



Education in Emergencies 2025:

A Year of Little Hope

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Unstoppable crises

While some countries talk about increasing defence and security spending, others suffer unrelenting waves of violence, disasters, and wars.

No matter what indicators, sources, or methods are used, the same conclusion is reached: world peace is getting worse year after year because of a steady increase in conflicts, especially in the last decade ([UCDP](#), [GPI](#), [ICP](#)).

On top of this, the impact of disasters tends to increase over time.. The frequency of disasters in less than a decade is between 315 and 432 events per year. Despite similar frequencies, the economic damage caused by crises in recent years has nearly doubled, indicating greater devastation ([Emergency Action Planning](#)).

However, these two phenomena do not run parallel to each other. In fact, the perverse combination of conflict and climate change is intertwined, generating devastating effects. Cases such as Gaza and Ukraine demonstrate how conflict

can directly contribute to climate change. The emissions produced during the first 120 days of the Gaza conflict exceeded the annual emissions of 26 individual countries and territories (Otu-Larbi et al., 2024).

However, these are not isolated cases. It is estimated that the military budgets of the world's armies are responsible for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, not including emissions from warfare itself. If the world's militaries were considered a single country, it would have the fourth-largest carbon footprint in the world ([UNFCCC](#)). Similarly, increased global warming can indirectly contribute to conflict by exacerbating tensions over issues such as food insecurity, water scarcity and competition for resources. According to the UNHCR, nearly half of all forcibly displaced people are affected by both conflict and the adverse effects of climate change.

These interlinked crises have once again resulted in record numbers, creating enormous humanitarian challenges. In 2024, [123.2 million people were displaced](#) due to persecution, violence, conflict or human rights violations — a 6% increase on the previous year. The number of internally displaced persons due to disasters in 2024 was almost double the annual average for the last

decade, reaching 45.8 million (IDMC, 2025). The number of people facing acute food insecurity has reached an unprecedented 295.3 million (Global Network Against Food Crises 2025, 2024). Children and adolescents have not been spared from this devastating wave. During 2024, 41,370 serious violations against children and adolescents were documented, representing a 25% increase compared to the previous year ([UN, 2025](#)).

The impact of these multiple crises is clearly reflected in the growing number of people who are directly affected by them and who depend on humanitarian aid to survive. By mid-2025, 300 million people were in need of aid, representing 4% of the world's population (OCHA). This exceptional increase over the last six years has seen the number of people in need double.



Inadequate Humanitarian Financial Architecture

Faced with these immense humanitarian needs, drastic and ongoing cuts to aid forced revisions to the initial figures for the population to be assisted, meaning that fewer people will receive aid in 2025.

The number of people initially identified was reduced from 300 million to 114 million, with assistance provided to only 38 per cent (OCHA, 2025a). **This means leaving a population larger than that of Bangladesh without assistance.** The gap between those who are identified as needing assistance and those who ultimately receive it has never been greater. 2023 holds the record so far, with 60 per cent of those identified receiving assistance (Humanitarian Action, 2024).

However, the situation could deteriorate even further if the full \$44.2 billion recalculated for the prioritised population is not paid out (OCHA, 2025b). By September 2025, with only four months left of the year, the donor community had released \$14.8 billion, only 33% of the total.

Ceasing to provide assistance to all these millions of people could have devastating consequences, and there are already forecasts indicating that this could be just the tip of the iceberg. For example, the World Food Programme has announced that, because of funding cuts, it will assist 21% fewer people than in 2024. This reduction will disrupt nutrition services for 14 million children, including more than 2.4 million who are already suffering from severe acute malnutrition and face an imminent risk of death. Maternal and infant mortality may increase as sexual and reproductive health services are cut in countries where risks are already higher.

In this context, it is more urgent than ever to reassess the financial architecture and seek new funds to alleviate these immense needs.

The Education Sector at the Epicentre of the Crises



Like so many other sectors, the education sector has been unable to escape the impact of successive crises.

When it comes to education, it is important to reflect on the greatest global setback in this field in recent history, given that its effects are still being felt today. The COVID-19 pandemic caused learning losses in four out of five of the 104 countries studied, according to the United Nations.

