



# Last in Line, Last in School

## How donors are failing children in conflict-affected fragile states

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”*

Nelson Mandela

Of the 77 million children out of school today, 39 million – more than half – live in conflict-affected fragile states (CAFS).<sup>1</sup> In many of these countries, years of instability and conflict have devastated the education system. Schools are destroyed or commandeered by armed forces, teachers are killed or flee to escape violence, children may be recruited and forced to fight, and are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Even when children living in these countries do have the chance to go to school, the quality of education they receive is frequently substandard and they are less likely to complete even a basic education. Education provides a route out of conflict and poverty, yet donors and the international community are failing children in CAFS by not providing sufficient aid for education.

All nation states have a legally binding obligation to ensure that every child can get free primary

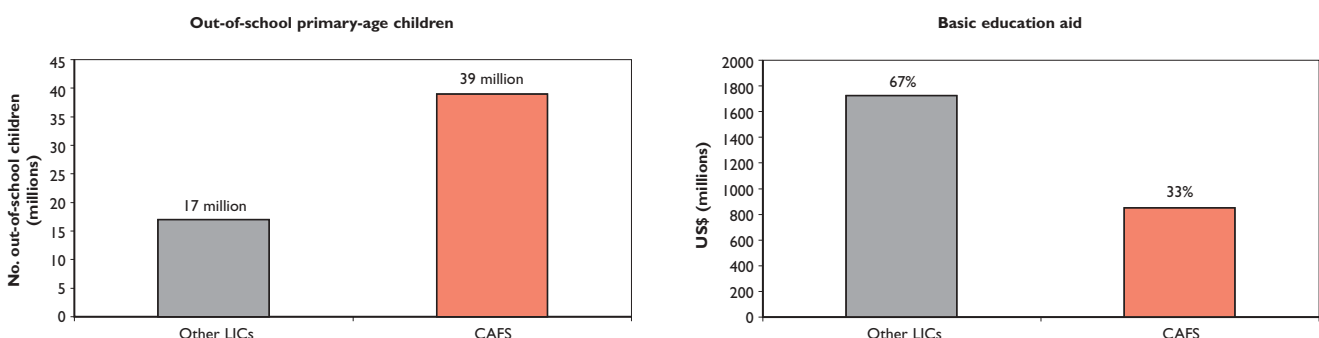
- More than half of the world’s out-of-school children live in CAFS.
- These countries make up 13 per cent of the world’s population.
- In CAFS, one in three children is out of school.

education.<sup>2</sup> This right is not dependent on who that child is, nor should it be dependent on where she or he lives. Yet being poor, a girl, disabled, belonging to a particular religious or ethnic group and/or living in a country deemed fragile or conflict-affected diminishes a child’s chances of getting an education.

Countries deemed CAFS have the highest numbers of out-of-school children, yet they are the least likely to receive external support, receiving significantly less than all other countries, including other low-income countries (LICs) (see Figure 1).

This need not and should not be the case. Experience shows that even in the most challenging contexts, it is possible to deliver education.

Figure 1: Distribution of out-of-school children and basic education aid in low-income countries



Source: UNESCO (2006)/UIS (2005); OECD CRS database



## Education is critical

Quality education is critical. It fuels development and contributes to a stable society. It has the potential to help families to escape generations of poverty. Quality education enables those who benefit from it to become active citizens, with greater economic possibilities and more life choices. It can protect children, reducing the risk of human rights abuses and exploitation.

Quality education has the potential not just to transform, but to save lives. It enables children to:

- come together in safe spaces to play and learn
- get emotional care and support
- have structure and stability in their lives and
- learn important life-saving skills, such as landmine awareness.

Education is what children and their families ask for. It can support conflict resolution and peace and, in the long term, improve stability and good governance.

## Children pay the price for adults' wars

Children do not cause wars, yet they suffer the consequences. Simply living in CAFS diminishes children's life chances. In other LICs, the proportion of out-of-school children, 1 in 11, is already unacceptably high. In CAFS, the figure is 1 in 3.

Despite the undisputed benefits of education, donor governments and the multilateral agencies they finance are denying millions of children, in particular those living in CAFS, the chance of even a basic education. While the challenges of working in CAFS are real, and while donors have a responsibility to ensure aid is spent effectively, the current allocation of aid for education to these countries is inexcusably low. Not one of the 22 major donors or multilateral organisations is currently providing adequate funding for education in CAFS.

