

**Central Asia:  
INTERNATIONAL FORUM “LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER.  
EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SOCIAL COHESION, CONFLICT PREVENTION  
AND RESOLUTION”**



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The UN General Assembly Declaration (2010) acknowledges that education in emergencies should remain a key priority for the international community and Member States. The Member States networking in post conflict situation is an open question for practitioners and policy makers working together to ensure all persons the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies through to recovery.

Achieving quality education for all that responds to the social, economic, cultural and environmental dimensions of emerging challenges requires improvements to the quality and relevance of learning contents, processes and contexts with the focus to conflict prevention and management. Under this area of work, based on UNESCO pillar “Learning to Live Together” there is a need to develop the concept of “education in post conflict situation” and assist post conflict countries in formulating and implementing policies, plans and programmes to promote it. This includes focus on human rights education; education against discrimination; the role of intercultural and gender responsive education in promoting values, education for the conflict prevention and education for inclusion of minorities. Specific attention should also be given to the prevention of violence in schools.

Meeting the needs of the post conflict countries requires collective action. Education for “learning to live together” equips individuals and communities with the principles, values and practices to build a more secure and peaceful future. It concerns all levels, settings and types of education, and must therefore be integrated throughout the education system.

In 2012-2013, UNESCO’s Almaty work in this area is focused around advocacy for peace building, provision of policy advice and capacity building for education planning and management in post conflict situation. In this area it aims to enhance content knowledge; risk reduction and preparedness, as well as conflict management, critical thinking skills in order to equip learners with the requisite skills, knowledge and attitudes to deal with future uncertainties and challenges.

Currently UNESCO Almaty Cluster includes two post conflict countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan).



The political events of 2010 in Kyrgyzstan made thinking and paying serious attention to education as an important tool for peace building and conflict prevention. The issue of conducting the Forum was brought up by Mrs. Rosa Otunbayeva, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, when she met with Mrs. Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director General in Paris in March 2011. The following needs in the field of education were raised: support to education system with focus to post conflict areas in Kyrgyzstan (rehabilitation, conflict management, post conflict education programs, and projects). Monitoring for measuring progress in emergency education and for learning lessons from experiences and best practices, are so far still undeveloped. A series of meetings was organized with government officials and officials from the Ministry of Education and it was decided to organize the Forum on Post Conflict Education in June 2012.

The UNESCO Cluster Office in Almaty initiated discussions and mobilized international and donor organizations in the Central Asian region and in Kyrgyzstan. The UN Women Sub-Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Almaty, Regional UNESCO Bureau for Education in Bangkok, Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding in Seoul (APCEIU), expressed their readiness to support the organization of the Forum. They provided key speakers and competent experts who contributed much to the work of the Forum. Mr. K. Singh, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education accepted the invitation to participate in the Forum and delivered a key note speech.

At the 20-th meeting of the Eurasian Economic Integration Community Education Committee Meeting (EURASEC) Ministers of the EURASEC Member States fully supported UNESCO's proposal to conduct the Forum on post conflict education and proposed to consolidate it with their meeting of the Eurasian Economic Integration Community Education Committee Meeting at the Ministerial level in Bishkek, June 2012.

The International Forum "Learning To Live Together" aimed to support education initiatives and collect best practices in the context of disaster and conflicts prevention from the Central Asian countries and CIS.

The Forum provided opportunity to identify debate and discuss priority issues in different areas of post conflict education; a platform for networking, collaboration and seeking common solutions to problems arising in the post conflict situation. It contributed to introduction of

approaches on conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation onto national strategic and other documents in the field of education of Central Asian countries.

The main goal of the Forum was to support policy makers, community, NGOs from post conflict countries in the region to intervene constructively in the transition process from violence to peace and nonviolence.

The Forum focused on education policies to address the most pressing issues in the affected territories, the education needs of the post conflict territories in particular in the areas of education policy, planning and management. It brought together civilians and NGOs from different countries and conflict regions of Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Caucasus to contribute to the facilitation of local/international peace-building efforts through education, to create an atmosphere of solidarity as well as to establish a region-wide network for strengthening peace movements, gender responsiveness across post conflict countries through education , to analyze critical educational practices of participants on peace, non-violence, gender equality issues in post conflict situation.

The Forum “Learning to Live Together” included different presentations, interactive group work as well as case studies on conflicts in the CIS countries, especially with the focus of the education policy review and needs assessment in the post conflict situation in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

More than 100 participants and resource persons registered for the Forum and participated in the 3 day Forum discussions based on formal and non-formal education of “Learning to Live Together” and interactive methods which included lectures, case studies, group and individual presentations, energizers, brain storming, debates, etc. (mainstreaming gender and conflict prevention into planning and programming processes with the focus on teaching/learning curriculum, training and professional development; post conflict education management, monitoring and evaluation):



Participants acquired knowledge and skills from lecturers/experts who are famous at international level, as well as teachers, researchers and practitioners who are experienced in the field of peace building and non-violence education in post conflict situations in Asia Pacific, South Korea, Germany, Philippines, Costa Rica.

