

GAWE 2026

THE WORLD IS BURNING AND EDUCATION CANNOT STOP!

During crises, emergencies and conflicts that disrupt people's lives, **the right to learn** is systematically violated. Damage to infrastructure, shortages of teachers and disruptions to essential services force schools to close, leaving children with very few options for continuing their education¹. **When a school closes, it is not just a classroom that is lost, but also a source of protection and a pathway to the future.** Education is an **essential** part of the humanitarian response, not a secondary service. Education saves and protects².

- In 2025, it was estimated that at least 234 million children and young people affected by crises around the world required urgent support to access quality education.
- Around half of children **not in education** live in crisis-affected countries. In fact, **just five countries** (Sudan, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Pakistan) account for almost half of these cases³. [Girls living in conflict zones are 2.5 times more likely than boys not to attend school.](#)
- Almost half of the world's children (1 billion) live in 33 countries at extremely high risk from the impacts of climate change⁴.

In this context, as we witnessed during the pandemic, **information and communication technologies (ICT)** provide solutions that ensure education can continue uninterrupted. However, evidence shows that technology alone does not address inequality, poverty or gaps in infrastructure.

- **In Pakistan**, the government has promoted digitalisation and **multimodal learning models** to protect the right to education amid poverty and flooding. However, a lack of physical infrastructure and connectivity remains an insurmountable barrier⁵.
- **In Ukraine**, **Digital Learning Centres** and national platforms have enabled millions of students to continue their education during the ongoing conflict. However, frequent power cuts are a significant obstacle to learning⁶.

- In **Lebanon**, while the government has promoted online solutions to ensure that education continues uninterrupted during the crisis, most families cannot afford the basic internet connection or electricity required to access them.

More than a tool: the right to digital education

Digital education refers to the use of digital tools, technologies and content to support teaching, learning and assessment. It ranges from online courses and interactive learning platforms to virtual classrooms and educational apps⁸.

Online education has undeniable potential: it reaches more people at a lower cost than conventional models. However, its impact is limited by the **digital divide**, which not only affects access, but also the unequal use and uptake of technology. Consequently, effective digital education requires investment in infrastructure and, above all, teacher training and high-quality content that promotes genuine **critical digital literacy**.

In addition, given the **increasing influence of corporations**⁹ on technological advances in today's world, it is vital to ensure that digital education does not result in higher costs for families or lead to privatisation¹⁰. For this reason, the Global Campaign for Education believes that the government should prioritise open-source platforms and educational resources. This ensures the system's financial sustainability and independence, as well as **strengthening digital sovereignty**.

There are three types of digital divide:

Access: A quarter of the world's population remains offline due to a lack of internet access and/or devices. This reflects existing inequalities in income, gender, age, education and location, which determine both access to connectivity and connection quality¹¹.

Use and application: A lack of digital skills is the main obstacle preventing connectivity from delivering its benefits. While these skills are difficult to measure, there is a clear correlation: **higher levels of education are associated with greater digital literacy**¹².

Gender: Only 29% of women in developing countries have access to the internet, compared to 41% of men¹³. In low-income countries, nine out of ten girls and young women (aged 15 to 24) do not have access to the internet, compared with seven out of ten of their male peers¹⁴.

While digital education is a key tool for maintaining access to and continuity of education in emergency situations, care must be taken not to widen **existing digital divides and inequalities**. **Multimodal learning models** are the most effective approach in situations like these, as they combine analogue technology (such as radio and television) with other digital channels, ensuring access even when families have very limited resources.

However, **these models and technologies will only succeed if they are adapted to the local context and accompanied by pedagogical support and specific training** in order to prevent stress

and lack of confidence among teachers and families. Similarly, the role of technology in education is to provide additional support; it can never replace educational work or the social role of schools. Finally, just like traditional education, digital education must provide a safe and supportive environment that safeguards children's rights online. This ensures that vulnerabilities in crisis situations are not exploited in digital environments, in line with **United Nations General Comment No. 25**.

The vital link: securing funding to ensure that education does not stop

Funding for education mainly comes from government budgets, with Official Development Assistance (ODA) providing a smaller proportion. However, in fragile and indebted states, the proportion contributed by ODA can be significant. In the **Central African Republic, for instance, it is estimated that 80% of the education budget relies on external aid**¹⁵.

Despite education being essential for human development, **70% of countries have reduced their education budgets since 2015**, with more than a third failing to meet the international targets for investment in education (4–6% of GDP)¹⁶. This reduction in national spending is exacerbated by drastic cuts in ODA. It is estimated that aid for education will fall by 24 per cent by 2026, leaving **a further six million children out of school**: a figure equivalent to emptying all primary school classrooms in Germany and Italy combined¹⁸.

This further undermines the already fragile emergency education sector, which receives less than **3% of humanitarian funding**¹⁹ to support children and young people affected by today's crises. Another factor exacerbating the decline in investment in education is government debt servicing, which stifles the ability of governments in the Global South to fund education²⁰. In low- and lower-middle-income countries, **costs associated with servicing debt are almost three times the education budget**²¹. In short, budget and aid cuts, combined with a lack of budgetary flexibility, seriously undermine their ability to guarantee the right to education and achieve SDG 4.

Governments must urgently commit to providing **education with predictable, adequate and sustainable funding**, while taking steps towards cancelling external debt and establishing a fair global tax system²². Now more than ever, **education must once more be placed at the heart of the priorities** of governments and donors.

Our Demands: Commitments that ensure that education does not stop

In order to safeguard the right to education before, during and after crises, the Global Campaign for Education is calling on the Spanish government and its political and public representatives at national, regional and local levels to:

Mobilise sustainable, equitable and fair financial resources and strengthen strategic partnerships to guarantee Education in Emergencies:

- a. **Meet the target of allocating 0.7% of Gross National Income to Official Development Assistance**, with 20% going to education and 10% of humanitarian aid specifically allocated to education in emergencies.
- b. **Increase the budget for decentralised cooperation**, which currently averages no more

than 0.12% across the regions.

- c. **Guarantee that 30% of funds are allocated to local organisations**, particularly those led by women and young people, ensuring progress towards decolonising aid.
- d. **Increase multi-year contributions to the Global Partnership for Education** and begin contributing to other funds such as *Education Cannot Wait* (ECW).
- e. **Support the creation of a UN convention on debt and taxation** to free up financial resources in the Global South.
- f. **Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders** such as the **Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies** (INEE), the CME and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA).

To ensure that schools are places of safety and resilience, we demand the following:

- a. **Operationalisation of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Comprehensive School Safety Framework** to ensure that schools are protected against attacks and military use, are resilient to climate change and are prepared to ensure the continuity of learning in any circumstances.
- b. **Implementation of contingency and school continuity plans** based on the **Minimum Standards** of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).
- c. **Investment in training teachers in crisis management**, enabling communities to manage conflicts and disaster risks and foster a culture of peace.

To safeguard digital education and digital rights, particularly in emergency situations, the following measures should be taken:

- a. **Recognise internet access as a human right** and ensure it is provided universally, free of charge and to a high standard, including the provision of devices for pupils and teachers.
- b. **Promote context-appropriate multimodal models**, such as radio, television and online and offline platforms, to ensure continuity of education and access.
- c. **Encourage critical digital literacy** and teacher training to help bridge the digital divide.
- d. **Support the use of free software and digital sovereignty** while limiting the transfer of public funds to transnational corporations.
- e. **Apply General Comment No. 25** to ensure that children have access to safe and private digital environments that are free from violence and exploitation.
- f. **Comply with the Digital Bill of Rights**, elevating it to a binding political commitment.

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