



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# UNESCO EVALUATION INSIGHTS

## IOS EVALUATION OFFICE

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**EVALUATION INSIGHTS** provides a snapshot of UNESCO's work in evaluation. Its purpose is to share insights and ideas with all interested stakeholders and to feed into ongoing discussions about the contribution of evaluation to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The sixth edition of **EVALUATION INSIGHTS** is dedicated to the evaluation of UNESCO's Role in Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises.

### What is education in emergencies and why is it important?

Education in emergencies refers to providing quality learning opportunities for people of all ages in situations of crisis, such as conflict and disaster, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education. It provides physical, psychological and cognitive protection that can both save and sustain lives. (International Network of Education in Emergencies (INEE) 2010.)

In today's world, disasters and armed conflicts are becoming more frequent and complex. As a result, in many countries facing disaster, war, epidemics and other emergencies, education is often interrupted, delayed or denied. This is currently the case for more than 75 million<sup>1</sup> children and youth, more than half of whom are female. Consequences of this are grave: children and young people are exposed to developmental delay; young girls are at risk of early marriage and pregnancy; while boys and young men are subject to recruitment in armed groups or forced labour.

Out of 33 conflict-affected countries identified by UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report in 2011, 25 of these were in protracted crises. For this reason, education in emergencies covers not only acute crises, such as sudden onset conflicts or disasters, but also situations of a protracted nature.

### Education in Emergencies in the SDG 4 and the 2030 Education Agenda

Education in emergencies is covered by three targets under SDG 4: target 4.5 speaks of providing equal access to education "for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations"; target 4.7 emphasizes the role of education for the "promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence" and, target 4.a underlines the necessity for "safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all".

<sup>1</sup> Nicolai, S. et. al. 2016. Education Cannot Wait: proposing a fund for education in emergencies. London: ODI.

The Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 specifically addresses education in emergencies and the World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul in 2016, recognized education as a priority on par with other humanitarian sectors. Fulfilling the right to education for people living in crisis-affected countries is recognized as a prerequisite for attaining the SDG 4 and the Education 2030 Agenda. It is a priority that cannot be overlooked by any organization working in education.



### Why this evaluation?

As the UN specialized agency for education, UNESCO is mandated to lead and coordinate the SDG 4 - Education 2030 Agenda and therefore has an important role to play in advocating for and shaping the global approach for education in emergencies and protracted crises. The aim of the evaluation was therefore to clarify UNESCO's role and position its work in this field.

### What we learned: UNESCO is present in many crisis-affected countries.

Among 52 crisis-affected countries and territories identified by this evaluation, UNESCO was found to have some level of education activity in 50 of them during the past five years. For the latter, the Organization has 20 in-country offices and covers 30 countries with its regional and cluster offices.

### It has developed expertise in a number of areas that it can claim to be its niches.

UNESCO's activities in crisis-affected countries focus on preparedness and reconstruction, rather than on immediate relief. Partners do not count on UNESCO to be involved in the direct delivery of educational services, which the Organization is not able to bring to scale. They do, however, expect UNESCO contribute its technical know-how to the development of policies, guidelines and tools for policy-makers, teachers, and students alike.

UNESCO is recognized for its expertise in strengthening education systems that bridge short- and long-term needs: capacity-development of government officials such as through training in the INEE Minimum Standards (e.g. in Iraq); crisis-sensitive planning (e.g. in South Sudan); and information management such as the development of Education Management Information Systems (e.g. for Syrian refugees in Jordan). In some countries UNESCO is the only UN Organization working on adult literacy (Afghanistan), certification of non-formal education (Lebanon), policies for higher education (Myanmar), and in the development of manuals in psychosocial support for secondary school teachers (Philippines).

### The lack of a strategy for education in emergencies signals that it's not a priority.

UNESCO does not have a global strategy for its work in education in crisis settings. As a result, UNESCO's efforts to respond to crises are often ad hoc, fragmented and without a longer-term approach. Staff cannot count on any guidance for their programmes and partners also often do not know what UNESCO can offer in such situations.

### Resources for education in emergencies are limited, especially in Africa.

UNESCO's education portfolio in crisis-affected countries represented less than 22 percent of its overall education budget during 2012-2015. Only 6 percent of its education activity budget was allotted to Africa, which is home to 25 crisis-affected countries and declared a global priority for the Organization.

### Key lessons

The evaluation examined UNESCO's education response to various crises over the past five years.

#### 1. An effective response in education depends on three factors: field presence, timeliness, resources

UNESCO can effectively respond to a crisis in the field of education if it has a physical presence in the country. This ensures it country-level contacts to position itself vis-à-vis other partners. UNESCO also needs to be part of the education response from the onset, engaging in joint mechanisms with other agencies. Finally, the Organization needs minimal human and financial resources in order to start implementing its response before additional resources are mobilized. The evaluation found that UNESCO has response capacity that meets those criteria only in countries where it is resident.

Out of six Level-3 Emergencies declared by UN-OCHA since 2012, UNESCO has responded effectively and with scale to two of them: in Iraq and South Sudan, where it has National Offices. It implemented one project in each of the following countries: Syrian Arab Republic, the Philippines and Central African Republic, while it did not implement education activities in Yemen.

#### 2. Opportunities to develop intersectoral approaches for education in emergencies are not capitalized on

In addition to the work by the Education Sector, UNESCO's educational programmes in disaster risk reduction (DRR) are run by the Natural Sciences Sector, which provides teacher training in DRR (e.g. in Haiti) and develops tools for safe schools (e.g. in Indonesia). The Communication & Information Sector runs programmes on the use of radio for transmitting curriculum-based education and strengthening peacebuilding (e.g. in Afghanistan and South Sudan). The Culture and Social and Human Sciences Sectors also focus on peacebuilding through education. UNESCO's sectors are working in silos and missing out on unique opportunities to develop intersectoral approaches and mainstream gender equality.

#### 3. Participation in needs assessments positions UNESCO to be part of the response later on

Participation in needs assessments allows UNESCO to advocate for data collection in specific fields in order to inform the longer-term planning of the response to crises. UNESCO has successfully contributed its expertise to education needs assessments in a number of countries, covering themes such as non-formal education (post-earthquake in Nepal) and higher education (post-conflict in Gaza), which were not prioritized by other organizations.



#### 4. Uneven engagement in education mechanisms has contributed to an image of an unsteady partner

Over the past five years, UNESCO has been absent from the Global Education Cluster, the main inter-agency forum for overall collaboration and coordination of activities supporting education response. Its participation in other global coordination mechanisms has also largely been due to the personal initiative of its staff, than to institutional commitments.

### Way Forward

This evaluation recommends that UNESCO develop an intersectoral strategy for its work in education in emergencies to show partners and donors what it can offer. It should also establish a community of practice of staff working in this field across the Organization. Finally, UNESCO should institutionalize its commitment to the Global Education Cluster and other bodies to confirm its leadership in the SDG 4 - Education 2030 Agenda.