More than 20 education practitioners and school principals from Kyrgyz conflict areas participated alongside with policy makers and experts, sharing their experiences and information from the field.

The forum working sessions focused on the following themes:

- the role of education in conflict prevention and resolution: basic approaches in international practice;

- education policy priorities and measures for conflict prevention and resolution;
- goals and priority lines of technical and financial support in post-conflict situations;
- international experience in education for conflict prevention and fostering tolerance in society;
- education policy priorities and measures for conflict prevention and management.

Participants had the opportunity to discuss and express their concerns during the work of three thematic groups:

- Education as an Instrument of Social Cohesion, Prevention, and Conflict Resolution;
- Gender Responsive Approaches in Education for Conflict Prevention;
- The Role of Social Inclusion in Promoting Peace and Stability.

The presentations and discussions focused on the following issues: social inclusion, basic concepts and significance for achieving social cohesion, ensuring the Right to Education for vulnerable groups in post-conflict situation.

All Forum participants noted that social inclusion – the provision of equal rights and equal participation of all citizens and groups in decision-making and implementation for societal development – is relevant and is an important factor for reducing the risk of conflict and instability, peace-building and rapid recovery after the conflict. Education is an effective tool for creation of a consolidated inclusive society.

The Forum international experts organized parallel working sessions on the following topics:

- “Pedagogical Practices in Post-Conflict Regions”, “Friends of the Waldorf Education”, (Germany)
- “Experiences from Multicultural Camp "All Children of Caucasus" as a platform for conflict prevention”, Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences (Russian Federation)
- “The Role of Mediation Skills in Conflict Prevention and Resolution”, NGO “IRET” (Osh, Kyrgyzstan)
- The Role of Media Technologies in Improving Education and Integration of Working Migrants from Central Asia in Russian Federation ( Union of Journalists of Russia);
- Children of migrants in schools of Russia and native countries: access to education and problems of learning/teaching (on the basis of researches in schools of Moscow and in Tajikistan), Centre for Analysis and Prognosis of Migration of the Institute of Economic Forecasting of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russian Federation)
- “Access to Education for Children of Migrants: Current Situation”(Children’s Fund of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

Presentations and discussions during the work of parallel sessions provoked deep and lively discussions among participants. Discussions provided ideas for further collaboration at the local and regional levels. The forum has revealed the experience and readiness to cooperate among of local and international experts, professionals and practitioners to promote follow up activities or projects on the implementation of Forum recommendations.

Participants discussed and developed recommendations for Forum resolution. Draft recommendations have been approved as a basis for the final document. During the discussion of the draft Forum resolutions, along with the editing of the document some proposals were made, particularly the need to actively use the educational system as a tool for conflict prevention, to build tolerant, inclusive communities and to promote peace.

The draft final document touched upon the following topics:

- preventive education policy formulation, including issues on the financial, administrative, monitoring management with focus on education for conflict management and peace keeping;
- capacity development for target groups, first of all for teachers (pre - service and in-service), state/government officials, statisticians, journalists; reinforcement of national capacities of teacher training institutions and teacher educators;
- gender responsive strategies and education policy formulation in post conflict situation;
- development of teaching/learning resource materials for school subject-oriented curriculum and extra curriculum activities;

Forum Theme Groups were established on priority issues for professional networking in education policy development in post conflict situation with the focus on teaching/ learning on conflict management, gender mainstreaming, community participation, social inclusion.

The Forum proposal on establishment of the CA Resource Center as a platform for networking, collaboration and seeking common solutions to problems arising in the post conflict situation was discussed and brought forward for consideration and expertise of the Eurasian Economic Integration Community Education Committee of the EURASEC Member States. The participation of EURASEC Member State Education Ministers underlined the importance of the Forum theme and contributed to the implementation of joint initiatives and events for the achievement of quality education for all.

The CA Resource Center establishment will facilitate knowledge exchange and enhance competencies to identify, share and apply good practices about effective teaching with focus on education for conflict prevention (curriculum, knowledge and skills update, subject-based competencies, teacher retraining, etc).

With regard to Forum recommendations implementation UNESCO Almaty in cooperation with the CA Ministries of Education will promote the development policies and normative frameworks with a practical emphasis on education for conflict prevention, peace building and non-violence issues. The workshops, interactive theme group work as well as case studies on learning to live together will be organized for networking and peer-learning opportunities across countries.

The work of the Forum has demonstrated good cooperation of many organizations from different regions including UN agencies such as UNESCO, UN Women, Soros Foundation and organizations from the Asia and Pacific region. The collaboration and joint initiatives will keep a holistic and sector- wide dimension for the whole range of activities to promote quality education for sustainable peace and human development.