

**39 million girls
are at risk: are
humanitarian
responses
doing enough?**



Introduction

Conflict and emergencies cause some of the worst violations of the right to education — girls are disproportionately affected. In 2015 alone, around 39 million girls were out-of-school because of war and disasters. Girls are 2.5 times more likely to drop out of school than boys.⁽¹⁾ Out-of-school girls are acutely vulnerable to exploitation during crises, and in danger of having their education ended permanently.

But while the importance of education in emergencies is recognised — and the vision of inclusive and equitable education for all is enshrined in SDG4⁽²⁾ — humanitarian responses do not make girls' education a priority in design, delivery, or in implementation on the ground.

By neglecting girls' education, humanitarian responses ensure millions of girls remain at risk of the most egregious forms of exploitation and exclusion, including trafficking, sexual violence, early marriage, and forced labour. Girls, particularly in the poorest settings, are already at risk of exploitation and crises raise the odds of such abuse exponentially. Awareness of gender has grown in humanitarian responses, but the particular vulnerability of girls is still not paid enough attention.

Education is a powerful tool to mitigate these life-threatening risks to girls, offering the protective environment of school and empowering girls to exert more control over their lives.

Humanitarian responses that ignore girls' education leave generations of girls less equipped to recover from crises, and entrench gender inequalities that severely limit their opportunities for development.

For girls in crises, dropping out of school is likely to mean a permanent end to education and more chance of spending their life in poverty, with fewer opportunities for their families and communities.

Of the tiny fraction (2%) of humanitarian aid that is spent on education, not enough of it is reaching girls. Gender inequality in funding, delivery and implementation of aid means girls are further marginalised from the lifeline that education provides. Unless humanitarian responses tackle the gender blind spot, progress towards SDG4 and other development goals will suffer because girls are being left out of school during crises.

Under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, all girls affected by emergencies should be supported to access safe learning environments to protect them and provide them with opportunities to build their own resilience.

In today's protracted crises, when the average length of displacement for a refugee is 17 years, leaving the education of girls to chance or putting it low on the priority list is simply not an option.



Recommendations

PLAN for prevention, preparedness and response.

Education sector plans must analyse, respond to, monitor, and budget for potential risks affecting the education system. These plans must ensure that education is equitable, inclusive and relevant, and that education continues throughout crisis.

INTEGRATE gender analyses into programme delivery in crisis

and provide 'safe spaces' for women and girls to access services and receive support tailored social, legal, medical and educational advice and opportunities to support them to cope with crisis.

ASSESS the impact of disaster and crisis on the education system

as a key part of initial disaster assessments.

MEASURE the impact of programmes based on gender equity

and their efficacy in protecting women and girls from further trauma and exploitation.

REQUEST resources in emergency appeals based on the need

to get *all* children access to quality education services in emergency settings, particularly girls, those with disabilities and others likely to be left behind.

PROTECT children, teachers and education facilities from attack.

Protection of education spaces from attack, military use and occupation of schools must be ensured through strict observance of international humanitarian standards. Safe passage to and from school must be a special focus, with particular attention paid to specific risks to girls.

ENSURE that INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, and Recovery are used consistently to ensure safe, quality and protective education.

Donors should require them, implementers should contextualise and rely on them and education leaders should promote them.

FUND Education Cannot Wait.

Donors should commit to provide at least \$4 billion over the first five years to reach 18% of those children and youth affected by 2020, with a plan in place to reach 100% by 2030. Donors should also commit to prioritising the funding of education in all emergency response and protracted crises including natural and climate disasters, conflicts and health crises.



Why humanitarian responses are failing girls

Too often, humanitarian responses have a gender blind spot. Gender is recognised as important but gender considerations aren't followed through. Programmes are not designed with enough gender sensitivity, sometimes because programmes do not include gender concerns as 'urgent', or they are designed to be one-size-fits-all. Yet disasters cement and exacerbate gender inequality.

Humanitarian responses do not address girls' specific needs, including their need for education, which is not considered as important as food, shelter or sanitation but which is vital to their survival. Girls' needs for skills such as disaster-preparedness are also not addressed.

Research by Plan for its 2013 report *The State of the World's Girls* found that education was identified as a vital intervention during emergencies, but not enough was being done to plan for, protect and prioritise it for girls.⁽³⁾ Girls trying to access education were vulnerable to violence and safety measures, such as installing separate toilets, were inadequate. Plan found that girls, who consistently prioritised their education, were not being asked or listened to about their survival needs. Adolescent girls were often overlooked or simply "invisible during disasters".