In this context, we will analyse the progress made towards educational objectives in areas where emergency education mechanisms have been implemented.

As shown in Table 1, among the 30 countries with a humanitarian appeal (national or regional)¹, only Vietnam has achieved SDG 4. Of the rest, 23% face significant challenges, 60% face fundamental challenges, and data is missing for two countries. In other words, **achieving SDG 4 by 2030 will be a highly unlikely goal for 83% of countries in crisis situations**, whether due to conflict, violence, displacement or disasters.

¹ This means that you are in a humanitarian emergency due to violence, conflict, forced displacement or a climate disaster.

Tabla 1. Countries with Active Humanitarian Appeals and SDG 4 Classification in 2025

Countries	2023 SDG Ranking	2025 SDG4	Countries	2023 SDG Ranking	2025 SDG4
Ukraine	42	Yellow	Burkina Faso	150	Red
Vietnam	61	Green	Mozambique	151	Red
Columbia	75	Yellow	Haiti	156	Grey
El Salvador	86	Yellow	Niger	159	Red
Philippines	87	Yellow	Afghanistan	160	Red
Bangladesh	114	Yellow	Sudan	161	Red
Venezuela	115	Yellow	Democratic Republic of Congo	162	Red
Myanmar	116	Red	Yemen	163	Red
Lebanon	124	Red	Somalia	164	Grey
Honduras	125	Red	Chad	165	Red
Guatemala	127	Yellow	Central African Republic	166	Red
Syria	131	Red	South Sudan	167	Red
Cameroon	133	Red			
Zimbabwe	137	Red			
Malawi	139	Red			
Mali	141	Red			
Zambia	146	Red			
Nigeria	147	Red			

Caption: Progress on SDG 4

Target achieved



Challenges remaining



Significant challenges



Critical challenges



Source: Prepared by the authors based on the SDG Progress Report 2025 and the list of humanitarian crises receiving humanitarian aid according to OCHA, 2025

UN Reset and Education in Emergencies

In this context of cutbacks, the United Nations has also launched its own review process with the aim of becoming more effective, efficient and sustainable, known as UN Reset. It aims to focus on the most pressing needs, transfer power to affected communities, ensure faster and more agile coordination adapted to the context, uphold humanitarian principles, protect the humanitarian space, and foster change through stronger partnerships, innovative and broader financing, and streamlined systems.

Although the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund officially recognised education as a life-saving intervention as early as 2010, and it has remained a lifesaving priority area in this first phase of architectural review, there is still a threat that it will disappear completely from humanitarian needs and response plans if it is no longer considered vital or essential.

For example, in South Sudan and Chad, 25% of education funding has already been cut. This reality is reflected throughout the region and will spread to others unless aid is increased again.

The risk is imminent, given that this area has historically been marginalised by the international community and is falling far short of meeting identified needs, as noted in the following section.



Funding for Education in Emergencies



According to [OCHA](#) data, the Education in Emergencies (EiE) sector had received \$344 million by early September, covering **only 13.5% of identified educational needs in 2025. In 2026, cuts are expected to reach 24%.**

Before continuing with the analysis, it is important to highlight that the budgeted requirements (2.55 billion dollars for 2025) are already well below actual needs, as a result of the cuts analysed above. To put the 2025 figure into context, in 2023, when educational needs were lower, the budgeted requirements were 1.5 times higher than for the current year (3.7 billion dollars). In practice, these figures have enormous implications. The recent

funding cuts have left **33 million people without any educational support**, despite their urgent need for it.

