

The importance of Education

Emergency situations associated with armed conflict or other chronic crises have created major constraints to achieving universal education. Violence or the threat of violence in or around schools can prevent girls and young women from attending school and female teachers from doing their job. The types of violence children in conflict may experience, includes verbal abuse, bullying, humiliation, stigmatization, corporal punishment, physical or sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape and abduction. Tragically, discrimination and violence against female students and teachers is common in conflict and post-conflict situations. Safe learning environments that offer protection to both student and teachers are crucial for girls' education.

Violence against women negatively impacts girls' access to education:

In the *EFA Global Monitoring Report on Gender and Education for All (2003/04)* gender-based violence is defined as a major reason for underachievement and high dropout rates of girls from education, stating that "many girls who surmount the barriers preventing them from attending school face harassment and sexual abuse from their peers or from their teachers once they are enrolled. This violence against girls perpetuates the gender gap in education and impedes their right to education"¹.



Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict

Facts and figures:

- In 2006, 75 million children were not in school². Around 27 million out-of-school children are estimated to live in countries in conflict³;
- In Ethiopia, between 70 and 80 percent of young adults in a study reported experiencing psychological or physical violence at school⁴;
- In Uganda, young women participating in a study reported that 49 percent of beatings of female students were conducted by male teachers⁵;
- In countries such as Sudan, Colombia and Uganda, the recruitment of boys and girls into armed groups keeps many children out of school;

¹ UNESCO (2004): Global Monitoring Report 2003/4. Gender and Education for All. The leap to equality. UNESCO.

² UNESCO; EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009. Overcoming inequality: why governance matters. UNESCO/Oxford University Press 2008

³ Erin Mooney and Colleen French: Barriers and Bridges; Access to Education for Internally Displaced Children, 2005. http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/20050111_mooney.pdf

⁴ Management Systems International (MSI). 2008. Are Schools Safe Havens for Children? Examining School-related Gender-based Violence. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development. Rosetti 2001

⁵ Ibid





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- In Afghanistan and Pakistan, female teachers and female learners have experienced violent attacks by armed groups. Girls' schools have been destroyed. The fear of sexual violence en route to school keeps many internally displaced girls at home⁶;
- In situations of conflict, for families having to choose between boys and girls attending school, girls are normally disfavoured and are often required to find work to supplement the family income;
- Conflict-related poverty might also lead to early and forced marriages of girl children, such as in Somalia, where forced marriage is a major reason for girls to drop out of school;
- In many schools, girls face a twin threat of sexual violence from both male teachers and older male students. Studies show that girls are most likely to be abused on their journey to or from school, in or near toilets, empty classrooms, computer rooms, libraries or dormitories or near the perimeter of school grounds⁷;
- A study in West and Central Africa found that teachers justified sexual exploitation of female students by saying that their clothes and behaviour were provocative, and that the teachers were far from home and in "sexual need"⁸; and
- Numerous studies in West and Central Africa have found that some male teachers exploit their authority by offering good grades in exchange for sex or other sexual acts by girls in their care.⁹

Education is an important protection measure in all phases of conflict:

- Education during emergencies, early reconstruction and chronic crisis can be life-saving and life-sustaining¹⁰. Children's access to education can be upheld throughout all stages of conflict, from onset to post-conflict;
- When creating "zones of peace," education plays an important role in physical and psycho-social protection;
- Deployment and retention of female teachers may enhance protection, as female teachers are often seen as contributing to greater security for girls in school, especially in preventing exploitation;



(Photo: UNICEF Photo/Anita Khemka)

- When teachers, support staff and education authorities are trained on and aware of learner-friendly teaching methodologies, this may enhance protection so that they can act as positive agents of change;
- Education gives an opportunity to address violence against women if life-skills training is part of the curricula, including discussions on gender-based violence; and
- Education may contribute to altering social dynamics when curricula and textbooks are free of abusive and sexist messages, and display girls and boys, women and men as equally valued and active.

6 Erin Mooney and Colleen French: Barriers and Bridges; Access to Education for Internally Displaced Children, 2005. http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/20050111_mooney.pdf

7 Erin Mooney and Colleen French: Barriers and Bridges; Access to Education for Internally Displaced Children, 2005. http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/idp/20050111_mooney.pdf

8 Catherine Blaya and Eric Debarbieux (2008) Expel violence! A systematic review of interventions to prevent corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying in schools. Bordeaux: International Observatory on Violence in Schools.

9 Nicola Jones; Karen More; Eliana Villar-Marquez and Emma Broadbent (2008) Painful lessons; the politics of preventing sexual violence and bullying in school. London ODI United Nations (2006) United Nations Secretariat-General's study on Violence Against Children. Geneva: United Nations

10 INEE: Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies: Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crisis and Early Reconstruction. UNESCO 2004

For more information please contact:
VAWICGROUP@yahoo.com



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Best Practices in Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls in Schools.