## Broken promises

In 2000, the Education for All conference in Dakar pledged that "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources."<sup>3</sup> In the same year, commitments to end poverty and create a more equitable world took shape in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). One of these goals was to ensure universal primary education (UPE) by 2015.<sup>4</sup> But for the 39 million out-of-school children living in CAFS, this achievable goal remains a distant dream. Despite being home to more than half the world's out-of-school children, CAFS receive the lowest amount of aid for education.

## Existing policy and practice fails children

Although increased focus has been given to achieving quality education for all since Dakar – with new money pledged and new mechanisms established – Save the Children has identified four key areas of policy and practice that need urgent attention to achieve universal primary education, including for children in CAFS.

### I. Education under-funded

Despite donors' promises at the 2005 G8 and UN summits, which were reaffirmed at the 2006 G8, not enough resources are being made available to achieve UPE by 2015. And of the education aid there is, not enough is channelled to basic education. In 2005, US\$3bn was committed to basic education. This falls far short of the estimated US\$9 billion in aid needed each year to achieve the UPE goal.<sup>5</sup>

The Education for All–Fast Track Initiative (EFA–FTI) was launched in 2002 as a global partnership between developing countries and donors to support progress in achieving the education MDGs by 2015. Despite being the key international mechanism for mobilising funds



for education, the FTI remains under-funded and plagued by low disbursements.

Total aid for education must increase, with a greater proportion being channelled to basic education.

## 2. CAFS getting less than fair share

The overall allocation of aid for education to CAFS is disproportionately low compared to the total number of out-of-school children in these countries. Despite recommendations that aid should be targeted to low-income countries,<sup>6</sup> this is not what happens in practice. Shockingly, almost half of all education aid (49%) continues to be allocated to middle-income countries (MICs), leaving the proportion of aid for other LICs (33%) and CAFS (18%) significantly lower (see Figure 2).

## 3. Low prioritisation of education in CAFS

Many donors claim that funding education in CAFS is too risky. However, many are putting money into those countries, just not into education. The greatest proportion of aid to social infrastructure and services in CAFS – 43 per cent – goes to government and civil society activities. In other LICs the figure is 18 per cent. Whereas education in CAFS is allocated 12 per cent, in other LICs the figure is 30 per cent (see Figure 3).

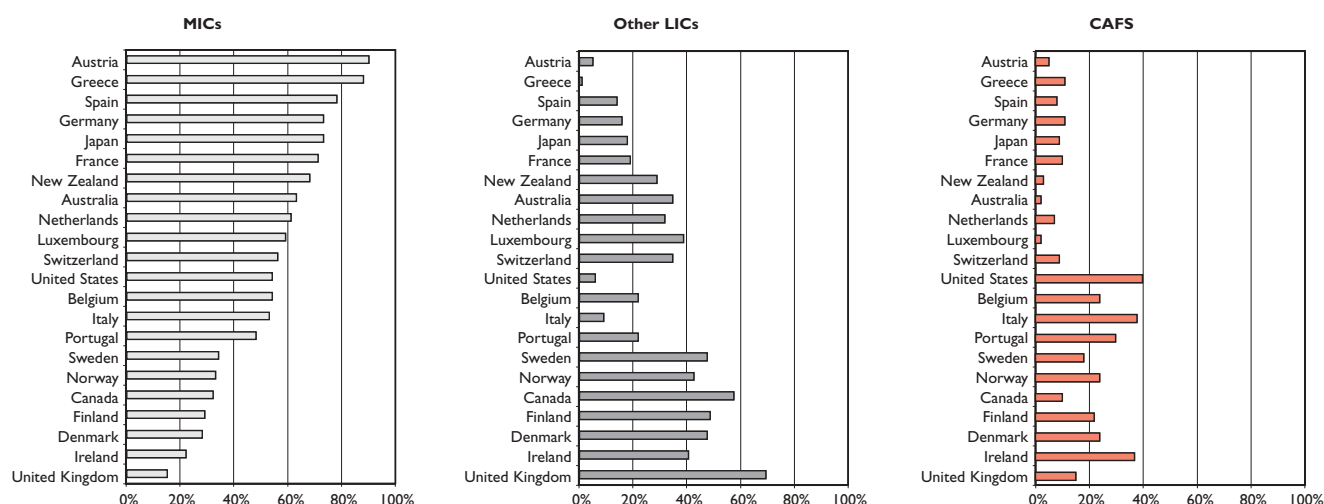
This demonstrates that donors differentiate considerably in their prioritisation of education depending on the country context. Not only does this make a mockery of the EFA agenda, contributing to high numbers of out of school children in these countries, but it is short-sighted in failing to recognise the short- and long-term benefits of investing in education demonstrated by the link between levels of education, stability and good governance.

