Education In Emergency: The case of the Arab World

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I. Background: Education Crisis in the Arab world

Of the 57 million children who are out of school, third are in areas affected by conflict. Of that third, at least 1.4 million are Syrian children.

More children are in school in the Arab region than before due to expansion of access, particularly at the primary level, and significantly slower at the pre-primary and lower secondary levels. Despite these achievements, Arab world is in education crisis.

Significant numbers of children remain excluded from education systems. It is estimated that more than 12.3m children are out of school: 4.3m primary school aged children (9%), 2.9m lower secondary aged children (12%) and 5.1m of pre-primary school age (58%). These figures do not include children who have been forced out of school by the crises in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Two countries in the region (Djibouti and Sudan) are known to have among the lowest out of school numbers and rates.

Children still do not go to school because of poverty, conflict, gender discrimination, educational quality, poor school environments (including violence in schools) and an epidemic of drop out.

Acute and protracted emergencies are predominant in the region mainly in Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, countries hosting Syrian refugees and Yemen, as well as emergencies in Libya, the State of Palestine and the Sudan. There are 56.6 million people in need across the region. Across the region, violence has rendered 8,500 schools unusable and this is believed to be an underestimation to the real figure. In many cases school buildings have been transformed into IDP shelters such as the case in Iraq and Yemen or inhabited by military groups or militias such as the case of Yemen.

In Yemen Already before the conflict started in March 2015 the country’s education system was in a state of disrepair despite many years of policy makers in Yemen advocating for greater access, equality and quality in public education. This was in part due to very difficult security contexts and tight budgetary constraints.

The conflict in Yemen has only severed an already devastated education sector. Statistics show that in all areas of conflict in the country, regardless of which party is in control, education infrastructure has been universally targeted by the fiercest waves of violence.

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3 This figure represents the aggregate total number of people in need as indicated in the Humanitarian Action for Children 2017 appeals for Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Yemen.
Bombardment of schools and other civil locations maybe a tactic for intimidation but there may be other unknown reasons.

Schooling has been disrupted for very long intervals in the past 19 months due to direct targeting of schools, the displacement of students and teachers and occupation and use of schools for shelter or for military purposes.

Around 3,584 schools have been forced to close, thus depriving around 1.84 million children from access to education, in the last quarter of the 2014-2015 school year alone\(^6\). Today, 2306 schools are either partially or completely destroyed. It is estimated that 234 schools are completely destroyed. More than 21,976 classrooms have been impacted and a total of 2,369 have been totally destroyed. More than 1,600 schools are currently unfit for use due to conflict-related damage, hosting of IDPs, or occupation by armed groups. Furthermore, there is a dramatic drop out of teachers because they have not received their salaries from the public education sector for 8 months in a row\(^7\). This situation has left about 2 million school-age children out of school and need support to fulfil their right to education. This represents 27 per cent of the 7.3 million school-aged children and includes 513,000 IDP children. Altogether, 2.3 million people need support to ensure that crisis-affected children can access education\(^8\).

Government resources are dwindling as part of the current economic crisis, and there is a division of authority (one in the north and another in the south) which not only divides policy and decision making but also divides already scarce financial resources. The dependence on external funding has reached its highest point, while many international organizations have withdrawn from Yemen for security reasons. As armed groups and airstrikes continue to target education facilities, it is only expected that the number of closed schools will only rise and scope of damage and destruction to the education infrastructure will widen.

In Sudan, there are 4 million school-aged children (4-16 years) living in the eight conflict-affected states in Sudan (the 5 Darfur states, South/West Kordofan and Blue Nile); an estimated 1.6 million of these children are affected and in need of Education in Emergencies (EiE) support. The school enrollment rate in these states currently stands at 51 per cent, which is lower than the 59 per cent average enrollment rate recorded in the rest of the country. Many school-age refugees require education assistance\(^9\).

