

## **EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM 2023**

**The Spanish Coalition of the Global Campaign for Education asks the international community and specifically Spain to respond to the needs of education in emergency contexts in light of the fact that it continues to be an underfunded agenda that has only received 3% of humanitarian funds.**

### **An increasingly turbulent world**

We are confronted with an increasingly turbulent world, marked by successive crises that last longer, in which the causes are diluted, but the consequences multiply.

There are currently 27 active conflicts (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022) and in 2022 alone there were 323 natural disasters (OurWorldinData). This context carries with it a bleak outlook that has a direct impact on people's lives. There are already 339 million people in need of humanitarian aid in 2023, a figure that represents a 23% increase compared to the previous year and a three-fold increase since 2016. If the number of people dependent on such aid constituted a country, it would be the third most populated in the world (OCHA, 2022).

This scenario is the sum of multiple correlated emergencies.

We are witnessing the largest global food crisis in modern history driven by conflict, climate disruption and the impending threat of a global recession. Hundreds of millions of people are at risk of worsening hunger, on top of the 222 million people facing acute food insecurity (OCHA, 2022).

Women and girls are seeing their rights becoming less and less attainable and it will take another four generations to achieve gender equity (UN Women et al., 2023). More than 70% of women and girls living in conflict zones have experienced gender-based violence (OCHA, 2022). Because of their age and gender, they suffer discrimination in all areas of their lives and even more so in emergency contexts (OCHA, 2022). They assume a disproportionate amount of household chores, have less access to education and health services, especially sexual and reproductive health services, experience sexual and gender-based violence, especially when they reach adolescence, and often see their opportunities for the future greatly reduced.

Climate change is contributing to humanitarian crises around the world, with climate-related disasters increasing levels of risk and vulnerability, spreading instability, and making them more prone to other crises (European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2022).

In addition, there is the indiscriminate use of violence against the civilian population, the impact of

clashes between armed actors and the violation of international frameworks.

In this context of fragility and deterioration, fleeing is the only solution a person has. And more and more people are deciding to do so. 103 million people have been forced to leave their homes; the highest number ever recorded. A year ago, the figure was 89.3, double the number from a decade ago (ACNUR, 2022c).

These chilling figures represent a significant proportion of children, with 41% of this group made up of children and adolescents (C&A)(while they account for 30% of the world's population). Specifically, **36.5 million children under the age of 18 were away from their homes in 2021; 13.7 of them are refugees and asylum seekers and 22.8 are internally displaced**, the highest figures recorded since World War II (UNICEF, 2022) **Added to this are the 7.3 million C&A who, in 2021 alone, were looking for a new home due to the scale of natural disasters.**

The scope of these figures is staggering and poses huge challenges. Among them is **ensuring quality and accessible education** for all these millions of C&A. But the reality is that the humanitarian model, with an approach that is still too short-sighted, is inadequate when it comes to meeting the real educational needs of children affected by crises.

## The importance of the triple nexus approach

It has already been pointed out that we are facing a context of prolonged and interlinked crises that accentuate the cycle of vulnerability. To provide a lasting solution, responses can no longer be limited to traditional structures, but must be simultaneous. This means that humanitarian assistance, development programs and peacebuilding must be designed in a holistic and coherent manner, in order to provide a sustainable response to people before, during and after a crisis.

The aim would be to respond to immediate needs while ensuring long-term investment to address the systemic causes of the crisis, therefore reducing its impact, and promoting peace.

This is an approach that has multiple implications since it involves, on the one hand, breaking down the usual silos between the three types of interventions in order to start thinking from the outset about the type of objectives pursued and how these interventions can be adapted to achieve them. This inevitably implies a change of vision, since it means providing short-term responses, but thinking about the long term. It is also based on the assumption that local and national capacities existing in the affected country need to be reinforced (and not replaced). This is reflected in the so-called Grand Bargain, where the international community establishes that 25% of the funds should go to local organisations.

When we focus the intervention on the education sector, the nexus approach becomes even more relevant for achieving the following objectives (INEE, 2021; (European Commission, 2018)).

- **Guaranteeing access:** responding to immediate educational needs, while planning for educational continuity.
- **Promoting development:** Education is one of the pillars of a more equal society and an effective tool for promoting sustainable development, but this requires quality education and training at every stage.
- **Creating resilient education systems:** given the average duration of crises, there is a need to create education systems that are able to overcome the various shocks they will be subjected to during that time. This means establishing well-planned, coordinated education systems with the necessary investment.

