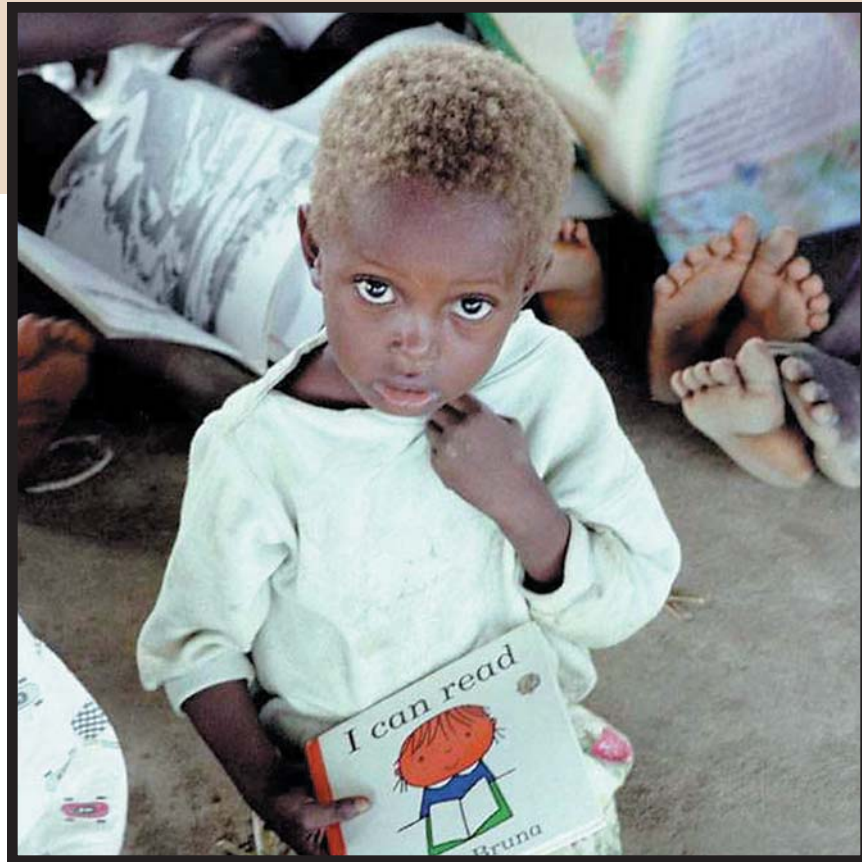


# *The Education Imperative*



**Supporting Education in Emergencies**



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**Supporting Education in Emergencies**



*Produced by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) and  
the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children  
with support from AED and the Mellon Foundation*

**January 2003**

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*We intend this publication to deepen the world's commitment to education in emergencies and to stimulate dialogue on how best to proceed.*



## Foreword

In 1995, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) published *From Emergency to Empowerment*, which documented the scope of the educational problem facing refugees and internally displaced persons. Noting that in the previous decade the number of refugees had doubled—to nearly 20 million—and that nearly 90 percent of refugee children had never been to school, the publication explained the benefits of education for such children and explained how education helps bridge the gap between relief and development. *From Emergency to Empowerment* called on the world to pay more attention to this critical issue.

Also in 1995, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (the Women's Commission) launched a study of adolescents affected by armed conflict. This study built on earlier research that showed that refugee youth had few positive opportunities but many destructive ones. Over and over, refugee children told the Women's Commission that education provided the only hope they had for a better future.

AED and the Women's Commission are pleased to share this publication, *The Education Imperative: Supporting Education in Emergencies*, which updates the 1995 AED report. We intend this publication to deepen the world's commitment to this issue and to stimulate dialogue among policymakers in donor, UN agency, nongovernmental organization (NGO), and government circles about how best to proceed.

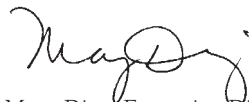
*The Education Imperative* documents how much has been done since 1995 to bolster international capacity and coordination to provide quality education programs as part of a humanitarian response. At the same time, it illustrates that more children than ever have not been

reached. An estimated 50 countries are experiencing conflict directly or indirectly, and at least 12 million children are refugees or are internally displaced. These numbers do not count the many children in conflict countries who, while not displaced, may be missing out on education due to the breakdown of basic services. Thus, despite the increase in international capacity, millions of children remain out of school.

There is reason for optimism, however. The improvement in international capacity to respond to the problem via NGOs, UN agencies, and some governments is a sign of serious commitment. The renewed commitment to Education for All (EFA) since the Dakar, Senegal conference in 2000 led NGOs and “emergency donors” to increase their coordination and collaboration. Donors are taking a new look at funding education in countries in various stages of conflict. These are excellent steps in the right direction. At the same time, it is important to strengthen the commitment with additional resources and policies to ensure that all children affected by war and conflict have access to quality education. AED and the Women's Commission are pleased to be able to play a part, through this publication, in helping make that happen.



