Committee: UNICEF

Issue: Safeguarding education in emergencies and crises

Student Officer: Stavroulaki Olga

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Stavroulaki Olga and I am currently attending 10th grade at Ekpaideftiki Anagennisi. In this year's ATSMUN I have the utmost honor to serve as one of your Deputy Presidents in the UNICEF Committee.

The first topic of our committee revolves around education in times of crisis. During the conference you will have to provide solutions in pursuit of safeguarding education in times of armed conflict, extreme weather conditions, and many other types of emergencies.

If you face any difficulties or questions during your preparation do not hesitate to reach out to me, I will be more than happy to help you. (stavroulakiolgamsail@gmail.com)

I am really looking forward to meeting you all in November!

Sincerely,

Stavroulaki Olga

INTRODUCTION

Now more than ever, our planet goes through numerous different cases of conflict. Climate change, natural disasters and even on-going armed conflicts are only some of them. Under such hostile conditions, children are at risk of losing their loved ones, losing their livelihoods, their access to education and therefore their future. So it is crucial that even in times of emergencies, the right of education is protected including the protection of school grounds and ensuring safe transportation to school facilities.

Every child has the fundamental right to an education according to Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet more than 32 million children across the world have never seen a teacher as a result of armed conflict. Overall, over 10.000 violent attacks against school facilities have been recorded in the recent years. In all of these 10.000 cases, the world witnessed teachers and students being murdered, buildings being destroyed in bombings and arson attacks and many other acts of aggression. More than 30 conflict zones in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America had more than 315,000 grave breaches against children between 2005 and 2022, according to confirmed data. Undoubtedly, the real figure is much greater.

Without protecting education itself, a child's right to an education in a conflict zone cannot be guaranteed. A good education can save your life. Children

Figure 1Syrian schoolchildren run past heavily-damaged buildings in the rebel-held area of Jobar, on the eastern outskirts of the Syrian capital of Damascus, on April 30, 2016.

are easy prey for abuse, exploitation, and recruitment by military forces and other organizations when they are not in school. Children should be able to feel safe from dangers and emergencies at school. It is also essential for ending the crisis cycle and lowering the likelihood of further conflicts.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS[1]

Armed Conflict

Armed conflicts are defined as political conflicts where the use of armed force by two parties of which at least one is the Government of a State results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.

Risk informed education programming

UNICEF defines a risk informed education program as a program that is informed by an analysis of hazards, shocks, and stresses; exposure; vulnerabilities; and capacities. Employs strategies that reduce the vulnerabilities of populations and systems to hazards, shocks, and stresses, and promotes capacities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to hazards, shocks, and stresses.

Hazard

United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) defines hazard as a dangerous phenomenon, substance, human activity, or condition that may cause loss of life, injury or other health impacts, property damage, loss of livelihoods and services, social and economic disruption, or environmental damage. This definition includes events that occur:

 a) suddenly, such as an earthquake, flood, or fire; and

 b) overtime, due to multi-level causes such as an economic shock, violent conflict, and/or climate change.

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[1] *Risk-Informed Education Programming for Resilience - UNICEF, Risk-Informed Education Programming for Resilience - UNICEF,*

Resilient Development

Giving children and families the tools they need to better anticipate, handle, and recover from crises is what resilient development entails. It necessitates addressing the fundamental inequalities and fragilities that underlie the strains and adversities in the social, economic, and environmental spheres.

It entails removing the artificial barriers that separate development from humanitarian aid, incorporating risk factors like climate change into programs, and enhancing systems that can both prepare for and respond to disasters.

Resilience

Resilient development means providing children and families with what they need to better prepare for and better manage crises, and recover from them more rapidly. It requires addressing the underlying drivers of inequity and fragility that cause environmental, economics, and social deprivation and stresses.

It means bridging the arbitrary divide between development and humanitarian assistance, integrating risk factors such as climate change into programming, and strengthening systems that can anticipate as well as absorb shocks in the event of disasters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is the exact issue?

Education is a fundamental right and a crucial component of human development. However, during emergencies such as natural disasters, armed conflicts, pandemic, or displacement, access to education is often disturbed or completely halted. Today, 426 million children live in areas affected by war worldwide. Nearly 200 million children are living in the world's most lethal war zones, the highest number in over a decade. And around the world, more than 89 million adolescent girls currently live in conflict zones. Children living in war-affected countries live in constant fear, experiencing severe violations of their rights, with serious impacts on their mental health. Many children living in lethal war zones are already at risk of climate change and facing unprecedented levels of hunger as well.

