



CALL TO ACTION

June 2025

Education in Emergencies – A Lifeline for the Future

At this critical juncture, we – the undersigned education experts, humanitarian leaders, civil society actors, and international organizations – convene in Helsinki with a shared sense of urgency. Across the globe, a generation of children is being left behind—not by accident, but by neglect and inaction.

While conflict, climate disasters, and forced displacement escalate at alarming rates, education funding is plummeting. This is a global emergency that not only threatens hard won development gain, it also fuels more cycles of crisis and instability. With renewed political commitment and smart investments, this can—and must be —reversed.

The reality is staggering:

234 million school-aged children and adolescents

living in crisis zones lack access to quality education. 85 million are entirely out of school.

In 2024 alone, climate disasters disrupted the education of **242 million children** across 85 countries.

Education receives less than 3% of total humanitarian funding—and less than 2% of what the world spends annually on global military expenditure¹.

This is more than a funding gap.

It is a failure to strategically invest in human capital and deliver on our global moral obligations.

Education is not a luxury – it is a life-saving intervention.

In emergencies and protracted crises, education is a lifeline. It provides safety, stability, and hope. It protects children from recruitment into armed groups, child marriage, trafficking, and other forms of violence. For girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized communities, education is often the only shield against exploitation. It also provides critical psychosocial support, offering structure, and healing.

When education is funded, children survive, heal and thrive. When it is not, children suffer.

We call on all donors — from the public and private sectors — to act with urgency and resolve.

1. Education Cannot Wait, 2023 Annual Results Report; UNESCO (2023); SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (2023)

⚠️ Our urgent appeal to the international community:

- Donor governments must immediately increase and ring-fence funding for education in emergencies. Education must be prioritized on par with life-saving interventions—because it is one.
- Governments must reassess national priorities. Invest more in development and education than in destruction. Investing in schools, not armament, is the path to sustainable peace.
- Foundations, private sector actors, and emerging donors must step up as essential partners to sustain education, working hand in hand with traditional aid partners.
- UN agencies, international financial institutions, and multilateral platforms must make education in crises a central pillar of their humanitarian and development strategies.

Because:

- **Education saves lives.** In crises, education protects from child recruitment, trafficking, child marriage, and gender-based violence.
- **Education heals.** It provides children with mental health support, safe spaces, and a sense of normalcy amidst chaos.
- **Education empowers.** It breaks cycles of poverty, drives economic growth, and fosters global citizenship. Every dollar invested in education returns up to \$15 in economic return.

And above all:

- **Education is a human right.** No child should be denied a future because the world failed to act.

✊️ We stand unified in this call.

Let us fund the future, not the fallout. Let us equip every child—not with weapons, but with books, skills, and hope.

Now is not the time to retreat. Now is the time to make the smartest investment to end cycles of crises and end aid dependency.

Because when we fund education in emergencies, we don't just respond to crisis—we build a more resilient, prosperous and stable future for all.

Endorsed by:

