Policy Paper 10

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Children still battling to go to school

The 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report exposed the hidden crisis of education in conflict-affected countries. Two years later, to mark the birthday of Malala, the Pakistani schoolgirl shot by the Taliban as she was exercising her right to go to school, this policy paper shows that urgent action is needed to bring education to the 28.5 million primary school age children out of school in countries affected by conflict.

Education seldom figures in assessments of the damage inflicted by conflict. International attention and the media invariably focus on the most immediate images of humanitarian suffering, not on the hidden costs and lasting legacies of violence. Yet nowhere are those costs and legacies more evident than in education.

Across many of the world's poorest countries, armed conflict continues to destroy not just school infrastructure, but also the hopes and ambitions of a whole generation of children.

Globally, the number of children out of school has fallen, from 60 million in 2008 to 57 million in 2011. But the benefits of this progress have not reached children in conflict-affected countries. These children make up 22% of the world's primary school aged population, yet they comprise 50% of children who are denied an education, a proportion that has increased from 42% in 2008 (Figure 1).
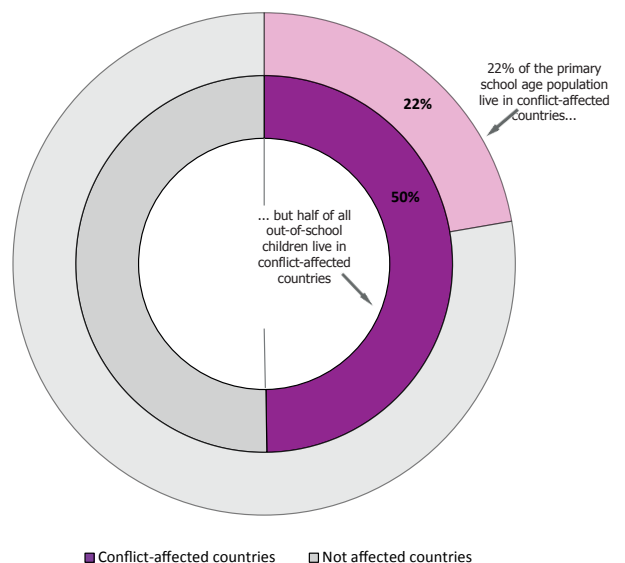
Of the 28.5 million primary school age children out of school in conflict-affected countries, 12.6 million live in sub-Saharan Africa, 5.3 million live in South and West Asia, and 4 million live in the Arab States. The vast majority – 95% – live in low and lower middle income countries. Girls, who make up 55% of the total, are the worst affected, as they are often victims of rape and other sexual violence that accompanies armed conflicts.

Of the 69 million adolescents of lower secondary school age who were not in school, 20 million lived in conflict-affected countries in 2011, of whom 11 million were female.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report team drew on the same international reporting systems as used for its 2011 report to construct an updated list of conflict-affected countries.[1] Thirty-two countries were identified as affected by armed conflict in the period 2002–2011, three fewer than in the period 1999-2008 (Table 1).[2] However, new countries have joined the list, such as Libya, Mali and Syria.

Many countries embroiled in conflict are overlooked in the international aid structure, with their education systems receiving neither long-term development assistance nor short-term humanitarian aid. The global education community has been calling for 4% of humanitarian aid to be allocated to education. Yet new analysis by the EFA Global Monitoring Report team shows that the share of humanitarian aid for education has declined. In 2012, education accounted for just 1.4% of humanitarian aid, down from 2.2% in 2009.

Figure 1: Half of the world's out-of-school children – 28.5 million – live in conflict-affected countries

22% of the primary school age population live in conflict-affected countries...

... but half of all out-of-school children live in conflict-affected countries

22%

50%

■ Conflict-affected countries   □ Not affected countries

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report calculations based on UIS database (May 2013)

Education suffers from a double disadvantage, not only receiving a small share overall, but also receiving the smallest proportion of the amount requested of any sector (Figure 2). In 2012, of

the modest amount requested for education for humanitarian crises, only 26% was received, leaving a funding gap of US$221 million.

This decline in humanitarian aid for education is especially unfortunate because funds are needed more than ever. Humanitarian crises are escalating in several parts of the world. There were 15.4 million refugees by the end of 2012 – more than there have been since 1994 (UNHCR 2013). The majority of refugees flee to neighbouring developing countries, whose education systems are already weak and face limited capacity to support new populations. For every refugee, there are two internally displaced people, who are often even less protected. Children make up 46% of those who have been forcibly displaced. These girls and boys face a disruption of their learning process at a critical time – and the risk of a lifetime of disadvantage as a result.

Governments identified conflict as a major barrier towards getting all children into school when they signed the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000. They recognized that children in conflict-affected countries are robbed of an education not only because schools may be closed and teachers absent, but also because they are exposed to widespread rape and other sexual violence, targeted attacks on schools and other abuses.