The UN reports and monitors 6 grave violations against children[2]:

1. Killing and injuring of children

2. Recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups

3. Abduction of children

4. Attacks on schools or hospitals

5. Refusal or lack of humanitarian support, like access to basic health care

6. Rape and other forms of sexual violence

Safeguarding education in these challenging circumstances becomes imperative to ensure the well-being and future prospects of affected individuals, particularly children and youth. In a further analysis, except the damaged infrastructure, the limited recourses and supplies, education coming to a halt poses a more significant, long term problem, exacerbating the already existing stereotypes that revolve around education. That primarily affects females but of course does not stop there. Many marginalized groups that have fought for their rights in the past are again deprived of their right to education.

Figure 2 On 16 January 2017 in the Syrian Arab Republic, a child carries manuals distributed by UNICEF volunteers in the area following an informative session on identifying and reporting unexploded objects in Al-Sakhoor neighbourhood of East Aleppo. (Photo: Khudr Al-Issa / UNICEF)

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[2] Source: https://www.savethechildren.org

Why is safeguarding education in times of crisis important?

Keeping the education guarded in times of emergencies does have numerous benefits. It can be used as a helpful tool in pursuit of addressing inequalities. Additionally, access to education provides the youth with knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for recovery. It enhances their resilience and empowers them to participate actively in their communities' reconstruction and development. Also, education plays a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty, preventing future conflicts and promoting sustainable development. Lastly, education prevents the lost generation phenomenon. This term was first used to describe the generation that reached adulthood during or shortly after the First World War. This generation, had inherited values that were irrelevant to the post-war world. Therefore, through the continuation of education amidst conflict, this can be prevented.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Afghanistan

Afghan children have known nothing but conflict their entire lives. Children are forced out of school and into labor today, more than a year after the Taliban seized power, and kids are suffering from terrible starvation. Girls' circumstances are particularly worrying.

Pakistan

Pakistan has faced several attacks against education, particularly targeting educational institutions and students. These attacks have been carried out by various militant groups and have resulted in tragic loss of life and disruption of educational activities. One notable incident occurred on December 16, 2014, when the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) conducted an attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar. During this brutal attack, seven gunmen stormed the school and killed 132 students and nine staff members. The tragic incident shocked the nation and led to a significant push for greater security measures in educational institutions. The Pakistani government and security forces have taken measures to counter such attacks and provide better protection to educational institutions. They have implemented security protocols, carried out military operations against militant groups, and increased surveillance to prevent future attacks. Despite these efforts, the threat to education remains.

Iraq

Iraq has faced several attacks against education, particularly during the period of instability and conflict following the US-led invasion in 2003 and the subsequent rise of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in 2014. These attacks have targeted educational institutions and students, causing significant loss of life and disruption to the education system. During the height of the conflict, ISIS specifically targeted schools and universities as part of its campaign to establish control over territories in Iraq and Syria. They sought to impose their extremist ideology and prevent access to modern education, especially for girls and women. In some cases, schools were closed, and teachers and students were forced to adhere to ISIS's restrictive curriculum. The Iraqi government, along with international support, has been working to combat terrorism and restore stability and security in the country. As ISIS has been significantly weakened, the situation has improved, but isolated incidents of violence may still occur.

Nigeria

Nigeria has faced attacks against education, particularly in the northeastern region of the country where the Boko Haram insurgency has been active. Boko Haram is a militant Islamist group that has carried out numerous attacks on educational institutions and students, with the aim of opposing Western education and establishing an Islamic state in the region. One of the most infamous incidents occurred in April 2014 when Boko Haram abducted 276 schoolgirls from the town of Chibok in Borno State. The incident garnered international attention and led to the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. While some of the girls have been rescued or escaped over the years, a significant number remained missing. Boko Haram has also targeted schools, colleges, and universities, resulting in the destruction of educational infrastructure and the loss of lives. The group has bombed schools, attacked school buses, and killed teachers and students, instilling fear and disruption in the education system in the affected regions. In addition to Boko Haram, other criminal and armed groups have also targeted educational institutions and students in Nigeria, exacerbating the security challenges faced by the country. Nigerian government, along with regional and international partners, has been working to combat terrorism

and address the security threats posed by Boko Haram and other militant groups. Efforts have been made to improve security measures in schools and protect educational facilities. Additionally, there have been initiatives to provide education and support to communities affected by the insurgency.

UNICEF

Thorough the years, UNICEF has contributed greatly in regard to the issue. The main goal of the United Nations Children's Fund is to provide uninterrupted education for every child affected by any kind of humanitarian crisis. UNICEF provides physiological aid to children that have gone through traumatic experiences, as well as supports the governments in pursuit of reducing the risk of disaster and supplies the countries with the necessary materials. Finally, UNICEF has collaborated many times with the EU in order to ensure that in any conflict, education does not stop.