Stephen F. Moseley  
President and CEO  
Academy for Educational Development



Mary Diaz, Executive Director  
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

## Introduction

Armed conflict presents the world with one of its most formidable obstacles to education and development. Conflict has forced tens of millions of people to flee their homes. Approximately one-third of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are children ages 5 to 18. Many of them are raped, trafficked, or forced to serve as child soldiers, prostitutes, or laborers. Few have the opportunity to go to school or learn a trade. When the conflicts are prolonged, generations may grow up without education. And when peace does arrive, the challenge of rebuilding a country economically and socially with a poorly educated population is staggeringly difficult.

Providing education in emergencies not only ensures that children realize their right to education, it provides them with a sense of hope and normalcy when their lives have been disrupted, promotes their psychological and social wellbeing and cognitive development, and lessens the risk that they will be recruited into dangerous activities. Providing quality education in emergencies is among the best ways to mitigate the impact of conflict on children, and it helps lay a solid foundation for peace and development. The international community has recognized the importance of education in emergencies in several very important ways.

More than 50 years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established basic education as a fundamental human right. The right to basic education was also enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Turning this right into concrete action planning, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand set a goal that by the year 2000, all children would have access to basic education. To measure the world's progress toward this goal, EFA

### Call to Action

Providing education in emergencies is a critical contribution to protection, human rights, and postconflict reconstruction. Accordingly, governments and international humanitarian agencies—including the UN and NGOs—must make education in emergencies a priority. Without the option of schooling, children are more likely to become involved in armed conflicts or degrading and destructive work, and they are more likely to lose out on the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Not only is the international community required by treaty to provide education for children, it knows that it is cost effective to do so. Education contributes to peacebuilding and reconciliation, postconflict reconstruction, and economic development.

The international community must demonstrate its support for education in emergencies by

- prioritizing educational response in the acute phase of emergencies along with other vital sectors of humanitarian assistance such as food and nutrition, health services, shelter, water, and sanitation
- increasing funding for education in all emergency and postconflict reconstruction situations—for both refugees and IDPs
- improving coordination between “development” and “emergency” donors, NGOs, and other agencies to ensure education programming is available in all stages of the emergency
- expanding efforts to ensure the right to education for girls, children with disabilities, and children from ethnic or religious minority groups
- dramatically increasing the availability of education for adolescents, including postprimary education, vocational and skills training, and life skills education

country assessments took place in 1999–2000. Faced with the fact that 113 million children were still not in school, a second EFA conference was held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. There, 180 countries announced their support for the conference's *Framework for Action*, which expressed the goal of “ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.”<sup>1</sup> Among the recognized obstacles to achieving this goal is the significant growth of tension, conflict, and war—the results of which are devastating, because they force the displacement of children and their families; lead to physical or sexual abuse or killing of teachers, students, and parents; destroy the government offices, education systems, schools, and classrooms; and traumatize children and adults.

To overcome these obstacles, many humanitarian organizations work to provide education in emergencies and ensure that children can still go to school—despite the suffering, trauma, and deprivation caused by war. This publication aims to provide information about the current state of education in emergencies, explain why it is needed, and describe how it can be done better and reach more children.

*Providing quality education in emergencies is among the best ways to mitigate the impact of conflict on children, and it helps lay a solid foundation for peace and development.*



## What Is “Education in Emergencies”?

Education in emergencies is the formal and nonformal education provided to children and youth whose access to national or community education systems has been destroyed by war or other humanitarian calamities.

Education in emergencies takes different forms according to the stage of a particular emergency. In the acute phase of an emergency, just after populations flee, education efforts often offer recreation programs or basic literacy and numeracy. As the situation stabilizes and security is assured, more formal schools are established, utilizing curricula from the country of origin or from the host country.

Education in emergencies also includes efforts to reestablish education systems when the conflict has ended. Formal schools are just one of the services offered. Nonformal classes for youth and adults, preschools, vocational education, and other nonformal programs are others.

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO 2000, p. 8; see also [www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/dakfram\\_eng.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtml).

# The Size of the Problem

An estimated 50 countries are affected by conflict (see map on pages 10-11). Current conflicts have killed millions and forced 37 million to flee their homes—more than 22 million within their own countries.<sup>2</sup> Nearly one-third of these displaced—7 million IDPs and 5 million refugees—are school-age children, only a fraction of whom have access to education of any sort.<sup>3,4</sup> Moreover, these dire statistics do not account for the millions who have *not* fled their homes but are nevertheless affected by armed conflict. Thus, the number of children without access to education due to conflict is certainly much greater than 12 million.

Because the problems and challenges for children in refugee populations versus IDPs and those still in their homes differ, so must the responses.

