

2018



THE ALLIANCE  
FOR CHILD PROTECTION  
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

ADVOCACY BRIEF

# Integrating Child Protection and Education in Humanitarian Action



## Introduction

In the year 2018, over 332 million children face protection concerns and educational barriers due to violence, armed conflict, and natural or climate-related disasters. Those numbers are only expected to climb. These conditions simultaneously increase children's vulnerability to violence or exploitation<sup>1</sup> and hinder their access to education and its related benefits.

Children's exposure to violence and their absence from education can negatively impact their life-long mental, physical and psychosocial health and that of future generations.<sup>2</sup> Girls face unique risks. Higher levels of education are associated with delayed childbirth and marriage and lower child mortality figures,<sup>3</sup> yet girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys.<sup>4</sup> The consequences extend beyond personal wellbeing. Estimates place the financial cost of physical, sexual and psychological violence towards children as high as \$97 billion a year, or 8% of global GDP.<sup>5</sup>



Integrating child protection and education creates a mutually-reinforcing cycle that can reduce children's vulnerability in emergencies. A quality education increases children and families' resilience in adversity, empowers children and promotes a protective environment.<sup>6</sup> An environment free from unchecked child abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation fosters quality education. **Integrating child protection and education programmes, policies and minimum standards maximises available resources to better address the multifaceted challenges and risks children face in humanitarian settings.**

## Protecting Children – From Commitments to Action

For decades, world leaders have been declaring their unconditional commitment to children's physical, mental, and psychosocial safety and development in emergencies by crafting national child protection laws and policies and ratifying international and regional children's rights conventions. Among these are:

- The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) on the right to education during war and occupation;
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child affording children rights to education (1989);
- The UN Security Council's (UNSC) first resolution on children and armed conflict (1999);
- UNSC Resolution 1612 (2005) on the monitoring and reporting of six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict;
- UNSC Resolution 1998 (2011) on the concept of schools and hospitals as safe havens that should be inviolate even in times of armed conflict;<sup>7</sup> and
- The Safe Schools Declaration on the responsibility of political leaders to protect and provide education during armed conflict (2015).<sup>8</sup>



Despite these written commitments, education and child protection remain underfunded and under-prioritised by national development planners and donors. Education receives only 2% of all humanitarian aid.<sup>9</sup> Child protection fares worse: in 2015, less than 0.6% of the US\$174 billion devoted to official development assistance went to ending violence against children.<sup>10</sup>

The UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing proposed the 'Grand Bargain', an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, to increase humanitarian aid.<sup>11</sup> It is time, however, to move “from delivering aid to ending need”.<sup>12</sup> **Actors at all levels--donors, policy makers, and practitioners--must invest in securing funding for joint child protection and education programmes that can both meet immediate needs and create a sustainable foundation for future generations.**

## Key Messages

- **Children—particularly refugee, internally-displaced or stateless children—face significant protection issues in all humanitarian crises.** These include the full range of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation: physical, sexual, emotional, and social.
- **Risks for children in humanitarian settings vary depending on gender and age.** Girls are often overlooked in child protection responses yet face specific risks as a result of both their gender and age. These include risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage. Girls face additional barriers to accessing education in humanitarian settings and their exclusion from education can contribute to protection risks and the entrenchment of gender inequalities.
- **Child protection practitioners and education providers should serve as reciprocal referrers.** Child protection actors can facilitate children's access to education while education providers can identify and refer vulnerable children and situations.
- **Effective and holistic child protection enhances other humanitarian efforts, including education.**<sup>13</sup>
- **All children everywhere have the right to protection and a quality education.** International humanitarian law affords children, at minimum, a primary education and basic human rights, even in times of war.
- **Children themselves value protection and education.**<sup>14</sup>

“Safety is everything  
and without it nothing is possible.”

- Child, Homs, Syria.<sup>15</sup>

- **Safe schools support safe students.** Schools free from external and internal threats can educate in job skills, health care, abuse prevention, danger avoidance, and more.<sup>16</sup>
- **Education and child protection need greater investment of humanitarian aid.** Current funding is insufficient for the educational<sup>17</sup> and protection needs of children and communities, especially those affected by protracted crises.<sup>18</sup>
- **Integrated solutions should build on and strengthen existing protective structures.**<sup>19</sup> Collaborating with local actors increases the relevance, acceptance, and sustainability of interventions.
- **Integration capitalises on limited resources to meet the full range of children's needs.** Integrated solutions (e.g. cross-training, referrals, and collaboration) build capacity to enable fewer people to sustainably meet more needs with fewer resources.<sup>20</sup>
- **Field-level interventions require country-level support.** Coordinating—and assessing the effectiveness of—country-level laws, policies, programmes, and emergency interventions is essential to changing harmful traditional practices, eliminating ineffective or redundant interventions, and upholding children's rights.

## End Notes

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