SAFE SCHOOLS: THE HIDDEN CRISIS

A framework for action to deliver Safe, Non-violent, Inclusive and Effective Learning Environments

Theirworld

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Every child in the world deserves to be in school. Not just any school. A safe school — free from fear and intimidation. A school that isn't in danger of being attacked or used for military purposes. Where every girl and boy can learn, free from the threat of abduction, harassment, bullying, exploitation and sexual violence.

This year, an estimated 75 million children will have their education disrupted by crises such as conflicts and natural disasters. And beyond the direct humanitarian crises, many others risk gang violence, extremism, abuse and all kinds of discrimination every day, just so that they can sit in a classroom and learn.

Education isn't a luxury. It is a basic human right that reaps lifelong rewards for the child, their family, their community and their country. There has been progress in the worldwide struggle to deliver safe and equitable learning for all — but nowhere near enough. The projections in this report reveal that the scale of the challenge is huge: if we fail to prioritise safe schools in the contexts of conflict, humanitarian emergencies and countries with high levels of violence, the Sustainable Development Goal will remain far out of reach. But we have come up with a framework for action that can make giant strides and achieve remarkable results through coordinated action and multiple entry points for engagement.

If all of us — from governments and global funders to NGOs, philanthropists, the business sector and local communities — work together in bold and innovative ways, we can reach for the high-hanging fruit and collectively become the first generation to ensure every single child is in a safe school and receiving a free, quality and inclusive education.

Sarah Brown
Chair of Trustees, Theirworld

Opposite Photo caption.

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Safe Schools

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education is the cornerstone of development and is recognised by the UN as a human right. Access to safe learning environments is a vital at every stage of child's education — from the pre-primary years, during which a child's brain undergoes 90% of its development, through to adolescence, when young people are prepared for the contributions they will then make to their communities, the economy and the wider world. A quality education can improve the life chances of individuals themselves — especially to girls — and the communities around them. It is strongly linked to improved physical and mental health, lower risks of exploitation such as modern slavery, child labour and armed conflict, greater equality, and more peaceful, prosperous societies.

Yet the ability to obtain a basic education is currently being jeopardised for millions of children worldwide by a lack of safety experienced in or around school. And there is reason to believe the situation is worsening. Nearly 370 million children live in conflict zones – an increase of 75% since the early 1990s. Millions live in countries where high rates of violence – much of it related to gangs and organised crime – terrorise communities and keep children out of school. Nearly 40 million children a year have their education interrupted by natural disasters such as earthquakes and disease outbreaks. The number of child refugees fleeing conflict and extremism, high violence and/or natural disasters is also on the rise, passing the 13 million mark in recent years.

Children can be attacked on the way to or from school, be deterred from attending school by real or perceived threats, and are increasingly being attacked within schools themselves — by militias, gangs and extremist groups looking to recruit, abduct, indoctrinate, intimidate, or use the school infrastructure itself for military purposes. Attacks on children and schools – including sexual assault – are often carried out as a specific military tactic. From within schools, bullying, corporal punishment and gender-based violence by teachers and fellow pupils remain disturbingly common. A lack of safety in schools can also impact on numbers of trained teachers. And while any child can be affected by these threats, it is the most marginalised groups in society – girls, LGBTI

youth, children affected by health problems and disability – that are most disproportionately affected, further hampering their life chances and pushing them further to the margins.

New projections produced for this report reveal the sheer scale of the challenge and the impact of inaction on school safety. **Within two years, there will be an estimated 550 million children of school and pre-school age (3–18), living across 64 countries, whose education is under threat from war, endemic high violence, or environmental threats. By 2030, this number will rise to 622 million — nearly a third of all children that will be alive at that point.** The projections are grim: nearly a quarter of these children (22%) will not complete primary school, over half (54%) will not complete secondary school, and three-quarters (75%) will fail to meet basic learning outcomes in literacy and maths. This translates to three of every four young people in countries affected by conflict, violence and emergency unequipped with the skills to participate fully in society and the economy.

As these figures starkly show, failure to improve the safety of schools in these countries makes realising the ambitions set out in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on education (SDG4) impossible. Moreover, denying these children the education they deserve risks depriving some of the world's most challenging areas of entire generations of builders, producers, innovators, problem-solvers, peace-makers, entrepreneurs, carers and life-savers. This deprivation in turn would perpetuate the cycle of unsafe education into the next generation and beyond, locking many of these countries into a future of violence and poverty. Urgent, large-scale action is clearly needed.

Yet current efforts by the international community fall well short of what will be required to avert this bleak scenario. There have been tentative signs of progress in recent years: funding for education through humanitarian and development aid is on the rise, and the creation in 2016 of the Education Cannot Wait fund represents a landmark in recognising the position of education in emergencies at the nexus between humanitarian and development aid. Yet still, nearly two thirds of humanitarian appeals fail to raise even 25% of the funds requested, despite consistently under-reaching in their ambitions. Domestic funding for education within countries affected by conflict, environmental threats, and high violence, stands at around half of what is recommended; and on current trends the external financing gap between realising SDG4 and the amount available will reach $89 billion by 2030.

A framework for action

The scale of the challenge is clearly immense. It is not, however, insurmountable.

There are a range of actions that will facilitate progress towards achieving SDG4, averting much of the crisis in safe education depicted by the figures above. These actions include:

— Ensuring all bilateral and multilateral agencies prioritise safe schools and learning environments through the policy directives which guide their funding and programming.

— Ensuring currently neglected areas, such as early childhood development, child mental health and wellbeing, and the availability of trained teachers, are prioritised in proportion to their long-term impact.

— Improving co-ordination between education and health/wellbeing-related aid, to reflect the extent to which outcomes in both sectors are interconnected.

— Ensuring sustained efforts to reduce the marginalisation of girls, refugees, LGBTI youth, children living with disabilities and other marginalised groups are explicitly factored into multi-year aid and education planning.

— Better integrating multi-partner data collection and sharing into response planning and delivery.

— Ensuring all countries have endorsed and act on the Safe Schools Declaration, under penalty of sanctions, prosecution or other consequences if they don't.

— Promoting child rights and safeguarding — particularly in relation to marginalised groups — as part of teacher training, national curricula, public education and legislation.

— Ensuring maximum value is secured from investment in safe schools by researching, innovating and piloting new approaches, whilst taking approaches that have proved successful to scale.

— Increasing aid for education by ensuring donor countries gradually increase their aid contribution to 0.7% of their GDP, and commit 15% of this aid spend to education.

— Supporting the governments of countries affected by high violence, conflict or environmental threats to prioritise safe schools and invest close to 6% of their GDP in education. Coupled with the above aid commitments, this would be almost entirely close the current shortfall in funding.

— Unlocking an additional $10 billion funding for education in lower- to middle-income countries by ensuring the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) is established and funded.

— Foundations and other private philanthropy identifying how their funding and prioritisation of safe schools and learning environments can enhance existing funding streams.

Accompanying these recommendations, this report provides a five-step Framework for Action and a Resource Annex to help actors identify the entry points and focus areas to act on. This Framework comprises:

1. **The principles** that need to underpin action on safe schools (identifying and strengthening policies and programmes, supporting governments to improve their capacity, and promoting dialogue among families, children and adolescents, authorities, the private sector and communities)

2. **The actors** (accompanied by their comparative advantages) that have a part to play in tackling safe schools: national governments, donor governments, international organisations, global funds, NGOs, civil society organisations, philanthropy, business and academia.

3. **The populations** each actor could focus on, depending on their interests, objectives and comparative advantages. These include: early years, primary-age children, adolescents, teachers, or combinations thereof.

4. **The marginalised groups and barriers** to inclusive education that each actor could focus on, such as refugees, disability, gender discrimination, child exploitation, LGBTI discrimination, and mental health and wellbeing.

5. **The range of actions** they could take, at a global, national or local level, to help prioritise, fund and deliver safe education.

The breadth of these recommendations and Framework for Action reflect the fact that — as has been shown by study after study — equitable, quality education is an essential component of any attempt to build a happier, healthier, more peaceful and more prosperous world. Similarly, the picture is increasingly clear that ensuring the safety of pupils and teachers in and around schools is an essential part of any efforts to achieve that equitable, quality education.

If the issue of safe schools is not adequately addressed, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals will remain a distant pipe dream, with all that this entails for continuing cycles of violence, deprivation and marginalisation in communities across the world. Clearly, tackling unsafe education is a monumental task. However, with the right actors supporting the right policies in the right ways, huge strides can be made. The lives and livelihoods of hundreds of millions of children, now and into the future, rely on this generation making that ambition a reality.

INTRODUCTION

Safe schools and learning environments (also called 'safe learning spaces') are physical locations or ways in which young people can learn free from systematic threats to the physical and mental wellbeing of themselves and their teachers. They are places where the physical infrastructure is also safe for learning.

Threats to safe schools exist in every country in the world. However, they are inevitably heightened in countries affected by conflict, environmental disasters, and high levels of endemic violence. Children and young people living in such regions often grow up with extreme violence and instability as an ever-present backdrop to their daily lives, dimming hopes of brighter future.

The known disruption caused to their education — pre-school, primary, secondary and beyond — is immense: it is estimated that some **75 million children and youth will have their education disrupted this year due to an emergency or crisis.**[1]

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Yet the true impact of this crisis is hidden, the daily consequences unseen and the lasting repercussions unaddressed. While the world news broadcasts the devastating images of the Syrian conflict, the flow of refugees from Myanmar, or the latest outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, the disruption to education and lack of opportunities for children and young people that result from these and other threats, in numerous countries across the world, rarely make the headlines. The lasting and significant repercussions this has for political and economic stability, mental and physical health, inequalities, marginalisation, exploitation, abuse and violence across entire regions, is denied the profile and prioritisation it needs.

This report aims to help address this oversight, by looking at the threats posed to the education of children and young people worldwide, the impact these threats have on an individual and societal level, and the potential means through which this growing, neglected crisis can be addressed.

What makes this report unique?

Reports are produced annually documenting the challenges and abuses experienced by children caught up in war and other emergencies. Many look at the impact such scenarios present for education.

However, this report brings together, for the first time:

— **A global picture of the range of threats posed to schools and learning environments**, from conflict, violent extremism and environmental disasters, to less commonly covered threats such as gang violence, bullying, school-based sexual abuse, and corporal punishment.

— **New analysis indicating the scale of the challenge of delivering schools** — from the countries worst affected, to the number of children and young people under threat, the impact these threats have their individual life chances, and wider implications of inaction for national and international peace and prosperity, including our ability to meet of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

— **A review of the national and international funding shortfalls** currently preventing significant progress in the pursuit of safe schools.

— **Recommendations on the policies, investment and stakeholders** that will need to be activated if the safe schools challenge outlined in the report is to be met.

— **A framework for action** identifying the entry points, focus areas and actions through which a diverse range of actors can help make a difference on a local, national and global level.

Part I
THE COSTS OF INACTION: UNSAFE SCHOOLS AND THE IMPACT ON HUMANITY

Calculating the scale and impact of unsafe schools and learning environments

Threats to safe schools and learning environments can occur anywhere. However, the children most vulnerable to the impact of unsafe education are those living in low- and middle-income countries affected by conflict, high levels of civil violence, or with high vulnerability to environmental threats. This can be seen in the strong correlations that emerge when prevalence data relating to out-of-school children are mapped against GDP data, and data relating to the severity of civil violence, natural disasters and armed conflict.[2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

Until now, no data has been produced with which to assess how significant a challenge providing safe education in these countries will be. Similarly, there is little data with which to assess the costs of failing to address this challenge, not least for our ability to realise the ambitions outlined in the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education. Such analysis is essential for understanding the size and nature of the target population, the international response required to help, and the humanitarian and global economic consequences if this is not done.

To conduct this analysis, we expanded the traditional scope of countries to identify a broader context in which safe schools and learning environments would become ever more important as the international community strives towards achieving SDG4.

To do this, this report looks at a group of countries which includes: (1) countries classified as fragile by the World Bank ;[7] (2) countries classified as fragile by the Global Partnership for Education ;[8] (3) countries with humanitarian appeals launched at the start of 2017 or party to one of the four regional response plans in 2017 ;[9] and (4) countries with levels of violence exceeding violent death rates of at least 20 per 100,000 population [10] *(see table overleaf for overview).*

Countries identified for this report as characterised by high violence, conflict or vulnerability to environmental threats

Country Name	On World Bank list of fragile situations 11	On GPE list of fragile and conflict-affected countries 12	Annual violent deaths exceed 20 per 100,000 13	Humanitarian or Regional Response plans in 2017 humanitarian appeal 14
Afghanistan	✖	✖	✖	✖
Bahamas			✖	
Belize			✖	
Brazil			✖	
Burundi	✖	✖		✖
Cameroon		✖		✖
Central African Republic	✖	✖	✖	✖
Chad	✖	✖		✖
Colombia			✖	
Comoros	✖	✖		
Congo, Dem. Rep.	✖	✖		✖
Congo, Rep.	✖	✖		
Côte d'Ivoire	✖	✖		
Djibouti	✖	✖		✖
Dominican Republic			✖	
Egypt				✖
El Salvador			✖	
Eritrea	✖	✖		
Ethiopia		✖		✖
Gambia, The	✖	✖		
Guatemala			✖	
Guinea-Bissau	✖	✖		
Guyana			✖	
Haiti	✖	✖		✖
Honduras			✖	
Iraq	✖		✖	✖
Jamaica			✖	
Jordan				✖
Kenya				✖
Kiribati	✖			
Kosovo	✖			
Lebanon	✖			✖
Lesotho			✖	

Countries identified for this report as characterised by high violence, conflict or vulnerability to environmental threats (continued)

Country Name	On World Bank list of fragile situations [11]	On GPE list of fragile and conflict-affected countries [12]	Annual violent deaths exceed 20 per 100,000 [13]	UN Humanitarian or Regional Response Plans exist [14]
Liberia	✗	✗		
Libya	✗		✗	✗
Mali	✗	✗		✗
Marshall Islands	✗			
Micronesia, Fed. Sts	✗			
Mozambique	✗	✗		
Myanmar	✗	✗		✗
Namibia			✗	
Niger		✗		✗
Nigeria		✗		✗
Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank & Gaza)	✗			✗
Pakistan		✗		
Papua New Guinea	✗	✗		
Rwanda		✗		✗
Sierra Leone	✗	✗		
Solomon Islands	✗			
Somalia	✗	✗	✗	✗
South Africa			✗	
South Sudan	✗	✗	✗	✗
Sudan	✗	✗		✗
Syria	✗		✗	✗
Tanzania				✗
Togo	✗	✗		
Trinidad and Tobago			✗	
Turkey				✗
Tuvalu	✗			
Uganda		✗		✗
Ukraine				✗
Venezuela			✗	
Yemen, Rep.	✗	✗	✗	✗
Zimbabwe	✗	✗		

For these countries, we drew on the aggregate data which is part of the Education Commission model and dataset (based on UIS indicators) used in the 2016 report, *The Learning Generation*, to assess trends for these countries based on available information.[15] Collectively, this group of countries represent the primary hotspots for instability, conflict, emergency and violence — or countries addressing the impact of such instability by hosting refugees to support young people in their respective regions.

We defined 'school-age' children and young people as those within the ages normally associated with pre-primary (age 3–5 years), primary (6–10) and secondary (11–18) education. Post-secondary education (including technical, vocational, and university education) is not included within this definition, but we do provide demographic projections for this group of young adults of post-secondary age living in these contexts. In the analysis, reference to 'basic learning benchmarks' or 'basic skills' uses the Education Commission's definition.[16]

In all countries included in this study, the need for safe schools is important — and an understanding og the scale of young people living in these countries and the challenges they face as we approach the 2030 deadline will be paramount — if inclusive quality education for all is to be achieved.

The scale of the challenge

Our analysis shows that failure to address safe schools and learning environments proactively today will have a devastating impact on the education, knowledge and skills and future opportunities of the generations to come. The numbers show that:

— In 2020 there will be approximately 550 million school-age youth living in low- and middle-income countries experiencing the impacts of conflict, humanitarian disasters or high violence. This number will increase to more than 622 million young people by 2030.

— Around 48 million of these will be of pre-primary age (0–4) in 2020, growing to 52 million by 2030. 255 million and 244 million will be of primary (6–10) and secondary (11–18) age respectively by 2020, growing to 286 million and 284 million by 2030.

— By 2030, these countries will be home to nearly 200 million additional youth of post-secondary age, impacting on the SDG4 target of increasing *"the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship"*.[17]

— Of the school-age population, 75% are on track to finish primary school by 2020 — and this only improves to 78% by 2030, meaning that in the SDG year, over one-fifth of children in these countries will still not complete primary education on current trends.

— The outlook for secondary education is worse. By 2020, based on available data, only 40% of youth will complete secondary school in these countries — this only increases to 46% by 2030, or less than half. In absolute terms, about 150 million young people in these countries will not complete secondary school.

622 million children

living in countries where safe schools are at risk

1.6 billion
school-age children worldwide

622 million
living in countries
where safe schools
are at risk

Of these 622 million children

52 million
pre-primary age

286 million
primary age

284 million
secondary age
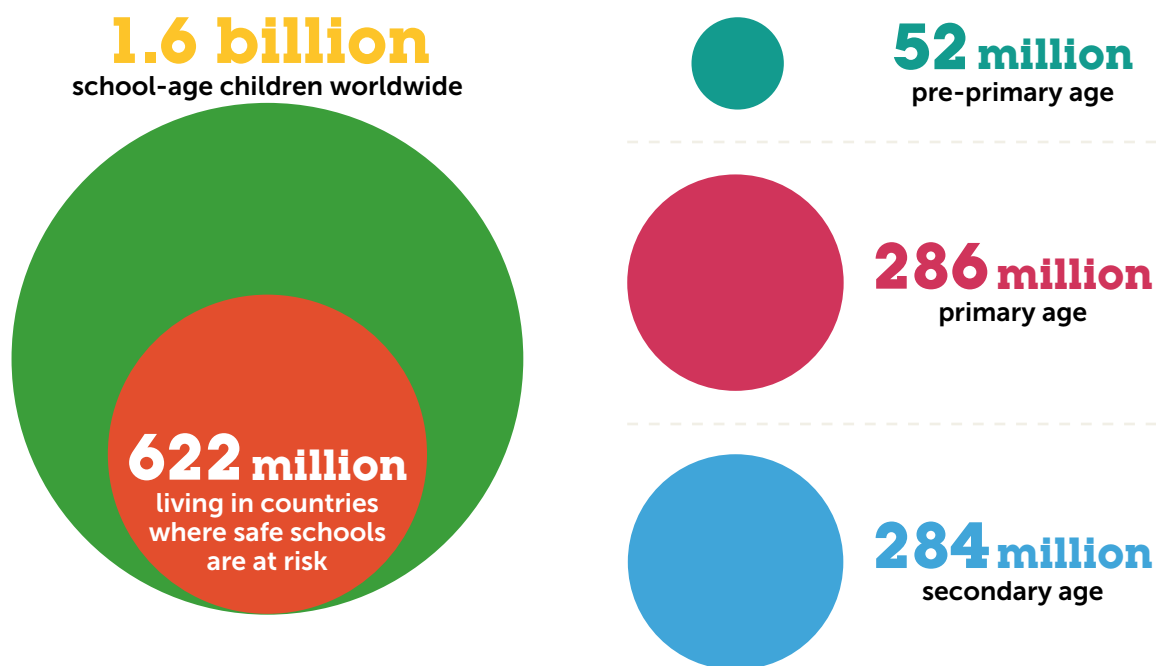
The projections on learning in these countries are even more troubling.