European Union

The European Union recognizes the importance of safeguarding education in times of emergencies and has established policies to address this issue .Therefore, the EU aims to mitigate these effects and promote the right to education for all, regardless of their circumstances. To do so, the EU encourages its member states to develop emergency education plans to ensure the continuity of education during crisis. These plans may include measures such as setting up temporary learning spaces providing educational materials, training teachers, and ensuring access to educational technology. In terms of humanitarian matters, the EU provides humanitarian aid that includes funding for the provision of educational materials, teacher training and the establishment of safe learning environments. Additionally, it supports initiatives that aim to integrate refugees and migrants into education systems and provides them with language support and other necessary recourses. Lastly, the EU recognizes potential of digital technologies to facilitate education during emergencies and therefore promotes the use of digital tools and online learning platforms to ensure uninterrupted access to education.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS[3]

Date	Description of Event
1924	The League of Nations adopts the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child
1948	The UN passes the Declaration of Human Rights and specifically the article no 26 which states that "Everyone has the right to education"[4]
1959	The General Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of the Child which again, through principal number 7, guaranteed and free education is promoted.
1966	The international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights are adopted, promoting the right to education
1989	The UN General Assembly approves the Convention on the rights of the child (Unanimously)
2002	The UN General Assembly holds a Special Session on Children for the first time to specifically discuss Children's rights
2015	The Safe Schools Declaration was adopted, providing 6 guidelines, addressing the protection of educational facilities in terms of armed conflict.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Education in emergencies initiative

The Education in Emergencies (EiE) initiative is a global effort aimed at ensuring that children affected by emergencies have access to quality education. It is led by various international organizations, including UNICEF, UNESCO, and Save the Children, in collaboration with governments, NGOs, and other partners. The EiE initiative focuses on providing immediate and long-term support to ensure the

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[3] The state of the world's children special edition
[4] Universal declaration of Human Rights

continuity of education during and after crises. The EiE emphasizes the importance of rapid response to establish temporary learning spaces, deliver education supplies, and provide psychosocial support to children affected by emergencies. It also promotes preparedness measures, such as developing emergency education plans, training teachers, and pre-positioning education supplies, to improve the response time and effectiveness in crisis situations. Other key pillars of the initiative are: Inclusive education, quality education, psychosocial support and advocacy - coordination.

Global Partnership for education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is a multilateral partnership and funding platform dedicated to improving education systems in low-income countries. It works to ensure that every child receives a quality education, particularly those who are marginalized or living in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Furthermore, the GPE the coordinates the allocation of financial resources to the partner countries. It provides technical assistance to strengthen education systems , build infrastructure, train teachers and improve learning outcomes. In terms of coordination and partnerships, The GPE fosters partnerships and coordination among governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to leverage resources and expertise in the education sector. It encourages collaboration and knowledge-sharing to maximize the impact of education investments and improve education systems.

Safe schools declaration

The Safe Schools Declaration is an international political commitment that aims to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities during armed conflicts. It was launched in 2015 and has been endorsed by 118 countries. The declaration focuses on establishing measures that are going to prevent the use of educational infrastructure for military purposes. Concerning schools that have already been abandoned, the declaration states that they can be used by the military for the minimum time necessary, but they have to be available to the educational authorities once the military forces have been withdrawn and any remnants of war have been removed safely from the building. That includes all weapons and unexploded ordnance (Guideline 2).

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Coordination and Partnerships

Strong coordination between humanitarian agencies, governments, and educational stakeholders is essential to ensure a comprehensive and unified response. Partnerships with local communities, NGOs, and international organizations can help leverage resources and expertise.

Temporary Learning Spaces

Establishing temporary learning spaces, such as tent schools or community centers, enables the continuation of education during emergencies. These spaces should be safe, inclusive, and equipped with necessary teaching materials.

Flexible and Context-Specific Approaches:

Educational programs should be adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of the affected population. This may include a flexible curriculum, accelerated learning programs, and vocational training opportunities to meet immediate and long-term needs.

Teacher Training and Support:

Testing in teacher training programs equips educators with the skills to address the unique challenges of teaching in emergencies. Support mechanisms, such as mentoring and professional development opportunities, are crucial for their well-being and effectiveness. This can be through online courses, webinars or in person seminars that are going to prepare the teachers about conflict management.

Psychosocial Support

Integrating psychosocial support services into education programs can help address trauma and enhance the emotional well-being of students. Trained counselors and social workers should be available to provide individual and group support.

Information and Communication Technology:

Leveraging technology, such as internet connectivity, mobile devices, and online learning platforms, can overcome geographical barriers and provide access to education, even in remote or disrupted areas. In the case that the nation does not have access to the technology that is needed, the UN and other international organizations can provide it.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Robust monitoring and evaluation systems should be in place to assess the effectiveness and impact of education interventions during emergencies. This enables evidence-based decision-making, learning from best practices, and improving future responses. These evaluations can be conducted either by the nations themselves or/and in corporation with international organizations.

FURTHER READING

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GUIDELINES for PROTECTING SCHOOLS *and UNIVERSITIES from MILITARY USE during*

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