- **Being more efficient:** it is widely recognised that the humanitarian and development sectors have different and sometimes even conflicting logics. Strategic planning from the outset with a view to the various stages and objectives to be achieved will therefore help to reduce costs and be more efficient. (INEE, 2021 a)

## Childhood and adolescence out of school

Currently, **222 million school-age children live in contexts affected by humanitarian crises**. This figure has risen exponentially from 75 million in 2016, an increase of 196% in just 6 years (ECW, 2022).

If we put this data into perspective, in Europe the population under 18 years of age is 89.4 million (National Institute of Statistics, 2022). In other words, children and adolescents (C&A) living in crisis settings make up more than double the total population of children and young people in Europe.

A total of 222 million children and adolescents are in urgent need of educational support, 78.2 million of whom are out of school and nearly 120 million of whom, even when in school, are not achieving the minimum level of mathematics or reading literacy. The situation is even more dramatic for C&A living in protracted crisis areas where most of them are unfamiliar with any context other than that of a crisis. 84% of out-of-school C&A live in these countries. These include places such as Afghanistan, South Sudan, Mali, and Pakistan, where entire generations know nothing but violence and recurrent crises. Girls and female adolescents in particular are disproportionately affected when it comes to access to education. 54 per cent of the world's out-of-school girls and female adolescents lived in a country affected by an emergency, a total of 69 million female students, 24 million in primary and 45 million in secondary school (INEE, 2021).

**The effects of having millions of C&A out of the education system will have enormous consequences for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda** as a whole, as education is an enabling right for many other rights included in this agenda (such as dignified employment or a more peaceful world). But we also know that progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is regressing and that many of the targets will not be met by 2030 (United Nations, 2021).



## The multidimensional impact on children and adolescents

Children are particularly affected by the destruction of physical capital and deteriorating economic conditions associated with a crisis. They may suffer health consequences due to famine, widespread malnutrition, outbreaks of infectious diseases, post-conflict trauma and the destruction of health facilities. Compared to adults, children exposed to a natural disaster have more severe physical effects because they breathe more air in relation to their weight, have thinner skin, are at greater risk of losing fluids and lose more body heat. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d.).

On the other hand, the financial difficulties faced by families mean that girls and boys are forced to work or to provide an income for their families and, therefore, **abandon their education**. Education may also be interrupted because of damage to schools, the absence of teachers, fear of insecurity and changes in family structures. Language barriers, stigmatisation and psychological trauma are other common obstacles to education in emergency contexts.

Crises are often associated with displacement, which affects children's education in many ways, **reducing access and undermining the equity, quality and how it is managed**. (Cazabat & Yasukawa, 2022). And in these situations, it is particularly relevant to address the scope of states' obligations regarding rights in these contexts in terms of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability (Entreculturas, 2020).

When structures for stability and security are disrupted due to a crisis, girls are especially vulnerable. Without the usual protective measures, such as the family unit or the household, they are at greater risk of being subject to a lack of protection. **Girls in conflict zones are 90 per cent more likely to not attend secondary school**, which increases the likelihood that they will become victims of various types of violence (such as child marriage and forced marriage) and heightens the risk of early pregnancy (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2015). In armed conflict, the pattern of deliberate and systematic attacks on education also has an important gender component. In its 2022 report, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) reports that girls and women have been directly targeted because of their gender in at least 11 countries. These attacks often come in various forms, ranging from violence and sexual exploitation or abduction to forced marriages, rape, and pregnancy, with devastating consequences on the mental and physical health of the victims themselves, and long-term impacts on communities and future generations.

Adolescent girls in particular, already vulnerable to human rights abuses based on gender norms and stereotypes, such as discriminatory legal provisions, lack of available sexual and reproductive health services, barriers preventing their equal access to safe and quality education, and gender-based violence, are faced with exacerbated vulnerabilities in humanitarian contexts.

The risks and human rights violations faced by adolescent girls are multiplied and exacerbated in humanitarian contexts, such as access to education; sexual and gender-based violence; child, early and forced marriages; trafficking; and forced unpaid labour, including domestic and care work. Girls with disabilities, as well as unaccompanied and separated adolescent girls, are also particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Adolescent girls can become systematic targets of sexual violence in conflict situations.

Limited mobility, security concerns and entrenched gender norms also have a major impact on adolescent girls' access to education in emergency contexts, creating additional protection challenges, contributing to the rise of negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex and child, early and forced marriage, and affecting the long-term development outcomes of girls. Menstrual hygiene needs represent urgent threats to dignity and risks to health and safety when girls and young women are unable to move around safely on their own in order to wash clothes or access essential sanitation supplies.