— While we expect about 75% of young people to complete primary school in these countries, only 43% will have reached basic learning benchmarks. By 2030, only 49% of primary students will be on track to reach basic learning benchmarks in these countries.

— Overall, we expect that only 20% of primary and secondary students in these countries will be on track to complete secondary school and reach basic learning benchmarks by 2020.

— In 2030, projections (based on countries with available data) suggest that only 25% of young people of primary or secondary age will be on track to complete secondary school and achieve basic learning benchmarks.

PROGRESS TOWARD UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4

Number of children and youth living in countries affected by conflict, emergency and high levels of violence

2020 — **550** million

2030 — **622** million

100m 200m 300m 400m 500m 600m

SDG4 Target

○—○ % expected to complete **primary school**

○—○ % expected to also complete **secondary school**

○—○ % expected to also achieve **basic learning outcomes**

100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

75% → **78%** (primary school)

40% → **46%** (secondary school)

20% → **25%** (basic learning outcomes)
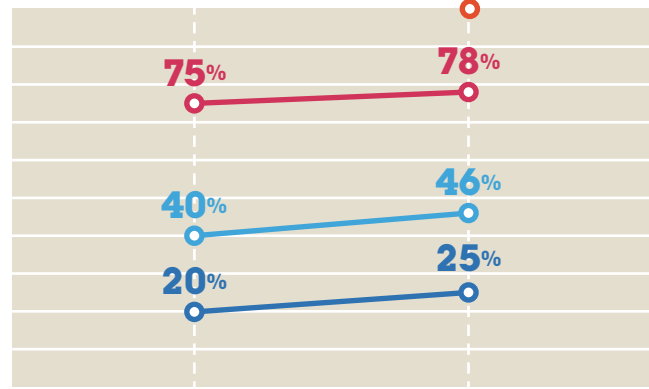
2020   2030

A core commitment of the Incheon Declaration is that *"no target should be considered met unless met for all"*.[19] Yet our projections suggest that by 2030, three-quarters of all children in the world's most fragile countries — equivalent to nearly half a billion children worldwide — will be left behind without having reached the most basic literacy and numeracy benchmarks. SDG4 will have failed — just like the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals before it — because governments and donors failed to prioritise education.

Even more troubling is that the young people being left behind in this scenario will be those living in unstable communities impacted by war, crisis, environmental disaster or high rates of violence: in short, the world's most disadvantaged children, and those already paying the price for the political and economic failures of previous generations worldwide. The impact of equipping only one in four young people in these countries with the most basic levels of learning should be unjust at best, and terrifying at worst, given the contexts and potential impact on the societies and economies where three out of four 18 year olds will lack basic tools anticipated to be provided by a quality and inclusive education.

This would mean failing children such as 11-year-old Zainab, who asked, having lost the last two years of her education as a result of the war in her native Syria: *"What if I get old and I continue on this same path and I lose my entire future? I want to study and grow up and teach my children as well. What if all these years pass by and I don't become anything?"* [20]

It would mean ignoring the pleas of Aisha Yesufu, leader of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign to rescue the 276 schoolgirls abducted by extremist group Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria, when she said *"Atrocities were just being overlooked. They were being meted out, and the world just didn't look."* [21]

It would mean turning a blind eye to the girls growing up in a Liberian society where half of schoolboys believe that the sexual violence is just a *"normal part of a man — woman relationship."* [22]

It would mean ignoring Aldegonde Batsyoto, head teacher at a school in the Ebola-struck Democratic Republic of the Congo, who reported on the first day of the new school year: *"Today, we only enrolled two pupils … in the villages, they're afraid that children will be contaminated at school."* [23]

And it would mean forgetting about 17-year-old Alfonso, recalling how gang violence in Honduras forced him out of education: *"The gang told me that if I returned to school, I wouldn't make it home alive. The gang had killed two kids I went to school with, and I thought I might be next."* [24]

The imperative to work together in providing safe, quality education for all is clear. Our failure to do so will result in many millions of frustrated and vulnerable young people, denied their rights and the chance of peaceful future, with thwarted ambitions and unfairly limited career prospects: the opposite of the 2030 vision we aspire to achieve.

The consequences of unsafe schools

SDG4 outlines a range of objectives relating to global education to be achieved by 2030. These include: [25]

— Providing safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all;
— Ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes;
— Ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education; and
— Eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

The sheer number of children who will be living in fragile, disrupted or violent areas will significantly impact on efforts to reach these targets on equality and childhood-long learning. For young people who are already marginalised, including girls, LGBTQ youth, children with disabilities, affected by HIV/AIDS, and/or living in extreme poverty, humanitarian emergencies and violence have been show to disrupt their education, pushing them further to the margins.

Across the board, the education of too many young people will also be interrupted or ended at vital moments in their development. This is particularly the case during the pre-school years — when 90% of their brain's growth takes place — and the secondary education years, which is so crucial in their preparation for the workplace and to help shape their communities as adults.

This section explores the importance of safe schools, from birth through to adulthood, and the populations who will be affected if no action is taken.

Early childhood development

Research suggests that the early childhood years (ages 0−5) are the most important for a young person's development. [26] **However, they are often the most neglected when it comes to their education.**

There are strong links between safe early learning and pre-primary education and the other pillars of early childhood development as outlined in the *Nurturing Care* framework, particularly nutrition and good health. [27]

Nourishment between the mother's pregnancy and the child's second birthday is the most critical period for structural brain development. Malnutrition during this period causes stunting and cognitive impairment even before a child has had a chance to enter a classroom. The Young Lives study, commissioned by Save the Children, found that malnourished children scored on average 7% lower in mathematics tests, were 19% less able to read at age eight, and 13% less likely to be in the appropriate grade than those who were well nourished. [28]

We project that just over 52 million children of pre-primary age (i.e. 3–5 years old) will live in countries experiencing conflict, humanitarian emergency or high levels of violence by 2030. This is significant as by the time a child turns five, its brain has already undergone 90% of its development. [29] This makes the developmental support and pre-primary education received by children during this period absolutely vital.

Research has shown that participating in quality pre-primary education *"has a significant impact on a child's future prospects in education and in adult life … and is particularly vital for the most marginalised young children in the poorest countries."* [30] Failure to provide high quality ECD support, through safe spaces and pre-schools, therefore puts children at a disadvantage that can persist as they grow, ensuring they are never given the chance to reach their full potential.

Despite the tremendous need, early childhood development remains seriously under-prioritised in emergency response. Although the need for a concerted focus on early learning in emergency settings is clear, nearly two-thirds of humanitarian response plans lack an ECD component. Where quality early childhood targets and programmes do exist, resources are frequently insufficient for the promised response to be delivered. [31] Just 1% of early childhood development aid is spent on children's pre-primary education. This denies too many children under 5 the safe spaces needed for their physical protection during a crisis, for playing and learning opportunities, and through which they can have a point of access to the clean water, sanitation, nourishment and hygiene facilities needed to support their development.

The interlinkages between education, nutrition, health, protection and care during these years are perhaps more important than later in life. The current crisis in Yemen, for example, in which an estimated 1.8 million children under the age of five are acutely malnourished, will also have a significant impact on future educational outcomes in addition to the more widely-reported health impacts. [32]

Due to the dramatic developments children undergo before their fifth birthday, current failures to support children in early life reduce the impact of all efforts to support their education and development later in life. The impacts of inequality are being ingrained at an early age. The longer-term impact on the future safety, wellbeing and prosperity of entire regions of this neglect is incalculable.

Primary age education

In 2030, the largest population of school age children will be of primary school age (6–11). **We project that approximately 286 million children will live in countries affected by conflict, humanitarian emergencies and violence.**

These years are crucial for a range of reasons. It is during these years that the brain acclimatises to formal learning environments, impacting on young people's ability to continue learning throughout the remainder of their youth. The development of motor skills, started during the early years, are strengthened, and pathways for more abstract reasoning start to develop. It is also during this period of their lives that many children will develop basic skills — such as literacy and numeracy — that form the cornerstones of their future education.

Primary education has traditionally been the best-funded area of basic education — both in general and in emergencies. Even amongst marginalised groups, such as refugees, enrolment in primary school is routinely significantly higher than secondary school. [33]

However, progress made towards achieving universality in primary education attendance in the early years of the millennium has halted over recent years. [34] Our projections show that by 2030, more than 1 in 5 primary age children in countries affected by conflict, high violence, or with high vulnerability to environmental disaster, will still not complete primary education. The number of children not in primary education in these countries will have declined by just three percentage points over the preceding decade. The slow rate of progress means millions of children will be denied that vital link between their early childhood development and their transition to adulthood during adolescence.

Progression into adolescence

Adolescence is a critical age in the development of all young people. It is an age during which the brain prepares for adulthood by strengthening connections regularly used for thinking and processing, while whittling away connections less frequently used in the preceding years of their childhood. It is also an age in which children become more predisposed to risk-taking and impulsive behaviour. [35, 36]

We project that in 2030, 133 million lower secondary-age youth (11–14) and 151 million upper secondary-age youth (15–17) — a total of more than 284 million adolescents — will live in countries experiencing conflict, humanitarian emergency and high violence.

The way the adults around them respond to these changes — be they educators and family members, or individuals with more exploitative motives such as armed or extremist groups — can be decisive in their future. Adolescents out of education are often the age-group most vulnerable to some of the negative consequences of unsafe education, such as child labour, sexual violence, forced marriage, radicalisation, and recruitment into gangs or armed forces and groups.

Safe schools and learning environments are of significant importance during this age. Quality education at this time can provide them with the education and knowledge needed to manage in challenging contexts, be prepared with the skills needed for their current lives and future — be it for political, social, and cultural participation or economic engagement in their societies.

However, despite the clear benefits of education at this critical age, the lack of safe schools and learning environments means that adolescents are often among those least likely to receive that education. Among refugees in particular, only 23% of eligible children attend secondary school, compared to 84% of their age group worldwide.

The situation facing a generation of Syrian youth exemplifies this problem.

Research has highlighted the risk a lack of secondary education presents for adolescents and youth, arguing that *"safe learning environments can protect children from getting trapped in cheap labour, early marriage, or extremism. Not only do Syrian children have to*

PERCENTAGE OF ELIGIBLE ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Worldwide 84%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Refugees 23%
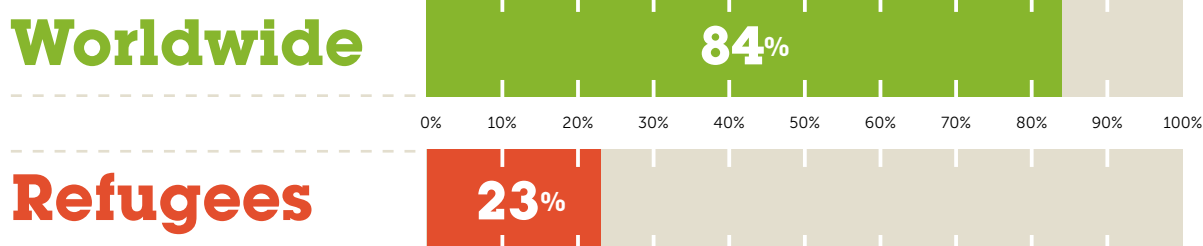
work to provide for their families, but they are also being forced into the worst forms of labour including the smuggling of goods and sexual exploitation." [37]

Yet despite some progress in the last few years, enrolment remains low. For instance, fewer than a quarter of Syrian refugees are enrolled in upper-secondary education in all host countries except Egypt. [38] This compares poorly to the two thirds of Syrian children enrolled in secondary school before the outbreak of war. [39] The ability of these children to play an active and productive role in rebuilding a peaceful society or their hope of finding decent employment in already challenging contexts will be limited.

These challenges are by no means confined to adolescents from refugee communities and countries torn apart by war.

In the Northern Triangle of Central America, violence is endemic and is costing young people their lives or their futures. Gang violence frequently takes place around or in schools, disrupting learning, leaving young people feeling vulnerable, fearful and often unwilling to run the risk of attending school. For others, lack of access to school or poor-quality education heightens their risk of being recruited into gangs, either through coercion or because the low quality of education offers limited learning or skills for an alternative path.

Beyond strictly secondary education, we project that an additional nearly 200 million young people will be of post-secondary age by 2030: young people seeking opportunity through skills-training, vocational or other forms of higher education.

In areas of conflict, emergency and violence, youth at the post-secondary age are seeking the skills necessary to engage in their social and economic contexts, to live without fear of violence. Research has highlighted concerns that the current disparity between employer needs and the skill sets with which young people leave school will grow, as technological breakthroughs such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and additive manufacturing — collectively characterised as the Fourth Industrial Revolution — transform workplaces and industries across the world. [40] As the recent report by Deloitte and the Global Business Coalition for Education highlights, *"factors such as frequent natural disasters, domestic violence, indigenous people's rights, refugee rights, statelessness, environmental*

concerns, crime rates, epidemics, and overall well-being all impact youths' ability to learn, develop skills, and gain employment." [41] Young people denied an education, or whose education has been disrupted, are at greatest risk of falling behind in this changing world. And these issues must be at the forefront not only of what education and safe schools prepare young people for – but of how safe learning spaces are provided and delivered in these contexts.

Teachers and education personnel

The threats to safe schools and learning environments do not only affect children and young people, but the education personnel and teachers who are responsible for delivering quality and inclusive education to young people. **In 2030, we predict that there will be 16.5 million teachers — ranging from pre-primary through to upper secondary — in countries impacted by violence, humanitarian emergencies and high levels of violence.**

In addition to the teachers, additional personnel — including school officials, school leaders, counsellors and staff — will also be living in such countries, although a dearth of current data makes it difficult to project the full scale of the adults actively engaged with delivering education in these contexts.

Teachers are at the heart of education. They are not immune from conflict and violence, yet their role becomes ever more important in situations of conflict and violence.

As explored later in this report, these adults working in education will face external threats on their way to school and internal threats within schools themselves. This has contributed to significant teacher shortages in many countries around the world. For instance, attacks on education personnel have been found to cause *"long term systemic consequences related to problems with teacher recruitment, disruption of education and employment cycles, and the diminution of quality education."* [42]

The most recent data show the impact this has had on class sizes. Pupil-teacher ratios (PTRs) in 29 of the 161 countries for which data is available exceeded the commonly used benchmark ratio of 40 pupils per teacher at primary school level. [43] The majority of these countries — and all of the countries that had experience the worst increases in their ratios since the turn of the millennium — are at war, experiencing high violence, or vulnerable to environmental disasters.

Analysis by UNESCO Institute for Statistics in 2016 showed that nearly 70 million teachers — 24.4 million at primary school level and 44.4 million for secondary school — will need to be recruited by 2030 in order to meet the world's educational needs. [44]

The barriers to the recruitment and retention of trained teachers and education professionals in these countries vary, but often include:

1. **difficult learning conditions** (e.g. lack of regular payment, overcrowded classrooms, increased probability of harassment and abuse, violence within or in route to school, and students with significant needs, in terms of psycho-social and physical needs for learning materials).

2. **systemic challenges** (e.g. poor leadership, limited administrative capacity or funding).

3. **conflict and violence** (e.g. lack of physical safety, targets of violence, lack of infrastructure for remote learning; see sections on 'External threats' for more examples).

4. **limited professional development** (e.g inconsistent or lacking relevance for the reality of scenarios within and outside of the classrooms). [45]

The promotion of safe schools needs to start with the protection, support, and professional development for the very teachers and personnel on the front lines of delivering safe schools and learning environments. Programmes run by organisations such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) have even shown that the provision of counselling and psychosocial support to teachers, especially in conflict zones, in turn supports the recovery of children. [46]

Teachers given sufficient support to work through these threats can enable children to continue their learning, regain a sense of normalcy, and rebuild their lives after trauma.

Teaching in warzones

"

The spark that set me on the road to becoming a teacher was when my own children developed trauma after witnessing a horrific incident on the way back from school. They became withdrawn, very afraid to go back to school, and very aggressive towards each other. Their academic work also suffered, and there was no professional help available.

Feeling very alone, I researched in libraries and bookshops and taught my children at home. A corner of our house became their new classroom. I started playing with my children to help them open up. We used balloons, puppets and role play — anything — to bring out their inner child. Eventually they got over their trauma, and returned to school. From then on I made it my purpose in life to help traumatised children in Palestinian public schools.

Here children witness violence first hand, or are exposed to it through news reports and social media. This suffering gets into the classroom and leads to frustration. The atmosphere is not normal. We see the suffering in our students' eyes every day.

I decided that teachers, like artists, must create an environment that frees the child and their imagination from their daily trauma, and helps them shape them shape it in a loving and beautiful way.

Due to a lack of funding I need to be creative to bring my lessons to life. I have built reading corners in the classroom, and chairs for the students from discarded vegetable boxes. I design games from my sister's neglected Lego pieces. Mathematics lessons are done with the aid of plastic cups, plates and clothespins. I made a puppet theatre out of a former clotheshorse, and an orchard in the classroom from artificial grass. The only limit is your imagination.

"

—

Hanan Al Hroub
Teacher, Palestine
Winner, 2016 Global Teacher Prize

Inequalities and marginalisation

Safe schools and spaces for learning can protect children and youth from physical harm and threats to their safety and is a key vehicle for learning about safe-practices, and promoting tolerance, conflict resolution and disaster risk reduction.

Provision of genuinely safe education and learning environments not only prevents increasing numbers of children being marginalised, but can help tackle prejudices and reintegrate marginalised groups into society. Conversely, research has shown the promotion of discriminatory policies and the denial of education to particular groups to be a driver of conflict, *"fuelling grievances, stereotypes, xenophobia and other antagonisms."* [47] Too little education, unequal access and the wrong type of education can have immediate and longer-term consequences.

Humanitarian emergencies and violence push marginalised groups even further to the margins when their education is disrupted. Societal groups affected can include girls, children with disabilities, those affected by HIV/AIDS, children from ethnic or religious minorities, those living in extreme poverty, or children marginalised by societal LGBTI prejudices towards themselves or their family.

Furthermore, the lack of safety within schools can also increase the number of children susceptible to marginalisation. For instance, the risk of disability rises in conflict, with children often subjected to injuries and trauma without adequate healthcare facilities to aid their rehabilitation, while among displaced populations in particular, a deficit in cultural sensitivities, or curricula taught in a language that they don't understand, can also further marginalise ethnic or religious minorities in the short-term, and further ingrain economic disadvantages for the future.

For those countries affected by conflict and violence, it is important that education policy and planning address the risk that a lack of inclusive and equitable quality education can bring. As UN guidelines make clear, education policy needs to take into account the need to: [48]
— *Protect learners from harm and put in place policies and procedures to ensure this.*
— *Provide quality education that will equip learners to cope with life challenges, develop as persons, and improve their livelihoods.*
— *Provide equitable access to education services.*

More than a decade ago the then UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education noted the lack of attention given to education by humanitarian actors and *"relative absence of clear programmatic principles, indicators, or funding"* before continuing: *"As parties to human rights treaties, States have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education, whether or not an emergency situation prevails. In addition, the right to education inheres in each person regardless of legal status, whether refugee, child soldier or internally displaced person"*. [49]

Yet a lack of prioritisation of education and safe schools in humanitarian conflicts, and a lack of clear targeted strategies by international donors, still remain a barrier to ensuring all children — including those already marginalised in vulnerable situations — enjoy safe inclusive and equitable quality education.