In 2015⁽⁴⁾ a review of Humanitarian Response Overviews (HRO) found that many HROs fail to look closely at gender inequalities even though these inequalities heighten vulnerability in crises. The review of Strategic Response Plans (SRP) indicated just how scant attention is paid to gender.

Every SRP for a humanitarian appeal is supposed to include a gender “marker code”. These codes signify the extent to which the humanitarian plan has considered gender, ranging from 0-2: the lowest score (0) indicates “no signs that gender issues were considered” while the highest score (2) indicates that, “the principal purpose of the project is to advance gender equality”.

The Inter Agency Standing Committee looked at a random sample of 29 proposals to provide aid to Syria revealed that none focused on gender in any meaningful way; 59% did not even consider gender and the rest considered gender “in a limited way”. Tellingly, it also revealed another problem. While some projects had been coded as beneficial to girls, a review committee determined that none were addressing inequality. Even when plans appear to consider girls’ needs issues in their strategies, too often the reality does not live up to the rhetoric.

Governments don’t make education a priority provision to refugees and other vulnerable groups. When a crisis occurs and humanitarian agencies step in, long-term development work — including on gender equality — may cease.

Funding has shrunk as crises have mounted. Funding to education in emergencies has been less than 2% of all humanitarian aid since 2010 and stood at only 1.4% in 2015. Over the past five years education funding needs have increased by 21% yet humanitarian aid for education has dropped by 41% in the same period, leaving an annual shortfall of nearly \$8.5 billion. Of 133 appeals since 2010 for education, just four received half of their targets.

Burkina Faso is an example of just how this funding shortfall gap may occur in inverse proportion to need. In a country with one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, 860,000 children and youth in crises were in need of an education in 2015. None were reached through funded humanitarian appeals despite a plan to provide education for all. A scorecard on education in emergencies produced by A World at School highlights this funding gap. ⁽⁵⁾

How conflict and disaster devastate education

Conflict and disaster are taking a global toll on education. In 2015, 462 million children and adolescents were living in countries affected by conflict and disaster.⁽⁶⁾ Around 75 million children and adolescents in fragile settings had their education disrupted; 39 million were girls.

In 2015, conflict deprived 13 million children of schooling in the Middle East alone, according to a UNICEF report,⁽⁷⁾ which said that just in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya, almost 9,000 schools were out of use because they had been destroyed or taken over by warring parties. The number of children affected by natural disasters is expected to go on rising as climate change brings more extreme weather around the globe.⁽⁸⁾ And schools are increasingly coming under fire — with thousands of targeted attacks on schools reported around the world.⁽⁹⁾ In countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, girls’ education has been a direct target.

War, disasters and epidemics destroy school buildings and dismantle infrastructure around schools. Emergencies undermine the quality of teaching and harm community systems that support education. They displace and destabilise communities, separating families and leading to criminal activities that endanger children and adolescents by luring them into armed groups as child soldiers, or preying on them as targets.

Emergencies exacerbate and entrench gender inequalities that existed before a crisis. Four out of five countries ranked lowest by the annual World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report in 2015 are facing insurgency or war.⁽¹⁰⁾

When it comes to education during crises, girls are more vulnerable to certain types of harms, exploitation, violence, and marginalisation. They are most likely to drop out of school and least likely to return. After the 2010 floods in Pakistan, for example, 25% of girls dropped out of school in grade six, compared with only 6% of boys. ⁽¹¹⁾

After the Ebola epidemic in West Africa forced more than five million children out of school for nine months, girls faced more challenges to going back. In Liberia, many girls were put to work doing domestic chores because their parents needed them to earn money. Emergencies place an undue burden on girls as caregivers. In Sierra Leone, where 62% of girls aged 15-24 are literate according to the latest government health survey, ⁽¹²⁾ girls who dropped out of school during the Ebola crisis and then became pregnant were barred from re-entering mainstream education by the government after schools reopened.

Where girls' access to education is fragile, emergencies can deliver a fatal blow.

On 25 April 2015 a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal, killing almost 9,000 people and leaving millions in need of aid. Around 16,000 schools were damaged or destroyed — with a catastrophic impact on Nepal's children, and threatening to undo the achievement of increasing primary school enrolment from 64% to 95% over the previous 25 years.

Yet, even in the midst of emergencies, children say that what they need is education — and their parents want it for them too. A report by Save the Children, *What do Children Want in Times of Emergency and Crisis? They Want An Education* ⁽¹³⁾ found that 99% of almost 9,000 children in 17 emergencies said their number one priority was education. Girls expressed a deep wish to return to education and unhappiness at being excluded from it. School is a place where children say they feel safe. School is where girls believe they can invest in their future — and that of their families — when much else has been lost. School is where they can recover from trauma and re-establish normalcy.

