

Campaña Mundial por la EDUCACIÓN
Coalición española
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EDUCATION DENIED, FUTURES AT RISK: ADOLESCENTS ON THE MOVE IN THE FACE OF THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Central America is facing an unprecedented educational crisis, caused by expulsions, displacement and forced migration. This phenomenon, invisible to many, has devastating human and social consequences: it threatens the future of the region's next generation. This report, based on qualitative research using primary and secondary sources, analyses the causes and institutional barriers that prevent adolescents on the move from accessing inclusive, equitable and quality education in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. The evidence gathered confirms that access to education is facing structural challenges fuelled by recurring emergencies, persistent inequalities, a lack of inter-institutional coordination, insufficient funding and historical shortcomings in public policy.

Due to violence, natural disasters, poverty and social divisions, school attendance becomes a fragmented process (UNESCO, 2025; Humanitarian Action, 2023). Thousands of adolescents are caught up in transition or return processes, facing exclusion that extends beyond access to the classroom, which manifests as a lack of psychosocial support, gender-based violence, discrimination, and inflexible reintegration pathways. Excluding adolescents on the move from education constitutes not only a violation of the right to education, but also an obstacle to collective development, regional equity and peace.

It is time to recognise that this crisis is in danger of becoming the norm, and creating a chronic, long-term problem. Building truly inclusive, safe and resilient education systems requires collective and coordinated action involving effective funding mechanisms, efficient identification and registration systems, and flexible schooling models tailored to diversity and teacher training. The Global Campaign for Education in Spain advocates for education as a fundamental right, not a privilege that vanishes in times of crisis. Therefore, investing in Education in Emergencies (EiE) today with a long-term vision is not a short-term response, but a strategic investment in the stability of the region.

The silent crisis in figures

The "silent crisis" facing education in the region calls for decisive action:

- Around the world, more than 234 million children and young people are affected by protracted crises; yet education in emergencies receives just 3% of global humanitarian aid.
- El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras face a complex combination of violence, crime, structural poverty and extreme vulnerability to natural disasters (Germanwatch, 2025).
- Children and adolescents make up nearly 14% of regional migration flows.
- Less than 50% of adolescents finish secondary school in Honduras and Guatemala, and only 60% in El Salvador.
- 63% of the Honduran population, 56% of the Guatemalan population and 30.3% of the Salvadoran population currently live in poverty.

The Triple Nexus Approach

Education must urgently be made a strategic priority in any humanitarian or development response. In Central America, EiE has established itself as the primary strategy for safeguarding rights and ensuring stability; however, in many cases, the challenges do not fall within the conventional parameters of an emergency, which means that coordinated responses are limited.

Although EiE provides a solid foundation, the dynamics of human mobility and the structural factors driving exclusion mean that we need to go beyond this approach. This report therefore examines the issue from the perspective of the Triple Nexus, an approach that simultaneously integrates three essential dimensions of international cooperation: humanitarian action, sustainable development and the promotion of peace. Applying this approach enables a coordinated response that addresses not only immediate needs but also future ones:

- Humanitarian Dimension: Essential for ensuring immediate protection, educational continuity and psychosocial support in crisis situations.
- Development Dimension: Develop educational policies that transform education into a structural force against inequality and forced displacement, strengthening education systems to make them resilient and adaptable.
- Peace Dimension: Incorporates the urgent need for schools to be places of protection, reconciliation and social cohesion, capable of breaking cycles of violence and forced migration.
- Partial interventions are insufficient to address the scale of this challenge; it requires a vision that integrates all three of these dimensions simultaneously.

Recommendations

I. For the International Development sector:

- Prioritise multi-year, direct and flexible funding that enables educational responses to be tailored to the specific circumstances of different genders, ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

- Allocate at least 10% of total humanitarian aid to education, ensuring mechanisms are in place to assess factors that go beyond just access: quality, safety, equity and wellbeing.
- Channel funds directly to local stakeholders and invest in resilient educational infrastructure, in accordance with the Comprehensive Framework for Safe Schools.

II. For National Governments:

- Ensure integrated identification and registration systems across the education, protection, migration and health sectors, with disaggregated data to enable monitoring and personalised care.
- Adapt the triple nexus approach to the local context, establishing education in emergencies as a catalyst for resilience and peace, and harmonising protocols for reintegration and the recognition of prior learning.
- Expand educational delivery methods (face-to-face, distance learning, accelerated programmes) through sustained investment in teacher training and psychosocial support.

III. For Civil Society:

- Lead advocacy efforts through strategies adapted to the territory and play an active role in educational governance and supervision.
- Generate, systematise and share evidence, testimonies and analyses on exclusion and pathways to educational integration in the context of mobility, in order to raise awareness and influence public policy.
- Promote partnerships between multilateral organisations, the private sector and communities to scale up innovative and culturally relevant solutions.

Aiming for a shared agenda: cross-cutting principles and commitments

To ensure that these recommendations are translated into real change, it is essential that governments, local stakeholders, civil society and donors act decisively and take joint responsibility. It will only be possible to build truly inclusive, safe and resilient education systems that guarantee opportunities, restore rights and strengthen social cohesion in the region through active multilateral cooperation centred on and led by local stakeholders, and through renewed political will.

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