

# Statement by the Members of Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies



## To:

Permanent Missions of Member States to the United Nations Office at Geneva and New York

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Geneva, 6 July 2022

## AHEAD OF THE TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT: EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES, THE CORNERSTONE FOR SDG4 IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION

**In June 2022, education and finance leaders came together at a Pre-Summit in Paris to discuss their priorities for the upcoming Transforming Education Summit convened by the United Nations Secretary-General. The Transforming Education Summit provides a unique opportunity to address the learning catastrophe before us and take control of the response to urgent education needs. Children's and youth's right to inclusive, safe and quality education does not end in times of crisis; to the contrary, it is precisely these situations which present the greatest challenge to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) worldwide.**

We urge global leaders and decision-makers to recognise the unprecedented scale of the need, and to respond rapidly to ensure that generations of children and youth do not lose their right to a quality education. It is crucial that they commit at the Transforming Education Summit to an ambitious agenda for providing equitable access to education at all times, for all children and youth.

During the pre-summit, we—members of the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies (EiE Hub)—were encouraged to see education in emergencies and protracted crises taking centre stage. Youth representatives gave powerful testimony about how violence, conflict, climate change and displacement affect their education. A stronger commitment to and support for the children and youth left furthest behind is urgently needed.

We are facing a worrying increase in needs relating to education in emergencies and protracted crises. According to Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the current number of crisis-affected school-age children requiring educational support has grown to 222 million. This includes as many as 78.2 million out-of-school children, and close to 120 million who are in school, but not achieving minimum proficiency in maths or reading<sup>1</sup>. In fact, just one in ten crisis-affected children in primary or secondary education is reaching this proficiency level. Among those left behind are children and youth displaced by conflict, violence or disaster, who represent about half of the more than 100 million internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers across the globe<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, only 68% of refugee children have access to primary education, compared to 90% globally. That drops to 34% versus 66% for secondary education, and 5% versus 40% for tertiary education<sup>3</sup>. The situation is especially dire among girls, and children and youth with disabilities. Furthermore, in 2020 and 2021 there were more than 5,000 attacks on schools and universities, their students and educators<sup>4</sup>. Access to safe and inclusive quality education is not only a fundamental right but an indispensable tool for the protection, safety and well-being of displaced and crisis-affected children and youth.

While the international community is committed to ensuring that all children and youth are granted their right to education, we are moving ever farther away from achieving this goal. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated the education crisis; the knock-on financial effects include estimates of students at risk of losing US\$21 trillion in potential lifetime earnings, the equivalent of 17% of today's global GDP<sup>3</sup>.

## **We call on world leaders to make commitments of support that equal the need:**

### **Put inclusion and the participation of all children and youth at the top of the education agenda**

Education stakeholders must ensure that all children and youth facing an emergency are included and cared for, including internally displaced and refugee children and youth, who must have equal opportunities to access safe and relevant education. This includes girls of all ages, gender-diverse individuals, children and youth with disabilities and those living in minority communities, in poverty or crisis.

Member States must fully integrate displaced and crisis-affected children and youth into their schools, accelerate their foundational learning, and provide access to the emotional and psychological support they need. This includes those internally displaced and refugees, the latter of whom can face added legal and administrative challenges to being admitted to schools. Donor countries must stand ready to support educational demands during crises in ways that ensure inclusion for all crisis-affected and displaced children and youth.

In doing so, it is critical to ensure meaningful engagement with children and youth, when appropriate, and their teachers, parents, communities and governments. This will enable people facing crisis to influence the decisions that affect their lives and protect their children's right to continuous, quality, safe education.