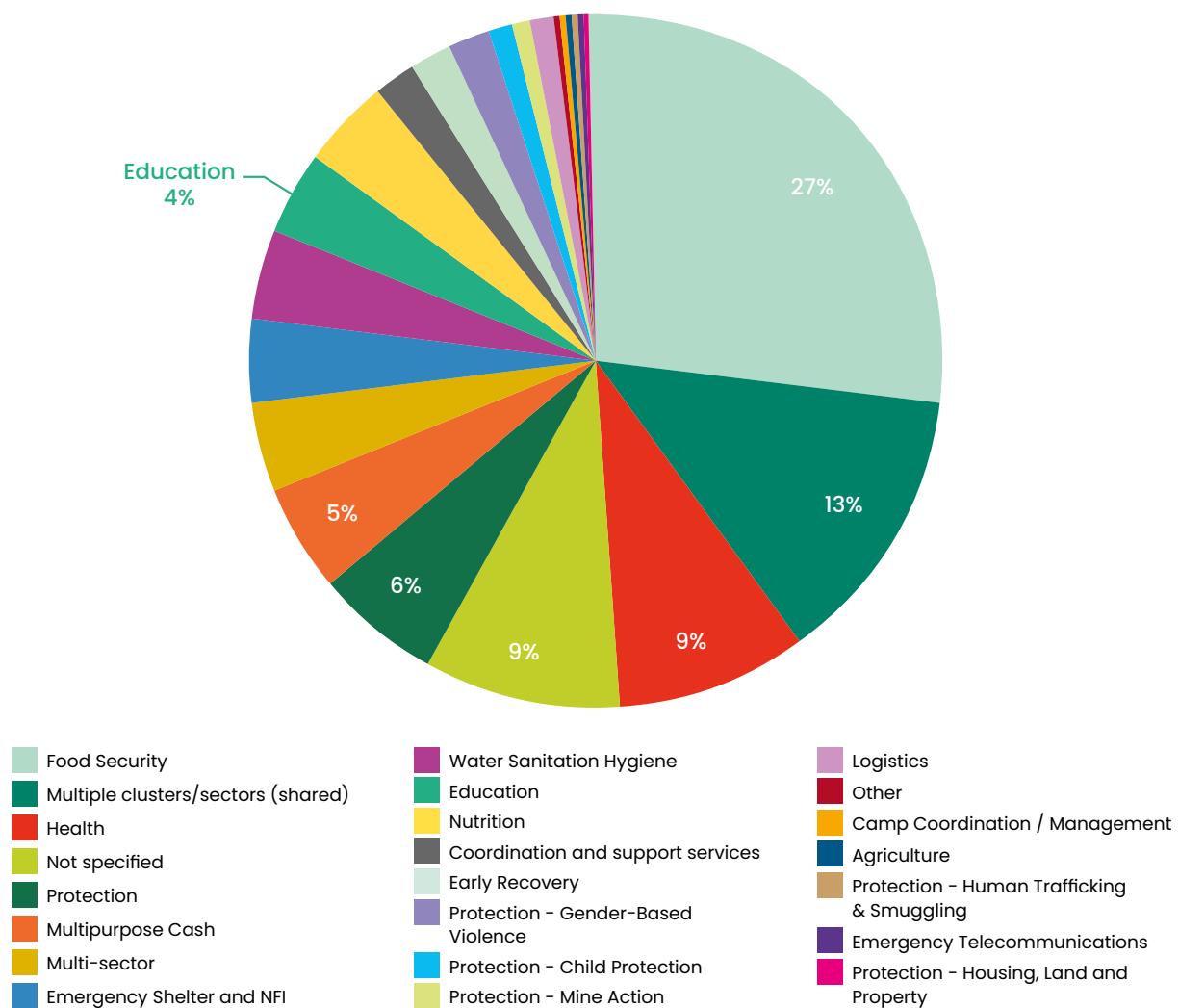
The Historically Marginalised Sector

Attending school is about much more than ensuring a fundamental right. Education is a space where many other rights are fulfilled, such as the right to health (through vaccination programmes) and the right to food (through school canteens, which provide millions of children with their only complete meal of the day).

While these arguments are irrefutable in theory, in practice, Education in Emergencies is an area that has historically been underfunded compared to others. Although it has been agreed that it should receive 10% of all humanitarian funds, the average over the past few years has been less than 4%. In September 2025, as shown in Graph 1, this trend continues. Of the 22 sectors classified by OCHA, education ranks tenth in terms of importance, which is significantly below where it should be.