## Refugees

Most of the countries sheltering refugees are among the world's poorest and have difficulty providing education for their own children. Some national governments open their own schools to refugees, but many do not have sufficient resources to do so. In these cases, outside assistance is required, which can be provided by UN organizations, international and local NGOs, and local community and religious groups. Donors fund education in emergencies via support to UN organizations or to NGOs.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is charged with the protection and wellbeing of refugees, and a significant number of refugee children have access to school because of its assistance. In 2000, for example, the UNHCR's implementing partners provided educational assistance to 1.1 million refugee children. As

a result, children from Sierra Leone, Burundi, Afghanistan, Sudan, and other countries affected by conflict have access to education in neighboring countries. While there has been a substantial expansion of education assistance to refugee populations over the past decade, a huge number of children remain unassisted. Of the estimated 5 million refugee children worldwide, the 1.1 million assisted by the UNHCR represents only 20 percent.

When UN organizations and NGOs support education in emergencies, their priority is primary education. Other educational services—such as preschool, secondary, vocational, and adult—are underdeveloped or nonexistent in almost every emergency setting. The Refugee Education Trust (RET)—an organization that focuses on providing postprimary education to refugee children—estimates that only 3 percent of refugee teenagers attend school beyond the primary level.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly so for girls who drop out of school to help with household activities or for reasons of culture, safety, or inability to pay school fees.

A huge challenge for organizations working in protracted, long-term refugee situations is sustaining support for their programs. The international community often loses interest in an area after the immediate emergency passes or a new emergency arises. Unfortunately, education is often among the first services cut when funding for a refugee situation is reduced.

## Internally Displaced Persons

Most of the estimated 7 million internally displaced children are without access to education. Providing education to IDPs is often difficult, since they frequently

<sup>2</sup> USCR 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Sinclair 2001; Hovy 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Here, *school age* is defined as ages 5 to 17 to match available UNHCR population statistics.

<sup>5</sup> See <[www.refugeeeducationtrust.org](http://www.refugeeeducationtrust.org)>.

reside within or near war zones. Although IDPs have received increased attention,<sup>6</sup> no single international organization is responsible for their overall protection, care, and wellbeing. As a result, national governments and a patchwork of agencies—UN, international, and NGO—provide varying levels of service. Even in postconflict countries, these populations may suffer as security or political obstacles delay the startup of projects.

The situation of the three countries with the largest number of IDPs sheds light on the extent of these problems.

- In *Angola*, with 4.1 million IDPs, approximately 1 million children have no access to any educational opportunities, meaning that more than half of Angola's school-age children do not attend school. Dropout rates are high, especially for girls. As many as 65 percent of the country's adolescent girls are illiterate.<sup>7</sup>
- Of *Sudan's* 4 million IDPs, just over 1 million are school-age children. Only 300,000 of these attend school, and only 26 percent of these are girls.<sup>8</sup>
- In *Colombia*, with 2.1 million IDPs, the government does not have enough space for all children to attend school; the situation is much worse for internally displaced children.<sup>9</sup> Estimates of the number of displaced children with access to school range from 25 to 45 percent.<sup>10</sup> Contributing to this low attendance is poverty, which prevents displaced families from providing their children with school uniforms, school materials, and other items their children need to go to school.

The challenges of delivering education to these difficult-to-reach populations are tremendous but not impossible. Interactive radio instruction holds great promise for some of the hardest-to-reach populations. Another approach, now being attempted in southern Sudan, takes a “development” approach—building institutional capacity of teacher training institutes, county education offices, and schools to reconstruct an education system from scratch.



*The number of children without access to education due to conflict is certainly much greater than 12 million.*