This section provides an overview of the marginalised groups who have the most to lose — and are often most left behind — in situations of conflict, emergency or violence. Failure to address the special needs of the most marginalised through safe schools and learning environments will further hinder progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4.

> **❝ As parties to human rights treaties, States have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education, whether or not an emergency situation prevails. In addition, the right to education inheres in each person regardless of legal status, whether refugee, child soldier or internally displaced person.**
> **—**
> **Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education, 2008.** [50]

Refugees and displaced children

One of the most frequently and devastatingly marginalised groups when it comes to education are children who have been driven away from their homes by war, violence or natural disaster — either within their own country (internally displaced) or across international borders (refugees).

This is a marginalised group that has grown in size over recent years. Crises are uprooting people as never before, creating huge displaced populations with entire generations of children for whom education is disrupted, dangerous, or simply non-existent. In 2017 the number of people displaced worldwide reached a record 68.5 million. Around half of this population is estimated to be children, of which a record 13 million are displaced internationally as refugees. [51] The most recent report by UNHCR indicates that in just one year, the number of refugee children out of school has increased by 15% (half a million children). [52]

Two-thirds of all refugees come from just five countries, with war in Syria responsible for the highest number of refugees (6.3 million), followed by Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. Among the global refugee population, the UN estimates that around 173,800 children are unaccompanied *(see graphic overleaf)*. [53]

Displaced populations are often the result of war, environmental disasters, or both: the camps in Dadaab, Kenya and Bidibidi, Uganda, the two largest refugee settlements according to UN figures, are populated by individuals fleeing both war and famine.

For the growing numbers of young people forced into refugee and displaced person camps, the time spent there can be substantial. Once displaced for six months, the average refugee will likely remain displaced for at least three years, with protracted refugee situations across the globe now lasting an estimated 26 years on average — more than the length of an entire childhood. [54]

Research has shown that children living in emergency situations regard education as a priority, with nearly two in five considering it their number one priority, and nearly 70% ranking it among their top three priorities. [55]

THE NUMBER OF DISPLACED CHILDREN WORLDWIDE

34 million
displaced children

20.8 million
internally displaced

13.2 million
refugees

174,000
unaccompanied

68.5 million
refugee and displaced people worldwide
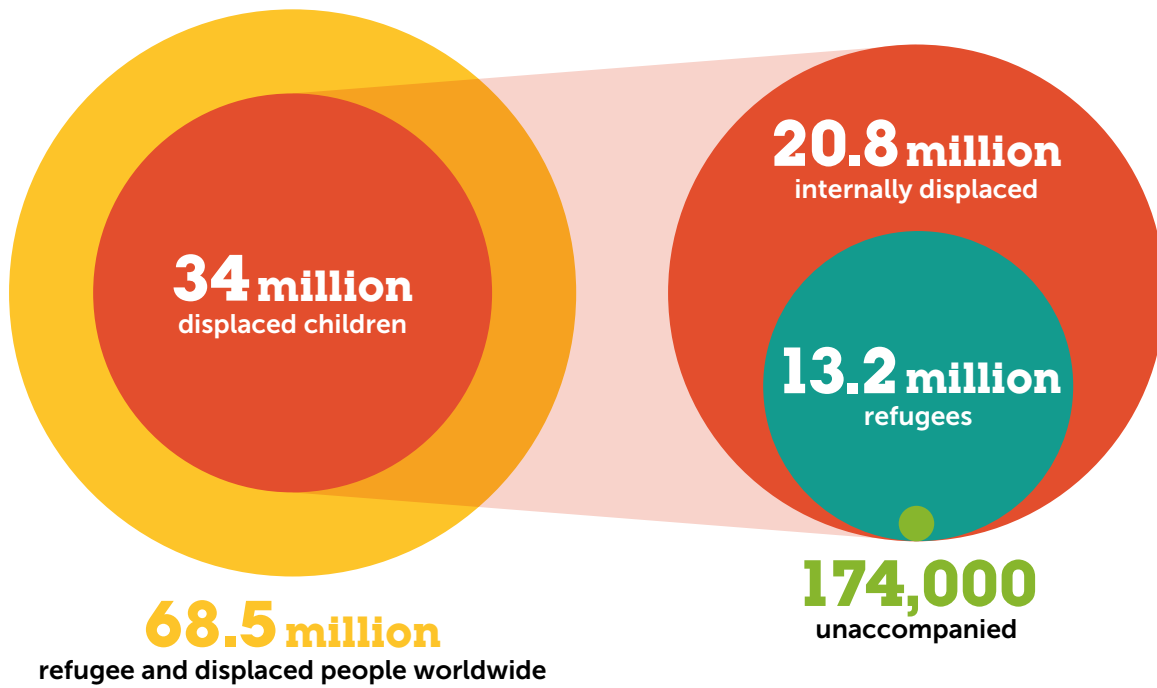
THE REFUGEE EDUCATION CRISIS [59, 60, 61]

Percentage of age-eligible children in school

Refugee children

61%
Primary school

23%
Secondary school

Children worldwide

92%
Primary school

84%
Secondary school

Yet despite this, barely 60% of age-eligible refugee children are in primary education (compared to a figure of 92% for all children globally), and less than a quarter are enrolled in secondary education (compared to a global figure of 84%). Only 1% of age eligible refugees are in higher education. [56] Overall, over 4 million refugee children who should be in school are denied that opportunity (an increase of half a million compared to a year ago), with girls are twice as likely as boys to be out of education. [57]

> **" For millions of young people these are the years when they should be learning not just how to read, write and count but also enquire, assess, debate and calculate, how to look at themselves and others, how to stand on their own two feet. Yet they are being robbed of that precious time.**
> —
> **Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner on Refugees** [58]

In protracted emergencies, it is common for children to be forced out of education and never return. For a child who lives in a camp during an emergency, missing school can mean losing out on potentially life-saving interventions; school can be a safe place to learn and play, offering protection from violence and exploitation and awareness of dangers like landmines or earthquakes. In safe learning spaces children can be supported through the trauma of their experiences so they have a better chance of recovery.

The sad truth is that, even in established camps, quality, equitable education is not a given. Despite years of advocacy and the recognition that education must be part of humanitarian response, children in refugee camps are still too often unable to access school, right across the age range.

In addition to some of the failings of humanitarian response, a range of complex issues hold refugee children back from accessing education or learning. These include discrimination, which frequently pushes girls and other marginalised groups out of formal education.

Refugee girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, while cultural conventions often mean families are reluctant to release their daughter into the care of strangers, believing she is safer if she is married off. [62] The need to work to earn money for the family is another barrier. Even something apparently quite unimportant like a lack of safe toilets in a refugee camp restricts girls' movements and keeps them away from learning spaces.

> **When a family goes to a camp the girls are vulnerable to more dangers than boys. A girl can be exposed to sexual harassment and rape, so it is necessary that she doesn't go out of the camp or the house. Her family may go so far as to prevent her from going to university — they want her to stay at home rather than be exposed to the possibility of rape or kidnapping.**
>
> —
> **Karim, Save the Children aid worker, Idlib, Syria** [63]

In host countries, outside refugee camp contexts, refugee children are often targets for bullies, on grounds of race, religion, language, nationality, perceived backwardness (resulting from a disrupted education), or simply due to their status as refugees. [64] Refugee boys in particular can be prone to either acts of aggression or withdrawn behaviour, resulting from traumas experienced before or during their displacement. [65] The sheer volume of refugees also puts huge strains on host countries' educational resources that are often already stretched.

Gender discrimination

In almost all scenarios, the education of girls is worse-affected than that of boys by war, environmental threats and living in regions of high violence. And as with all marginalised groups, their risk of marginalisation increases during humanitarian emergencies caused by conflict and other factors.

Conflict is among the biggest threats to their education that girls can experience. Girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in conflict-affected countries and nearly 90% more likely to be out of secondary school, compared their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict. [66] This then feeds a vicious cycle: gender inequality in education has been found to increase the likelihood of conflict within a region by as much as 37% [67]; this conflict in turn increases the likelihood and extremity of gender inequality in schoon.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. Rape and sexual violence a common tactic of war, with strategic rapes — targeting opposing ethnic, religious or political groups, and including mass rape — often targeting children. [68] Prevalence of such behaviour if difficult to estimate, with many instances not reported due to the stigma attached to having been subjected to such an assault in many countries. The threat of sexual violence increases during emergency situations, and often continues at this raised level into the post-conflict and recovery period. [69] Beyond the immediate trauma, longer term impacts of sexual assault on girls include health risks, such as contracting HIV, and the development of high risk behaviours in future — all of which increases their risk of further marginalisation. [70]

Families or parents facing extreme choices during emergencies often see options like early marriage as a solution for the protection of a girl. For example, NGOs reported a significant upswing in instances of child marriage and other forms of exploitation following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, as families and vulnerable girls sought what they perceived to be more secure options. [71, 72] Such responses play into the hands of predatory

individuals, gangs and organisations, while others take advantage of crisis situations to take prey on young girls through trafficking and other exploitative behaviour.

Even the journeys to and from school can put girls at risk of a range of dangers — from physical and sexual assault to abduction by gangs or armed groups — that force girls and their parents to question whether the education received is worth these risks. [73] Although these risks rise in conflict or other crisis situations, they can equally apply in countries with high levels of violence. Anecdotes such as this from 11-year old Samara from Brazil (interviewed by Plan International) are disturbingly common: *"Yes [it is dangerous for girls to walk to school alone] because there are a lot of crazy men drinking booze on the streets. The girls are more afraid… They're afraid to walk alone at night."* [74]

Progress remains slow. 2016 UNESCO data show that twice as many girls as boys will never even start school.[75] These inequalities are exacerbated in countries affected by conflict, experiencing high violence or vulnerable to environmental threats.

The impacts of this inequality are manifold. In terms of individual welfare and agency, research shows that providing girls with a full education results in significantly higher earnings, a reduction in rates of child marriage of nearly 70%, and more say over household decisions, including reproduction. [76, 77] Wider health benefits for society resulting from the education of girls include averting up to 30 million deaths of children under 5, and saving a further 12 million children from stunting caused by malnutrition. [78, 79] In economic terms, research has shown that every dollar invested in girls' education generates earnings and health benefits of $10 in low-income countries and nearly $4 in lower middle-income countries. [80] The World Bank has put the cost to the world economy of not educating girls at between $15 and 30 trillion. [81] And underpinning all this is the fact that education is a human right: a right deserved no less by girls than by boys.

Disabilities

In times of crisis and conflict, and in communities plagued by violence, discrimination faced by children and young people with disabilities is often heightened, and barriers to education made even greater.

Disability can leave children facing increased risks and challenges, which often deny them access to education, healthcare and other services, and even food. Amid the chaos of humanitarian crises, there is increased danger of separation from family members, abandonment, and neglect. A number of studies have also found that children with disabilities — particularly girls — face a greater risk of bullying, physical abuse and sexual violence, both generally and at exacerbated rates in situations of conflict and natural disasters. [82, 83, 84, 85] Perceptions that children with disabilities are less powerful and less able to defend themselves contribute to this. [86]

Crises, particularly war, also increase the number of children with disabilities exposed to these challenges. Children in emergencies often experience injuries, in regions without adequate healthcare facilities to treat them. This lack of rehabilitation then increases the risk of the injury becoming a lifelong disability, which in turn then increases a child's risk of marginalisation and neglect. The scale of this impact can be considerable. In Syria,

for instance, over 1.5 million people — many of them children — are living with new disabilities caused by the war. [87] The World Health Organisation has estimated that a third of the victims of explosive weapons during the war are children, and that one in three of the injuries sustained in these explosions will result in a permanent impairment. [88]

Overall, over 100 million children around the world live with a disability — more than 80% of them in developing countries. [89] Within these countries, 40% of primary-age children with disabilities and 55% of secondary age children with disabilities are not in education — compared, respectively, to just 12% and 26% of their peers. [90]

IMPACT OF DISABILITY ON EDUCATION IN LOW- AND LOWER-MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES [91, 92]

Percentage of children in education

Children with a disability

60%
Primary school

45%
Secondary school

Children worldwide

88%
Primary school
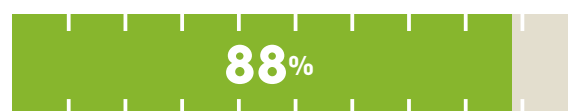
74%
Secondary school

The discrimination experienced by children with disabilities often begins in their earliest years, where they are frequently denied access to the quality ECD and pre-primary education that are so vital to their wellbeing and development. [93] Throughout their education, stigma and societal attitudes often mean parents choose to withdraw their children from education. A 2016 study found that a third of children with disabilities in Palestine reported that their families did not support them going to school. [94]

Addressing the multiple challenges faced by disabled children and young people in accessing safe education will require specific policy changes and increased investment, by development and humanitarian actors. Access to safe spaces, and quality pre-primary education in particular, is absolutely vital to mitigate the risks faced by younger children. Yet across all age groups, humanitarian appeals and response plans regularly fail to make provision for children with disabilities. [95] Without this specific, targeted support, disability will continue to unjustly deny millions of children worldwide the opportunity to realise their potential.

Exploitation

Denying children a safe education not only denies them future opportunities, but leaves them vulnerable to dangers such as early and forced marriage, exploitation, trafficking, radicalisation, or recruitment as soldiers or for sexual exploitation by armed groups. [96, 97, 98]

The scale of these problems is immense. For instance, an estimated 152 million children are victims of child labour worldwide, with nearly half of them working in hazardous conditions. Approximately the same number of child labour victims — 48% — are aged 5–11. As many as 1 in 5 children in Africa — 72 million — are in child labour. [99]

> **Slavery, trafficking, child marriages, child labour, sexual abuse, and illiteracy: these things have no place in any civilised society ... Governments must make child friendly policies, and invest in education and young people. Businesses must be more responsible, accountable and open to innovative partnerships. Intergovernmental agencies must work together to accelerate action. Global civil society must rise above the business-as-usual and fragmented agendas. Faith leaders and institutions, and all of us must stand with our children. We must be bold, we must be ambitious, and we must have the will. We must keep our promises.**
> —
> **Kailash Satyarthi, human rights activist, Nobel Peace Laureate.**
> *Nobel Lecture, December 2014.* [100]

Around a third of child labour victims are completely out of education. Those that do stay in school often struggle to keep up with the dual demands, and are often punished and marginalised as a result of their working status. This negatively impacts on their academic performance and grade progression, and increases their likelihood of dropping out altogether. [101] This contributes to a vicious circle, with many children driven into work in the first place by poverty, marginalisation, and a lack of safe, quality education (particularly when the costs of receiving an education — such as school fees, materials and other expenses — are taken into account).

At its extreme end, labour that children are forced to do against their will (often as 'debt bondage' as a means for families to repay debts) is part of the range of modern slavery — a range that also includes child marriage, trafficking and so-called 'child soldiers'. Around 10 million children worldwide are currently victims of modern slavery, the majority of which are either in debt bondage or child marriage. [102]

Children are trafficked for all forms of modern slavery. Although the illegal nature of trafficking makes the full extent of the problem difficult to ascertain, estimates have put the number of children trafficked each year as high as 1.2 million. [103] Amongst the 63,000 cases detected worldwide each year, around 28% are children. This figure is as high as 64% in sub-Saharan Africa, and 62% in the Caribbean and Central America. Over 70% of all children trafficked are girls. [104]

The journey trafficked children are forced to undertake is often perilous, and the fate that awaits children on arrival equally so: according to UNICEF, over 70% of trafficked girls are forced into sexual exploitation, and around 86% of trafficked boys are sold into forced labour and slavery. [105] Even those who escape or are discovered by authorities are often treated as criminals. Provision of safe education can act as an important barrier to trafficking, and thereby to slavery. Children who have been out of education for extended periods are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

The links between a lack of safe, quality education and enrolment into armed forces and groups is similarly, if not more, pronounced amongst so-called 'child soldiers'.

Up to 300,000 children and young people currently serve armed groups worldwide, ranging from so-called IS (Daesh) in Iraq, to Houthi rebel forces in Yemen, warring militias in Central African Republic, and FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces) in Colombia. [107, 108] Though commonly known as child soldiers, these young people perform a range of roles ranging from porters, cooks, look-outs and servants, to fighters, human shields, suicide bombers and — as is common for the 4 in 10 'child soldiers' who are girls — sexual servants. [109, 110]

Although children are abducted into armed groups — including from school settings — many, particularly in countries like Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are voluntarily drawn to such groups. For children unaware of the severe hardships of life within armed groups, a lack of safe, quality schools can make joining an armed group appear a safer alternative with better career prospects. [111]

> **Every day I was pestering my parents, asking them to put me in school, but they refused. So I went and joined the Nyatura [a militia] in the bush.**
> —
> **Anonymous former child soldier, Democratic Republic of the Congo.**
> *Interviewed by Child Soldiers International, 2016.* [112]

Research has shown that education can also play key role in reintegrating 'child soldiers' into society. The prospect of safe, quality education provides a strong pull factor, making a viable future outside the group seem worth the risks entailed in escaping. Education with integrated psychosocial support can help children process and deal with the traumas they have experienced as part of armed groups.

Tackling exploitation through education

Save the Children's HEART programme uses arts-based group activities, such as drawing, drama and music, to help Syrian children suffering from chronic stress. They are encouraged to share their memories and feelings, verbally or through artistic expression, enabling the healing process. The programme focuses on making children feel less isolated and more confident and secure — and more likely to learn. A teacher describes the process in Save the Children's *Invisible Wounds* report:

"

We prioritise children who have lost or been separated from one or both of their parents and are at risk of early marriage, child labour or recruitment. All children are different at first — many stay quiet and reserved, but others are hyperactive. We get children to do handprints with paint, as it's very sensory and active and gets them engaged with each other and make human connections. We ask them to write their dreams on a kite or balloon and then set it free. Most want to be doctors or teachers. Gradually, we see a big improvement. It builds their character and allows them to think of their future, rather than the nightmares of their past." [106]

LGBTI discrimination

Among youth who can face a particular risk of violence are those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community.

Data show LGBTI students are up to five times more likely to be victims of bullying than their non-LGBTI peers. [113] As with sexual violence against girls, LGBTI young people can be targeted as a tactic of war, and within the context of violence: reports have also noted how LGBTI young people can be targeted for kidnap, torture and sexual violence as a means of expanding gang territory. [114]

Being LGBTI and a member of another marginalised group can compound the difficulties experienced. For instance, research conducted amongst Syrian refugees living in Lebanon has shown LGBTI refugees to experience extreme social isolation and discrimination in their treatment by authorities, in addition to disproportionate levels of violence, abuse and exploitation. [115]

" In primary school, we realise we are different from our peers, and because of this we become the focus of ridicule. The [children] call us names like khaleh zanak ["auntie lady"] because we appear more feminine and because we don't like to play like other boys. It is from this time that we begin to think that there is in fact something wrong with us.

—

Anonymous, gay former student from Tehran, Iran.
Interviewed by Human Rights Watch, 2016. [116]

Though discrimination against LGBTI youth is common around the world, cultural factors can significantly increase the risk in some countries. Jamaica, for instance, has been described as the one of the most "virulently homophobic and transphobic" societies in the world, due to the high levels of discrimination that LGBTI youth are routinely and openly subjected to in schools and other public institutions. [117] Studies have found similar LGBTI prejudices across the Middle East and Asia Pacific region. [118, 119]

The discrimination against LGBTI youth in and around school settings has been found to result in reduced attendance, impaired educational outcomes, as well as long-term physical and mental harm. [120, 121] In the longer term, such discrimination helps embed prejudices and marginalisation across generations, both in the minds of the victims and across wider society. This includes many adults who will have been educated in environments where such prejudices were an accepted, even encouraged, part of life.