Listening to children affected by crisis must be part of humanitarian response. Children prioritise their education, with other essential needs and education safeguards their emotional and social wellbeing.



Why conflict and disaster pose particular dangers to girls

Trafficking

In fragile settings, trafficking gangs prey on children who may then be duped or coerced into forced labour or sold into sexual slavery.

A UNICEF representative in Ecuador who was interviewed expressed concern that children affected by the April 2016 earthquake were more vulnerable to trafficking gangs on the border with Colombia⁽¹⁴⁾, particularly if they were not in safe learning settings. A year earlier, the earthquake in Nepal, which left almost 1.4 million children out-of-school, including nearly 700,000 girls, led to sharp rise in trafficking⁽¹⁵⁾ as children were orphaned or became separated from their parents.

In the case of Nepal, the disaster also exacerbated the existing trafficking problem; the UN and local NGOs estimate that as many as 12,000–15,000 children are trafficked from Nepal to India each year. In 2010, charity network Child Reach International led an analysis of high levels of child trafficking in Nepal and identified high school dropout for girls as a major factor. It went on to launch the Taught Not Trafficked campaign⁽¹⁶⁾ to break down barriers to girls' education and protect them from trafficking, highlighting the importance of school as a safe environment and of education to raise awareness of the dangers among potential victims.

COUNTRY

Nepal

ISSUE

Trafficking



Muna Tamang, 16, moved to Kathmandu a year ago from Sindhupalchok to live with her aunt. She left to attend a good school but also because her area was one of the worst in Nepal for child trafficking and early marriage, in the aftermath of the April 2015 earthquake. She said 80 girls were taken from her village after the quake and no one knows where they ended up.



I came to Kathmandu because in my area they marry girls at a very young age. Girls get married at 13, 14 and 15. There is a school in my village but it was totally destroyed by the earthquake. Many girls come to Kathmandu and work as domestic helpers so that they can go to school. When I went back to the village after the earthquake, it looked deserted. All the houses turned to rubble. The quake killed so many people. Many girls have gone missing from the village since the earthquake. They must have been lured away by traffickers.



Early marriage

Every year around 15 million girls around the world marry under the age of 18 — putting them at risk of greater risk of domestic violence, HIV infection and other diseases, and increasing their chance of maternal mortality.

In a vicious cycle that limits their life opportunities, girls are taken out of school to marry and then have little chance of returning to complete their education. But education is a known protective factor against early marriage.

Girls are twice as likely to marry early if they have no education than if they have completed primary school and girls are three times less likely to marry early if they complete secondary education.⁽¹⁷⁾ In Nepal, child marriage rose steeply after the earthquake. Conflict has brought a steep rise in child marriage among girls in Syria, and among refugees in Jordan and has also been reported in Lebanon, Egypt and Turkey.⁽¹⁸⁾ In emergencies, early marriage may be seen as the ultimate desperate resort.

In fragile settings, parents fearing for their daughters' safety may push them into marriage as a form of "protection" from rape. Marriage is seen as a solution to poverty and girls themselves may choose marriage as a coping mechanism. Systems that inoculate girls against early marriage weaken. During crises, education has a critical role to play in shielding girls from early marriage — and the devastating consequences of it.

Early pregnancy and maternal mortality

Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second cause of death for girls aged 15-19 globally,⁽¹⁹⁾ and fragile settings heighten these risks.

In 2015, the number of maternal deaths in 35 countries in fragile settings was estimated at 185,000, 61% of the global estimate of maternal deaths (303,000).⁽²⁰⁾ Girls are not only more exposed to risks during emergencies, they are less likely to get the information they need to protect their sexual and reproductive health. A school can be a place where information on safety, health and risky behaviours can be shared. Health literacy paired with education has a crucial role to play in mitigating risks for girls and preparing them for challenges in future.



COUNTRY

Sierra Leone

ISSUE

Ebola

Education was one of the first casualties of the Ebola outbreak — forcing nearly 5 million children out of school in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea for almost a year.

At the height of the epidemic in Sierra Leone, there were at least 14,000 new teenage pregnancies between October 2014 and July 2015 across 12 of the 14 districts — during the crisis, schools were closed and girls were forced to engage in transactional sex to provide for themselves.

In a report by three leading aid agencies, most of the 617 girls interviewed in Sierra Leone said they believed higher incidences of teenage pregnancy were a result of them being outside the classroom.



Forced labour

During crises, poverty, discrimination and marginalisation limit the options and leading boys and girls into child labour, often bringing a permanent end to their education.