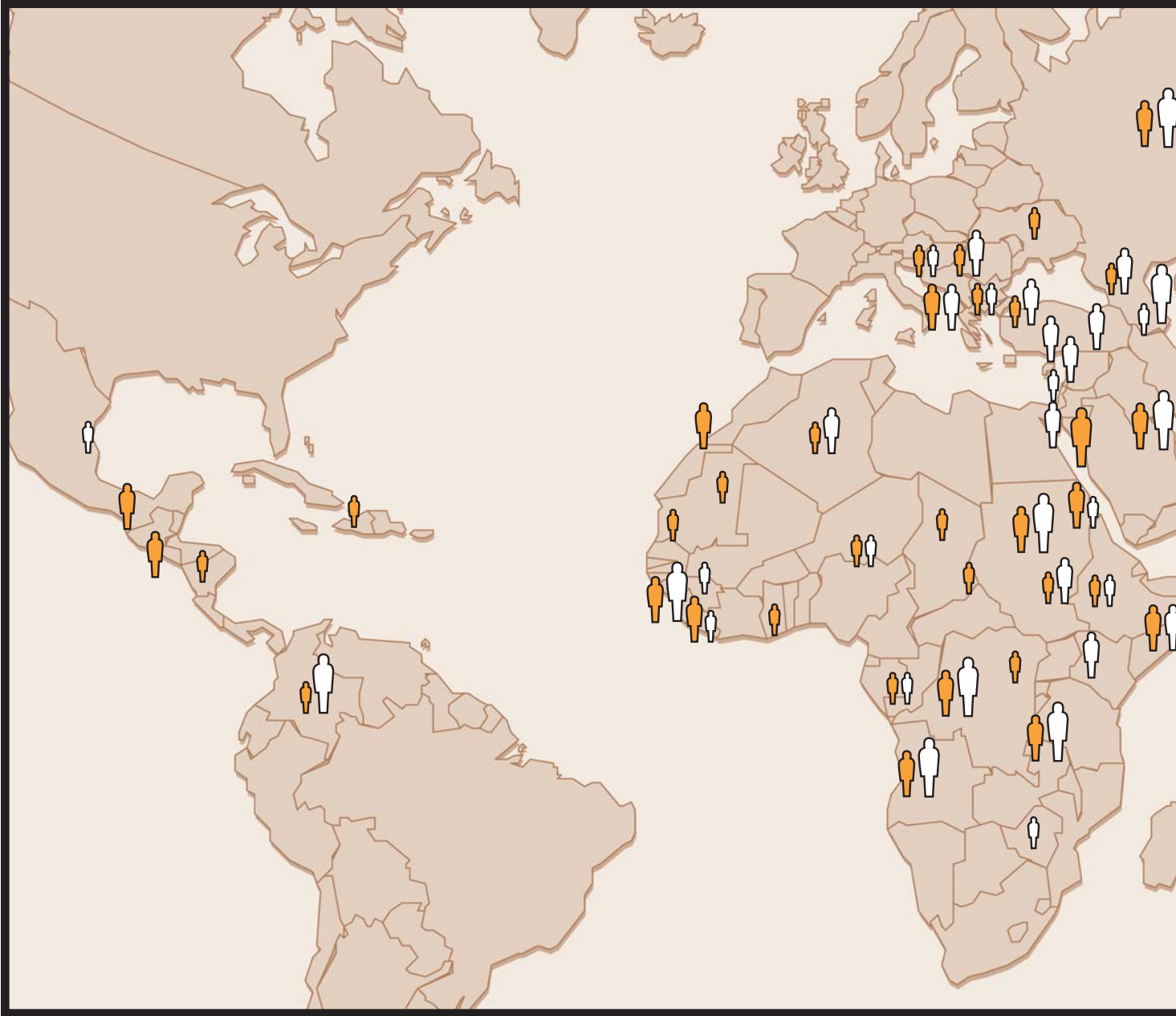
<sup>6</sup> The UN's secretary general appointed a special representative for internally displaced persons, and the Internal Displacement Unit was created within the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF 2002.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF/OLS/AETrust 2002.

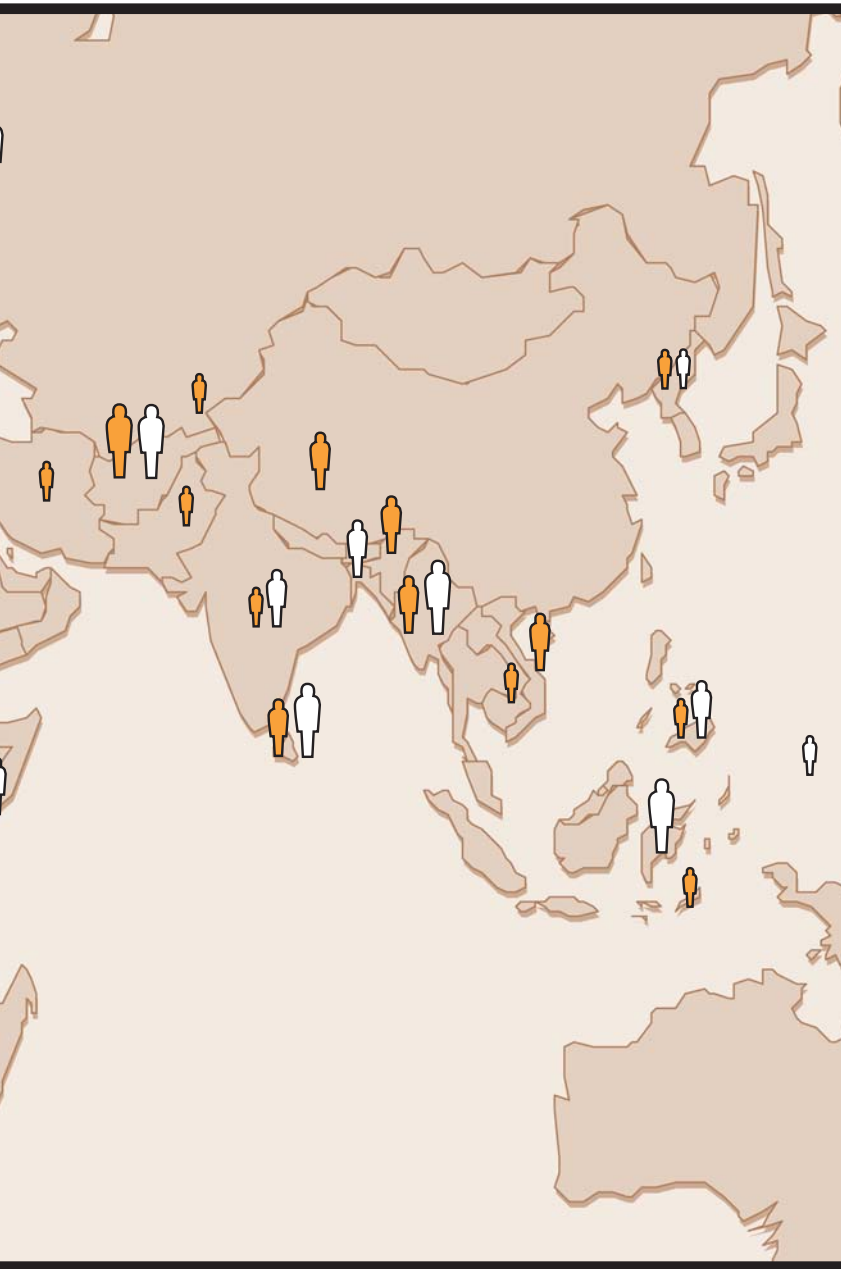
<sup>9</sup> Women's Commission 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Save the Children 2001, *El Tiempo* 2001, cited in Women's Commission 2002; Senderos, pp. 84–85, cited in Women's Commission 2002.