" Learning in a safe environment is a fundamental right that all children and young people are entitled to. Acceptance of diversity begins on the school benches.

—

Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO.
International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, 2018. [122]

Mental health and development

The sheer psychological and emotional toll of spending years in a conflict zone or displaced persons camp, losing or being separated from a loved one, or fearing an airstrike will destroy your home at any moment, can be immense. Children in have been found show signs similar to post-traumatic stress disorder following natural major disasters, which in turn have affected academic performance. [123] Similar mental impacts can result from the chronic fear of violence resulting from gang violence, and even from prolonged exposure to internal threats such as gender-based violence and bullying.

Such experiences can lead to high levels of the stress hormone cortisol being released into a young child's brain over a sustained period, creating what is known as 'toxic stress'. The changes to brain architecture resultant from toxic stress can cause developmental delays and a tendency towards violent behaviour (thereby contributing to sustained cycles of violence across generations). Later in life, toxic stress can lead to mental health issues such depression and substance abuse, and is also linked with physical conditions including heart disease and diabetes. [124, 125, 126]

The 2017 Save the Children report *Invisible Wounds* laid bare the catastrophic impact of the Syrian war on the mental health and wellbeing of the children of Syria. [127] Among many telling details in responses to a survey was a finding that 48% of adults said they had seen children who had developed speech impediments since the war, or simply lost the power of speech. If children in fragile settings lack physical protection and support for their socio-emotional development — which education provides — their chances diminish of overcoming trauma they have faced.

> **The children are psychologically crushed and tired. When we do activities like singing with them, they don't respond at all. They don't laugh like they would normally. They draw images of children being butchered in the war, or tanks, or the siege and the lack of food.**
>
> —
> **Teacher, Madaya, Syria.**
> *Interviewed by Save the Children for Invisible Wounds, 2017*

In the longer term, data show that the seemingly more mundane impacts of conflict and upheaval — food and housing insecurity, inter-parental stresses, and particularly the destruction of local communities and support networks — have can have an even greater negative impact on children's mental health than direct experiences of violence. [128]

A range of studies have shown that, particularly with elements of psychosocial support integrated, education can be a powerful tool for overcoming past traumas and coping with the resultant toxic stress, for the long-term benefit of young peoples' physical and mental health. [129]

" **If you don't rebuild people ... if we don't address the psychological issues that have arisen as a result of this conflict, I think we will be in a lot of trouble for decades to come"**

—

Psychologist and public speaker on violent extremism, Dr Fatima Akilu
Interviewed by the BBC about the abduction, by extremist group Boko Haram, of 276 Nigerian schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria, 2014. [130]

However, although leading NGO programmes now commonly include such psychosocial components, the funding available for these components remains very tight, and is often only available via short-term grants that prevent the kind of long-term provision children need. [131] Moreover, a lack of safety and security in school systems can make it difficult for such support to be provided on a sustained basis.

As a result, children are too often being denied the support that can help them cope with the various threats experienced around their education in the short-term, and improve their educational outcomes and ability to contribute to the peace and prosperity of their communities into the future.

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Conclusion:
Building the Framework

In this chapter, we have seen that:

— Access to safe learning environments is a vital at every stage of child's education, from pre-primary education (by the end of which a child's brain would have undergone 90% of its development) through to adolescence (during which time children are prepared for the contributions they will then be able to make to their communities, the economy and the wider world).

— On an individual level, failure to provide safe schools can negatively impact on a child's academic achievement, their future career prospects, their physical and mental health and development, their chances of avoiding exploitation such as modern slavery and child marriage, and the degree to which girls, refugees, LGBTI children and children affected by ill-health with disability experience marginalisation. It can also impact on teacher safety, welfare and training, negatively impacting overall staffing numbers.

— On a societal level, failure to provide safe schools has been shown not only to impact on overall education outcomes, but to further increase inequalities, increase risks of violence and conflict within a region, hinder economic growth, and damage a nation's health and welfare.

— Our projections show that, by 2030, 622 million school-age children will live in countries characterised by conflict, environmental threats and high levels of violence, where the safety of schools is under greatest threat. Without a significant effort to improve the safety of schools in these countries, 22% of these children will never complete primary education, 54% will never complete secondary education, and just 25% will achieve basic learning outcomes.

— These figures show that failure to address safe schools alone will result in the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals on education (SDG4) being missed by a considerable margin.

Building a framework for action:
considerations for safe schools
and learning environments

Improved prioritisation and funding for early childhood development (ECD) in children aged 0–5, given the extent to which this impacts on subsequent academic and life chances. All humanitarian response plans should include targets on education in ECD, including the prioritisation of pre-primary education and the establishment of safe spaces for parents and ECD-age children.

- -

Ensuring lower and upper secondary education is included in response and development plans, to reflect the critical role this stage of education plays in preparing young people for adult life and the workforce.

Improved co-ordination with the provision of health and wellbeing aid to reflect the extent to which outcomes in both sectors are interconnected. This is particularly important for ECD and meeting the needs of children living with health problems and disabilities.

Targeted efforts to prevent marginalisation of particular groups being exacerbated in emergencies, including: expanding scholarships to improve enrolment from such groups; investing in safe and accessible infrastructure; and integrating gender, disability, and other equality targets into response and development plans. Evidence-based rehabilitation and reintegration programmes should be implemented to help children out of child marriage, armed conflict, and other forms of exploitation.

Greater support for refugee education. This will require support for host governments to overcome barriers to enrolment and meet refugee-specific learning needs (e.g. language and psychosocial support) within existing national school systems; commitments from donors to multi-year funding; rolling out of programmes that meet the needs of refugees from marginalised groups (such as peer support groups for LGBTI refugees); contributions from businesses to extend beyond the financial, and include expertise, employment opportunities, technology/equipment and innovation capacity.

Greater attention to the mental wellbeing of children who have endured traumatic experiences, including: long-term, sustainable funding for the integration of psychosocial support into education in humanitarian settings, and the school-based provision of mental health and resilience support for children who need it; and efforts to reunite children with family and other community-based support, and to provide key individuals (such as parents and teachers) with psychosocial support where needed.

Provision of funding and other resources to increase the number of trained teachers, including teacher salaries that reflect their contributions to society, and standardising teacher education and professional development targets.

Investment in research, innovation, piloting and partnership working in order to develop new education modalities that are accessible and responsive to the needs of students — particularly those at risk of marginalisation — and their communities.

Integrating better education data collection and multi-partner sharing into response planning and delivery, particularly in relation to ECD and marginalised groups, in order to: enable all partners to accurately assess the extent of the education need in each setting and ensure that need is met; and assess the impact of education programming, so that successful approaches can be rolled out and key learnings can be carried forward to other programmes.

Part II

FROM INSIDE AND OUT: THE THREATS TO SAFE SCHOOLS

Threats to safe schools take many different forms, but can be encapsulated in three main categories, all of which can seriously impair both a child's willingness and ability to attend school, and the ability of educators and institutions to provide that education. Understanding the types of threats can make it possible to ensure actions to promote safe schools and learning environments address the various dimensions of safe spaces.

Three Types of Threats to Safe Schools & Learning Environments

Environmental threats

Environmental threats include natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, that put entire populations at risk, and to the impact of which children are particularly vulnerable. Environmental threats also include public health threats and disease epidemics, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014–16.

External threats

External threats occur outside of the school environment but still impact children's education. They include attacks on the way to or from school, attacks on places of learning themselves, and the occupation of schools and learning spaces by armed groups. These are usually the consequence of flare-ups in civic violence, or more prolonged regional or national wars.

Internal threats

Internal threats are those that take place inside formal learning environments.

This can include the continuation of wider societal concerns within school settings, such as recruitment by violent or extremist groups, and gang activity (both recruitment and active conflict), and gender-based violence

Internal threats also incorporate those enacted as part of school policy (such as corporal punishment) and bullying, by educators and between pupils.

Environmental threats

Natural disasters

Around half of the 75 million children who have their education disrupted each year do so from environmental threats, including natural disasters and disease outbreaks. Such disasters have led to schools being destroyed, damaged, rendered inaccessible or otherwise closed; many of those that remain open are left offering irregular lessons or with a shortage of materials.

Natural disasters like floods and earthquakes do not spare schools, and represent a significant threat to the safety of learning environments.

Although data collected on the extent to which education is impacted by natural disasters is limited, what data is available gives an indication of the scale of the problem.

In South Asia alone, 18,000 schools were shut in 2017 following damage or destruction in the region's worst flooding in years. In the Asia Pacific region, it has been estimated that around 200 million children a year will have their lives severely disrupted by disasters over the coming decades. [132]

The impact on displacement is also immense. In 2017 there were 18.8 million new displacements by natural disasters. [133] In 2016 the figure was even higher at 24.2 million. [134] And these figures are set to grow as the impact of climate change increases over the coming years.

The displacement figures also fail to capture the full impact of natural disasters which can take a devastating toll on children's lives and wellbeing and their education. Disruption to education can continue for months or even years after the onset of the disaster, leaving children vulnerable and at risk, denying them their right to education.

The impacts on children and young people's education can be profound, with the poorest and most marginalised, including girls, most at risk. The devastation is often most severe and long lasting in contexts where education capacity and resources are already low. [135] Millions of children and young people have their education disrupted due to schools being destroyed or damaged by the extreme weather conditions, often made worse due to poor site location, school design, or construction.

In South Asia alone, floods in 2017 destroyed or damaged more than 12,000 schools in India, 4,000 in Bangladesh and 2,000 in Nepal. [136] Damaged infrastructure or schools being converted into makeshift shelters may make accessing school for educational purposes physically impossible. Even when schools are not damaged they are frequently commandeered as temporary shelter. In the event of natural disasters schools are often the only secure location to shelter in safety from environmental hazards. Families displaced from their homes are frequently given makeshift housing in schools that can last months or even longer.

Where schools remain open, parents may be reluctant to send their children back to school as natural disasters disrupt livelihoods. This in turn has been found to increase the risk child of labour or early marriage. [137]

Children and young people may be unable to learn due to fear or trauma. Assessments have shown that children signs similar to post-traumatic stress disorder following natural disasters, affecting academic performance. [138]

Not to be underestimated is the extent to which damage wrought by natural disasters affects even the basic tools and infrastructure needed for learning. Children can easily lose glasses or other assistive aids they need for learning. Exam certificates or other documents they need to progress get lost (a particular problem for internationally displaced children).

Although natural disasters cannot be prevented, targeted support can better prepare countries to manage their impacts and give education support to continue. Resilience education within schools can increase awareness of potential impacts of natural disasters and train children on what to do during the event. [139] Incorporating psychosocial components into education programmes can also help children cope mentally with the trauma and damage wrought by natural disasters.

Education is also part of the long-term solution. Research suggests that better-educated adults also fare better after natural disasters, both in terms of mental resilience and recovery of their everyday lives. [140]

Despite this, education is rarely a core focus in emergency responses. The rebuilding of school infrastructure is often considered a secondary priority, resulting in children being educated in temporary learning centres for years after the event. Although funding has increased for Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies, more investment is needed for education in emergency settings.

Disease outbreaks

In addition to weather-related and other environmental shocks, disease epidemics and outbreaks can significantly reduce access to safe education.

Instances of education being ravaged by disease outbreaks are regrettably regular. In January 2018, children in Zambia were kept out of some schools for over a month to an outbreak of cholera that infected 3,600 and killed 78. [141] In Yemen where millions of children are already out of school because of the war, a cholera epidemic is bringing yet more misery to children's lives and their education. The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Southern Africa not only killed thousands, but resulted in millions of children losing one or more caregivers, or being marginalised due the stigma attached to the disease. [142]

One of the most devastating outbreaks in recent years has the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, 2014-16, which killed over 11,000 people and infected nearly 30,000 — including 6,000 children. [143, 144] Over 16,000 children across the region lost their caregivers. [145]

Schools, which in many natural and conflict related emergencies can offer children and young people protection, became a site of potential risk. Because the Ebola virus spread through close contact, it meant keeping children in school presented a potential risk and many education authorities simply chose to close schools. In Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, school closures kept 5 million children out of education. [146]

Children missed out on vital learning and numbers of drop outs increased, with many children never resuming their education. In some areas, this was a direct result of the perceived health risk of returning to school. The recent comments of Aldegonde Batsyoto, a head teacher in Mangina, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the first day of the new academic year are common within the region:

> **Today, we only enrolled two pupils. On the radio, in church, they announce that the new academic year has already arrived and that all necessary precautions have been taken. But in the villages, they're afraid that children will be contaminated at school.**
>
> —
> **Aldegonde Batsyoto, head teacher in Mangina, Democratic Republic of the Congo.**
> *First day of school after an Ebola outbreak, 2018* [147]

Decisions on whether or not to close school can be proactive (to prevent further infections) or reactive measures (when schools are closed due to high levels of absenteeism). World Health Organisation modelling studies *"suggest school closure has its greatest benefits when schools are closed very early in an outbreak, ideally before 1% of the population falls ill. Under ideal conditions, school closure can reduce the demand for health care by an estimated 30–50% at the peak of the pandemic"*. [148]

However, while school closures may be necessary, measures can be taken to help minimise the impact. Continuing to pay teachers helps prevent a shortage after the

outbreak; training them in Ebola response and improving health monitoring can aid preparedness. Schools which were safe can be reopened as quickly and as responsibly as possible, with local populations confident that they no longer pose a risk. [149]

Emergency education can also still be provided through means such as radio, television or the internet. In Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak, education programmes were broadcast over the radio five days a week in 30 minute sessions, with listeners able to call in with questions at the end of each session. Regional accents and dialects, poor radio signal coverage in rural areas, and a shortage of radios and batteries (despite efforts by UNICEF to distribute 25,000 radios to the worst affected areas) meant access was far from complete. However, it did allow for a continuation for learning during the crisis, maintaining education until schools were ready to be reopened. [150, 151]

The imperative for education to be continued is great — not least because, as with the other threats to safe schools covered in this report, investing in education now can reduce the health-related threats to safe education in future.

The links between a good quality education and health are well evidenced. Schools also provide a ready-made and important setting for promoting health, both for the students themselves (particularly with regards to the transmission of diseases such as HIV) and for subsequent generations. One of most dramatic illustrations of this is the *"estimate that 2.1 million lives of children under 5 were saved between 1990 and 2009 because of improvements in the education of women of reproductive age."* [152] The World Health Organisation's Global School Health Initiative, which among other things seeks *"to provide a healthy environment, school health education, and school health services along with school/community projects and outreach"* outlines the health promotion roles schools can play in communities across the world. [153]

External threats

War

One child in every six worldwide now lives in a warzone. Nearly half of these children live in "high-intensity" conflicts, such as those in Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen. The total number of children living in conflict — 367 million — is an increase of 75% on levels in the early 1990s. [154]

The impact of these wars on the lives of children has been devastating.

In 2016 alone, over 10,000 children were killed or maimed in conflict. Since 2010, the number of children maimed and killed each year has risen by 300%. [155]

Last year, children were abducted to be used as human shields or recruited as soldiers and suicide bombers in countries such as Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and Yemen. In South Sudan, as many 19,000 children have been forced into conflict as part of armed militias since 2013. [156] Children who have been able to escape active armed conflict are often ostracised or subjected to violent reprisals upon returning to their communities. [157]

Children came under attack in their homes, hospitals and even their schools and playgrounds: between 2013 and 2017 there were more than 12,700 attacks on schools, harming more than 21,000 students and educators in at least 70 countries. [158] School buildings have simply ceased to be safe places in many conflict areas, with recent data suggesting schools and their pupils and staff are coming under attack at an increasing rate. In the first half of 2017 alone, a record of over 500 attacks on schools were recorded by UNICEF. [159]

Attacks on schools in the Central African Republic

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has detailed the occupation and destruction of schools in the Central African Republic, where mainly Muslim Seleka rebels from the north-east are fighting Christian and animist groups. [160] Schools that were already under-equipped have been looted, occupied and destroyed by the Seleka and other militia. HRW visited 12 schools that had been occupied and were now too damaged to be used. Other schools that had been abandoned by militias were, tellingly still empty, due to persistent fears about the dangers of going to school.

These attacks don't just comprise the bombing and burning of school buildings, but can include the subjection of children and their teachers to horrific physical and sexual attacks — inflicted to dehumanise and dispirit their victims as an explicit military tactic. [161]

All of these constitute grave violations against the rights of the child as defined by the UN, yet have become everyday prospects for millions of children around the world. [162] And it is a pattern that has been growing over the past five years, with UNICEF describing 2017 as one of the worst years for children caught in conflicts on record. [163]

The UN's six grave violations against the rights of the child

1. Recruitment or use of children as soldiers;
2. Killing and maiming of children;
3. Sexual violence against children;
4. Attacks against schools or hospitals;
5. Abduction of children;
6. Denial of humanitarian access for children.

Protection of schools in international law

Protection for schools from physical attack is enshrined in international humanitarian law. The Geneva Convention of 1949 prohibits the targeting of civilians and what are classified as "civilian objects", including schools. This legal protection was given additional teeth in 2011, when attacks on schools (and hospitals) were included as grounds for listing countries in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on children in armed conflict. Other non-binding measures such as the Safe Schools Declaration call on governments to follow guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. [164] However, many armed groups and warring factions today pay scant attention to laws that demarcate schools, and hospitals, as no-go areas. This widespread flouting of international standards is catastrophic for millions of children caught in crises and violence.

Meanwhile, in Syria — where it has estimated that a third of the victims of bombs and other explosive weapons used during the war have been children — 1.5 million more people have permanent disabilities than when the war began. [165]

In some countries, the journey to school in current or former conflict zones literally takes children through a minefield. In 2013 children accounted for half of the 2,403 casualties of landmines worldwide, with rates being as high as 90%, 82% and 75% in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen and South Sudan respectively. [166]

The resultant impact of this unrest on education attendance and outcomes is immense.

Across the world, more than a third of all out-of-school primary age children, a quarter of all out-of-school lower secondary age children, and nearly a fifth of all out-of-school upper secondary age youth around the world are living in conflict-affected areas.[167] Children in conflict-affected countries are more than twice as likely to be out of school compared those in countries not affected by conflict.[168]

Data from Syrian exemplify the impact war can have on education infrastructure and outcomes. Before the conflict, almost all Syrian children were enrolled in primary school and literacy rates were at 95%. Six years later, enrolment is among the lowest in the world, with almost three million children no longer in school. In cities such as Aleppo, enrolment rates have been estimated to be as low as 6%.[169] An estimated 150,000 education personnel have been killed since the conflict began, and around 40% of schools have been taken out of commission — destroyed, damaged or used as shelters.[170]

The impact of the war on Syria's education system came into focus in 2015 with reports of the attack on Sa'ad al-Ansari elementary school in opposition-held northern Aleppo. Around 600 students, dozens of teachers and two administrative staff were at the school when a vacuum bomb dropped by government forces destroyed the building's main wall, hurling debris into the school and on to the streets. At least 10 people were killed, including four teachers, and 30 were injured.

