

**Education and Academia Stakeholder Group**

**HLPF 2022 SIDE EVENT**

**5<sup>th</sup> of July 2022 13:00 PM NYT**

**The right to education and lifelong learning: the new normality in a broken world**

***Don't Let the Light of Education be extinguished.***

The [high-Level Political Forum 2022](#) offers the opportunity to review Sustainable Development Goal 4: The Right to Quality Education. The high-level political forum on sustainable development is consistent with its universal intergovernmental character of providing political leadership, guidance, and recommendations for sustainable development goals. [The Education and Academia Stakeholder group](#) event hosted by the Global Campaign for Education, Global Campaign for Education-US, International Council for Adult Education, Global Students Forum, Government of Argentina held an HLPF side event to provide key lessons and review progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for SDG-4 whilst identifying the policy recommendations required for education recovery post Covid-19. The EASG [HLPF side event](#) brought seasoned educational experts drawn from the global pool of candidates to provide an independent assessment focusing on how to reposition the education sector as a priority sector in a world recovering from the COVID-19 outbreak and protracted conflict and disasters.

Globally, statistics show that 222 million school-aged children are affected by crises<sup>1</sup>. These 222 million children are on a spectrum of educational needs: about 78.2 million (54% females, 17% with functional difficulties, 16% forcibly displaced) are out of school,

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<sup>1</sup> Education Cannot Wait Global estimates number of crisis effected children and adolescents in need of Education support <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/global-estimates-number-crisis-affected-children-and-adolescents-in-need-education>, June 2022.

while 119.6 million are not achieving minimum proficiency in reading or mathematics by the early grades, despite attending school<sup>2</sup>. Pre-COVID statistics show that, only 9% of crisis-affected children achieved minimum proficiency in mathematics, and only 15% of crisis-affected children achieved minimum proficiency in reading in the early grades<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore COVID-induced learning losses are more pronounced amongst the poorest and those who were already lagging in learning before the pandemic including children in crisis contexts. The broken world's current status quo shows that education gaps are growing, learning poverty is increasing, education budgets are shrinking, and the further exclusion of lower-income countries on education digital systems exacerbates the lack of access to education.

The joint panel discussion highlighted challenges related to education recovery in the new normality of the broken world with recommendations and lessons from the crisis. The GCE President Refat Sabbah stressed how conflict and emergencies marshal violence in, against, and around schools that disproportionately affects girls and exacerbates existing structural problems in fragile education systems, mainly experienced in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Every year, millions of crisis-affected girls and boys are left behind, and today 222 million children need educational support. This figure hides a litany of violence targeted at children and their teachers. In states such as Afghanistan where there is a direct threat to children particularly girls from receiving education due to discriminatory laws has led to schools being unsafe and not inclusive for all. More broadly, the GCE President called into attention that governments and policy makers to consider the multiple dimensions of exclusion and inequality and how they shape people's education opportunities and the possibility to enjoy the right to education. Furthermore, GCE president Refat emphasized that International donors, humanitarians, and civil

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

society groups must establish a high-level coordinated approach to ensure that aid reaches the intended beneficiaries to protect education and lifelong learning. Furthermore, provide independent monitoring and evaluation systems that monitor and protect girls in the education sector during emergencies.

With the intervention of the Ministry of Education of Argentina in 2015, the governments of Norway and Argentina led processes amongst the United Nations Member States to develop the [Safe Schools Declaration](#), an intergovernmental political agreement dedicated to protecting education in armed conflict. According to Alberto Croce, the critical intervention of the declaration is to promote safe and inclusive schools by using domestic policy and operational frameworks at the national level to collect reliable and relevant data on attacks on education facilities, military presence in schools, and attacks on learners and teachers. [One hundred fourteen states](#) have signed the declaration; despite declaring to protect education and signing the order, countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Palestine, and Ukraine are in conflict. Alberto Croce's intervention also discussed the importance of looking at what he called the intersection of multiple pandemics, named the ongoing health crisis, political instability, and war in Ukraine, and their influence on education policies.