## 4. Education a low priority in emergencies

Currently aid allocations fall into two camps – humanitarian aid and longer-term development aid. Education has traditionally been funded as part of longer-term development aid, but a significant proportion of aid to CAFS is humanitarian. On average, between 2003 and 2005, 15 per cent of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to CAFS was in the form of emergency assistance and reconstruction, compared to only 3 per cent for other LICs. For some countries suffering protracted crises, humanitarian aid can become the dominant form of aid over long periods of time. For example, in 2004, 70 per cent of all aid to Somalia was humanitarian.

In order to meet the EFA goals, education must be included as part of all humanitarian responses. With

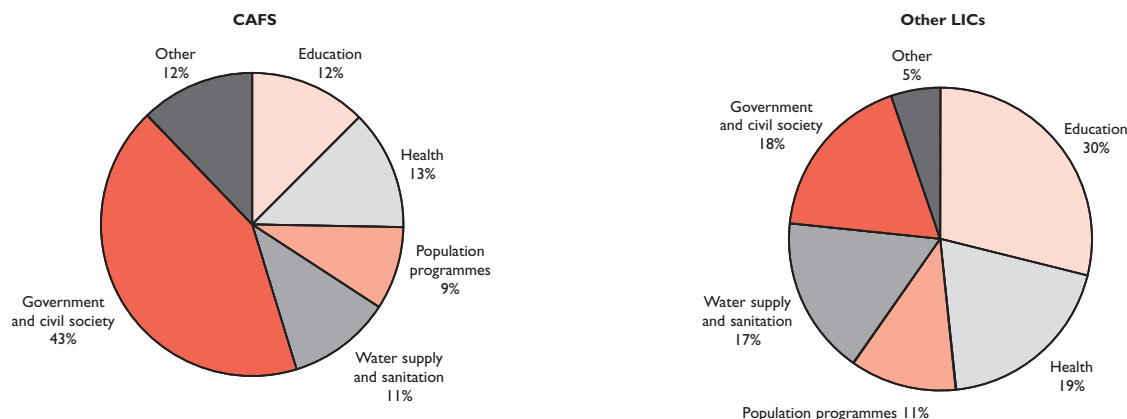
**Figure 2: Comparison by donor of the share of education aid allocated to MICs, other LICs and CAFS**



Source: OECD CRS online database



Figure 3: Distribution of total sector allocable aid to social infrastructure and services in CAFS and other LICs



Source: OECD CRS online database

the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsement of a cluster approach to education, all donors must now recognise education as a core component of humanitarian responses and fund it accordingly.

## Policy and practice need to change

As Save the Children and others have shown, it is possible to provide education even in the most difficult contexts.<sup>7</sup> Much of the debate in donor and development circles focuses on the effectiveness of aid. Pouring good money after bad serves no one's interest. But failing to fund education in CAFS will lead to continued poverty. It may also exacerbate existing instability and lead to the destabilisation of neighbouring countries.

Donors' reluctance to fund education in CAFS often stems from the associated risks of funding state authorities in those countries or concern about the danger of undermining state-building if funding to education is made through non-government structures, such as international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These 'trust gaps' sometimes prevent donors "from having the confidence to provide additional education resources in fragile states..."<sup>8</sup> However, while some CAFS may be unable to manage significant additional funds due to a lack of technical and

managerial capacity, as well as weak service delivery systems, many could easily absorb additional volumes of aid with the right types of funding mechanisms.

While there is no model approach that will work in every context, there are a range of flexible approaches that have been used by donors in fragile states – such as donor co-ordination (including multi-donor-trust funds and pooled funding); general or sector budget support; social funds; project support through governments or by channelling resources through NGOs. When donors are innovative and use mechanisms appropriate to a country's context, they can fund education in CAFS effectively.

Increased, predictable and long-term aid is vital for CAFS to escape the poverty cycle. The relationship is clear – effective development assistance reduces the need for emergency relief, while successful humanitarian assistance can reduce vulnerability and help build the foundations for sustainable development.