> **" I feel like I've seen so many terrible things. We need to go back to school so we can study and get educated. There are some people like my brother [aged nine] who are failing everything and have forgotten everything they knew. When you ask him 'what is one times two or one plus one' he doesn't know. A lot of children don't even know the letters of the alphabet, it's all gone. They've been affected by the violence. I lost out on two years of school, and my brother has grown up and has hardly studied at all. What if I get old and I continue on this same path and I lose my entire future? I want to study and grow up and teach my children as well. I want to be a teacher. What if all these years pass by and I don't become anything? It's not fair."**
> **—**
> **Zainab, 11, al-Hasakah, Syria**
> *Interviewed by Save the Children for Invisible Wounds, 2017*[171]

The negative impacts of war can extend long after the fighting has stopped. Infrastructure and educational workforces can take years to rebuild. Epidemics of malnutrition — particularly amongst children under 5, as seen in Yemen — has been shown to significantly hinder early brain development, and negatively impact on the future educational outcomes of children affected.[172] Increasing incidence of disability is putting record numbers of children at risk of marginalisation. The traumas experienced by children coupled with the destruction of their communities and support groups can result in lifelong mental ill-health.[173]

Case study:

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Two decades after the outbreak of war in the 1990s, the DRC continues to experience violence and conflict. The conflict is due to political, economic and ethnic tensions, internally and with neighbours, as well as control over natural resources. As of December 2017, there were more than 120 non-state armed groups, underlining the complexity of the situation. Conditions are weakening the country's already fragile education provision.

In DRC, education is compulsory for children aged six to 11, but over a quarter of primary age children are out of school. Primary school is supposed to be free but parents usually pay a fee. While high levels of poverty are a barrier to education, so is underinvestment. The most recent available information for government spending shows that 2.3 percent of GDP and 12.5 percent of public expenditure was allocated to education in 2015, short of the UNESCO recommendation of 4–6 percent of GDP and 15–20 percent of public spending.

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Meanwhile, the ongoing insecurity has traumatised children. According to the Child Protection Cluster, an inter-agency organisation providing advice on policy in humanitarian crises, *"children show signs of psychosocial distress and are often afraid to leave their parents, even shortly"*. This distress has a devastating effect on education and learning.

In some areas, including Kasai, parents are opting to keep their children at home rather than risk their recruitment into armed groups. Some go to extraordinary lengths to resume their education, such as eight-year-old Bipendu who missed a year of school because of the conflict and was only able to return after walking for two months through the bush to live with a relative. Her mother Florence explains: *"Last year Bipendu wasn't able to go to school because of the fighting. I don't want her to miss another year of school."*

A glance at the statistics reveals the scale of the crisis in DRC. The country has the highest number of displaced people in Africa: 4.5 million, of whom around 60 percent are under 18. In 2017 alone there were 2,600 cases of children being used by armed militias and between 2014 and 2017 there were 11,542 violations against children, by 40 parties to the conflict. Between August 2016 and July 2017 there were 1,400 cases of sexual violence in three provinces alone, with girls aged 12–17 accounting for 68 percent of cases.Schools are also the target of armed groups. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) found that the DRC was very heavily affected by attacks on education with over 1,000 incidents of violence occurring between January 2013 and December 2017. Between 2014 and 2017, 434 attacks against schools were verified by the UN between 2014 and 2017, with 90% of these in 2017.

Violent extremism

The rise of violent extremism is a global phenomenon, with reports of a nine-fold increase in extremist violence between the years 2000 and 2014. [174] **As with other external threats, the rise of these violent ideologies poses substantial risks for children and their education.**

Boko Haram — responsible for the widely reported kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in Chibok, Nigeria in 2014, and for the less widely reported murder of 2,295 teachers across Nigeria over the last decade — is perhaps the group most synonymous with extremist attacks on education. Their name literally translates as *'Western Education is a Sin'*. However, they are by no means alone. Attacks on education by extremist groups, include right wing extremists, have been documented across a wide range of countries. [175]

In Somalia, the Islamist armed group al-Shabaab has been targeting schools to force communities to hand over their children for indoctrination and military training. Over the past decade, hundreds of children have been forcibly recruited or have fled their homes to escape. According to one report of a typical approach taken by the group, local residents told how in September 2017 al-Shabaab fighters forcibly took at least 50 boys and girls from two schools in Burhakaba district.[176] Two weeks later, a large group of armed al-Shabaab fighters returned to the village, entered another local school, and threatened and beat the teacher, demanding the children be handed over.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgency remains a threat to education. In 2015, for instance, UNICEF documented 19 incidents of armed groups threatening or committing acts of violence, intimidation or interference targeted specifically at blocking girls from attending school. Just nine of these incidents led to the closure or partial closure of 213 schools, affecting the education of over 50,000 girls. [177]

There is a now wide recognition of the role of education in reducing violence and building more peaceful societies. Without the knowledge and skills — including critical thinking and decision-making skills — that quality education in safe schools offers young people, their potential is limited, and their options narrowed. In such circumstances, they can become easy targets for extremist groups. This can apply in both developing and developed countries.

The importance of addressing violent extremism is gaining increased global attention, including the risks posed to children and young people, and in education's role in 'preventing violent extremism' (PVE). However, the push and pull factors that may influence children and young people at risk of radicalisation are multiple and complex.

Despite the complexities, education can play an important part in addressing these push and pull factors, promoting understanding and respect for human rights, and encouraging critical thinking that can help children and young people to question ideologies of hatred.

Peshawar school massacre

In December 2014, a horrific attack by the Taliban on a school in Pakistan left more than 130 students dead and dozens more injured.

The pupils — thought to be mostly aged between 12 and 16 — were killed after several gunmen wearing security uniforms stormed the Army Public School in Peshawar. They roamed through classrooms, shooting children — many of whom were hiding under their desks. Local officials said at least 130 students were among over 140 people killed, with a large number of children among more than 100 injured.

Hours after the attack, fighting was still going on at the school after soldiers surrounded it and tried to rescue students and teachers who had been taken hostage. Officials later said that

— after a nine-hour battle — the school had been retaken and six militants had been killed.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the massacre, saying it was in revenge for members of their group being killed by Pakistani authorities. A statement said: *"We targeted the school because the army targets our families. We want them to feel our pain."*

Around 500 students were in the buildings when the violence erupted. One of them, Abdullah Jamal, described what happened. *"I saw children falling down who were crying and screaming. I also fell down. I learned later that I have got a bullet. All the children had bullet wounds. All the children were bleeding."* [178]

Urban violence and education

While the number of children living in warzones has been increasing, another kind of violence also stalks children and young people in urban areas worldwide: homicidal violence by gangs and other armed groups.

In many areas — most notably in cities across Latin America — extreme violence, often linked to gangs and the illegal trade in drugs, has become a routine backdrop to daily life. In 2016 the rate of violent deaths in El Salvador and Honduras was second only to Syria and greater than in Afghanistan and Iraq. That more violent deaths are occurring outside war zones only underlines the scale of the crisis affecting children and young people all over the globe. [179]

In terms of homicides committed outside of warfare, forty-two of the world's 50 deadliest cities for which data are available are in Latin America. [180] Overall, the region — home just 8% of the world's population — is scene to a third of the world's murders. Young people are most affected, with half of all murder victims aged between 15 and 19. [181]

> **The M-18 gang thought I belonged to the MS-13. They had killed the two police officers who protected our school. They waited for me outside the school. It was a Friday, the week before Easter, and I was headed home. The gang told me that if I returned to school, I wouldn't make it home alive. The gang had killed two kids I went to school with, and I thought I might be the next one.**
>
> —
>
> **Alfonso, 17, Honduras**
> *Interviewed by UNHCR* [182]

This pervasive violence means even walking a short distance from home to school could mean getting caught in crossfire between police and armed groups. In favela communities of Rio de Janeiro, for example, parents routinely communicate via social media to warn each other if the streets are safe. Children are kept at home if there's news of a shootout, missing irreplaceable hours of school time, including exams. Others are trapped between school and home because violence erupts, with a high risk of getting hit by stray bullets. The UPP (police pacification programme) run in the city during the soccer World Cup in 2014 and Olympic Games in 2016 saw armed police take over several schools in Rio's favelas to use as a base. During shootouts, transport to school is disrupted, teachers are deterred from turning up to work, and drug gangs sometimes order residents to avoid the streets.

As with the external threats from natural disasters or wars, the high rates of violence in everyday life across northern Central America have fuelled forced migration crises parallel to, but less reported than, those caused by war. The UN has reported hundreds *"taking these journeys out of desperation"* due to the *"high levels of homicide, particularly affecting women"* experienced in their home countries. [183] In addition to the dangers of the journey, those heading to the US now face possible separation from their families and detention. [184]

> **Grandmother wanted me to leave. She told me 'If you don't join, the gang will shoot you. If you do join, the rival gang will shoot you — or the cops will shoot you. But if you leave, no one will shoot you'.**
>
> —
>
> **Kevin, 17, Honduras**
> *Interviewed by UNHCR* [185]

Case study:
Guatemala

Guatemala is an example of how violence prevents children from attending school and causes them to drop out.

Primary education is compulsory from age six to 15 and since 2006 the enrolment rate has averaged around 95%. However, low literacy, poor teaching and bad attendance all persist. Often, students can't afford uniforms, books, transport or other costs. Many students drop out in order to earn money for the family. According to UNESCO, nearly 300,000 children were out of school in Guatemala in 2016, a 62% increase from 2008.[186] More students drop out as they get older: 13% of primary age children are out of school, climbing to 31% of children in the early years of secondary school and 51% of young people at upper secondary school.[187]

Much of this poor attendance can be attributed to violence rooted in gangs that have grown and extended their influence across the country since the end, in 1996, of a 36-year civil war in which indigenous communities were subjected to marginalisation and genocide.

Two of the best-known gangs (or maras) are Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 (La 18), which originally formed in the US and spread to Central America when around 150,000 people were returned from the US to their home countries during the 1990s. Almost 400,000 came back voluntarily. For many young men with low levels of education and whose identities had been rooted in the gang culture they had known in the US, return to Guatemala meant few prospects, poverty and marginalisation — life with the gang seemed a better option.

According to some estimates, in the late 2000s there were around 67,000 gang members in Guatemala, reflecting the scale of their influence over the past decade.[188] Armed robberies, homicides and violent attacks perpetrated by these gangs destabilise the country and sow fear and anxiety. Education has to improve so that young people can thrive without joining these groups. Instead, however, gang violence is further weakening the education system.

Research has found that almost 60% of students are afraid to go to school, with at least 23% of students and 30% of teachers reporting that they or someone they know have been victims of gang violence as they have left or entered school.[189]

Abduction is another fear. In a 2017 case that reached international attention, two boys aged 10 and 11 were kidnapped and killed on their way to school in an area near San Juan Sacatepéquez.[190] The International Crisis Group has reported that young people and their families lock themselves inside their homes to avoid contact with gangs.[191] During a workshop to prevent violence in Guatemala City, one 18-year-old boy said: *"In our communities we can't play or walk freely out of fear we will get shot, mugged or beaten."*

Although other factors will likely have also contributed, the rise in violence has unsurprisingly been accompanied by a decline in educational and skills levels among young people. According to one report, one in 10 Guatemalans is illiterate and half the population have only completed primary education. One fifth are able to attend secondary school but have only remedial numeracy and literacy skills.

In turn, the lack of skills and education provides more recruits for gangs and harms social cohesion. The majority of youth in Guatemala live under the poverty line. Older people fear younger people because they worry they may be gang members. Employers refuse to hire young people who live in areas controlled by gangs. In the current climate, young people face huge obstacles to studying and finding work. Reports show that only 25% of youth in Guatemala are in formal employment. For indigenous youth, there's another layer of difficulty — they are often overlooked because of racism.

Internal threats

Gender-based violence

School-related gender based violence (SRGBV) is a human rights violation. [192] **Defined as "acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence perpetrated in or around school as a result of gender norms and stereotypes,"** [193] **it comprises offences such as rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, early marriage and female genital mutilation (with different forms of abuse often overlapping).**

Although it has been estimated that nearly a quarter of a billion children around the world are subjected to violence in or around schools every year, the paucity of data collected to-date — not least because of the reluctance of many victims to report their crime, or because many such crimes go unrecognised — means no comparable statistics are available for SRGBV. [194] Best estimates suggest that 1 in 10 girls and women under the age of 20 — around 120 million worldwide — have been subjected to sexual violence in school. [195] However, this figure doesn't include SRGBV perpetrated against boys, and only records the number of victims rather than the number of attacks (with many children subjected to repeat offences).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SCHOOL
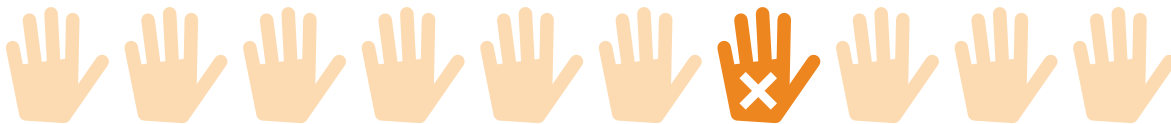
1 in 10 women and girls under the age of 20 have been subjected to **sexual violence** in a school at least once

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No country or region is completely fee of school-related sexual violence. However, the extent and forms of SGBV are often exacerbated in emergency situations. Evidence shows that violent conflict in particular exacerbates all forms of SRGBV, with such violence often used as a weapon of war or terror in and of itself. [196] The increased threat usually continues into the post-conflict and recovery period. [197]

Reports of school children being targeted in conflict-related sexual assault are disturbingly common. For instance, the Education Cluster in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reported attacks by militias on girls in Tanganyika province in 2017, including the abduction and rape of three girls from a primary school, and the abduction and rape of six school girls for over two months by militia during a burglary of a primary school.

> **" This rape is not a sexual act — it is a strategy of war.
> It is meant to destroy women physically and mentally.**
> **—**
>
> **Dr Denis Mukwege, Panzi Hospital, Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo**
> *Leader of a team who has cared for more than 50,000 survivors of sexual*
> *violence in DRC, Nobel Peace Laureate 2018*

Girls who have been raped are at increased risk of their education being curtailed through unwanted pregnancy.[198] Those raped as a weapon of war are often also shunned in post-war societies as punishment for 'collaboration' with enemy forces. A 2017 report by Amnesty International, for instance, recorded numerous cases of women and girls in northern Iraq, raped during the war against so-called Islamic State (Daesh), being subsequently being ostracised for their perceived links with the occupying IS regime, and being targeted with violence (sexual and otherwise) in so-called revenge attacks.[199] Children who are "war-rape orphans" often face a lifetime of stigma and exclusion, from education and society as a whole.

The risk of sexual assault on the journey to school alone means many children — or their parents — are forced to weigh up these dangers against the benefits of getting an education. Journeys to school can bring a range of dangers, from threats to physical assault, rape or forced recruitment into gang or armed groups.[200] In a study of 7,000 children in 11 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America by the charity Plan International, over a quarter of the girls interviewed reported never or seldom feeling safe on the way to or from school.[201]

Within school settings, SRGBV comes from many sources beyond soldiers, gangs, extremist groups and other external perpetrators of violence. It is not uncommon for the source of the violence to be students themselves. In Cameroon, for example, almost a third of sexual violence experienced by girls is committed by male students.[202]

Pupil-on-pupil violence is often the result of young people having been brought up in societies where violence is the norm, and without support to help them process traumatic experiences they have endured. However, cultural factors also loom large. In Liberia, which has one of the highest rates of sexual assault in the world, and where 78% of reported rape victims are of primary or secondary school age,[203] surveys have found that nearly half of schoolboys and over a third of schoolgirls consider sexual violence a *"normal part of a man-woman relationship"*. Two in five boys and nearly a third of girls considered sexual violence *"a natural expression of male sexual urges"*.[204]

It is also common for teachers and educational staff to subject children and young people to SRGBV. Government data in Ivory Coast, for instance, has reported nearly half of teachers having committed SRGBV against pupils.[205] Another study covering 11 countries across East and Southern African found that nearly a third of primary school principals were aware of teacher-to-pupil sexual harassment in their schools.[206]

Where (often untrained) teachers are the perpetrators, sexual acts can be traded for the payment of school fees and other school related expenses, or in exchange for grades, with teachers refusing to give children qualifications or allow them to progress to the next level of their education unless their sexual requests are met.[207]

> **[My teacher] said: 'If you want to pass my class you need to have sex with me or send pictures of your body.'**
>
> —
>
> **'Elsa', 16, from Villanueva, Honduras**
> *Interviewed by UNICEF, September 2018* [208]

All the types of SRGBV referenced above result in a wide range of devastating impacts. These include increased drop-out rates, lower academic achievement, and *"long-lasting consequences on children's psychological, social and physical wellbeing"*. [209, 210] SRGBV is thought to be a significant reason why girls are two and a half more likely to be out of school in conflict and crisis contexts than boys. [211] As mentioned above, the stigma faced by children born of SRGBV can also pass these impacts down through the generations.

With SRGBV also more common amongst LGBTI young people, refugees, and children with disabilities, it can also exacerbate the discrimination and marginalisation experienced by such groups. [212, 213] One study of schoolchildren in Uganda found that girls with disabilities were twice as likely to have reported instances of SRGBV compared to girls without a disability, adding to the stigma endured in their everyday education. [214]

All this in turn brings substantial economic costs. For instance, USAID has estimated that SRGBV, via lost academic attainment, has occasioned an annual cost to low- and middle-income countries of around $17 billion — more than is spent each year on all education-related aid combined. [215] Though less profound than the physical and psychological cost, this economic consequence contributes to a cycle of sexual violence that continues through the generations, and that will not be broken without significant targeted interventions.

Bullying

Bullying is the most common form of violence in schools, with and is consistently recorded as one of the biggest concerns children have in schools across the world. [216]

Rates of bullying vary wildly, with the proportion of children that report having been bullied ranging from between less than 10 per cent to 75 per cent, depending on the country, community and context. [217] It is a concern that spreads well beyond the lower-income countries affected by war, high violence and environmental threats focused on elsewhere in this report.

However, the global scale of the issue is undeniable. A large-scale survey of 100,000 young people across the world, published by UNESCO in 2016, found two-thirds of the children interviewed to have been victims of bullying. [218] More recent figures suggest that over a third of students (130 million) between 13 and 15 years old alone experience bullying regularly. [219] UNICEF have estimated that up to 150 million children within the same age group have had the education disrupted by bullying, and that as many as half the world's teens have experience of bullying in and around school. [220] Tackling bullying is vital to ensuring safe schools.

While any child or young person can be a victim of bullying, as with other forms of violence, the most marginalised and discriminated-against sections of society are the most frequently targeted. LGBT students, for instance, are up to five times more likely to be victims of bullying than their non-LGBTI peers. [222]

Children can be targeted due disabilities or disease (including family associations with conditions such as HIV/AIDS). Studies from Nepal and South Africa have found children with autism to be particularly vulnerable to bullying. [223] Other common factors in whether a child is subjected to bullying include physical appearance, poverty or socioeconomic status (the most common factor in wealthier countries) and ethnic or cultural differences.