## Principal Sources of the World's Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

as of December 31, 2001



10,000 – 100,000

100,000 – 500,000

More than 500,000

□ Internally Displaced Persons

■ Refugees

Source: U.S. Committee for Refugees 2002. *World Refugee Survey*.

# Why Education in Emergencies Is Essential

Some policymakers believe that supporting education during or immediately following an emergency is unnecessary, even inappropriate. They consider education to be a long-term development activity whose results will be realized in future years and decades, not the shorter timeframes of humanitarian emergencies. These policymakers believe that devoting resources to education diverts resources from more immediate, essential services such as health care and food distribution—particularly when war-affected communities have already initiated education activities themselves. Finally, they express concern that by providing education in emergencies, schools become “magnets” that attract people from other areas who are already surviving without emergency assistance, or that educational services encourage refugees to delay repatriation.

In our view, these arguments are not supported by the facts. Indeed, education during crises actually provides a foundation for developing peaceful, postwar communities. Schools provide a semblance of normal community life and a platform for encouraging other actors, such as women and youth, to become involved in humanitarian activities and decisionmaking. While education for refugee children does exist without outside support, most of it is rudimentary at best, lacking appropriate materials, curricula, and qualified teachers. Moreover, rather than diverting resources from other programs, schools provide convenient, appropriate forums where the importance of essential services and behaviors such as health care, water, and sanitation can be taught. Finally, while it is true that schools create stability for communities in exile, the argument that schools “attract” refugees or discourage them from repatriating does not begin to capture the complicated calculations refugees make when deciding whether and

when to return. This decision is based upon many factors, the most important of which are guarantees of physical and economic security.

Whatever the arguments against investing in education in emergencies, those that support such investment are compelling indeed.

## **Education Is a Basic Human Right**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)—the latter has been ratified by all nations except Somalia and the United States—assert the right of all children to education. Governments that have ratified the CRC have committed to protecting and ensuring children’s rights and to be held accountable for this commitment. The international community—including governments, NGOs, UN agencies, communities, and parents—shares the responsibility of ensuring that children’s rights are upheld, even in emergency situations.

War-affected communities assert this responsibility by starting classes and creating schools at the outset of humanitarian emergencies. When the international community supports education in emergencies, it improves quality and plays an important role in ensuring that *all* children have access to schooling, including those who have most often encountered barriers to access—girls, children with disabilities, and children from ethnic or religious minority groups.

## **Education Is a Protection Tool that Provides a Safe and Supportive Environment**

Protection of refugees, particularly children, is a central principle that guides the work of humanitarian agencies working in emergencies. Schools are a cost-effective and

## Startup Strategies

Educators have employed several approaches during emergency situations. In some situations, a refugee-led approach has allowed schools to be set up that closely mirror those in the home country. In other cases, rapid education packages or kits are used to quickly start up educational activities.