Given the importance of education to state-building and development objectives, donors must ensure that Education for All means education for all, regardless of who the child is or where she or he lives.



## Recommendations

Save the Children is calling on all donors to review immediately their policy and practice in regard to aid for education to CAFS and ensure that the following recommendations are met.

### 1. Increase overall long-term, predictable aid for education

This requires donors to:

- **Increase basic education aid to meet their fair share of the US\$9bn annual external financing requirement.**

Urgent action is needed by: Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United States.

- **Support the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) to meet its mandate of mobilising funds for Education for All by committing the resources required.**

Urgent action is needed by: Australia, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal, Switzerland and the United States.

- **Ensure that education, with basic education as the priority, is adequately funded by the European Commission (EC), World Bank, regional development banks and UN agencies.**

Urgent action is needed by the EC to ensure that basic education is a high priority target for support under the tenth European Development Fund.

### 2. Increase long-term, predictable aid for education in CAFS

This requires donors to:

- **Ensure funding is equitable, with at least 50 per cent of new basic education commitments going to CAFS.**

Urgent action is needed by: Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the UK, as well as the EC and the World Bank.

- **Ensure the Education for All–Fast Track Initiative (EFA–FTI) and other initiatives are accessible, and able to support and fund CAFS.**

Urgent action is needed by all donors and the EFA–FTI Secretariat.

### 3. Make education a greater priority in CAFS

This requires donors to:

- **Prioritise and increase aid to education in CAFS, at least in line with the levels of support given to education in other LICs.**

Urgent action is needed by: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the United States, as well as the EC and the World Bank.

### 4. Include education as part of humanitarian policy and response

This requires donors to:

- **Include education in their humanitarian policies.**

Urgent action is needed by: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and the United States, as well as the EC.

- **Increase the allocation of education aid in humanitarian crises to a minimum of 4.2 per cent of humanitarian assistance in line with need.**

Urgent action is needed by: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the United States.

- **Commit to supporting the education cluster and ensure it is adequately funded.**

Urgent action is needed by all donors.



## Kalume, 17, Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo

Seventeen-year-old Kalume fought with a rebel group from 1999 to 2003, after quitting his studies.

*"I saw that there was a risk of dying because we fought every day. People died all the time. Really my heart is sad. Even today I ask myself how those people could have died like that."*

*"I saw my friends going to school. They had gone a long way – some were in sixth year, some were in fifth year of humanities, some had already finished their studies. So, I started asking myself so many questions. We say all things without education are worth nothing."*

He went through the formal demobilisation process and was reunited with his family in Goma, eastern DRC, by Save the Children. He is now in the third year of secondary school and has to pay approximately \$30 US in school fees each semester. Kalume sells petrol to pay the fees but, if he cannot raise enough money, his local community network, which is involved in income generating activities to help vulnerable children, help him pay the difference.

*"We remember how things were when we were in combat. We fought against other brothers. All that blood – when we think of all the blood that covered everything, it demoralises us. Now, everything is in the past. Tomorrow or after tomorrow we will help our country develop. In the future, I hope to be an engineer."*



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Conflict-affected fragile states are countries affected by armed conflict and characterised by income disparity, weak governance and inequality

<sup>2</sup> See United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

<sup>3</sup> For information on the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) see [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/framework.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml)

<sup>4</sup> For information on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) see <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO (2006) *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007: Strong Foundations – Early childhood care and education* Paris: UNESCO

<sup>6</sup> "The share of total aid going to basic education must at least double and be more focussed on low-income countries rather than middle-income ones" *Ibid* p. 103

<sup>7</sup> Save the Children (2006) *Rewrite the Future: Education in conflict affected countries* London: Save the Children

<sup>8</sup> Sperling, G (2006) *Closing the Trust Gaps: Unlocking Financing for Education in Fragile States*, Paper presented at the 4th FTI Partnership meeting Cairo, November, 2006: p.4

This briefing is based on Save the Children's policy report, *Last in Line, Last in School: How donors are failing children in conflict-affected fragile states*, which is available at [www.savethechildren.net/rewritethefuture](http://www.savethechildren.net/rewritethefuture)

**Published by**  
**International Save the Children Alliance**  
**Cambridge House**  
**Cambridge Grove**  
**London W6 0LE**  
**UK**

[www.savethechildren.net/rewritethefuture](http://www.savethechildren.net/rewritethefuture)