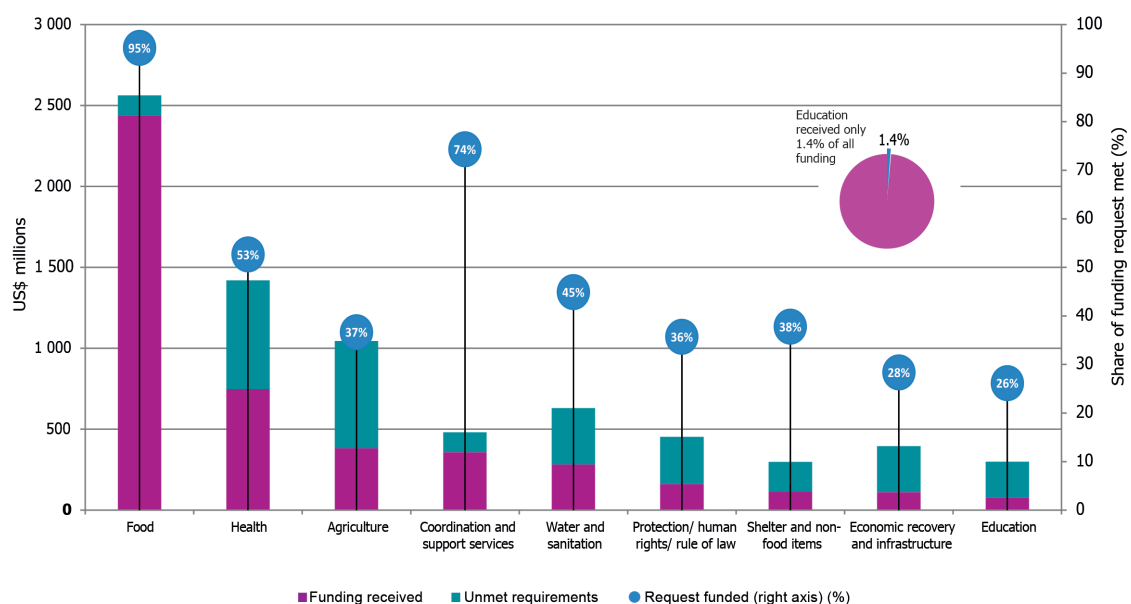Classrooms, teachers and pupils will continue to be seen as legitimate targets unless there is tougher

Table 1: List of conflict-affected countries: 2002–2011

Afghanistan	Myanmar
Algeria	Nepal
Angola	**Niger**
Burundi	Nigeria
Central African Republic	Pakistan
Chad	Palestine
Colombia	Philippines
Cote d'Ivoire	Russian Federation
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Rwanda
Eritrea	Serbia
Ethiopia	Sierra Leone
Georgia	Somalia
Guinea	Sri Lanka
India	Sudan
Indonesia	**Syria**
Iran	Thailand
Iraq	Timor-Leste
Liberia	Turkey
Libya	Uganda
Mali	Yemen

Note: Countries in light blue were on the list in 2011 but are no longer identified as conflict-affected in 2013. Countries in red joined the list in 2013.

Figure 2: Education receives a small share of humanitarian aid
Funding received against amount requested per sector, 2012 consolidated appeals and flash appeals

Source: Financial Tracking Service database. *Accessed June 2013*

action against human rights violations, an overhaul of global aid priorities, strengthened rights for displaced people and more attention to the ways education failures can increase the risk of conflict. The crisis of education in conflict is no longer hidden: there is no excuse for not helping to bring it to an end.

Annie Bodmer-Roy/Save the Children

Sita*, 12 years old, has been living in a make-shift camp for internally displaced people in Sevaré, central Mali, for nine months. She fled her hometown of Gao when the fighting began in her village and her school was attacked.

"I left because of the things that were happening. I couldn't have fun anymore. I didn't go out any more, I just stayed inside. On Monday I went to school. They came into the school. It made me scared. They broke our school desks, destroyed our school books and our things. I didn't like what they were doing at all. School is supposed to be a place where we learn things. They came in and chased us all out. They shot at the doors. When we left the school, we all ran straight home and stayed there. We didn't go back. We stayed at home from then on."

Motasem is a sixteen year old Syrian refugee living in Lebanon. He left Syria with only the clothes on his back. He has been unable to graduate due to the war and is aware of schools being targeted and school children being killed on their way home from school.

"Now students don't go to school, because when they did there were shells – I think they targeted the school because shells fell all across it. Students were leaving to go home in the afternoon when it started and two children died – they were both very young. I am in ninth grade but this war stopped me from graduating and now my future is destroyed."

The two case studies in this policy paper were shared with the EFA Global Monitoring Report by Save the Children

*The name has been changed to protect her identity.

Notes

1. The list of conflict-affected countries includes any country with 1,000 or more battle-related deaths over 2002–2011, plus any country with more than 200 battle-related deaths in any one year between 2009 and 2011. Battle-related deaths include fatalities among civilians and military actors. Data are compiled using the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) datasets on armed conflict and battle deaths. See Box 3.1 in the 2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report for further information. Because localized conflicts in countries with large populations can skew figures, this exercise makes an adjustment by including only conflict-affected areas for India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

2. During the period in question Sudan still included the area that now comprises South Sudan.