### **“Rapid Ed” and school kits**

A major focus of emergency education policy during the 1990s was to develop packages for rapid educational response. These packages included curriculum, teacher guides, and learning materials aimed at basic literacy and numeracy that could be adapted to different situations. The Rapid Ed approach also involved sending out prepackaged school or classroom kits of supplies and learning materials. The Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) for Angola in the mid 1990s and structured activities for Rwandan children in refugee camps in Tanzania are two examples. Many of the lessons learned from earlier experience in Africa were applied to the Kosovo crisis, in the Kosovar refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia in particular. (Sinclair 2001)



### **Protecting children in East Timor**

Structured, normalizing activities for children and adolescents that address their protection and development needs is the key objective of the consortium program in East Timor. The project “trains community adults and youth leaders to lead appropriate games and activities for children and youth in post-conflict settings,” issuing each with a “psychosocial kit” comprising basic education supplies, recreation and sport equipment. There is support for parent-teacher associations and education committees to help restore schooling and support for capacity-building for youth clubs and organizations, and to train youth club members to work effectively with younger children and vulnerable peers. These “normalizing” programs not only help children recover from trauma and move forward but also provide a training ground for youth and adults to learn the skills of constructive participation in the work of civil society. (Sinclair 2001)

### **Certification for refugee students— a source of pride and hope**

A number of refugee education projects have implemented successful strategies that provide exams and certification for refugee students. Having their children pass recognized exams and earn diplomas or certificates while in exile is a major source of pride for parents and communities. For children, there is no better way to provide hope than to offer them the opportunity to complete schooling with a recognized certificate or degree. The IRC refugee education project in Guinea gave early priority to producing a curriculum that incorporated the national requirements for refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone. The West Africa Examinations Council has administered the exams for both countries in Guinea since 1993. Pass rates are often higher for the refugee schools than schools in their home countries. A similar approach to regional certification is being used for Burundian and Congolese (DRC) refugee students in Tanzania. (Sinclair 2001)

efficient means of providing children with physical and psychosocial protection. Safe learning environments can shield children and adolescents from ongoing insecurity, exposure to landmines, recruitment into militias and gangs, and sexual violence.

Education also plays an essential role in delivering vital messages—concerning health, sanitation, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and landmine dangers—to children, parents, and communities. Delivering these messages through the schools is an effective and inexpensive way to reach children and their families.

Education is a vital psychological intervention for children, because it promotes a sense of normalcy that helps children cope with the effects of crisis. For children who need more specialized interventions, quality teacher training initiatives help teachers identify and refer children to appropriate health professionals. A teenager from Sierra Leone stated this point eloquently: “If we have access to education, young people will be on a steady path to peace and will not be forced into prostitution or other dangerous work. We can rebuild Sierra Leone and we need education to do it.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, children bereft of hope may become more vulnerable.

### **Education in Emergencies Is an Explicit Element of EFA**

The second goal of the EFA declaration, signed in Dakar, Senegal by 180 countries is to ensure that “by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.”<sup>12</sup> This goal is supported by the *Dakar Framework for Action*, which states that “the significant growth of tensions, conflict

## **Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>12</sup>**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- a. Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- b. Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- c. Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- d. Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
- e. Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

<sup>11</sup> Women's Commission 2002.

<sup>12</sup> For the entire text of the CRC, see <[www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm](http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)>.

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO 2000.

and war, both within nations and between nations and peoples, is a cause of great concern. Education has a key role to play in preventing conflict in the future and building lasting peace and stability.”<sup>14</sup> Donors, including the World Bank, are paying more attention to education in emergencies based on the momentum of this campaign. As noted later on, UN organizations and NGOs used the Dakar EFA meeting to improve their coordination on emergency education. Now governments committed to EFA must assert the political will needed to implement the framework for action.

### **Education in Emergencies Strengthens Communities in Exile and Supports Redevelopment of Civil Society**

From Bosnia and Colombia to Afghanistan and Sudan, the efforts and sacrifices that communities make to educate their children, even in the most difficult circumstances, are compelling evidence of communities working together for a common cause.

Supporting education during crises strengthens these communities, preparing community members for eventual repatriation and reintegration, and providing the foundation for development of peaceful, postwar communities. Quality schools offer a semblance of normal community life and a platform for encouraging women and youth to become more involved in humanitarian activities and decisionmaking. Peace and civics education programs can support tolerance for the views of others and contribute to an understanding of democratic political systems. In this way, education can help counteract movements toward authoritarian rule or community violence. Finally, education strengthens ties between displaced people and governments, and between displaced and host populations.

### **Education Addresses the Developmental Needs of Children and Adolescents**

Education is critical to many aspects of a child’s cognitive, social, and emotional development. Research has concluded that establishing a sense of normalcy through structured activities such as school, play, and sports is crucial to the healing process and wellbeing of children affected by conflict. This is particularly true for children who are traumatized by family separation and the horrific events they may have experienced.

Denial or even delay of access to education can result in severe developmental problems that often require expensive remedial interventions. If displaced children and youth are refused their right to education, they may lose the opportunity forever. This will ultimately prove costly for everyone, since developing the thinking skills of children and youth is an essential component of postwar reconstruction. In the case of youth, education draws them away from becoming victims of violence and war.

*The argument that schools ‘attract’ refugees or discourage them from repatriating does not begin to capture the complicated calculations refugees make when deciding whether and when to return.*

<sup>14</sup> UNESCO 2000, p. 15.