## Why Education in Emergencies is urgent

Education is a fundamental right, as recognised by many international and national regulatory instruments. It is also considered an enabling right for the exercise of other rights which, among other aspects, allows for: the integral development of human beings, the improvement of social conditions, the breaking of the circle of marginalisation and poverty, and the reduction of the gender gap.

**In an emergency, the right to accessible and quality education remains inalienable and indivisible and therefore cannot be suspended and must be guaranteed at all levels** (from early childhood to higher education, formal and informal). Furthermore, it is important to underline that this is independent of the legal status, location, or condition of the individuals. It is therefore a right that travels with each individual and enables their full development.

However, in emergency situations, states often find it difficult to guarantee and protect human rights. This may be due to the loss of power and chaos that such a situation entails, the destruction of infrastructure or the reorientation of resources. In any case, emergencies increase the likelihood that the right to education will be violated. **The interruption of this right not only means fewer learning opportunities for C&A in the present, but it could also jeopardise their future.**

During a crisis, children and adolescents need a space where they feel safe and protected, which provides them with physical and emotional stability, reduces their stress levels and builds their resilience. They also need a place where they can play, socialise, have access to healthy and balanced nutrition and other services such as clean water and sanitation facilities.

Education is a fundamental right for human development and poverty eradication. **Children rarely get a second chance at education.** When the opportunity for education has been lost due to a crisis, it is not only a loss for the individual, but a loss of social capital and of a society's ability to recover from such an event.

States have an obligation to take all feasible steps, to the full extent of their available resources, to respect, protect and fulfil this right in all contexts and locations, including in contexts and locations where emergencies occur. This has a number of fundamental implications for the design and implementation of humanitarian interventions. First, entitlement to the right to education is not withdrawn in emergency situations and therefore cannot be suspended. On the contrary, the right to education of persons living in emergency situations requires special protection by states given the threatening and particularly vulnerable situation they are exposed to as a result of the emergency. This special protection is legally enforceable and claimable from states on the basis of the right to equality and the principle of non-discrimination established by international human rights law standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (arts. 10 and 26).

**Denying someone the right to education subjects them to ignorance and significantly reduces his or her abilities as well as his or her present and future life expectancy and quality of life.** In crisis contexts, this right may seem secondary because its denial does not compromise survival (such as medical or food assistance do), but it gradually eliminates, over generations, the possibility of leading a life in which the individual fully enjoys his or her rights (Sen, 2002).



## How EiE is funded

In this context, from which the URGENCY of EiE emerges, funding in this area appears to be key to respond to the growing demands.

**In one decade**, humanitarian appeals recorded by OCHA through the Financial Tracking System (FTS) to cover **education demands have grown from just over \$400 million to \$2.9 billion, a six-fold increase.**

In response to these needs, **the donor community has increased its humanitarian spending on education over the past ten years. Specifically, it has increased from \$163 million to \$786 million, a more than fourfold increase<sup>1</sup>.**

It is important to note that the education sector has been gaining importance in the overall appeal, given that in 2013 contributions to this agenda accounted for 1.9% of total disbursements, but **by 2022 it accounted for 3%**. On average, the weight of EiE in total humanitarian aid during this period has been 2.8%. It is important to note that these figures may not accurately represent the total contributions to the education sector, as there may be contributions that could be attributed to the education sector but are still classified by donors as “multi-sector” contributions<sup>2</sup>. While acknowledging this caveat and recognising a greater effort by the international community in education, **this percentage is far from the 10% that the Global Campaign for Education has called for.**

1 See [Appeals and response plans 2022 | Financial Tracking Service \(unocha.org\)](#) consulted in January 2023.

2 Since 2020-2021, it has been proposed that funding for education in Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) should no longer be included in the 'multi-sectoral' category. Despite this effort to be transparent, the reality is that much investment in education remains invisible, unaccounted for and untracked.



## Recommendations for Spain, European Governments, Donors and other Forum participants

Education represents hope for children who are immersed in a crisis. It is their present and their future. It is their right. It is essential for growing as individuals and for developing their personalities and their full potential. It is their right, their lifeline, their place of safety and protection. The organisations that make up the international community should respond to these expectations and invest in quality education that ensures access for all affected C&A.