In Syria, one-third of school-age children in Syria are not in school, with one-third of schools out of service\(^10\). Inside Syria, five years into the crisis, 2.1 million Syrian children were out of school and one in four schools had been either damaged, destroyed, or were being used as shelter or for military purposes. Lack of learning spaces is compounded with a shortage of qualified teaching staff and learning materials, makeshift curricula lacking any educational underpinning and the uncertainty over examinations and recognition of certificates. If children do not return to school, the loss of human capital formation due to the

\(^7\) Statistics presented by Ministry of Education in Local Education Group Meeting, Beirut April 2017.
\(^8\) Yemen Humanitarian Overview 2017
increased dropout from school could reach US$10.7 billion, or 17.7 per cent of Syria’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010.\textsuperscript{11}

As the situation in Syria escalates and more refugees are being forced to flee the country, it is clear that Syria’s neighboring countries cannot bear the burden of resettling the masses of refugees. While plans to bolster the refugee camps and systems of education in Jordan are already in place, overcrowding is robbing many children of their childhood and a chance at a future through education.\textsuperscript{12} For example the Syrian crisis had a profound impact on the education sector, in particular on public schooling. The Government of Jordan granted Syrian refugees access to free education in the public education system. This has led to heavy pressures on the education system in terms of human resources and puts an additional burden on public finances.

It is estimated that the total number of Syrian students in public schools in 2015 amounts to 125,000 and the cost per Syrian student is estimated to be around JD 1,544, according to the Ministry of Education. Countrywide, 41\% of Jordanian public schools are now crowded, compared to 36\% in 2011. About 80 schools had to work double shifts in order to enrol over 95,000 Syrian children (excluding camps).\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{In Somalia,} more than 3 million children of school age are out of schools. Continued inadequate support for education mostly in southern and central Somalia will decrease the likelihood of enrolling out-of-school children and it is expected that school closure and dropout rates will increase in 2017.\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{In Mousel Iraq,} when ISIL took control, over 2,400 schools were fully functional. As of January 2017, some 90 per cent of the 400 schools in newly accessible areas required rehabilitation. Additional January 2017 assessments in Ninewa found that over 35 per cent of schools were used by ISIL as military positions, weapons stores, and for teaching and training of children. Thirty-two per cent of school principals in Al-Qayyarah reported concerns of explosive hazards in and around the schools. Remaining school facilities are overcrowded and under-staffed, significantly reducing the quality of education available. Moreover, displaced children often face additional challenges due to differences in language and curriculum used in areas of displacement, as well as financial and transport constraints. \textbf{In Mousel among displaced people,} 105,851 are school-age children and 51,114 are currently not accessing any form of education. These numbers are increasing rapidly as newly displaced people continue to flee western Mosul.\textsuperscript{15}

At the end of 2016’s academic year only 60 per cent of conflict affected children had access to some form of education. Fewer than 50 per cent of children in camps, and fewer than 33 per cent of children in out-of-camp settings, have access to education.

\textsuperscript{11} INEE. http://www.ineesite.org/en/crisis-spotlights/syria
\textsuperscript{12} http://www.borgenmagazine.com/education-in-jordan-classrooms/
\textsuperscript{15} Mousel Situation Report No. 27, OCHA Iraq, April 2017. unocha.org/iraq
More than 1.1 million children in host communities have been affected by the crisis. Schools across the country are overcrowded and understaffed. Many operate two or three shifts, reducing the amount of time children have to learn. In classes that are running, there is a high pupil-to-teacher ratio. Teachers are in short supply – and many of them have been displaced. Many schools are being used to house internally displaced persons which will likely delay the start of the school year for children living in those areas. One in five schools in Iraq is out of use due to conflict. Since 2014, the UN has verified 135 attacks on education facilities and personnel.\(^\text{16}\)

II. Education of Girls and Children with Disability

It is expected that in cases of conflicts and wars, disability due to direct injury is expected to become increased dramatically. Children with disability have therefore doubled needs in the educations sector.

Of the estimated 1.4m Syrians who have found safety in Jordan, about a third have a disability or serious health condition.

Recent surveys on Syrian refugees show that at least 22 per cent of surveyed Syrian refugees have an impairment; 6 per cent have a severe impairment, of those 22 per cent, half experience difficulties in daily living activities. About 44.2 per cent of impairments recorded in this survey were physical.\(^\text{17}\)

This is a very high number knowing that hosting communities and countries struggle to provide basic food and shelter services. For example, the Jordanian government admits it’s unable to support everyone to address the needs of the disabled, they need more money.\(^\text{18}\).