The following are some of the key components to addressing abuse and sexual violence for children and their access to education:

- Ensure children are provided with their right to education throughout all stages in a conflict, from onset to post-conflict;
- Ensure recruitment and retention of female teachers and encourage the use of female assistants if qualified female teachers cannot be found;
- Provide a Code of Conduct to be signed by teachers and other education personnel taking part in education programmes. The code of conduct should prohibit corporal punishment and any kind of physical abuse or exploitation;
- Create national action plans to focus on reforming legislation, policy, data collection, services for victims, and prevention responses;
- Focus on local interventions for prevention;
- Include children in developing strategies and solutions to break the cycle of violence;
- Students, parents, all school staff and the community must work together to expel violence from schools;
- Ensure that school infrastructure is protective/sufficient, and that girls/women (including female teachers) are provided with separate latrines located in a safe place and provided with a lockable door;
- Provide psychosocial support to teachers and learners, enabling them to reduce destructive coping behaviours; and
- Establish a monitoring system to identify risks of sexual violence and discrimination.



Recommendations

In order to fully implement the EU existing policies, we urge the EU to:

- Promote the implementation of the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crisis and Early Reconstruction;
- Recognise that education is a required component of humanitarian assistance;
- Support measures to increase girls', especially youth and adolescence's, participation in education;
- Increase funding to education in emergencies/fragile states since education is an important arena to counteract violence against women and girls;
- Support the recommendation of the Oslo Declaration "Acting Together" on promoting equity, which states that "Girls are especially disadvantaged in countries experiencing conditions of fragility and during emergencies. Special measures are required to reach them and to promote an enabling learning environment";
- Promote the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which underscores that "special efforts should be made to ensure the full and equal participation of women and girls in education programs"¹¹; and
- Develop national action plans to address sexual and gender-based violence that identify comprehensive programmes and opportunities for action across sectors, including sexual and reproductive health and the prevention, treatment and care for HIV/AIDS, socioeconomic recovery, livelihoods, human rights, justice, security sector reform, and also create necessary education and life-skills programs.

¹¹ Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, principle 23.3

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What is being done by the EU to combat violence against women and girls?

At all levels, from international to local, civil society and governments are working in order to fight violence against women and girls. In regards to education in emergencies, these policies highlight what is being done at the EU Policy level:

- The EU policy on Sexual Gender-Based Violence, paragraph 3.2.7.2. Prevention of violence underscores the need to (b) support for education in the fundamental rights and empowerment of women and girls. 3.2.2 (f) by promoting and supporting campaigns focusing on the systematic neglect of girls, in particular as regards official birth registration and schooling;
- Through its policy on gender-based violence, the EU is committed to provide “support for education in the fundamental rights and empowerment of women and girls¹²” and to support “campaigns focusing on the systematic neglect of girls, in particular as regards to official birth registration and school¹³” ;
- Through the Implementation Strategy for Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict the EU, the Commission and Member States are obliged to give “specific attention to the protection of girls and women from sexual violence, abuse and exploitation, including promoting assistance and support for survivors of sexual violence. Specific attention should be given in the context of EU support to (...) the specific needs of girls¹⁴;
- The Maputo Protocol. The protocol articles emphasize the elimination of all forms of discrimination against African women, and calls for new legislation prohibiting all forms of violence, the establishment of victims of violence rehabilitation programs, women’s participation in basic services, such as education; and
- Through the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals, EU Member States have committed themselves to ensuring access to quality education for all girls and boys by 2015.

The following are key documents that can assist the EU in advancing education for girls in conflict settings.

- Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies: Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crisis and Early Reconstruction (www.ineesite.org);
- Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies: Gender Strategies in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction Contexts: Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence in and through Education: http://ineesite.org/uploads/documents/store/doc_158_Gender_Strategies_in_Emergencies_GBV.doc
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Guidelines on Gender Based Violence Action Sheet 9.1: Ensure girls’ and boys’ access to safe education; and
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee: Education Action Sheet from the Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action.

The Brussels Ad hoc Working Group includes: CARE International, Cordaid, International Rescue Committee, Justitia et Pax, Marie Stopes International, Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium, Pax Christi International, EurAc Network, Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l’Homme, World Organization Against Torture - OMCT and PLAN International.

The observers to this group are:
The Brussels Offices of UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM; Human Right Watch, ISIS Europe and The Norwegian Refugee Council.



<http://www.fao.org/sd/erp/img/addis1.jpg>



<http://bd.china-embassy.org/eng/xwdt/W020070802756185004031.jpg>

¹² The EU policy on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, paragraph 3.2.7.2. (b)

¹³ Ibid. paragraph 3.3.2 (f)

¹⁴ The Council of the European Union: Implementation Strategy for Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict. http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/hr/news65.pdf

For more information please contact:
VAWICGROUP@yahoo.com