Katarina Popovic stated, *"to heal the broken world and ensure the light of Education doesn't get extinguished, reforming education will not work but transforming education will."* There needs to be an active dialogue amongst citizens to discuss with the governments on actions required to support education in the broken world. This focus should be on policies and practice by enabling the potential of the right to education through investment and resource mobilization while advocating for gender equality, inclusivity, and quality free education for all lifelong learning. Her intervention also

highlighted the importance of addressing policies to secure the right education for all, including adults and in particular those of millions illiterate across the world.

Hector Ulloa discussed how students' rights throughout the pandemic were undermined under the entire education ecosystem from vocational colleges, universities, and technical schools. Digital learning was the way of instruction, creating a digital divide among students; furthermore, there was a decrease in quality education in faculties such as science and medicine that require contact lessons. Student activism in holding governments to account to protect education during emergencies faced by students during the pandemic was compromised due to distance learning and student well-being. The digital divide was experienced the most in higher learning due to data costs and resource support. Hector recommends that education is a fundamental right, just like health; the lack of financial ability to afford electronic devices requires more substantial investment from the government and should be prioritized for future crises. Finally, Hector Ulloa called for the need to develop a legal framework to protect students' rights.

**The Global Campaign for Education recommends the following policy measures that the education sector globally should implement as a resilient strategy to adapt and mitigate the impact of emergency contexts on the Right to Education.**

**Keeping schools open by putting in place clear safety measures:** Advocating for the removal of military forces in schools that intimidate teachers and learners. Schools should not be used as political ground spaces but as learning spaces and implementing security to protect all children and in particular girl children which are often the most affected.

**Enabling effective distance learning when school closures are necessary while ensuring there is no digital divide amongst learners:** By deploying diverse hybrid

learning platforms to mitigate learning disruptions. These learning platforms must be geographically context-specific and respond to potential issues such as digital division.

**Identify measures to support both learners' and teachers' wellbeing during emergencies:** Implementing social welfare and health programs to support teachers and learners during emergencies.

**Prioritizing the complete vaccination of teachers and Learners and addressing vaccination inequalities between the global north and the global south:** To address the current and future health crises should include greater collaboration among governments in low- and middle-income countries to increase their own scientific and technological capacity and produce more equitable access to intellectual property rights and cutting-edge research at the global level. In addition, wealthier countries and big pharmaceutical companies should agree to more democratic access to the cures they fund and produce in cases of international emergency.

**Strengthening coordinated education planning and response in crisis:** By creating a decentralized approach of institutional arrangements and high-level coordination between international donors, governments, civil society, and humanitarian education clusters dealing with emergencies and conflict to protect education: Coordination efforts must also evolve to anticipate and address education needs. These include: learning from refugee responses to address internal displacement responses; linking education to other vital sectors, such as child protection, gender, and livelihoods; strengthening connections between local, national, and regional education stakeholders through a whole-of-society approach; enhancing coherence and mutually reinforcing assistance between humanitarian and development aid, linked to both community level and national education systems.

**Increasing financial investment and providing policy frameworks to recover education post COVID19 and during the conflict.** Domestic resource mobilisation, tax justice, and increased international aid to recover societies' education systems during emergencies prioritising the most marginalised groups in society.

**Building resilience and trust in education through system-wide planning by Instituting education system reforms towards the realisation of lifelong learning through formal, non-formal, and informal education.** Solid education systems are far more resilient to crisis hence building resilience through investing in education is crucial: By designing a learning recovery plan at the macro level and micro-planning through mobilising local stakeholders to strengthen reform efforts toward digital transformation.

By transforming the landscape for education in emergency contexts, we need resilient societies that produce change-makers to adapt to the new normality of the broken world. The role of education is to provide adequate education systems and solutions to respond to health outbreaks, economic recessions, disasters experienced due to climate change, and war and conflict. GCE 2022 HLPF side event, *the new normality in a broken world*, focused on action-oriented interventions of appropriate consideration of new and emerging challenges and mobilise further actions to accelerate the implementation of quality education.