Almost half a million children are suffering from acute malnutrition in Yemen and 2,450 have been disabled. This number is increasing every day as children outside of school are at risk of being recruited into armed forces and prone to further injury and disability.\(^\text{19}\)

III. Gender and Education in Emergencies

Due to the gendered, unequal roles of girls and boys, crises impact girls and boys differently. Disaster mortality rates are higher for women than for men. A study of 141 countries found that more women than men are killed during disasters; particularly in poor communities and at an earlier age.\(^\text{20}\) Gender inequality started time long before recent conflicts. However, girls are now more vulnerable and more disadvantaged. Conflicts always reduce access of girls to education. This is because girls start carrying caring responsibilities and also may be forced into child labor.

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Girls also are liable during crisis for more Gender-based violence (GBV) which is rooted in unequal gendered power relations and often increases in times of crisis. This is due to a number of factors, including: a breakdown of law and order leading to impunity for the perpetrators of violence; risks associated with displacement; and the use of rape as a weapon of war. Domestic violence, which can be exacerbated by the availability of weapons, may also increase during and after conflict.

Measures of the impact of armed conflict and violence often focus on fatalities, not, for example, GBV/VAWG, and therefore the experience of girls and women tends to be less visible in determining responses.

In Yemen, in 2016, the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) verified 699 incidents of grave violations of child rights. Conflict-affected families with limited or no income prioritize their basic needs in all sectors, although they may only be able to fulfill these needs by resorting to negative coping strategies. Poverty have forced conflict-affected households to engage in negative coping strategies that place them at heightened risk of GBV and other protection risks. For instance, sharing shelter with others can result in overcrowding, which raises risks of lack of privacy and sexual exploitation.

Also as more girls are pulled out of school to engage them in child labour, separating them from the family, marrying off girls at an early age, and sending children to armed groups or forces. Adolescents are one of the groups most likely to adopt risky behaviour and coping mechanisms which often put them at even greater risk of abuse and exploitation.

IV. Education in the Arab World Under Attack

There is evidence that there has been threats and/or deliberate use of force against students, teachers, academics, education trade union members, government officials, aid workers and other education staff, and against schools, universities and other education institutions, carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic or religious reasons. There is also evidence of military use of education buildings and facilities.

At least 9 countries in the region have experienced a pattern of targeted attacks on schools, teachers, and students, or the military use and occupation of schools by armed forces (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Syria). The most comprehensive report on education under attack is the Education under Attack report of 2014 by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. More and more data is documented on attacks on education. This could be due to increasing awareness of the problem and more and better reporting of such attacks since the earlier studies were published or an actual increase in the number of attacks.

This and other reports show that attack on education is not only but prominently in areas of war and conflict. For example in Yemen, or instance, there were 720 incidents involving the

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22 HNO Yemen 2017.
use of force or violence affecting schools in 2009-2012 but war of March 2015 only aggravated the scope and intensity of the attacks.\textsuperscript{24}

The reported motives for targeting schools, students, teachers and other education staff include the desire to destroy symbols of government control or demonstrate control over an area by an anti-government groups, block the education of girls, or any type of education perceived to teach or impose alien religious or cultural values, biased history or an unfamiliar language of instruction, abduct or facilitate recruitment of children as combatants, or logistical support in military operations or seize schools and universities for use as barracks and bases or firing positions, or attack schools because they are being used for these purposes by opposing forces.

V. Main Challenges facing Civil society working with Education in Emergencies

- Decreasing space for CSOs to operate and fewer opportunities to participate in governance processes is a major challenge for CSOs working in situations of conflict.
- Security threats are grave problems that impact the work of CSOs.
- The inevitable breakdown of systems that occurs in conflict situations deeply mars the effectiveness of civil society due lack of governance structure.
- In conflict and post-conflict situations, the scope and nature of aid are often diverted to security or basic needs not education.
- CSOs not always have a seat or negotiation power in education clusters or local education groups and have little influence on policy making or in the design of humanitarian response plans.\textsuperscript{25}
- CSOs face difficulties in logistically implementing their programs due to financial or other forms of sanctions. Some CSOs are prosecuted and their accounts are withheld, also some CSO personnel are either kidnapped or intimidated and their mobility becomes difficult.
- CSOs face problems with access to education data or difficulties performing their monitoring role due to non-transparent management of the education sector.