### **Increase education systems' ability to pre-empt and withstand the effects of future crises**

Conflict, disasters and climate change threaten progress in providing education for all. The climate emergency alone threatens the education of nearly half of all children – an estimated 1 billion – living in countries with a high risk of suffering the effects of climate change. The education of millions of children and youth is disrupted each year by the climate crisis. We urge Member States to:

- Institutionalise comprehensive, crisis-sensitive education sector planning to identify and analyse the many risks to education, including conflict and disasters; understand how these risks affect education systems and identify measures that can help to anticipate, prevent, adapt to, respond to and recover from a crisis; ensure such measures are gender and diversity responsive, and include risk reduction, climate change and conflict-sensitive education.
- Provide safe and supportive learning environments, including by complying with the education-related provisions of international humanitarian law and international human rights law; by strengthening the education-related provisions of national disaster law; and by boosting the domestic implementation of these bodies of law as well as political instruments—including, for example, by endorsing and implementing the Safe Schools Declaration and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.
- Strengthen coordination across the development-humanitarian-peace nexus to create effective strategies and plans that align with national needs; prioritise education in humanitarian preparedness and response, including anticipatory action and immediate relief.
- Strengthen education data systems so they are age, gender and diversity responsive; include data on risks; better identify and reflect internally displaced, refugee and host communities in education and other social protection systems, especially as related to child protection, gender-based violence, WASH and health.
- Adopt and contextualise the INEE Minimum Standards<sup>5</sup>, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Guidelines for Working with and For Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crisis<sup>6</sup>, and ensure their implementation.

### **Provide sufficient funding, and effective solutions, to include crisis-affected and displaced children and youth**

Member States with crisis-affected and displaced populations must spend their education funds equitably and include children and youth affected by displacement and emergencies. Education budgets in countries affected by emergencies and protracted crises must be protected and increased, and internally displaced and refugee populations must be included in costing exercises and allocations.

Donor countries should prioritise education in their humanitarian funding – noting the Global Education First target of 4%, if not the more ambitious target of 10% – and ensure that this priority is maintained over time. Funding should particularly target initiatives that focus on target populations that are furthest behind.

All Member States must work to expand funding, including by contributing appropriately during the upcoming ECW High-Level Financing Conference in Geneva in February 2023. Member States must also diversify and improve the funding base for education in emergencies, encouraging non-traditional donors, the private sector and philanthropic organisations. They must explore innovative financing models, and use better coordination to enable different funding modalities to act in unison, to support access to education for vulnerable minorities affected by crisis and those left furthest behind—in both emergencies and protracted crisis contexts. Donor countries also must increase their commitments to finance the inclusion of refugees into national education systems ahead of the 2023 Global Refugee Forum.

Member States are urged to implement action-oriented solutions that will help to ensure that children and youth receive quality education before, during and after a crisis, including socio-emotional learning and psychosocial support. This also involves support to teachers and education workers, as accelerating progress toward SDG4 and transforming education are only possible when all education personnel are professionalised, trained, motivated, and supported—particularly in crises where teachers are often paid late or not at all, and face difficult teaching conditions. Furthermore, it comprises wide application of new technologies, pedagogies and holistic approaches to modernise education systems, making them more inclusive, resilient and fit for purpose. Scalable evidence-based solutions that accelerate progress are important in guaranteeing that displaced and crisis-affected children and youth acquire foundational literacy, numeracy, digital and transferable skills for life and work.

To avoid being caught out by future crises, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States must recognise the importance of prevention, anticipatory action, preparedness and risk reduction. We must take the lessons of COVID-19 to heart and put more concerted effort into ensuring the continuation of education during disruptive events.



**Endnotes:**

1. Education Cannot Wait, *Global Estimates: Number of Crisis-Affected Children and Adolescents in Need of Education Support*, June 2022: [www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/global-estimates-number-crisis-affected-children-and-adolescents-in-need-education](http://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/global-estimates-number-crisis-affected-children-and-adolescents-in-need-education)
2. UNHCR, 23 May 2022: [www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2022/5/628a389e4/unhcr-ukraine-other-conflicts-push-forcibly-displaced-total-100-million.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2022/5/628a389e4/unhcr-ukraine-other-conflicts-push-forcibly-displaced-total-100-million.html)
3. Education Finance Watch 2022: <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/related/WB-EFW-06-28-22.pdf> and UNICEF
4. Education Under Attack 2022: <https://eua2022.protectingeducation.org/#title>
5. INEE Minimum Standards: <https://inee.org/resources/inee-minimum-standards>
6. IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises (2020): <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/events/iasc-guidelines-working-and-young-people-humanitarian-and-protracted-crises>