## Benefits of Education in Emergencies<sup>15</sup>

### Education in emergencies can help to

- protect children from physical harm
- prevent military recruitment
- prevent sexual violence
- prevent separation of children from their families
- provide a safe place for young people, especially adolescents and small children
- prevent children from turning to or being forced into exploitative work
- prevent alcohol and drug abuse

### Trained teachers and education staff in emergencies can

- facilitate the screening of children for specific protection needs
- identify children who need special assistance
- form strong positive relationships with young children
- provide positive role models in periods of instability
- build children's sense of positive self-identity

### Schools can mitigate psychosocial impacts of conflict by

- reestablishing children's positive identity as students
- enhancing children's understanding of events they have experienced or are living through
- providing daily structure, purpose, and meaning
- providing avenues to express feelings and opportunities for more personal support
- restoring playfulness

### Education can provide for children's future by

- developing children's organizational and analytical skills
- increasing children's options for careers and helping them find positive ways to contribute to their community
- promoting self-reliance
- promoting reconciliation between parties to conflicts
- conveying survival and peacebuilding messages
- promoting children's rights and leadership

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from Triplehorn 2001.

# The Essentials of Providing Education in Emergencies

Educational materials and a school building are not sufficient to improve education in times of crisis. Quality education must be provided, and it must be appropriate to the refugee community's needs. It must include teacher training, appropriate content, and community involvement in school management. Quality education must support positive community values, and it must address additional psychological, public health, and security concerns that arise out of conflict.

## **Getting Started: Early Stages of an Emergency**

Providing education to people who have had to flee their homes, are traumatized by war and disaster, and who live in conditions of extreme disorder, presents many challenges. During the early stages of a humanitarian emergency, educators must quickly develop orderly educational environments amid chaos. For organized teaching and learning to take place, teachers must be identified and trained, students registered, materials procured, a curriculum developed, and learning locations identified. Initially, students can be organized in recreational and expressive activities that promote play, sportsmanship, and psychological recovery.

The rollout of a full-spectrum education program takes time. Sometimes in the acute stage of an emergency, a special temporary curriculum emphasizing literacy and numeracy may be put in place to jumpstart learning. Sometimes, exile communities insist on immediately using their home-country curricula, or host countries may insist on using their own curricula (particularly when refugees attend host-country schools). As the emergency situation stabilizes, however, and more teachers are identified and materials reproduced, educators should move toward implementing a more complete curriculum and education program.

Faced with an array of newly surfacing issues and needs, education in emergencies usually includes targeted education modules and courses. These may include

- public health modules that inform students and communities about preventing infection from HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and avoiding epidemics such as cholera
- peace education, life skills, and human rights courses that promote the nonviolent resolution of conflicts
- public safety modules that educate people about avoiding landmines and preventing environmental degradation
- psychosocial and recreational activities that help children recover from trauma and adjust to protracted periods of difficulty

## **Planning the Transition to Postconflict Education**

As school systems are stabilized, other needs surface. Among the most important of these is the need to support teachers with appropriate training. Many organizations incorporate responding to trauma into teacher training. The training helps teachers identify and refer severely traumatized students to public health officials for specialized care. As children are surrounded by fearful, insecure conditions and undemocratic command structures, attempts are usually made to replace authoritarian styles of teaching with active teaching methods aimed at promoting student exchanges and expression.

In protracted emergencies, one of the most pressing educational concerns is connecting emerging education systems for people in exile with the ministry of education in their country of origin.

Selecting the appropriate curriculum is another difficult issue. Ordinarily, curricula are taken from the war-affected population's home country. In some cases, however, refugees who have been in exile for long periods may adopt the curricula of their host country. Either way, working to ensure that the education ministry in the country of origin recognizes educational activities that have taken place during emergencies is a considerable challenge. A challenge like this was met during Angola's civil war. In this case, a "neutral" curriculum was adopted by education administrations on both sides of the conflict in a process facilitated by UNICEF and the Norwegian Refugee Council.<sup>16</sup>

Without continuity between the preconflict and postconflict educational experiences of the refugees and IDPs, an extraordinarily vital source of hope—the thread connecting the children of displaced communities to hopeful future prospects—will be severely weakened. The international community must make every effort to coordinate its education programs with government ministries and gain their acceptance. They must help ensure that home countries recognize the coursework and examination results of refugees.

Programs must also ensure that teacher training during emergencies is certified, so that when teachers return to their countries of origin they can continue to work. An example of such an effort occurred in Sierra Leone, where the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sports found a

creative solution to teacher certification for the Sierra Leonean refugees the IRC had trained. A distance education project was developed in cooperation with the Freetown Teacher's College so that refugee teachers could study parts of the Sierra Leonean teachers' curriculum that were not included in their original training and take the Sierra Leonean teacher certification exam.<sup>17</sup>



*Quality education must support positive community values, and it must address additional psychological, public health, and security concerns that arise out of conflict.*

<sup>16</sup> Sommers 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Watson and Smith 2002.

