

## The Hidden Crisis: Education and Armed Conflict

*“Destroy a school, and the parents and kids do everything they can to keep open the doors to education. If only donors would show the same resolve and commitment.” Desmond Tutu, GMR 2011*

The 2011 Global Monitoring Report (GMR) on ‘The Hidden Crisis: education and armed conflict’ clearly states that if the international community does not act now, there could be more children out of school in 2015 than there are today, thus reversing progress through the MDG and Education for All (EFA) frameworks to ensure that all children enjoy their fundamental right to an education.

**Save the Children welcomes the 2011 Global Monitoring Report’s focused attention on one of the greatest barriers to realising these international commitments: armed conflict in the poorest countries.**

### Key education and financing in conflict figures

- In conflict-affected poor countries, 28 million children of primary school age are out of school, 42% of the world total.
- Children living amidst conflict are far more likely not even to survive to school age. In conflict-affected countries, the average mortality rate for children under 5 is more than double the rate in other countries: on average twelve children out of a hundred die before their fifth birthday.,
- Not only are children less likely to be in primary school in conflict-affected countries, but they also more likely to drop-out. Survival to the last grade in poorer conflict-affected countries is 65% whereas it is 86% in other poor countries.
- Gross enrolment rates in secondary school are nearly 30% lower in conflict-affected countries (48%) than in other low income countries (67%), and are far lower for girls.
- If rich countries were to transfer just six days’ worth of military spending to development assistance for basic education, they could close the US\$16 billion external financing gap for achieving Education for all goals, putting all children into school by 2015.

**We urge the international community to act now for the millions of children who currently do not enjoy their right to education in conflict-affected fragile states.**

The 2011 GMR sets out four failures that require urgent attention by the international community:

**Protection:** intentional attacks on children, teachers and schools have increased and the use of other weapons of war, including sexual violence, overwhelmingly affects civilian populations, leading to egregious human rights violations and war crimes.

**Provision:** despite the demand and obvious benefits, education remains the most neglected area of an underfinanced and unresponsive humanitarian aid system.

**Early recovery and reconstruction:** education is not adequately covered through humanitarian aid and long term development assistance.

**Peacebuilding:** education’s role in helping societies become less susceptible to violent conflict and breaking the cycle of poverty has not been fully acknowledged.

## Commitments to education

Delivery of education in such contexts is possible and essential; however key support is needed in order to ensure education reaches the poorest and the hardest to reach children by investing in educational systems, teachers, and innovative approaches to deliver education. Conflict-affected fragile states have an equally important role to play in upholding national EFA commitments to deliver education by allocating a national budget that reflects the educational needs; and particularly build the State's capacity to respond to education by investing in quality teaching and school infrastructure.

Countries affected by conflict should commit to allocating at least 20% of their national budgets to education and remove all financial barriers that prevent the most marginalized children from accessing school. As the GMR states, if countries devoting more resources to their military budgets than to primary education would cut military expenditure by 10% they could put a total of 9.5 million additional children in school. In defining national education budgets, countries should consider the lost opportunities of not investing enough in education and the impact this has on poverty, unemployment and marginalization.

## Education Can't Wait: Their Future is Now

**Save the Children has repeatedly called on the international community to increase funding for education in conflict-affected fragile states. Given the urgent need to ensure children receive education in situations where it is most needed, we repeat this call.**

The overarching failure of the international community is evident in the **lack of international spending and financial commitments on education** in conflict-affected fragile states. The GMR calls education, *"the poor neighbour of a humanitarian aid system that is underfinanced, unpredictable and governed by short-termism. It suffers from a double disadvantage: education accounts for a smaller share of humanitarian appeals and an even smaller share of the appeals that get funded."*

Supporting the provision of education in conflict-related emergencies as well as in long-term development programmes in protracted crises is a way to guarantee that funding meets the local needs and demands of the community.

**Donors have a critical role in ensuring that the right to education of children in conflict-affected fragile states - almost half of all out-of-school children - is delivered upon and made a reality for all.**

Some of the world's poorest and most fragile countries have been neglected in major donor agendas, with a select number of countries affected by conflict receiving most funding on education in line with donor national security priorities. The GMR shows that the *'development assistance flows to twenty-seven conflict-affected developing countries have increased over the past decade, reaching US\$36 billion a year in 2007-2008. However, Iraq received one quarter of the total, and Afghanistan and Iraq together accounted for 38% of the total. Afghanistan received more aid than the combined total disbursed to the DRC, Liberia and the Sudan.'*

In 2010, the Education for All- Fast Track Initiative (FTI) recognized the importance of investing in fragile states. Save the Children believes that all donors should honour their commitments to

support education programmes in fragile states and low income countries, either through the FTI as a channel for financial and technical support or through bilateral programmes. Withdrawing funding from countries that are in most need of such financial support equals reversing international progress made in getting more children into school.

**Donors must increase the predictability and reduce volatility of aid to conflict-affected fragile states through longer-term multi-year commitments.**

**Increase financing now; recommendations to the international community**

- Support innovative measures to provide protection and care for children in countries affected by crisis, including the provision of accelerated learning programmes.
- Increase the availability and predictability of financing for education in conflict-affected fragile states and in emergencies.
- Include and prioritise education as an integral part of all humanitarian responses with long-term strategies.