**The Spanish coalition of the Global Campaign for Education acknowledges the effort made by Spain to provide more resources for EiE, however, it is essential to consolidate this growing trend so that it becomes an issue that permeates at the political level, in both the executive and legislative areas, and one of the main pillars that governs foreign policy.**

✓ **Promote a rights, equality, and wellbeing approach to education in emergencies.**

✓ **Increase investment in education in emergencies.**

Acknowledging the effort made by Spain to provide more resources to EiE, continue to develop this path with other crises. Meet the **investment target** of 0.7% of gross national income to ODA by 2030 and from this amount allocate:

- 20% to the education sector with a special focus on countries in crisis
- 10% to humanitarian action and of this 10% to education in emergencies.
- Encourage more regional and local administrations to join in promoting and investing in EiE.
- Apply a gender and age-sensitive approach in EiE policies and interventions to address the inequality that affects girls and adolescents in their access to education and to promote gender-transformative education. In particular, data disaggregated by gender, age and other characteristics are needed to appropriately match the funds to the needs.

✓ **Promote the EiE agenda in international frameworks:**

- Within the framework of the **Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, prioritising Education in Emergencies in its program, as Sweden has done during its mandate.
- In the many **UN fora** to make its relevance visible and to improve its provision, while at the same time devoting greater importance to flexible funds.
- We also call for the support and implementation of the Declaration on Safe Schools and the Guidelines for Preventing the Military Use of Schools and Universities during Armed Conflict.

✓ **Promote the EiE agenda in bilateral relations between Spain and countries in emergencies:**

- Encourage bilateral meetings between the Ministries of Education of both countries to align curricula and implement cooperation agreements in education.
- Promote bilateral meetings between Foreign Ministries to increase cooperation agreements with a special focus on educational needs.

✓ **Participate in *Education Cannot Wait***, the only fund dedicated exclusively to EiE, and make a contribution at the first donor conference to be held in February 2023.

✓ **Approve and implement a specific strategy on EiE** that guides Spanish cooperation as a whole (including state, regional, bilateral, and multilateral levels, as well as private funds and the role of NGOs) and sets clear objectives to capitalise on the increased financial efforts in this agenda.

- ✓ **Support projects and programs that prioritise support for teachers** in emergency contexts working on the frontline and ensuring that learning continues, often at risk to their own health and wellbeing. Specific training programmes need to be developed, with blended learning to enable their continuing professional development, psychosocial support to cope with their own and their students' stress and trauma, and for them to be adequately remunerated for their efforts.
- ✓ **Support remote learning and education projects and programs** that enhance existing materials for distribution via TV, radio, SMS, etc., ensure that new and existing online platforms are user-friendly, accessible to children and young people with different abilities and of high quality, and develop online learning, including investment in technological devices and the development of online platforms and materials.
- ✓ **Ensure that EEE is one of the main sectoral pillars in the regulatory frameworks** for development cooperation and that it is transferred by extension to Spanish Development Cooperation's humanitarian contextual strategies so that it becomes a programmatic reality.
- ✓ Improve **reporting mechanisms for EiE contributions** to ensure that a unified, robust, and coherent view is given. This is the only way to efficiently monitor these funds, to ensure that they are used in the most effective way and that they have the greatest impact on C&A.
- ✓ **Encourage C&A participation** by ensuring that they have a key role in the projects they fund and encourage the active role of C&A in international fora. But also, to take into account the voices of other affected people and the whole education community (teachers, carers, parents), as well as local actors such as civil society organisations. Acknowledge their critical role in the response and ensure their participation in the design, planning and implementation stages of education responses in emergencies, sustainably strengthening the resilience of national education systems.
- ✓ **Use the nexus approach as a starting point** to ensure coherence, sustainability, and integrity between the short and long term, promoting the role of local organisations and civil society organisations, and fulfilling the commitments of the *Grand Bargain*. It is essential to establish coordination mechanisms between short-term humanitarian assistance and sustainable development strategies that strengthen the resilience of refugees and the communities they settle in.
- ✓ Systematically promote that EiE is designed to **promote gender equality** and empower girls and boys to build resilience in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. In this regard, it is crucial to pay particular attention to the data and reality of refugee girls and adolescent girls so that their needs are taken into account throughout the diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.
- ✓ **Support projects and programs that ensure that learners with disabilities** have the same opportunities to fulfil their right to education in emergency situations and apply an inclusive education perspective in the planning, budgeting, and implementation of emergency response plans.
- ✓ **Promote transformative education, ensure that education promotes peace and social cohesion**, and incorporate psychosocial support and social and emotional learning approaches into educational responses.





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