> **The kids would pull me by the hair and say that I was an orphan because I had AIDS. When I was 13, they wrote in the bathroom: 'Emmy Nicolle Dubon has AIDS, do not hang out with her'.**
>
> —
>
> **Emely Dubon, Puerto Cortes, Honduras.**
> *Interviewed by UNICEF, September 2018* [224]

As mentioned in previous chapters, violent behaviour in children can result from a childhood spent surround by violence, and where traumatic childhood experiences have not been addressed though psychosocial support or most intensive mental health care. The impact of cultural factors has also been observed across the world: for instance, research has found targeting of LGBTI youth to be endemic within certain Caribbean cultures. [225]

New technologies have also changed the nature and extent to which bullying takes place, with school bullying now easily continued outside of school, through social media and mobile phones. Cyberbullying, although often less visible, is a growing problem and research suggests that girls are more likely to be victims. Cyberbullies reach wider audiences and can be harder to tackle as the perpetrators often remain anonymous. [226]

Cyberbullying of adolescent girls can often be of sexual nature, including 'sexting', with sexual messages and images shared, and 'cyberstalking' designed to force the girl into performing sexual acts. [227]

The impact of bullying can have severe implications for the physical and mental health of victims. Affected children and young people are *"likely to experience interpersonal difficulties, to be depressed, lonely or anxious, to have low self-esteem and to suffer academically"*. [228]

Bullying also impacts on educational outcomes, with victims less able to pay attention in class, taking time off school due to fear or injury, or dropping out altogether. The impact goes beyond individual children who are bullied, affecting the wider climate of the classroom and school, creating unsafe learning environments that reduce the overall quality of education. These educational impacts can in turn limit life chances, thereby passing the likelihood of bullying down through generations. [229] Although efforts — including legislation — to tackle bullying and the prejudices that underpin such behaviour have been introduced around the world (with universities and non-government organisations leading the way in many areas), the response overall remains patchy and inadequate.

Corporal punishment

Violence and abuse in and around schools takes many forms, and is routinely and widely condemned, especially when teachers are the perpetrators.

However, violence and abuse by teachers (or other school staff) does not simply result from the actions of rogue individuals. In a third of countries around the world — home to over 730 million school age children — it is legally allowed under the guise of 'discipline'. [230, 231]

The UN has encouraged all countries to "move quickly" to ban corporal punishment. However, defined in the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child as *"any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort"*, corporal punishment remains extremely common in a number of countries. [232] For instance, although Bangladesh has expressed a commitment to banning corporal punishment on several occasions, research has found that over 90% of children in Bangladeshi schools have been subjected to it at least once. [233]

Each day millions of children around the world run the risk of physically violent discipline, that creates climates of fear in classrooms that should be safe places for children to flourish and learn. Corporal punishment in school can take many forms, from hitting by hand or with an implement — often with a stick or cane — to *"kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion"*. [234] Generally, the intention is to humiliate, scare and hurt children.

As with other threats, marginalised groups are particularly vulnerable to corporal punishment, with the disproportionate targeting of ethnic minority children (particularly refugee children), and other already marginalised groups, reported across a range of settings worldwide. [235] The exception to this trend comes in the form of data suggesting boys at greater risk or corporal punishment than girls, and that the punishment meted out is generally more severe. [236] There have even been reports of punishment so severe that they have proven fatal. [237] Most recently, outrage and national debate was sparked in Tanzania when a 13-year-old student, Sperius Edadius, died as a result of injuries sustained from the punishment administered by a teacher who accused him of stealing. [238]

In all cases corporal punishment reduces the safely of the school environment and such forms of disciple are detrimental to a child's health and well-being. Beyond the obvious physical consequences, the psychological effects of corporal punishment can include anxiety, stress, living in fear, and a reduction in child's self-esteem. [239] These mental health impacts have been shown to manifest themselves in increased rates of antisocial and aggressive behaviour — both amongst children subjected to corporal punishment, and those who regularly witness it. [240, 241]

All of this has a significant negative impact on education. Children who have seen or experienced corporal punishment have commonly demonstrated deteriorating peer relationships, impaired focus and concentration, an increased likelihood to avoid or drop out of school, slower cognitive development and lower academic achievement. [242, 243, 244] One study from Lebanon found that as many as *"68% of boys and 58% of girls had left school because of harsh treatment by their teachers"*. [245]

Analyses of several countries also suggest that the economic costs of corporal punishment are high, due to drop-out rates, lower academic attainments, mental and physical health needs, and wider health and generational impacts (for example, lower academic attainment in girls is strongly correlated with higher fertility rates and lower health outcomes for themselves and their family). In India, for instance, this societal cost has been valued at between $1.5 billion and $7.4 billion a year.

Bringing an end to corporal punishment would eliminate the risk of legal violence that children face hands of their teachers and create safer learning environments for children of all ages. Changing legislation to prohibit corporal punishment in schools is one way to end this violence. Changing attitudes is also key, as teachers — and many parents — often support corporal punishment in schools, believing it to the best way to discipline children. Corporal punishment is often seen as the way to stop misbehaviour or to punish children for poor academic performance. Showing that non-violent positive forms of discipline are available and effective, is an important step to bringing an end to the practice of corporal punishment. [246]

Conclusion:
Building the Framework

In this chapter, we have seen that:

— Threats to safe schools and learning environments come from environmental sources (such as natural disasters and disease outbreaks), external threats (including war, violent extremists and urban/gang-related violence) and internal threats (in the form of gender-based violence, bullying and corporal punishment).

— The impact of some of these threats has reached record proportions. For instance, the number of children living in conflict zones — 367 million — has increased by 75% over the last quarter of a century. The number of child refugees — 13.2 million — is also on the rise.

— The impact on education and environmental and external threats can continue for many years after the threat itself has subsided. This can happen on an institutional level (for instance, by destroying infrastructure, deflecting or cutting resources, reducing teaching capacity, or removing/deterring children from education permanently), and on an individual level (by inflicting long-term mental and physical harm, or increasing the susceptibility of children to early marriage and other forms of exploitation).

— Children can be attacked on the way to school, be deterred from even attempting to go to school by real or perceived threats, and are increasingly being attacked within schools themselves — notably by militias, gangs and extremist groups looking to recruit, abduct, indoctrinate, intimidate, or to use school infrastructure itself for military purposes. Attacks on children and schools — including gender-based violence — are often carried out as a specific military tactic.

— Internal threats — particularly to marginalised groups such as girls, LGBTI students, and children affected by health problems and disability — can come from other students and educational staff, often as a result of wider societal prejudices.

— The intensity of impact of most threats increases for marginalised groups.

Building a framework for action:
considerations for safe schools and learning environments

Ensure all countries have endorsed and act on the Safe Schools Declaration in order to protect children from attack in and on the way to school, and protect schools from military use or targeting. The Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict should be implemented. Parties violating the terms of the declaration, or found to have committed any of the six grave violations against the rights of the child, should be held accountable through sanctions, prosecution, or other means.

- -

Promote child rights and safeguarding — particularly in relation to marginalised groups — as part of teacher training, national curricula, public education and legislation, to help reduce instances of bullying and other attacks from teachers and fellow pupils. In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, corporal punishment should be banned, and non-violent methods of discipline promoted.

- -

Minimise the number of children whose education and welfare are subjected to armed threats and violence by: seeking political solutions to armed conflict, gang warfare and violent extremism.

- -

Pilot and fund evidence-based strategies for minimising the number of children whose education is impacted by environmental threats. For instance: investing in preparedness training for students and teachers to help cope with natural disasters; improving public communications and responses around disease outbreaks (including utilising public communication channels such as radio to help minimised any disruption caused to education).

- -

Research the causes of bullying and other internal attacks, to inform, pilot and roll-out new approaches to reducing their incidence

- -

Improve collection and sharing of data relating to internal and external attacks on schools and children, including disaggregated data relating to types of attack and the impact on marginalised groups.

- -

Part III
THE HIDDEN CRISES: FUNDING SHORTFALLS FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

The previous chapters outlined the nature and extent of the current threats to safe schools and how, without urgent and targeted action, these threats will continue to contribute to the global education crisis.

Yet, despite some recent evidence of progress, this area is still not receiving the focus and funding needed to ensure the UN's Sustainable Development Goals on education don't just remain a distant dream well beyond their 2030 deadline.

Current funding levels certainly falls well short of the costs and economic impact of violence against children. In Brazil, for instance, youth violence is estimated to cost the economy nearly $19 billion each year, of which $943 million can be linked to violence in schools. In India, the societal cost of corporal punishment in schools alone has been estimated at between $1.5 billion and $7.4 billion a year. Worldwide, the costs of violence against children have been estimated to be as high as $7 trillion. [247]

To fully invest in safe schools and learning environments in these countries, it is necessary to examine what we know about the current and potential sources of financing that can fully address these needs and support the sound policies which will have an impact on improving safety and learning of young people.

Domestic finance

The need to improve the safety of learning environments exists across countries of all income levels. Although much depends on the political and economic stability of the countries concerned and the stresses they experience over the next decade, our projections suggest that of the 60 countries characterised by high violence, conflict or environmental threats for which data are available, five are anticipated to be classified as high-income countries by 2030 (as opposed to two today).

Of greater concern for the provision of safe schools are the 15 low-income countries and 42 middle income countries (23 classified at lower-middle income, 19 as upper middle-income) also characterised by high violence, conflict and environmental threats. These are the countries where children and young people are most vulnerable to the impact of a lack of safe schools and learning environments education. Given the situations many of these countries face, it is entirely possible that their income status may deteriorate. Most recently, in 2018, Syria was reclassified from being a lower middle-income country to being a low-income country as a consequence of the country's devastating civil war.

Predictable financing of education is key to managing the risk to education systems in times of crisis. Tax revenue is a major source of financing for education, even in contexts that are aid-dependent. While external aid is vital in the short and medium term, building a strong domestic finance base through sustainable tax reform is key to the long-term provision of safe, inclusive and equitable quality education.

If adequate bridge financing is available in the international financial architecture, lower-middle income countries — currently home to the largest numbers of school aged children — can expect to gradually become less reliant on grant financing as their domestic capacity increases.

However, projections based on previous research by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity suggest that international aid will need to remain a crucial — and in some cases substantial — part of the education funding mix for low- and middle-income countries affected by conflict, high violence and environmental threats, until 2030 and beyond. The 2015 Incheon Declaration recommended that these countries commit 4-6% of GDP to education from domestic source — something reiterated in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. [248] Research by the Commission suggests the figure needs to be towards the upper end of this bracket, at 5.8% of GDP. [249] That this figure is nearly double the current average in these countries — around 3% of GDP — gives an indication of the scale of the challenge.

A range of factors common across these countries exacerbates this problem. Countries face multiple developmental demands, and must prioritise the use of limited domestic resources among many desirable areas of investment. Furthermore, many of the countries analysed for this report rely heavily on one or two sources for domestic revenue — notably customs and (often non-renewable) natural resources. The presence of large informal sectors (particularly agricultural) and a current lack of technical, technological and statistical capacity, makes expanding the tax base beyond these sources difficult. [250]

Overcoming these challenges will require the support provided by the international

community to extend beyond the financial, and include assistance in maximising domestic financing, and fostering the political will to invest that additional income in education. Without this support, the countries covered in this report will find it challenging to provide the safe, quality education their children and young people deserve, denying future generations the chance to fully contribute to their country's economic and social wellbeing themselves.

Humanitarian and development aid

Humanitarian aid

There are promising signs that funding for education in humanitarian settings is moving in the right direction. In one of the most significant developments in aid provision in recent years, 2016 saw the launch of the Education Cannot Wait fund at the World Humanitarian Summit. This, for the first time, squarely placed education as part of *both* humanitarian and development efforts: an active acknowledgement of the need to protect education for children living in crisis settings.

In 2017, close to $310 million was spent on education in the 22 country-specific humanitarian response plan appeals launched by the UN at the beginning of the year. A further $140 million in humanitarian funding was contributed to education in four wider regional response plans, and to various additional flash appeals developed throughout the year as emergencies and disasters took place. In total, humanitarian aid to education increased for a fourth consecutive year, reaching a record $450 million.

Despite this recent progress, however, the data show that funding for education in humanitarian emergencies still lags well behind the level necessary to meet the ambitions outlined in SDG4.

Despite being a record total, the $450 million invested in 2017 still constituted just 2.1% of the total $20.7 billion spent on humanitarian aid that year. This is well short of the internationally agreed minimum target of 4% ($825 million). The $310 million contributed to education through humanitarian response plans was barely more than a third of the $813 billion deemed necessary when the appeals were launched by UN OCHA. [251]

As a result, of the 22 countries featured in humanitarian response appeals, only three received more than half of the funding requested for education (see table below). Eight (more than a third) of appeals received less than a quarter of the education funding needed. These eight countries included Afghanistan (just 3.3% of the education funding need met), where tens of thousands of girls were repeatedly blocked from attending school as a military tactic in one of the world's most intense conflicts. [252, 253] Also among these eight countries was the Democratic Republic of the Congo (just 11% of education funding need met), where — as detailed in Part 2 of this report — 2017 saw nearly 400 UN-verified attacks on schools, as part of a war that has created a population of nearly 3 million displaced children.

A Spotlight on 'hidden crises': Many humanitarian appeals for education are less than one-half funded *Based on UN OCHA Humanitarian Appeals 2017* [254]

Country Appeal	Amount needed for education in humanitarian responses $US millions	Funding received for education in humanitarian responses $US millions	Humanitarian education funding met %
Afghanistan	40	1.3	3.3%
Burundi	3.5	0.9	25.7%
Cameroon	10.4	4.1	39.4%
Central African Republic	34.8	13	37.4%
Chad	18	7.4	41.1%
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)	41.7	4.6	11.0%
Djibouti	0.7	0.12	17.1%
Ethiopia	35.3	1.8	5.1%
Haiti	6.1	2.8	45.9%
Iraq	69.9	24.3	34.8%
Libya	6.7	1.5	22.0%
Mali	35.1	5.2	14.8%
Myanmar	7.1	2.5	35.2%
Niger	10.4	3.9	37.5%
Nigeria	56.3	11.9	21.1%
Occupied Palestinian Territory	20.3	5.7	28.1%
Somalia	33.8	22.5	66.6%
South Sudan	48.5	44.3	91.3%
Sudan	39.8	5.6	14.1%
Syria	249.9	127.6	51.1%
Ukraine	8.4	3.8	45.2%
Yemen	36.5	13.7	37.5%
Total	**813.2**	**307.2**	**38.1%**

Further to these shortcomings, with education not yet fully embedded and remaining low on the agenda in humanitarian settings, it has been suggested that even the $813 million requested through official UN appeals was well short of the true amount needed to meet the educational rights of the children it is intended to help. [255] A lack of on-the-ground capacity and real-time data collection on education in emergencies exacerbates this problem, by making accurate needs assessments more difficult, thereby increasing the likelihood of the full need being underestimated.

Altogether, this paints a deeply concerning picture of education in emergencies, in which a lack of prioritisation and inadequate data collection mean that not enough money is

being requested, yet even these under-reaching requests fall well short of being met. This in turn has created a number of 'hidden crisis' countries: those with chronically under-financed humanitarian responses, where entire generations of children and young people can go without receiving the support they need.

Overall, while the rhetoric on education in emergencies and safe schools is positive — a marked and welcome step in the right direction compared to previous decades — funding is simply not available for basic education responses in many areas, let alone the kind of full and systematic approaches that will help establish and maintain safe schools and learning environments into the future.

Development aid

As with humanitarian aid, the picture of development aid spending on education is showing tentative signs of improving, but not yet at the scale required to meet the need.

Educational aid spending during the first half of the current decade had declined, both in dollar terms and as a share of total global aid spending. However, the most recent data suggest this trend might be reversing, with funding for education reaching a record high $13.4 billion in 2016, and the share of the total global aid budget spent on education increasing for the first time since 2009. [256]

Analysis conducted for this report found that countries affected by conflict, emergency or high levels of violence, for which there are available data, received a total of nearly $5 billion of this record education investment in 2016 (see table overleaf). Of this, $1.8 billion was dedicated to 25 low-income countries, slightly over $2 billion to the 20 lower-middle income countries, and about $1.1 billion was dedicated to the 17 upper-middle income countries. The largest recipients of education aid were Pakistan ($621 million), the Occupied Palestinian Territories ($373 million) and Jordan ($317 million).

While development aid is important for the education of millions of children, and for the future peace and prosperity of the recipient countries, the total invested still falls well short of funding levels needed to meet the objectives outlined in SDG4.

Current best estimates predict that the global education funding gap – the shortfall between the education funding required to meet the SDG4 ambitions and the amount that countries can realistically expect to be able to fund from domestic finance (– will more than double over the next 11 years to reach around $89 billion by 2030. [258] Mobilising the external resources necessary will be paramount for supporting the achievement of SDG 4.

Analysis by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunities has outlined that if the bilateral donors pledge to raise their contributions gradually to reach the 0.7% target of GDP to development aid, and ensure that 15% of the total development aid is invested in education, the external funding gap could largely be closed by 2030. [259]

Multilateral and bilateral aid 2016[257]

Country Name	Development aid invested in education $US millions	Total from bilateral donors $US millions	Multilateral donors total 2016 %	Country Income Level
Afghanistan	237.557	220.374	17.183	LIC
Bahamas	...	...	...	HIC
Belize	1.106	0.850	0.256	UMIC
Brazil	99.343	93.713	5.630	UMIC
Burundi	14.070	11.637	2.433	LIC
Cameroon	100.130	99.012	1.118	LMIC
Central African Republic	6.255	4.632	1.623	LIC
Chad	14.324	10.529	3.795	LIC
Colombia	61.147	57.397	3.750	UMIC
Comoros	15.028	11.964	3.064	LIC
Congo, Dem. Rep.	97.351	76.240	21.111	LIC
Congo, Rep	17.030	15.797	1.233	LMIC
Côte d'Ivoire	43.928	37.735	6.193	LMIC
Djibouti	14.473	7.828	6.645	LMIC
Dominican Republic	...	...	...	UMIC
Egypt	141.742	111.641	30.101	LMIC
El Salvador	23.648	22.925	0.723	LMIC
Eritrea	3.594	1.415	2.179	LIC
Ethiopia	253.555	201.552	52.003	LIC
Gambia, The	2.145	1.454	0.691	LIC
Guatemala	39.494	39.112	0.382	UMIC
Guinea-Bissau	15.000	12.286	2.714	LIC
Guyana	7.378	1.853	5.525	UMIC
Haiti	98.405	51.825	46.580	LIC
Honduras	44.258	43.772	0.486	LMIC
Iraq	33.900	28.184	5.716	UMIC
Jamaica	7.491	7.311	0.180	UMIC
Jordan	317.696	172.898	144.798	UMIC
Kenya	98.553	79.511	19.042	LMIC
Kiribati	9.775	9.712	0.063	LMIC
Kosovo	27.232	20.567	6.665	LMIC
Lebanon	234.509	176.827	57.682	UMIC
Lesotho	7.379	2.266	5.113	LMIC

Country Name	Development aid invested in education $US millions	Total from bilateral donors $US millions	Multilateral donors total 2016 $US millions	Country Income Level
Liberia	70.615	30.786	39.829	LIC
Libya	11.333	10.831	0.502	UMIC
Mali	86.455	69.156	17.299	LIC
Marshall Islands	3.040	3.040	0.000	UMIC
Micronesia, Fed. Sts	8.324	8.324	0.000	LMIC
Mozambique	164.435	121.763	42.672	LIC
Myanmar	135.240	114.836	20.404	LMIC
Namibia	16.193	12.686	3.507	UMIC
Niger	77.461	41.766	35.695	LIC
Nigeria	155.017	98.926	56.091	LMIC
Occupied Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza)	373.105	90.882	282.223	LMIC
Pakistan	621.499	346.763	274.736	LMIC
Papua New Guinea	60.821	53.831	6.990	LMIC
Rwanda	67.590	61.263	6.327	LIC
Sierra Leone	33.359	29.756	3.603	LIC
Solomon Islands	17.916	17.596	0.320	LMIC
Somalia	31.613	18.947	12.666	LIC
South Africa	51.113	36.280	14.833	UMIC
South Sudan	80.614	77.341	3.273	LIC
Sudan	16.946	12.034	4.912	LMIC
Syria	116.983	86.262	30.721	LIC
Tanzania	176.399	140.997	35.402	LIC
Togo	17.817	17.170	0.647	LIC
Trinidad and Tobago	...	...	...	HIC
Turkey	239.939	234.039	5.900	UMIC
Tuvalu	1.851	1.240	0.611	UMIC
Uganda	93.233	61.661	31.572	LIC
Ukraine	93.716	91.982	1.734	LMIC
Venezuela	11.428	11.127	0.301	UMIC
Yemen, Rep.	46.465	45.395	1.070	LIC
Zimbabwe	24.973	22.298	2.675	LIC
TOTAL	**$4.99 billion**	**$3.60 billion**	**$1.39 billion**	

However, only six countries to date — the UK, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands and Luxembourg — have either implemented the 0.7% policy, or pledged to scale up their aid contributions so that this figure is met by 2030, as needed. This shows the extent of the progress that remains to be made — in the prioritisation of both international aid and of education as a core component of it — for safe schools, and the benefits they bring, to become commonplace.