This lack of recognition means it is declining more than other sectors in the current climate of cuts. If we compare education with sectors that are normally better funded (protection, food security, water and sanitation, nutrition and health), we see that (1) the number of people who will receive aid has fallen by 43% for education compared to 17% for the average of the other five areas, and (2) funding needs have been cut by 37% for education compared to 30% for the other areas.

Graph 1. **Distribution of funds by sector**



Source: prepared by the authors based on OCHA data (2025)

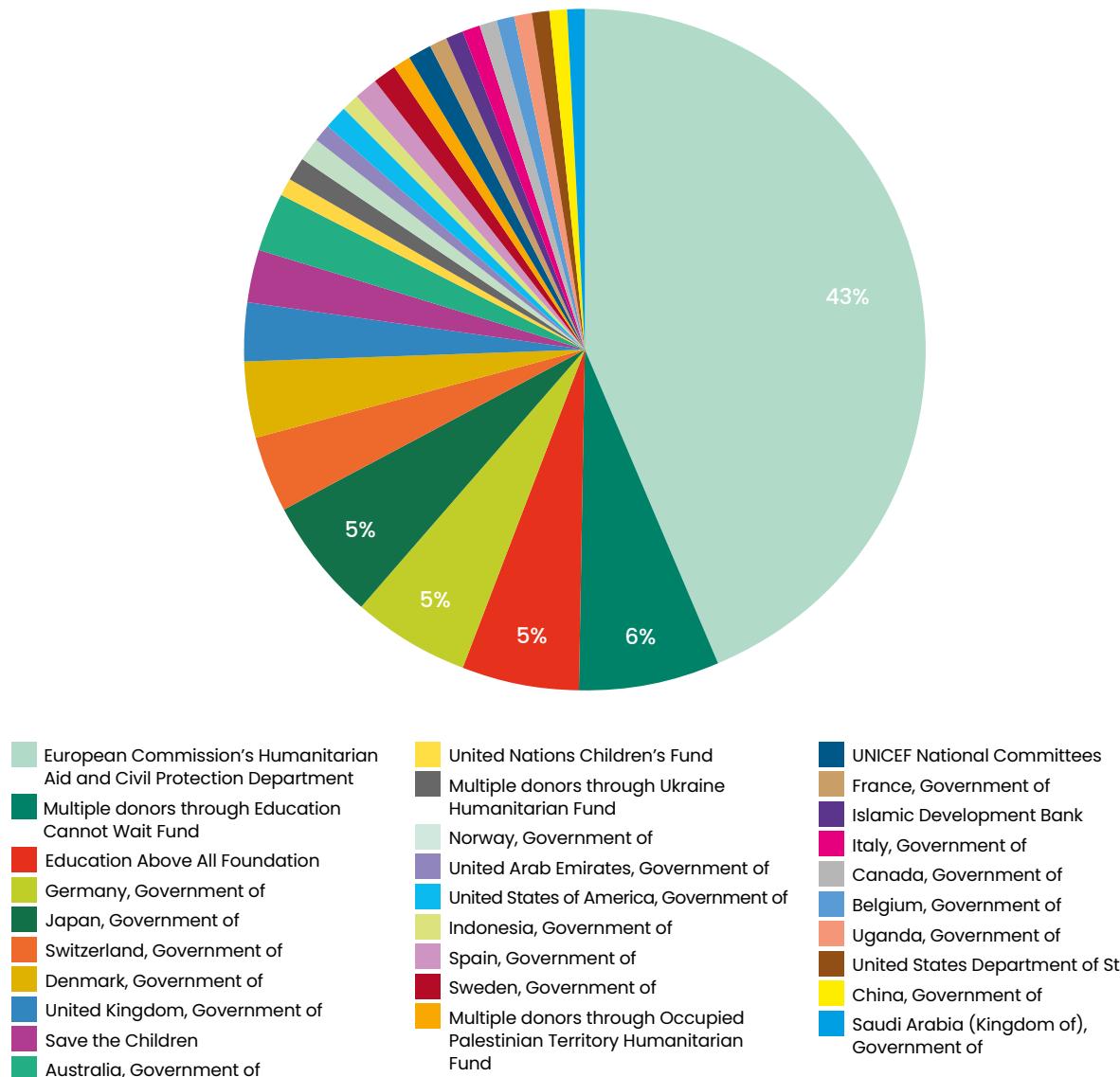
The Main Donors

Historically, **the EU has been the primary donor in EiE**, achieving the goal of allocating 10% of all humanitarian funds to this sector. In 2025, it continues to be the main source of funding in this area, contributing **43% of the total funds**. As Graph 2 shows, the contribution from other donors has fallen dramatically, with

Education Cannot Wait now the second largest donor at 6%.

