



# Education in Emergencies & Child Protection



Education in emergencies (EiE) and child protection are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing. Today, almost 1 in 5 children and young people around the world live in conflict-affected countries and with inadequate access to education. Lack of access to education increases child protection risks such as abuse and neglect, economic and sexual exploitation, homelessness, sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), trafficking, and child marriage.

**“When there’s a dangerous situation, we know what to do. The teacher & our classmates are there to guide us, help us not to be afraid & get us out safely.”**

*-Rosine, 13, adolescent girl, Chad.*

Furthermore, children and young people already experiencing these and other protection concerns, such as attacks on school facilities, violence in schools, and mental distress, are often prevented from realising their right to education. Children and young people with disabilities or from minority backgrounds, those who are forcibly displaced, girls, and children of diverse gender and sexual orientation are disproportionately affected by these situations. For all of them, education is a lifeline.

Children and young people empowered by quality, inclusive and safe education can obtain knowledge and skills that help develop their intellectual, physical, and emotional potential. Schools can provide hope, shelter, a system of support, and critical information to protect their rights. Conversely, child protection efforts help ensure children and young people can go to school safely by preventing and responding to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against them.

Thus, collaboration between EiE and child protection is mutually reinforcing, often resulting in better learning, increased capacities, confidence, resilience, healthier relationships between children and young people and the adults in their lives, and more peaceful societies. EiE and child protection, through improved coordination, help children and young people caught in crises learn safely and thrive.

## What We Know

**When children and young people in emergencies have access to quality, inclusive and safe education, they can learn, socialise, and be protected.**

Supportive learning environments enable children and young people caught in crisis to access learning, acquire new skills, re-establish routines, regain a sense of normalcy, play and project into the future. In school, they can develop cognitive and socio-emotional skills, and build healthy relationships that improve their resilience against adversity. Attending school can reduce their risk of child marriage, child labour, economic and sexual exploitation, and association with armed groups and gangs.

## Urgent Actions

**Boost investment in collaboration between EiE and child protection before, during, and after crises.**

Securing more funding to implement joint sustainable opportunities should be prioritised. Joint programming and coordination can improve the quality of interventions, generate resource efficiency, ensure the identification and inclusion of the children and young people at most risk, and achieve a greater impact on their learning and wellbeing.

**Without protection and support, schools can be unsafe for children and young people caught in emergencies.**

Without explicit measures and actions to protect and make education inclusive and safe, schools can expose children and young people to child protection risks including physical punishment and violence, bullying and fighting, GBV, and attacks – either at educational facilities or while on the way to school. Furthermore, in armed conflict and violent contexts, schools are often used for military purposes, threatening students' lives and exposing them to violence and the risk of association with armed forces and groups.

**Through education, children and young people can access other essential services and obtain life-saving information.**

Schools are key platforms for transmitting vital messages that can reduce children and young people's exposure to physical and psychological harm, disease, and death. These can result from such risks as GBV, trafficking, exploitation, mines and unexploded ordnance, disaster risk, and poor health and hygiene practices. Schools can also connect students and their families to essential services such as child protection, mental health and psychosocial support, health, food, and more.

**Quality, inclusive and safe education in emergencies interventions contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion.**

By creating learning environments that promote positive, nonviolent values – such as inclusion, tolerance, justice, peace, human rights, solidarity, respect, and conflict resolution – among children, young people and the community, schools can contribute to creating a culture of peace, reducing the risk of violence and conflict across society.

**Improve collaboration between EiE and child protection at every step of the humanitarian response.**

Whether in needs assessment, strategic planning, resource mobilisation, implementation, or monitoring and evaluation, EiE and child protection should increase their interaction and joint efforts. Promising examples include joint needs assessment processes, collaborating around curriculum development and implementation, incorporating school-based social workers, cross-sectoral referral mechanisms, and others.

**Mobilise states to implement policy and legislation to protect children and young people in education. All states need to respect International Humanitarian Law.**

They must put in place policy and legislation, as well as accountability mechanisms, to protect children and young people from all forms of violence and attacks in and around education, as well as to restrict the use of schools and universities for military purposes. Enabling environments should be established, which entails implementing conflict-sensitive approaches to education, prohibiting corporal punishment in schools, and improving the capacity of educational systems to prevent and respond to violence.

**Engage children and young people, their parents, and the wider community in building protective environments in and around schools.**

Children and young people should participate in designing and implementing strategies to prevent violence and promote their wellbeing in educational settings. This encourages participation, contextualisation, and ownership. Moreover, schools also need to work with parents and the community to address discrimination and harmful practices, enhance support networks and improve the physical and social environment around schools and at home.

**Generate more evidence on what works in EiE and child protection, in joint and integrated programming and coordination in crisis contexts.**

While evidence from non-humanitarian contexts suggests that there is a significant added value to well-coordinated integrated programming, evidence from humanitarian contexts is still limited. This impedes the development of effective solutions to the needs of children and young people living in emergencies.

# GET THE FACTS

## Violence disrupts children and young people's right to quality education

- 3 in 4 children globally between the ages of 2 and 4 are violently disciplined by their caregivers on a regular basis.<sup>1</sup>
- 1 in 10 children worldwide is subjected to child labour.<sup>2</sup>
- 1 in 3 women and girls worldwide will experience GBV in her lifetime.<sup>3</sup>
- Although data is scarce on the magnitude of sexual violence experienced by boys, including members of LGBTIQ+ communities, case studies suggest that it is prevalent.
- 650 million girls and women around the world today have been married as children.<sup>4</sup>

## Humanitarian crises exacerbate child protection risks

- 426 million children globally live in conflict zones.<sup>5</sup>
- Between 2005 and 2020, 93,000 children were forcibly recruited in conflict settings, with the actual number believed to be much higher; parties to armed conflict abducted 25,700 children; and at least 14,200 children were victims of GBV (97% of reported cases concerning girls).<sup>7</sup>
- At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 104 countries reported having their violence prevention and response services disrupted.<sup>8</sup>

## Without protection, children and young people are at risk even when in school

- Between 2015 -2019,<sup>9</sup> there were over 11,000 attacks on education globally, 2 out of 3 on school facilities. 22,000 students, teachers, and academics in 93 countries were injured, killed, arrested, or harmed. Parties to armed conflict in 34 countries used schools and universities for military purposes.
- 720 million children live in countries where corporal punishment at school is not fully prohibited.<sup>10</sup>
- Worldwide, more than 1 in 3 students aged 13 – 15 experience bullying.<sup>11</sup>
- 50% of children experience violence in and around their school.<sup>12</sup>

## Further Reading

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020)

[Collaboration Across Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies](#)

Global Education Cluster & Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility (2020)  
[Education in Emergencies – Child Protection Collaboration Framework](#)

Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019)  
[Minimum Standards for Child Protection](#)

Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children  
[Safe to learn](#)

Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack  
[The Safe Schools Declaration](#)

Global Education Cluster and Child Protection AoR  
[Guidance | Child Protection-Education in Emergencies Collaboration Framework](#)

*\*The members of the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies contributed their knowledge and expertise to this document. [Contact us](#).*

## SOURCES

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## Additional Sources

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INEE and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020). [Position Paper: Collaboration Across Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and Education in Emergencies](#).

Save the Children (2021). [Build Forward Better: How the global community must act now to secure children's learning in crises](#).

Save the Children, the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2020). [Still Unprotected: Humanitarian funding for Child Protection](#).

OCHA (2023). [Global Humanitarian Overview 2024](#).





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