As seen above, with education in crisis settings sitting at the nexus of development and humanitarian work, the funding directed to support education in emergency, conflict and high-violence countries can come from both budgets. Some regions, such as Central America and Latin America as a whole, are no longer seen as priority areas for aid despite the significant challenges they face: they rarely qualify for humanitarian aid even though violence is higher in some countries than in recognised war zones.

The regional responses to international humanitarian efforts are illustrative of this work. For example, in 2017, the UN launched four regional response appeals for both humanitarian and development funding — the Burundi Regional Refugee Response Plan, Nigeria Regional Refugee Response Plan, South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, and Syria Crisis Response — to help support education in countries hosting refugees from the world's most significant crises.

Data relating to the highest profile of these appeals — that surrounding the war in Syria — illustrate the scale of the current shortfall. As the country of origin for 6.3 million refugees — more than any other country, and nearly one-tenth of the world's refugee population — the strain imposed on the host countries by the Syrian war has been immense. [260] The regional plan required $841 million of funding for education in 2017. Yet, despite the importance of, and challenges presented by, educating refugee children, only $450 million — little over 50% of the total requested — was provided (see table below). This left half of young Syrian refugees without educational support, undermining the quality of education, learning and safe learning environments for these children.

UN OCHA Syria regional response plan education funding appeals 2017

Regional response plan	Requested $US millions	Funded $US millions	Need met %
Lebanon	355	260	**73.2%**
Turkey	271	119	**43.9%**
Jordan	158	52	**32.9%**
Iraq	36	8	**22.2%**
Egypt	21	11	**52.4%**
Total	**841**	**450**	**53.5%**

Across both humanitarian and development aid, the failure to prioritise education continues to stockpile problems for the future, by denying countries in crisis with the educated future generations required to help them meet more of their educational and humanitarian needs in future. Unless governments, donors and other partners keep pace with the needs of this growing population, the ambitious agenda of the sustainable development goals to "leave no one behind" will recede further into the distance.

Global funds and sources

Funding for education in countries impacted by conflict, emergency and violence to support safe schools and learning environments also come from a range of multilateral channels.

Education Cannot Wait

The newest addition to the global education financing architecture is the Education Cannot Wait fund (ECW), established during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to bridge the humanitarian-development divide for the provision of education in emergencies. As such, safe schools and learning environments are crucial to its mission.

ECW has two primary windows for programme delivery. First, the rapid response window goes into action at the onset of an emergency to prioritise education in the humanitarian response, strengthening education's position during a humanitarian crisis. The intention is to ensure a stronger prioritisation of education during emergency response and that initial funding is available.

Second, a multi-year window aims at bridging the humanitarian-development divide by rallying the actors from both sectors around plans which take into account both immediate needs and longer-term realities. In the multiyear programmes, Education Cannot Wait backs the plans and aligns additional bilateral, multilateral and non-traditional funding behind the plans.

Reflecting the process of the Reaching All Children with Education (RACE) in Lebanon plan, ECW launched multi-year plans in 2018 for Uganda, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, which have started to attract resources for delivering education, safe schools and learning environments.

Education Cannot Wait in action: Uganda

Following the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees in 2017, the Government of Uganda, together with local and international humanitarian and development partners, has worked to complete an Education Response Plan for over half a million refugees from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and other countries. Together with students from Ugandan host communities, who have been very supportive of their refugee peers, Education Cannot Wait and partners developed a multi-year response plan to deliver education. While the total cost of the 3.5-year plan is $389 million, catalytic funding from Education Cannot Wait and backing from other multilateral funds and bilateral donors have brought in over $80 million in pledges during the first several weeks of its launch.

Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) focuses on long-term developmentalh assistance for education through the development of national education plans, of around three to five years in length. Prioritising safe school and learning environment policies in GPE's policy and planning tools can help improve systemic integration of policies to protect education and learning and improve overall resilience of systems. The recent replenishment round saw a renewed level of funding which can be disbursed to support safe schools across long-term government strategies.

GPE's funding model also allows up to 20% of resources to be reallocated to address emergencies. While this allows much-needed flexibility when responding to an emergency, the impact of reallocations on the longer-term developmental funding must also be taken into account.

Multilateral Development Banks

The Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), including the World Bank and Regional Development Banks, provide funding to support a range of developmental objectives, including education, making it an influential financier of safe schools and learning environments. An example of a MDB programme targeted specifically at the provision of safe schools is the World Bank's Global Programme for Safer Schools (GPSS). Launched in 2014 to boost large-scale investments for the safety and resilience of new and existing school infrastructure at risk from environmental threats in developing countries, the programme builds on the experience and lessons learned from the World Bank's safe school projects in countries such as Colombia, the Philippines and Turkey.

The World Bank-supported Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) is another innovative education programme that has evolved into a global platform capable of providing concessional financing to help middle-income countries address refugee crises wherever they occur.

UNRWA

Launched in 1950, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is focused exclusively on the protection and wellbeing of over five million Palestinian refugees currently living the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Over half of UNRWA's spend is on education programming, through which the organisation delivers education to over half a million children in more than 700 schools across the region.

However, in January 2018, the US administration — which until that point had provided nearly 30% of UNRWA's budget — slashed its contribution from over $360 million to $60 million. In September 2018, the US ended all further funding. To help stem this gap, 25 countries committed to advancing their donations to UNRWA, and 30 donors committed in September 2018 to providing additional contributions totalling an additional $122 million. This includes funding to provide safe quality education for millions of Palestinian refugee children, many of whom are living in extremely vulnerable settings.

UNICEF

UNICEF is the UN Agency for children and in 155 countries around the world, UNICEF works to provide learning opportunities that begin in early childhood and that prepare every child with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive.

In 2017, UNICEF spent $1.2 billion on education, making it one of the largest multilateral investors in education. UNICEF's education work bridges the divide between development and humanitarian funding and in recent years has been marked by a sharp rise in support for education in emergencies. UNICEF spends around 40% of its annual budget in crises or fragile situations. UNICEF supported 8.8 million children in humanitarian situations in 2017. [261]

UNHCR

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is the international agency responsible for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people other than those that come within UNRWA's remit. By the end of 2017, there were more than 19.9 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate. More than half of the global refugee population — 52 per cent — were under the age of 18, including 7.4 million refugee children of school age under UNHCR's mandate. [262] UNHCR coordinates the regional response plans (RRPs) to address the needs of refugees each year, including education.

International Finance Facility for Education

Set to be established in 2019, the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) will potentially generate an additional $10 billion for education in lower-middle income countries. IFFEd will use innovative financing to multiply donor resources and generate additional concessional financing from the multinational development banks for education. The funding will align with national sector plans and has the potential to be used to support safe schools and learning environments. IFFEd is currently supported by the World Bank, regional development banks, the UN system and many potential donors and beneficiary countries.

Investing in What Works

It is vital that any strategy to improve the safety of schools and achieve the ambitions outlined in SDG4 not only targets increased funding, but ensures that this funding is invested in quality education programmes.

Although progress is still required, a range of efforts are underway to help secure maximum impact from education investments by improving the monitoring and evaluation of, and ability to learn from, from current programmes. Several major bilateral donors, agencies, affected countries and philanthropists are working together to improve their own policies and further the scope to improve delivery. Some examples include:

— **The Education Cannot Wait fund** is developing its acceleration facility to improve understanding and support for what works best to provide education in emergencies.

— **The United States Agency for International Development** (USAID) has established the Education in Crisis and Conflict Network which provides tools and resources to design, implement, monitor and evaluate interventions that improve the safety of learning environments.

— **Dubai Cares**, part of Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives, announced a new Research Envelope, "Evidence for Education in Emergencies," aiming to inform decision and policy makers about matters pertaining to the education of children in areas hit by various crises.

— **The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies** (INEE) is a network of more than 14,000 individual members and 130 partner organisations in 190 countries, including donor agencies, sharing best practice on the delivery of education in difficult contexts, including the promotion of safe schools.

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Conclusion: Building the Framework

In this chapter, we have seen that:

— Due to a range of challenges faced in raising funds for education domestically — including large informal sectors, competing priorities such as health and infrastructure, and an over-reliance on a small number of sources for tax revenue — countries characterised by conflict, high violence and environmental threats are currently only investing around 3% of GDP in education. This is considerably lower than the 4–6% recommended in the Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 Framework for Action and the 5.8% that the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity calculate to be necessary

— There have recently been tentative signs of progress in the provision of aid for safe schools: humanitarian funding for education is at record levels having increased for the fourth year in a row, while education funding from development budgets has also started to increase again after a slight decline over the first half of the decade. In addition, the launch of the Education Cannot Wait fund at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 signalled a landmark in recognising the position of education in emergencies at the nexus between humanitarian and development aid.

— However, the majority of humanitarian response appeals still fail to raise even half the money requested. Nearly two thirds of appeals fail to raise even 25% of the money requested. This is despite UN humanitarian response plans and regional response plans under-reaching in their calls for education funding, due to a lack of prioritisation and dearth of data with which to inform appeal estimates.

— Furthermore, only six donor countries meet the recommended target of 0.7% of GDP for international development aid, and no countries currently allocated the recommended 15% of their aid budgets for education. If this situation does not change, there will be an estimated $89 billion shortfall in the funding required to meet SDG4 by 2030, even if funding from domestic sources is maximised.

— There are a number of global funds and sources of education investment. In some areas, such as Education Cannot Wait, investment is increasing. However, other agencies — notably UNRWA — have endured huge recent cuts to their budget.

— Although a range of efforts are underway to help secure maximum impact from education aid by improving the monitoring and evaluation of, and learning from, current programmes, these endeavours are still not widespread enough.

Building a framework for action:
considerations for safe schools and learning environments

Increase aid for education by ensuring donor countries gradually increase their aid contribution to 0.7% of their GDP, and commit 15% of this aid spend to education.
In particular, Education Cannot Wait should receive full funding for its strategic plan and funding should be provided to cover recent drops in support for education, particularly for UNRWA, in order to create predictability in programming.

- -

Ensure education is prioritised and sufficiently funded in humanitarian response plans.
This needs to include developing and funding multi-year programmes, in recognition that the damage done to education provision by conflict, high violence and environmental threats can outlast the duration of the actual threats themselves by many years.

- -

Ensure all bilateral and multilateral agencies prioritise safe schools and learning environments through policy directives, informed by better data collection and knowledge sharing, which guide their funding and programming.

- -

Support the governments of countries to invest a higher share of GDP in education and prioritise safe schools: analysis suggests that, with the right support, the average share of GDP invested in education should increase to an average of 5.8% of GDP to meet SDG4. All governments should have policies to prioritise safe schools and learning environments.

- -

Unlock an additional $10 billion in global education funding by ensuring the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd) is established and funded.
Governments should be encouraged to use IFFEd to fund results-based programs, especially programs to promote safe schools and learning environments.

- -

Ensure maximum value is secured from investment in safe schools by researching, innovating and piloting new approaches, whilst taking approaches that have proved successful on a larger scale. Building on the various research initiatives into safe schools and learning environments, sector-wide agreement on the key areas in need of research — as well as investments which yield results — would improve the effectiveness of financing safe school programs.

- -

Foundations and other private philanthropy should identify how their funding and prioritisation of safe schools and learning environments can enhance existing funding streams, fill gaps or improve the overall ecosystem and effectiveness of actors in the space.

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Part IV
A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

This report has outlined the range and extent of the threats to safe schools that children and young people endure around the world. It has, through new projections, shown the impact failure to tackle these threats will have on the world in 2030, and our ability to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) on education in particular. It has also looked at the current funding situation for global education, including the potential sources of transformational investment, and the current shortfalls that help explain why we are not yet seeing this transformation.

In the face of such daunting figures, the response from governments, stakeholders and the international community must be comprehensive.

This section looks at how a range of actors — including government departments, NGOs, foundations, civil society groups, and business — to explore the roles they can play in creating systemic and sustainable change to promote safe schools.

This framework for action is intended to help a variety of stakeholders understand and assess the assets and advantages they can bring to promotion of safe schools and learning environments, and is organised in the following manner:

1. **Identifying the actors**, their comparative advantages, partnership opportunities, and the level at which they wish in influence change

2. **Identifying the dimension** of challenges to safe schools a stakeholder would like to address, including the target population, issues of marginalisation and barriers.

3. **Identifying opportunities to prioritise, invest and deliver** safe schools and learning environments by operating at global and regional, national and local levels

Through these three components of the framework, it is intended that stakeholders can better identify an approach to addressing the issues of safe schools and learning environments and be part of the effort to change course and place SDG4 within reach for young people living in these challenging environments.

SAFE SCHOOLS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

PRINCIPLES

Identify and Strengthen Policies and Programmes	Support Governments to Improve Capacity	Promote Open Dialogue

ACTORS

National Governments	Donor Governments	International Organisations	IFIs and Global Funds	NGOs	CSOs	Philanthropy	Business	Academia

FOCUS: POPULATIONS & IMPACT AREAS

Early Years	Primary Education	Adolescents	Post-Secondary / Skills	Teachers and Education Personnel	General / No Specific population

FOCUS: MARGINALISATION & BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Refugees and Displaced	Disabilities	Girls	Exploited Groups*	LGBTI	Mental Health and Wellbeing	'Hidden Crises' Countries	Resilience in Communities

*e.g.victims of child marriage, child soldiers or other marginalized groups

TAKING ACTION

PRIORITISE	INVEST	DELIVER
Global/Regional — National — Local	Global/Regional — National — Local	Global/Regional — National — Local

Like all Theirworld action plans, this framework is rooted in the philosophy that only through next-generation partnerships, and working together in non-traditional ways, can we collectively rise to the challenge of creating a greater impact for the next generation and to enable children to reach their full potential.

Principles

The framework for action is rooted in building and strengthening the overall safe schools and learning environments response at the local, national and global level. Respecting and engaging with the communities impacted by emergencies and violence — and understanding their challenges — as well as working to support and improve the capacity of existing actors is central to the framework. Therefore, at the heart of this framework lie **three key principles** which are suggested to guide decision-making while using the framework: [263]

4. **Identify and strengthen policies and programmes** by researching and piloting new approaches and taking successful initiatives to scale.

5. **Support governments to improve their capacity** to achieve full the educational rights of children and adolescents, which include ensuring that schools and learning environments are safe and inclusive.

6. **Promote an open dialogue among families, children and adolescents, authorities, the private sector and communities** for immediate action as well as building long-standing responses.

Actors and comparative advantages

Taking action to address the threats to safe schools and learning environments requires the activation of all stakeholders capable of contributing to next-generation partnerships which can put safe schools at the centre of education strategies aimed at free quality and inclusive education for every child.

While the burden of responsibility is on governments to achieve SDG4, especially in context of conflicts, emergency and violence, institutions may be weak and broader partnerships are necessary to raise the profile of safe schools, generate the necessary resources and deliver effective programs.

Each stakeholder has a unique comparative advantage which should be considered when developing possible partnerships to address the challenge, make a tangible impact and take sustainable solutions to scale. And all stakeholders should ensure that their approach to safe schools and learning environments places the principles at the core of any work to ensure interventions advance the rights of children and youth and do no harm.

Some of the key stakeholders who can contribute to improving safe schools and learning environments — and the comparative advantages they can contribute — include:

National governments:

Including, but not exclusive to, governments currently in need of supporting safe schools and learning environments within their borders. National governments have several unique advantages, including:

— Setting policy direction, enacting legislation, and providing leadership from the top of the government through to agencies at the subnational level
— Implementing national programs to deliver safe schools and learning environments
— Capacity-building within institutions to generate knowledge about safe schools and learning environment
— Data collection and management
— Large scale, multi sectorial reach (given the oversight of agencies and ministries)
— Ability to collect tax and invest in safe schools and learning environments
— Set examples in the international community for safe schools and learning environments

Donor governments:

Governments providing financial and technical support through international development agencies and programs which have the potential to impact safe schools and learning environments. Some of the unique advantages include:

— Ability to invest financial resources and technical expertise in countries in support of safe schools and learning environments.
— Cross-country knowledge and expertise in the delivery and implementation of safe schools
— Ability to set agendas in international policy for safe schools and learning environments
— Influence global funds and organisations to prioritise safe schools and learning environments

International organisations:

Includes the major international agencies working to fund, set norms and deliver education in challenging circumstances, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNRWA, UNHCR, etc. Some of the advantages include:

— On the ground presence and technical expertise in program delivery
— Connections to local and national government
— Network of practitioners across countries focused on delivery and advocacy
— Reach within countries and communities for program delivery
— Strong networks of actors – donors, governments, delivery NGOs, community leaders, etc.
— Set policy and delivery norms for education in emergencies
— Set priorities on the international agenda for finance and delivery of education

International financial institutions and global funds:

Includes the World Bank and regional development banks, as well as funds such as the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait Fund, or the proposed International Finance Facility for Education. Some of the advantages include:

— Financial resources to invest in safe schools and learning environments
— Ability to set policy directions and standards for the implementation of safe schools and learning environments
— Networks of development and humanitarian actors
— Immediate response and multi-year planning methodologies
— Diverse set of financial tools, ranging from grants to catalytic funding and concessional lending

Global networks and coalitions:

These include networks like the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), The Early Childhood Development Network (ECDAN), and coalitions such as Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA); and Global Campaign for Education (GCE). The advantages of networks and coalitions in the promotion of safe schools and learning environments include:

— Knowledge sharing and capacity building
— Research and advocacy for accountability
— Convening power bridge between actors at different levels

Teachers federations and unions:

These include global federations, such as Education International, as well as regional bodies and national teacher unions. Some of the advantages include:

— National and global representation of teachers across countries, focused on the delivery of quality education.
— Ability to share knowledge on policies, programmes and advocacy efforts to promote and protect teachers
— Support the interests of teachers and other education employees at the international and national levels, including promoting development of qualifications and teachers working conditions

NGOs (non-governmental organisations):

include both international NGOs and local organisations working within countries. The advantages of NGOs in the promotion of safe schools and learning environments include:

— Delivery capacity and expertise within communities
— Network of practitioners across countries focused on delivery and advocacy
— Ability to mobilise for large-scale global and national advocacy efforts
— Set agendas for international policy and programmatic policy across regions and countries
— Community engagement in the communities where the NGOs operate

Civil society:

Includes global and local groups of teachers, youth, parents and concerned citizens, formally or informally organisation. Some of the advantages of engaging civil society include:

— Direct experience delivering education, safe schools and learning environments
— Are the most present and engaged in the day-to-day realities of children and young people facing unsafe learning environments
— Ability to mobilise and influence policy at the community, national and global level

Philanthropy:

Philanthropy includes individuals, public and private foundations investing time and resources in supporting education in conflict, emergencies and areas of high violence. There are several comparative advantages of the philanthropic community:

— Funding available to invest in programs and advocacy efforts focused on safe schools and learning environments
— Ability to engage at local, national, regional or global levels
— Flexibility to adapt and make strategic investments to advance safe schools and learning environments, including investments in program delivery, research, field-building and advocacy
— Relationships with a broad network of actors and expertise in programmatic priority areas
— Invest in programs or projects with risk levels greater than government and traditional actors
— Ability to use leadership to shape policy priorities
— Support a diverse set of policy, advocacy and delivery organisations to improve overall ecosystem and field-building

Business:

The business community can include large global multinational companies or small and medium enterprises working regionally or nationally. Some of the advantages of the business community as a partner include:

— Presence in local communities often experiencing in need of safe schools and learning environments as employers or through direct interaction with consumers
— Employee talent, services and products, including new technology, which could support safe schools and learning environments
— Philanthropy, social responsibility and community investment programs
— Influence from corporate leadership at national and global levels to interaction with consumers through marketing and advertising

Academia:

Researchers, academic institutions and think tanks. Members of the academic community have the unique ability to contribute:

— Research, data and expertise
— Identify gaps in policy or practice
— Test pilot programs and share results and implications for scaling up efforts

Case study
Working with business for safe schools

In December 2015, UNICEF, the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-Education) and its partners launched an initiative for safe schools in Latin America, which shows how partnerships with government and NGOs on the ground can deliver education programmes that re-engage students amid high violence. The initiative includes measures to prevent weapons in schools and develop conflict resolution in a region where 21 million children are out of school and gang violence is a major cause. [264]

Diverse partnerships can help create enabling environments for change by bringing together an ecosystem of actors where evidence, advocacy and action can combine to have a greater impact. In each of the next steps of the framework, return to the actors to ensure through the actors you wish to engage you are creating, building or integrating into existing ecosystems as not to duplicate existing efforts and also bringing along the partners.