The departure of the United States from the donors' group has left a significant gap in this area, given that it has historically been a key contributor, occupying one of the top positions. For example, in 2023 it was the second largest donor, behind the EU, with 17% of total funds.

Graph 2. **Funding by donor**



Source: prepared by the authors based on OCHA data (2025)

Main Beneficiaries

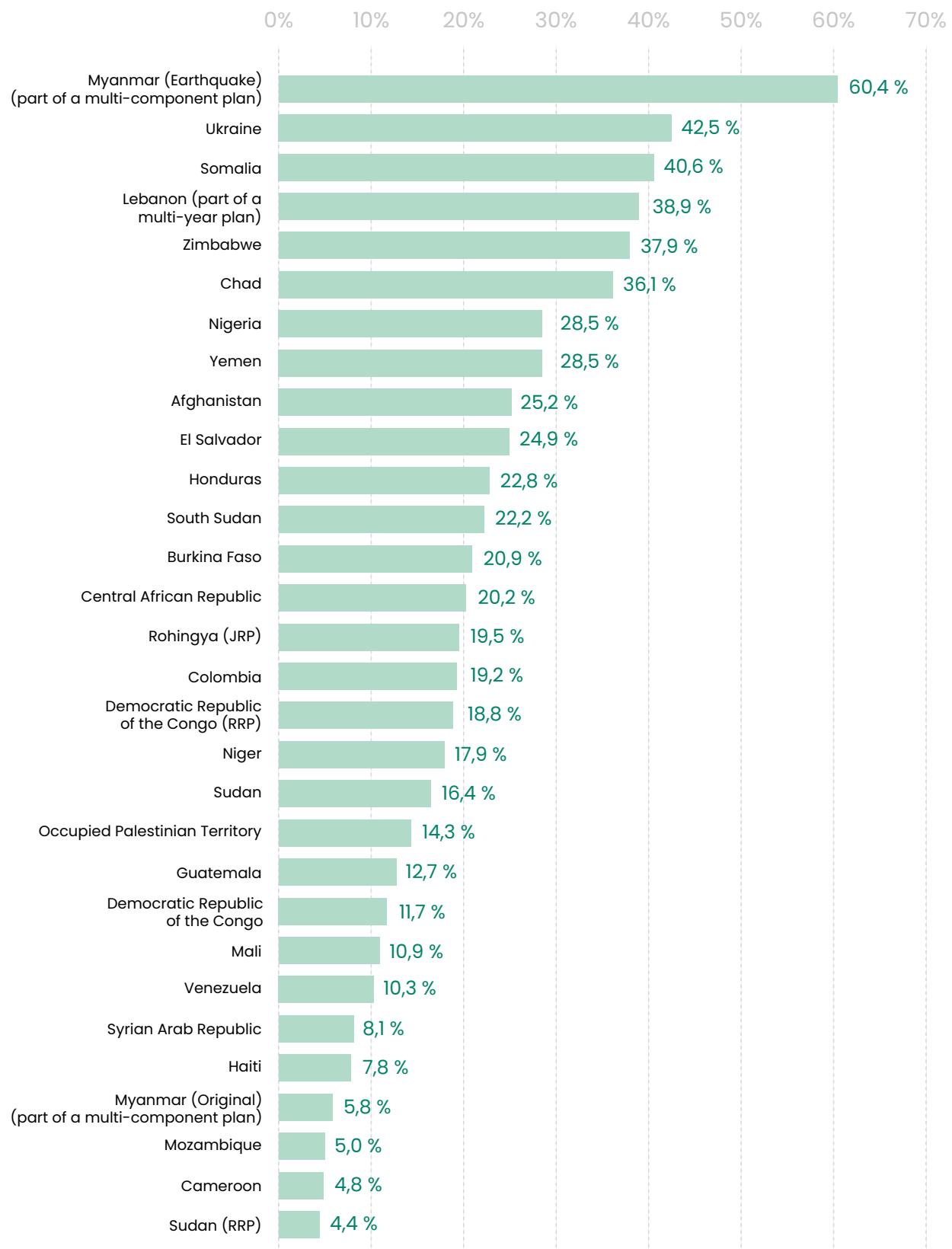


We will analyse the 30 crises with humanitarian needs identified by OCHA to determine the main destinations of EiE funding and identify which crises have been overlooked. For example, there is a huge gap between the earthquake in Myanmar, where 60% of needs were met, and the conflict in Sudan, where only 4.4% were met, with considerable implications for children affected by the funding shortfall.

For example, in Bangladesh, UNICEF has been forced to close more than 6,400 learning centres in the Cox's Bazar camps, leaving some 300,000 Rohingya

refugee children at risk of losing their education. In Chad, UNHCR and its partners have had to scale back programs for refugees from Sudan. A lack of funding for teachers' salaries puts 8,500 displaced children at risk of losing access to secondary education this year, while more than 155,000 refugee children could be left entirely without education if the cuts continue next year.

Graph 3. **Coverage of needs versus contributions by country**



Source: prepared by the authors based on OCHA data (2025)

Consequences of Funding Cuts



There are now 272 million children and adolescents out of school. The cuts in education funding will increase this figure to 6 million by the end of 2026. An estimated 1.7 million children and young people could be at risk of dropping out of school, and 67 million will be affected by fragile education systems.

The implications of these figures are unimaginable, first and foremost for these children and young people, but also for their families, communities and the urgent need to rebuild their territories.

Education in emergencies should not only be considered a **fundamental right**, but a **cornerstone of other rights that protect and save lives**.

The consequences of not having this right include:

- **Loss of learning and skills:** Children lose critical years of literacy, numeracy and life skills.