VI. Opportunities for EiE:

- Passing of UN Security Council Resolution 1998 in July 2011\textsuperscript{26}

This resolution made attacks on schools and school personnel a trigger for listing in the annexes to the UN Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict. This, in turn, requires the violating parties to develop action plans to end such attacks or face consequences that can include targeted sanctions applied by the UN Security Council. The passing of Resolution 1998 has ensured that the UN pays greater attention to attacks on schools and teachers in monitoring and reporting carried out by Country Task Forces of the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in

\textsuperscript{24} ibid
\textsuperscript{26} http://www.un.org/press/en//2011/sc10319.doc.htm
situations of armed conflict. This mechanism however did not operate in all affected countries because the activation of the MRM requires a high standard of UN verification of incidents and identification of perpetrators.

- More funds earmarked for EiE

The Arab countries have diverse levels of financing education. Low income countries are those who have been falling in and out of wars and conflicts and have all the common challenge of low education budgets. All countries in the region have less than 5% of GDP and less than 20% of government budget allocated for education. In most of these countries measures of increasing financing such as tax reforms remain far fetched due to fragility of state or lack of established mechanisms of good governance.

However there are some windows of light opening into this dark scene. Education Cannot Wait is a good example on improved mechanisms to finance EiE. Funding covers so far crisis-affected countries in the region such as Yemen, Syria and Somalia who will benefit from improved access to quality learning, teacher training, psycho-social support and new school facilities.

ECW is already funding quality education for an estimated 2 million vulnerable children in Chad, Ethiopia, Syria and Yemen, over half of whom are girls.

- Recognition of conflict sensitive Education and Education as a Peace building tool

There are now more and more tools that can be used to make education more conflict sensitive. By that we mean making education policies and programs to have the greatest positive impact possible (and reduce any negative possible effects) taking into consideration the contexts and parties of the conflict. Education is increasingly being recognized as a tool for resilience and tool building which not only opens more doors for funding but also which makes education more inherent to peace building programming and thus protecting this sector from further attack.

- National Opportunities:

There are key opportunities to bring national attention to the status of education, and to leverage political will. National elections are due in over 20 countries in which GCE member coalitions operate, and many others have provincial elections. Arab countries such as Jordan and Qatar are countries taking part in Voluntary National Reviews for the High Level Political Forum in 2017. Several national education coalitions are and can be submitting reports to treaty bodies in 2017. These opportunities provide space for pushing for the implementation of the Education 2030 agenda nationally, and raising issues pertaining to state failure at the international level.

Global Advocacy Movements in Support for Education

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28 www.conflictsensitivity.org
29 GAWE2017 Campaign Overview. Global Campaign for Education.
There is a current strong movement that is advocating for SDG4 agenda with rigor and enthusiasm. The campaign involves several international, regional and local actors who agree on key messages and deliverables. Global action week for 2017 is a good example which focuses on advocating for accountability of states to deliver SDG4 and that includes accountability to EiE.

VII. Recommendations for Education Stakeholders

So what can be done? There are several key recommendations for all stakeholders to better address education needs in emergency:

- Effective monitoring, assessment and reporting are crucial to diagnose the needs for education. These should not only include the education under attack indicators but also others like equality and quality of education.
- Strengthen coordination mechanisms between UN agencies, international and national NGOs and education ministries and district education offices to improve planning processes. Participation of civil society organizations in education clusters should be effective and genuine.
- Advocate to protect education from attack and work towards the reduction in or an end to the use of schools and universities for military purposes. This can be done through introducing legislation, jurisprudence or military policies restricting, and in some cases completely prohibiting, the military use of schools or universities, although this injunction is not consistently enforced. (such as the case most recently in South Sudan, which in August 2013 issued a military order prohibiting its armed forces from using schools for military purposes)
- Work with communities and encourage citizen participation to hold states accountable to education in emergency. Also communities have contributed to protection in a range of ways that have proven successful in other regions (such as Afghanistan, Liberia and Mexico).
- Donors to commit to increase of education share in humanitarian aid to at least 20% and work closely with states to find domestic sources that can cover at least 20% of government budget to education sector.
- Civil society must be given a voice in any decision-making process which impacts on the lives of citizens, at all levels, and this is critical to the realisation of the SDGs. Yet in too many countries the voice of citizens is being stifled; across all regions of the world, certain national governments have taken more aggressive action to limit civil society activity, from restrictions on funding, ‘political activity’ or protest, to direct criminalisation of civil society activity.