Case study
Diverse partnerships for finance and delivery

The first Safe Schools Initiative in Nigeria focused on school and community interventions to help the most vulnerable and at-risk girls stay in education and offers a template for collaboration between business, NGOs and government. Launched after the kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, a partnership of business leaders from the Global Business Coalition for Education, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, A World at School and the Nigerian government leveraged $30 million to promote safe schools. Working with UNICEF and UNDP, the government and international donors each matched the first catalytic investment of the business community of $10 million. Nearly 50,000 children displaced by Boko Haram were directly helped by the Safe Schools Initiative through various interventions, including moving students to safer areas for study, equipping pilot schools and with additional safety features and protocol, and supporting education and teacher training in host communities. In camps for the displaced, innovative pedagogy was used to engage traumatised children. When Nigeria's new government took power in 2015, many of the Safe Schools Initiative's activities were not pursued as a policy priority. Campaigners are calling for the initiative to be revived and reinstated.

Focus:
Populations and impact areas

As this report highlights, there are a variety of entry points for affecting change and addressing barriers hindering the realisation of safe schools and learning environments. When identifying where a stakeholder can make an impact, it is important to assess the comparative advantages of a stakeholder (or group of stakeholders) with the dimensions of the challenge the stakeholders wish to address.

In short, the question is what is the population a stakeholder wishes to impact and/or the barriers a stakeholder wishes to address?

As covered in Part I of this report, the major populations from a demographic perspective to consider include:

— **Early Years**
— **Primary Education**
— **Adolescents**
— **Post-Secondary/Skills**
— **Teachers and Education Personnel**

Each population has specific needs that can be met in order to improve the safety of their schools and learning environments, while there are also measures that would secure benefits across populations. An organisation may choose to work generally on safe schools and learning environments in this way; or they may wish to pick a focus population (e.g. early years or post-secondary learners) that reflects their organisational objectives and the comparative advantages listed in the previous section.

Focus:
Marginalisation and barriers to inclusive education

Within the populations covered in the previous section, there are specific barriers to inclusive education which contribute to the marginalisation of particular groups within these populations. Tackling specific areas of marginalisation represents another potential focus for an organisation. Conversely, an organisation may wish to pick an area of marginalisation coupled with the general population (e.g. addressing needs of safe schools and learning environments for children and youth with disabilities, across all age groups).

To achieve SDG4, additional efforts are needed to place focus on the various marginalised groups, contexts and barriers which specifically impede safe schools and learning environments reaching their full potential. Given the most-marginalised are the most likely to be left behind, it is important to consider whether an entry point for an organisation also includes focus on a specific barrier or exploited group:

— **Refugees and displaced children**
— **Disability**
— **Gender discrimination**
— **Exploitation** (e.g. child marriage, labour or soldiers)
— **LGBTI** (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) discrimination
— **Mental health impacts**

In addition to these marginalised groups, there are also:

— **Children living in 'hidden crisis' countries**: those with chronically under-financed humanitarian responses, where — as noted in Part III — generations of children and young people can go without receiving the support they need.
— **Children and teachers living in areas where external and environmental threats are particularly common**, who — as noted in Part II — can be given resilience training and support to help cope with the immediate incidence and aftermaths of natural disasters and attacks.

As with the focus populations, for each marginalised group there are specific ways in which the various forms of marginalisation can be tackled, as well as approaches that would support children and young people across these groups. These are looked at in the next section.

Taking action: Prioritise, invest and deliver

Once actors have identified the populations and barriers to inclusive education they wish to focus on, there are a range of ways in which they can take action. A range of possible global, national and local level interventions actions are recommended in the conclusions to Parts 1–3 of this report and throughout this section, via which actors can help create education systems and funding models that promote resilience and adaptability to the threats they face. These have been broadly laid out in three categories to help actors identify interventions that reflect their areas of interest, organisational objectives, and comparative advantages:

1. **Prioritise safe schools and learning environments in organisational and government policies**

2. **Invest in safe schools and learning environments by ensuring adequate financing is available and supports best practice**

3. **Deliver results for children and youth through safe schools and learning environment programming which scales up best practice through direct engagement with affected communities**

These and other possible interventions can be explored in greater detail through the range of resources listed in the Annex to this report.

Global/regional action

At the global level, action can influence overall policy priorities, resource availability or improve the know-how and evidence for action. Within this context, key recommendations include:

Prioritise:

— **Encourage international accountability** for violations against safe schools and learning environments, starting with the Safe Schools Declaration
— **Ensure safe schools and learning environments** are present in the strategies of global organisations, including international organisations, financial institutions and funds, and donor agencies, and used in country/regional planning activities
— **Ensure safe schools and learning environments** rise to the top of the international agenda of major conferences, summits and campaigns
— **Strengthen advocacy** for safe schools and learning environments at a global level
— **Ensure currently neglected areas**, such as early childhood development and mental health and wellbeing, are prioritised in line with their long-term impact
— **Ensure inclusive education** and overcoming the barriers currently experienced by marginalised groups are explicitly factored into aid planning.
— **Seek political solutions** to the provision of safe schools in areas of war, gang violence, and violent extremism

Invest:

— **Gradually increase overall aid levels** to 0.7% of GDP, with 15% directed to education
— **Ensure mechanisms are in place** to finance safe schools and learning environments in diverse countries, including:
  — Full funding of the Education Cannot Wait Fund and integration of safe schools and learning environments in first-response and multiyear programs
  — Inclusion of funding for safe schools in Global Partnership for Education sector plans
  — Windows to support safe schools and learning environments in multilateral development bank financing, including financing leveraged by the International Finance Facility for Education (IFFEd)
  — Donor agencies include safe schools and learning environments within education portfolios
  — More philanthropic entities prioritise safe schools and learning environments and develop funding collaboratives to improve effectiveness and complementarity of funding
— **Hold public global funds, investment facilities and donors to account** for financing safe schools
— **Increase the capacity for multi-year investments** that reflect the ongoing challenges that external and environmental threats, such as war, high violence, natural disasters and disease outbreaks, can impose on education systems.

Deliver:

— **Share expertise on best practice** resulting from local, national and global pilots and studies through networks focusing on safe schools and learning environments
— **Conduct research** to improve data and evidence on safe schools and learning environments
— **Conduct pilots** to identify solutions to address barriers for the most marginalised and identify lessons for scaling up successful interventions
— **Build an ecosystem** for supporting safe schools and learning environments by strengthening networks evidence to action
— **Identify how new technologies** can promote the more effective delivery of safe schools and learning environments in conflict, emergencies and areas of violence
— **Encourage the business community** to dedicate its talent and problem-solving develop tools to support safe schools
— **Improve co-ordination** with the provision of health and wellbeing aid to reflect the extent to which outcomes in both sectors are inter-connected.

Example of Global Action in Practice:
Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines

An international political commitment to protect students and schools and universities exists in the form the Safe Schools Declaration, which has been signed by 81 countries since its launch in May 2015. [265] **The declaration signals their commitment to protect students, teachers, schools and universities from attack during armed conflict. It stresses the importance of continuing education during war and presents measures to deter military use of schools.**

States that sign up to the declaration pledge to undertake steps to makes it less likely that schools and students are attacked and to mitigate the effects of attacks that do occur. These measures include collecting reliable data; assisting victims of attack; investigating violations of the law and prosecuting perpetrators where appropriate; developing "conflict sensitive" approaches to education; supporting efforts to continue education in the midst of war; supporting UN work on children in armed conflict; using the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* [266]

and bring these into domestic policy and operational frameworks. One of the core aims of the guidelines is to prevent warring factions converting schools into military objectives. The guidelines reflect evidence of good practice already applied by some parties to armed conflict for the protection of schools. The also raise awareness of the issues and provide a focus for discussion between governments, NGOs and others about how to keep schools safe.

A number of conflict-affected countries, including Nigeria, Somalia and the African Central Republic have taken steps to put the guidelines into action. As Somalia implemented the declaration in 2017, ANISOM handed several educational buildings back to authorities, after first checking that they were clear of explosives and fit for purpose. Afghanistan's ministry of education issued directives calling for security forces to evacuate schools in 2016. The guidelines have been used by NGOs to convince some warring factions to stop using schools, for example by Save the Children in DRC.

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Business innovation at the global level

The business community is constantly innovating for the marketplace. However, too often, businesses are not engaged in thinking about how their new technology could promote safe learning environments.

Some companies are taking a proactive lead through the Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-Education), which was established by Theirworld in 2012 to improve business investment in education. For example, **Arup International Development**, a not-for-profit business within the private engineering and design company Arup, partnered with the Global Program for Safer Schools to support the development of a Roadmap for Safer Schools, an operational tool offering guidance to project managers to advance the safer school agenda, including post-disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts. [267]

Another company taking a proactive approach to promoting safe learning environments is **SafeBus**. [268] Their communications app allows parents to track their child's school bus, creating safer routes to school and more peace of mind for parents.

The solar energy company **MPOWERD** has also made significant progress in creating safe learning environments for students with their technology. [269] Their solar-powered lightweight light sources have provided up to 12-hours of illumination for children in energy scarce countries such as Kenya, Honduras, Iraq, Nepal, etc. to help them study and play after dark, as well as commute to and from school safely.

Moreover, the Rapid Education Action (REACT) initiative emerged out of GBC-Education's commitment to mobilise in-kind and financial resources from the business community to support on-the-ground needs. Using a digital database, the system matches companies to registered implementation partners who can work collaboratively to effectively leverage these assets to carry out programs and initiatives to support education in emergencies and promote safe schools and learning environments.

Business and NGO partnerships at regional level

Peace Tech Lab works to reduce violent conflict using technology, media, and data to accelerate and scale peacebuilding efforts. Their GroundTruth Global project provides early warnings of social and economic disruption to help inform where education projects can be expanded or implemented during a crisis. [270]

Ericsson partnered with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Asiacell to support teachers in Domiz Refugee Camp in Iraq with the Connect To Learn cloud-based solution to enable access to resources and content via mobile broadband. [271]

Google.org partnered with War Child Holland on the $2.5 million dollars in the innovative tablet-based teaching method Can't Wait to Learn, for children affected by conflict. While many children in conflict situations are not able to learn in a traditional classroom, this technology gives them a chance to play and learn subjects like math and reading. [272]

National action

At the national level, it is possible to influence policy priorities, resource availability or improve the know-how and evidence for action within the context of a specific country's needs. Within this context, key recommendations include:

Prioritise:

— **Ensure countries have signed** the Safe Schools Declaration
— **Ensure national policies** in education, protection, health, immigration and emergency preparedness promote safe schools and learning environments with contingency plans in place
— **Encourage top officials** to speak out on the record about the importance of safe schools and learning environments
— **Ensure disaster risk reduction** and resilience of education systems is a critical aspect of policy planning and advocacy at a national level.
— **Promote child rights and safeguarding** — particularly in relation to marginalised groups — in teacher training, national curricula, public education and legislation.

Invest:

— **Reach domestic financing targets** of an average of 5.8% of GDP to education through increased prioritisation and domestic resource mobilisation
— **Ensure funding is available** for the support of safe schools and learning environments are part of education strategies – both as a form of prevention and addressing unsafe schools in real time
— **Provide research and development funding** to improve technology, data and information systems to deliver effective safe schools programming

Deliver:

— **Work with government departments**, school personnel, teachers and delivery partners to ensure no child or young person is left behind
— **Proactively identify** and address barriers to safe schools
— **Build evidence**, collect data and ensure ecosystems for action are in place among government agencies, departments and communities to deliver safe schools and learning environments

National action in practice:
Theirworld in Lebanon

In Lebanon, at the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2011, nearly 500,000 children were out of school. Troubled with the reality of limited international engagement and no solution in sight, in 2013 Theirworld commissioned a team, led by Kevin Watkins, to work with partners and identify solutions to the Syrian refugee influx.

Through direct work and ownership of the government of Lebanon, the team designed a 'double-shift' school programme to accommodate the students and Theirworld worked with the government of Lebanon, the donor community and international agencies, such as UNICEF and UNHCR, to build momentum. The government worked with agencies to build an operational plan based on the proposal while Theirworld worked with youth campaigners and civil society organisations, like Avaaz, to advocate for the plan to be funded and put into action. Theirworld also funded an individual to sit within the government to coordinate the response.

Today this initiative, known as 'RACE (Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon), is managed by the Government of Lebanon with the support of international agencies and financing from the international community. It currently enrols around 300,000 Syrian refugees annually in various forms of education.

Building on the Lebanon example, the Education Cannot Wait Fund, now entering its second year of programming, has developed a multi-year response program to bridge the humanitarian-development divide and rally all stakeholders behind multi-year plans. In a process owned by the national governments, there is an opportunity to bring actors together and build plans which place safe schools and learning environments at the centre of the humanitarian-development divide. Multi-year education programs have now been developed for Uganda, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

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Local action

At the local level, action can be directed to most directly impact — and in partnership with — those on the front-lines of delivering safe schools and learning environments. Within this context, key recommendations include:

Prioritise:

— **Community groups are engaged** in promoting safe schools and learning environments, including young people and diverse stakeholders
— **Preventative programs** are in place to ensure resilience of safe schools and emergency plans are in place
— **Engagement** with community, teachers and law enforcement to promote trust and safe learning environments
— **Advocacy** at local level for safe schools and learning environments to build local awareness and prioritisation
— **Encourage** the local business community to promote safe schools and work in partnership with governments and other stakeholders

Invest:

— **Ensure funding** reaches target populations
— **Ensure transparency of funding** with public reporting on funds
— **Engage local philanthropy or business engagement** in supporting safe schools and learning environments in communities

Deliver:

— **Empower** schools, delivery agents, teachers and communities to implement safe schools and learning environments
— **Build best practice** and share experiences to create an active learning ecosystem for safe schools

Examples of Local action in practice

As communities have specialised knowledge about their particular context and conflict dynamics, and may even know the individuals involved, communities themselves will in many instances be best suited to devising practical solutions for protecting education from attack and for helping negotiate schools as peaceful zones. Examples include:

Community education committees (Somalia)

UNICEF trained volunteers to serve as intermediaries between the community and the school management as part of Community Education Committees in Somalia. These committees help to reduce the influence of al-Shabaab in the schools, particularly when respected elders and religious leaders participate. They have been successful in several regions in curtailing attack.

Teacher-student-parent defence units (Zimbabwe)

Students and community members formed voluntary groups in several schools to promote safe schools. By fostering these units, members work together to protect education, so that, for example, parents warn teachers of imminent attack. Parents also get involved in school affairs, making inquiries of the administration about student participation in political camps at schools. All members work together to try to remove militia camps from school grounds.

Religious leader engagement (various examples)

Engagement of local religious leaders in the promotion of education has had a significant impact in reducing attacks. For example, in **Afghanistan**, in collaboration with community shuras and protection committees, respected imams or religious mullahs sometimes use their Friday speeches to raise awareness about the importance of education in Islam. In Peshawar in **Pakistan**, prominent Muslims from the community delivered speeches about the importance of education and of sending students back to school in a program supported by UNICEF. And in **Somalia**, religious leaders have gone on public radio in government-controlled areas and visited schools to advocate against the recruitment of children.

Community-driven negotiations to develop and agree to codes of conduct for Zones of Peace (various examples)

In some communities, collaboration among diverse political and ethnic groups in widely publicised mass meetings can lead to the development of 'Safe School Zones'. Undertaken in countries such as **Nepal** and the **Philippines**, the writing and signing of codes of conduct define what was and was not allowed on school grounds in order to minimise violence, school closures and the politicisation of schooling. For instance, terms of the code in some cases included "no arrest or abduction of any individual within the premises" and "no use of schools as armed bases." The signatory parties kept their commitments, in general, and these efforts helped communities to keep schools open, improving protection as well as school governance.

Conclusion

The challenge is clear. The pervasive threats to safe schools and learning environments created by humanitarian emergencies and violence are massive. But so too are the consequences — for each individual child affected, and for health, happiness, peace and prosperity of the world. The new data produced for this report show that it is no exaggeration to state that the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals are simply not achievable without a concerted effort to tackle unsafe schools.

Changing course will require a range of actors and stakeholders to implement a range solutions to address a range of challenges. The systemic call to action must be to create more resilient and adaptable education systems which can bounce back during times of shock and innovate. But to be resilient and adaptable, education must become an item high on the agenda and we must leverage some of the tools at our disposal to create lasting change.

In doing so, stakeholders should harness existing efforts while innovating to address the challenges that remain. Across all of these efforts, stakeholders must work to ensure their efforts are able to adapt to meet the needs of the most marginalised and build resiliency in systems.

A raft of interventions by local, national and international NGOs provide examples of how to improve access to education and learning, in every kind of fragile setting. A range of interventions by local and national governments are developing children's resilience and keeping schools safe. Technology is also playing a part, offering online alternatives to classroom teaching and tracking journeys to school, with vital support from international business partners. And policy frameworks — from the Safe Schools Declaration to the practical guides for practitioners — are being developed to help aid in improved delivery of safe schools.

For a systemic change to take place — to the extent needed to achieve SDG4 and ensure a safe education for all children faced with humanitarian emergencies, violence and conflict — much more must be done at a local, national and global level to prioritise, invest in, and deliver safe schools. This framework for action provides guidance to stakeholders to identify where and how they can best make an impact and contribute to a holistic response capable of rising to the challenge set out in this report. The cost of inaction, for hundreds of millions of children around the world, is too high for this not to happen.

ANNEX
HELPFUL RESOURCES ON SAFE SCHOOLS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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