- **Risk of dropping out:** It is more difficult to return to formal education after long absences and in fragile contexts where there is an urgent need to generate family income.
- **Higher protection risk:** Children who do not attend school are more vulnerable to child labour, early marriage, trafficking, recruitment by armed groups and other forms of exploitation.
- **Gender-based violence:** Girls, in particular, face a higher risk of gender-based violence and early pregnancy.
- **Psychosocial harm:** The loss of school means that trained professionals and teachers are no longer available to help children and adolescents manage their trauma, which is a key element of stability and support.
- **Economic exclusion:** Without training, job opportunities will be limited in the future, which could lead to a higher risk of unemployment and poverty. Each year of schooling lost can reduce future earnings by approximately 10% (World Bank).
- **Impact on health and wellbeing:** Families lose access to school-related services (school meals, health campaigns, psychosocial referrals).
- **Reduced gender equality:** Families may take girls out of school first, reinforcing cycles of gender inequality.
- **Weakened human capital:** A large number of young people not in education means fewer qualified professionals (teachers, healthcare workers, engineers) needed for recovery and development.
- **Social instability:** Idle or disillusioned young people are more susceptible to radicalisation and recruitment by armed groups.
- **Fragility in peacebuilding:** Schools are fundamental to fostering social cohesion and tolerance; dropping out of school can fuel social fragmentation.
- **Financial losses:** Countries facing protracted crises can lose billions in lifetime earnings when children are unable to attend school.
- **Weakened institutions:** The shortage of skilled labour hinders reconstruction and governance capacity.

Recommendations

Recommendations for donors

Recognise the critical importance of education, including in humanitarian contexts. Achieving SDG 4 will be virtually impossible by 2030 in countries affected by crises. This will impede capacity building, hinder social mobility, and limit opportunities for both individuals and communities. Moreover, it will set back progress toward sustainable development and peace.