The reasons are complex; general economic collapse may mean a family's assets are destroyed or the main breadwinner is lost. Earning an income may be seen as the most constructive use of a child's time immediately after a disaster. Girls and boys may be sold into bonded labour to earn money for the family, or forced into working as child soldiers or prostitutes.

The most abusive forms of child labour occur in conflict. Girls are forced into sex slavery as wives for militants or pushed into prostitution. In South Sudan, thousands of women and girls have been abducted and held as sex slaves since war erupted in the African country. Thousands of Yazidi girls in northern Iraq, some as young as nine, were abducted by Isis fighters and subjected to systematic rape and torture, in one of the most alarming atrocities of conflict in the Middle East.⁽²¹⁾ Education provides alternatives and rehabilitates former child labourers.

COUNTRY

Haiti

ISSUE

Modern-day slavery

Since the earthquake in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2010, there has been a large increase in the number of girls working as unpaid domestics under the system known as "restavek", whereby children from poor families are sent to live with rich families for whom they work for free.

An estimated 225,000 Haitian children aged 5–17, mainly girls, are trapped in this system. Many work 10–14 hours a day without pay, doing arduous tasks such as working in the fields or washing clothes by hand. Many are sexually abused by the men of the households where they work and then thrown out if they become pregnant. Without an education, these children are left without safe survival options.

Education for the next generation

A raft of evidence points to girls' education as the single most effective strategy for ensuring their wellbeing and that of their families — and wider society.

The empowerment of girls is vital to ending gender inequality, and educated girls make a vital contribution to the global economy. There are compelling benefits linked to girls' education: each year of a mother's schooling cuts the risk of infant mortality by 5–10%; children of educated mothers are far more likely to go to school, for example.

But education during crises also prepares girls to make considered choices that protect their rights and those of their families. In addition to passing on valuable practical lessons, for example, how to prevent mother to child HIV transmission, or how to avoid landmines, or how to access clean water. Ultimately, good quality education during conflict can support the long-term process of sustaining peace by preparing girls to become leaders in their communities. Girls can be taught and trained to play a leading role in disaster-preparedness. Teaching girls tolerance and conflict resolution helps them to foster inclusion and equality.

Investment in girls' mental and emotional health through education during the critical phase of adolescence is crucial to their wellbeing as adults, and critical to the wellbeing of their families and communities.

Girls' education during emergencies is a life-saving intervention and should be paired with health in early humanitarian responses.⁽²²⁾

World's leading education experts, NGOs and campaign organisations urge financing for education in emergencies at World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul

In 2015 alone, more than 75 million children and young people had their education disrupted or destroyed by emergencies and prolonged crises. Record numbers of attacks on schools, natural disasters, wars and the largest refugee crisis since World War II have increased the need for education in emergencies.

Despite this, less than 2% of all humanitarian funding has gone to education every year since 2010. There is now an approximate \$8.5 billion dollar gap for education in emergencies annually. Generations of displaced and refugee children are losing their right to rebuild their lives and communities.

That can all change soon.

In May 2016, at the first ever World Humanitarian Summit, world leaders will launch a new education crisis platform.

The platform will include a 'Breakthrough Fund' to begin to adequately finance efforts to meet the educational needs of millions of children and young people affected by crisis. This fund must:

- be financed with multi-year donor commitments,
- be supported by new funding and resources that are ambitious enough to address the scale of the crisis in education and emergencies,
- be supported by resources that are additional, and not at the expense of other critical education and poverty-fighting interventions, and
- build on existing financing mechanisms so as to ensure smooth transition from crisis response to longer term development of education systems.

Call to Action: Ambitious new resources for education in emergencies

Education is a human right. We cannot stand by while children are shut out from the opportunity for an education due to conflicts and disasters. We must bring new and immediate financing to deliver education alongside protection and other essential social services.

We, the undersigned organisations, call upon world leaders at the World Humanitarian Summit to launch an education crisis platform and make new, multi-year, pledges aimed at funding the platform and supporting the 75 million affected children so that it can truly be a breakthrough for children living without education in the most dangerous or unstable contexts.

World leaders have said "Education Cannot Wait," and must now take action to keep that promise to the most marginalised and vulnerable children.

Theirworld has joined more than 50 leading global NGOs and Civil Society Organisations is supporting a joint Call to Action for a new fund for education in emergencies. The full list of organisations can be found at <http://www.aworldatschool.org/page/content/whs-ngo/>

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Theirworld is an innovative charity which helps children to unlock their potential. Through research, pilot projects and campaigning, Theirworld is at the forefront of testing and shaping new ideas to help give children around the world the best possible start in life

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