## Field Expertise Is Continuously Advancing

Major humanitarian organizations and NGOs have invested in full-time staff who can respond to educational needs in the event of an emergency. Creative approaches have built capacity to provide school materials, teacher training, and other essential needs to starting up education in emergency situations. For example, the Norwegian Refugee Council has a roster of fully trained education specialists who can be deployed quickly. AED has created partnerships with U.S. schools and educational associations to provide school supplies for Afghan schoolchildren.<sup>18</sup> Save the Children has developed six field guides for implementing its emergency education programs.<sup>19</sup>

Educators in these and many other organizations have developed mechanisms for quick delivery of school supplies; specialized curricula; teaching materials; and tools for needs assessments, community participation, and teacher training and evaluation. These efforts, together with the continued development of organizational capacity to deliver quality education in times of emergency, will be enhanced by the following three-pronged approach:

1. *Training:* While UN organizations and NGOs have developed expertise in teacher training, they now need to increase training and capacity building at the field level for ministries, UN agencies, and NGOs that support the development and implementation of education activities in emergencies.

2. *Information sharing:* As the number of players working in this area increases, there will be a greater need to coordinate and connect the numerous activities. To do so, the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) was convened by UNHCR, UNICEF and UNESCO, and NGOs. To improve communication and cooperation in educational responses in emergencies, INEE seeks to share knowledge and experience, make teaching and learning resources widely available, and document and disseminate best practices in the field. INEE has developed and made available *Good Practice Guides*, which provide members with information related to education in emergency situations.<sup>20</sup>

3. *Research and best practices:* Research and studies by field professionals and organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, the Social Science Research Council, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and AED have expanded understanding of best practices and the state of education in emergencies. The NGO-led effort to develop education standards for eventual inclusion in the Sphere Minimum Standards in Disaster Response is another important step.<sup>21</sup>

These efforts will lead to more effective and efficient education interventions on the part of both the international community and host governments and strengthen training efforts among field practitioners.

<sup>18</sup> For more information, see <[www.aed.org](http://www.aed.org)>.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, see <[www.savethechildren.org/crisis/](http://www.savethechildren.org/crisis/)>.

<sup>20</sup> For more information, see <[www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org)>.

<sup>21</sup> CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and the Save the Children Alliance are leading this effort.



*The Interagency Network on Education in Emergencies seeks to share knowledge and experience, make teaching and learning resources widely available, and document and disseminate best practices in the field.*

## More Support Is Needed

Children and teenagers suffering from the consequences of war have the right to basic education. The international community must not ignore them and should respond with commitment and vigor. Steps that should be taken immediately include the following:

- make education response of equal priority in acute emergencies as other vital sectors of humanitarian assistance such as food and nutrition, health services, shelter, water, and sanitation
- increase donor funding for education in emergencies—for refugees and IDPs—and in situations of postconflict reconstruction
- expand efforts to ensure the right to education for girls, children with disabilities, and children from ethnic or religious minority groups
- greatly increase the availability of education for adolescents, including postprimary education, vocational and skills training, and life skills education

*Without increased financial support and attention to the importance of education in emergencies, millions of displaced children will continue to be denied their right to education.*

To meet this call to action, donors must

- Overcome institutional barriers that prevent funding for education in emergencies after the acute phase. Support for education is often limited by “emergency” donors who consider education a development activity, or by “development” donors who cannot work in emergency situations. The result is that children are caught in the middle and are not adequately supported.
- Earmark funds for education in emergencies.
- Work with governments in countries affected by crisis to increase the political will to expand educational opportunities for refugees and internally displaced children.

An impressive array of expertise and experience has emerged in the field of education in emergencies. Working with limited resources in the face of enormous need, educators have developed educational programming for more than a million children. Without increased financial support and attention to the importance of education in emergencies, however, millions of other displaced children will continue to be denied their right to education.

Every day, the international community fails to protect millions of children who are trapped in war zones when it fails to provide education. Humanitarian interventions without an education component do little to advance children’s social and intellectual development. Education is the way out of hardship and despair. Therefore, it is imperative that the international community respond.

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works to ensure that refugee and displaced women, children, and adolescents are given protection, encouraged to participate, and have access to education, health services, and livelihood opportunities. Through a vigorous and comprehensive program of advocacy, supported by extensive research and technical expertise, the Women's Commission serves as an expert resource and works with governments, UN agencies, international and local NGOs, and donors to improve the lives of refugee and displaced women and children. The Women's Commission was founded in 1989 under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee.

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# Acknowledgments

**Writing:** Marc Sommers

**Editing:** Lynn Bethke, Mary Diaz, Ken Rhodes, John Engels

**Comments:** Chistopher Talbot, Eldrid Midttun, Jane Lowicki,  
Margaret Sinclair, Wendy Smith

**Design:** John Engels

**Photos:** AED, IRC, WCRWC



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