- **Promote a rights and wellbeing approach to Education in Emergencies.** Adopt and promote the rights-based approach of this agenda. Education must be understood both as a right and as a catalyst for other rights. Any intervention should promote a safe, protective space and promote wellbeing.
- **Increase investment in Education in Emergencies.**
 - Increase the share of humanitarian aid to education to at least 10%, as called for by the Global Campaign for Education, following the example of the European Union (DG ECHO). In 2023, the share of education in total expenditure was 4%.
 - Allocate 20% of ODA to the education sector with a special emphasis on crisis contexts.
 - Commit to flexible, multi-year funding for education in emergencies to ensure that children and adolescents in protracted crises can continue their education.

▪ Education must be considered a **lifesaving intervention** that should be prioritised in humanitarian response plans, as it provides physical and psychosocial protection and reduces vulnerability to risks such as exploitation, violence, child labour, early marriage and recruitment into armed groups. Education also offers opportunities to acquire life-saving knowledge and skills, such as those related to health, builds resilience and provides a platform for multisectoral responses, such as access to safe drinking water, life-saving vaccines and school meals, effectively reaching large numbers of children and providing care for the most vulnerable, including those with disabilities.

- **Promote the triple nexus approach to Education in Emergencies.** We are facing a context of prolonged and interconnected crises that accentuate the cycle of vulnerability. To offer a long-lasting solutions, responses must be designed in a holistic and coherent manner by providing a sustainable response to people before, during and after a crisis, through the three-pronged approach of humanitarian assistance, development programmes and peacebuilding. This approach is crucial in the education system because it:
 - Guarantees access: responding to immediate educational needs, while planning for the continuity of their education.

- Promotes development: education is one of the pillars of a more equitable society and an effective tool for promoting sustainable development, but this requires quality education and training throughout all stages.
- Creates resilient education systems: given the average duration of crises, it is necessary to create education systems capable of overcoming the various shocks they may suffer over time. This means establishing well-planned, coordinated education systems with the necessary investment.
- Promotes peacebuilding: Education is a powerful tool for peacebuilding, fostering social cohesion and preventing the recurrence of conflict. By fostering inclusive and transformative education systems, societies can overcome differences and promote dialogue, tolerance, understanding and reconciliation between different groups.
- Is more efficient: strategic planning from the outset that considers the various stages and objectives to be achieved will help to reduce costs and be more efficient.

▪ **Increase participation from children and adolescents.** Education is a key instrument in the development of children's agency, autonomy and resilience. In line with this, donors must actively include children and adolescents in decision-making and processes, from strategy development to implementation, and ensure that they have a central role in the projects they fund and in international fora. To achieve this, communication must be transparent and avoid power imbalances.

- **Ensure an inclusive response** by taking into account the voices of other affected people and the whole education community (teachers, carers, parents), as well as local actors such as civil society organisations. Recognise their critical role in any response and ensure their participation in the design, planning and implementation stages of education responses in emergencies, sustainably strengthening the resilience of national education systems.
- **Promote transformative education**, ensuring that education promotes peace and social cohesion, and incorporates psychosocial support and social and emotional learning approaches into educational responses.
- **Ensure compliance with quality and accountability standards**, such as the Essential Humanitarian Standard, INEE Minimum Standards, Safe Schools Declaration, localisation agreements, and the Grand Bargain, among others.
- **Advocate for better monitoring and accountability mechanisms in funding for Education in Emergencies**, as well as for greater coordination and sectoral disaggregation to provide a comprehensive, up-to-date and timely overview of contributions to this sector. The inclusion of the Education in Emergencies category in the OECD Development Assistance Committee should be mandatory.
- **Promote and raise the profile of the Education in Emergencies agenda** in the various UN funds in order to make its relevance visible and improve its allocation, while at the same time devoting a higher share to flexible funds.



We are Educo, an NGO that works in more than 18 countries for the wellbeing and rights of children, specially the right to receive a quality education.

We stand with children all over the world, especially those who live in situations of vulnerability, poverty, or lack of opportunities. Whatever happens, nothing can stop us: in any crisis, armed conflict or emergency, education cannot stop. Because education is urgent: it heals, empowers, and protects.