring about peace and reconciliation.

What happens to children and young people who are not in school in emergencies?

They are at risk of:

- losing a sense of normality
- taking on adult roles
- missing out on the benefits of learning, with cognitive and developmental needs neglected
- having fewer opportunities for further learning and good livelihoods
- not returning to school, or never enrolling in or going to school
- psychosocial damage, exacerbated by a lack of child-friendly spaces and opportunities to be with peers.

They also risk:

- being abducted, trafficked, enlisted or forced to work in armed groups, armed forces or criminal gangs, as porters, spies, soldiers or for sexual favours
- being forced to get married at a very early age (especially girls)
- becoming involved in illegal child labour
- being subject to rape and sexual violence

Education is a key platform for many other humanitarian interventions including:

Health: Schools and temporary learning spaces can provide children with safe and reliable access to health services. They are central locations for vaccination and cholera prevention programmes, for providing basic knowledge about health and hygiene, and for spreading urgent, lifesaving health information, such as about HIV prevention.

Nutrition: Nutrition is central to a child's cognitive development and learning potential. Many children receive their one and only daily meal at school. Children's nutrition can be improved by the provision of meals or nutritious snacks as part of school feeding programmes or school health and nutrition interventions.

Water and sanitation: Children and young people can learn basic steps for preventing communicable diseases. Schools and temporary learning spaces also provide safe, separate male and female toilets, and clean drinking water and water tanks. Providing tanks and safe water helps children to continue their education instead of getting caught up in the common task of fetching water.

Shelter and non-food items: Education and shelter experts can work together to ensure that shelter and education interventions are complementary. Schools can potentially be used outside school hours, and also as distribution centres for items such as soap, buckets, aquatabs and sanitary materials.



PHOTO: UNICEF/NYHQ2009-2062/
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Peace education and conflict resolution: In chronic crises caused by conflict, peace education and conflict resolution can support the quest for peace and reconciliation. This is especially crucial in areas where children have been drawn into the conflict.

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR): Through education, children and their communities can learn how to plan for and respond to natural disasters, and how to prevent and mitigate their impact. This includes teaching children about landmine risks, discussing and practising what to do in an earthquake, or teaching those in flood-prone areas how to swim. Child-focused DRR promotes a culture of prevention and resilience.

Early recovery: Education helps to establish the right conditions for early recovery. It makes it easier for children, young people and their families to restore normality in their lives. It also aims to prepare young generations for the future through improved overall learning conditions, despite the crisis, and thereby build a solid foundation for the country's development.



PHOTO: TERI PENGILLEY/SAVE THE CHILDREN

The Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery provide a framework for a good quality education response in emergencies.

The INEE Minimum Standards are a companion to the Sphere standards for integrating good quality education within humanitarian response and achieve greater accountability in the humanitarian sector.



Education is key to all humanitarian action

- Governments, humanitarian agencies and donors have an important responsibility to recognise children and young people's right to education and ensure the provision of education in any humanitarian response.
- The humanitarian community must recognise that education is vital in all stages of an emergency – from acute responses to chronic crises and through to early recovery.
- The Education Cluster should be activated alongside other clusters. It represents a unique platform for other humanitarian interventions, and its activation can support and facilitate intersectoral approaches that tap into education.
- Education should be included in all major emergency responses from the start, and feature in all joint needs assessments, Flash appeals and CAPs (Consolidated Appeals Process).
- Donors must ensure adequate and more predictable funding for education in emergencies.
- Education in emergencies should become an integral part of a long-term strategy to develop inclusive education systems in countries affected by armed conflict.

Funding challenges prevent the right to education in emergencies

The funding situation for education in emergencies is dire. There are insufficient resources compared to the scale of need, and huge challenges in maintaining consistent levels of funding. Between 2001 and 2010, education accounted for 4.1 per cent of all humanitarian funding requirements, but received only 2.4 per cent of the actual funding provided.

This lack of predictable funding creates uncertainty in emergency responses and complicates the crucial delivery of education services to communities in crisis. Aid volatility and a short-term focus are particularly worrying in countries experiencing chronic crises. Without adequate funding, the education sector cannot deliver education to those children and young people who need it most.



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