



Safe Schools

Protected From Conflict, Disasters, Pandemics,
and Other Risks

Safe Schools. Protected From Conflict, Disasters, Pandemics, and Other Risks.

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Content

A world immersed in multiple interconnected crises	4
Impact on schools and the right to education	6
Destruction or damage caused by climate emergencies	7
Attacks due to violence or conflict	8
Impact of pandemics and health crises	9
Recommendations for guaranteeing safe schools	11
Aimed at States, multilateral organisations and educational and children's organisations	11
Aimed at central government and autonomous communities	13
ANNEX 1	16
ANNEX 2	18
ANNEX 3	19

A world immersed in multiple interconnected crises



No matter what indicators, sources, or methods are used, the conclusion is always the same: **world peace has been deteriorating** year after year, driven by a steady increase in conflicts, especially in the last decade ([UCDP](#), [GPI](#), [ICP](#)).

On top of this, **disasters are on the rise**. In the current decade, their frequency ranges between 315 and 432 events per year. Although the number of disasters has remained relatively stable, the economic damage they cause has nearly doubled, indicating greater devastation ([Emergency Action Planning](#)).

However, these two phenomena do not run parallel. The perverse **combination of conflict and climate change is intertwined, generating devastating effects**. Cases such as Gaza and Ukraine illustrate how conflict can directly contribute to climate change. For instance, 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 world's military budgets are responsible for 5.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, not including emissions from warfare itself.

If the world's armies were a country, they would have the fourth largest carbon footprint. (UNFCCC). At the same time, increased global warming can indirectly intensify conflict by exacerbating tensions over issues such as food insecurity, water scarcity and competition for resources. According to UNHCR, nearly half of all forcibly displaced people are affected by both conflict and the adverse effects of climate change.

These interconnected crises have once again produced record numbers, creating enormous humanitarian challenges. In 2024, **123.2 million people were displaced** by persecution, violence, conflict or human rights violations, a 6% increase on the previous year. The number of internally displaced persons caused by 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 risen to 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**.



Impact on schools and the right to education



As an international NGO that advocates for children's rights, especially their right to quality education, we know that schools are at the epicentre of these interconnected crises. They are subject to attacks, used for military purposes, damaged, or destroyed by extreme weather events. Like other infrastructure, they face a multiplier effect of various risks that can occur simultaneously or consecutively, ultimately preventing them from being used for

their intended purpose. Consequently, **the right to education is one of the first rights to be lost in a crisis and one of the last to be restored.**

The following section analyses the data according to the type of threat, acknowledging that there may be some specific consequences (see Annex), but these usually lead to common effects, as will be shown in the next section.

Destruction or damage caused by climate emergencies

Disasters and crises have a global impact on education. Between 2022 and 2024, more than **400 million students were affected** by school closures due to the climate crisis, and 242 million children had their schooling interrupted by extreme weather events in 2024 alone.

However, these consequences do not affect all countries equally. In 2024, students in low-income countries missed an average of 45 days of school, compared to an average of just six days for students in high-income countries. If risk exposure is combined with low income, the effects can be devastating. For instance, between January 2022 and June 2024, students in the Philippines experienced 23 periods of school closure. In Pakistan, students missed 97 days of school (almost 54 per cent of a normal academic year).

Historical data shows that these phenomena are going to become more severe and have a greater impact on the education sector. Over the past 20 years, schools have been closed on at least 75% of occasions when extreme weather events linked to climate change have affected 5 million people or more.

Spain and the impact of disasters on education

- Spain is ranked eighth in the world in terms of climate risk, with heat being the most significant factor, and it ranked fifth among the countries most affected in 2022.
- Despite having signed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Spain has not reported any progress on the safe schools indicator and has not adopted the Comprehensive School Safety Framework, unlike other European countries.
- More than 1,000 educational centres are located in flood-prone areas, especially in the Mediterranean and Galicia.
- After the DANA storm in Valencia, more than one hundred schools were affected, including eight that suffered serious structural damage.

Attacks due to violence or conflict

A report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) entitled *Education under Attack 2024* found that between **2022 and 2023** there were approximately **6,000 attacks** on education (schools, universities, military use of facilities) worldwide, an increase of **almost 20% compared to the previous two years** (2020-2021). Compared to 2024, **the United Nations points out that this represents an increase of 44%.**

This increase is mainly due to a series of crises in several countries, particularly between 2022 and 2023, during which time a large number of schools were attacked;

- Democratic Republic of Congo (1,256); Ukraine (700); Palestine (642); Gaza (350); Burkina Faso (493); Yemen (482); Myanmar (245).

A close-up of the impact

Ukraine

- Since the Russian invasion in February 2022, hundreds of schools have been damaged, destroyed or used as shelters.
- More than five million children have had their studies interrupted.
- Many educational institutions are currently offering remote or hybrid learning due to significant infrastructure damage and constant risks of bombing or military use of educational spaces.

Gaza

- One of the countries most affected by serious violations in the educational context.
- In Gaza, hundreds of thousands of children are out of school, and many educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed.
- 13,500 students have been killed, and 785,000 have been deprived of their right to education. More than 800 teachers have been killed or injured.
- Schools have been converted into shelters, school facilities have been taken over for military use, and fear has spread among the student population.
- It is estimated that they have lost three years of learning.



Impact of pandemics and health crises

The COVID-19 pandemic affected more than 1.6 billion students and young people. Between February 2020 and February 2022, education systems around the world **completely stopped in-person teaching for an average of 141 days**.

Each month of school closures equated to a full month of lost learning, highlighting the limited effectiveness of distance learning. In some cases, the situation was even worse. In Latin America, for example, where schools were closed for the longest, it is estimated that learning losses would result in a 12 per cent decrease in lifetime earnings for current students.

The pandemic has set back progress on virtually all **SDG 4 indicators**: access, learning, equity, financing and quality. According to reports by the United Nations, achieving many of the SDG 4 targets has become both more costly and more difficult. Specifically, **educational poverty**—the inability to read and understand a simple text at age 10— **increased to approximately 70%** in low- and middle-income countries in 2022 due to the pandemic.

Five years later, **weaknesses remain**, including cuts or failures to consolidate extraordinary resources, a lack of sustained investment in support staff, and a digital divide in specific sectors. These weaknesses limit the capacity to deal with another crisis of similar magnitude, should it occur, including in Spain.

Effects on the right to education

Short term effects

- **Interruption to classroom-based teaching:** partial or total closure of schools; loss of teaching hours.
- **Loss of access and digital divide:** students without connectivity are excluded from distance learning.
- **Paralysis of complementary services:** suspension of school meals, psychological support, healthcare and protection services.
- **Risks to physical safety:** damage to infrastructure, risk of injury or death (in conflicts/disasters).
- **Mobility and displacement:** movements of internally displaced persons or refugees affecting existing resources, enrolment and planning.
- **Increased school dropout rates and higher risk of child labour:** especially among vulnerable groups (girls, poor households).
- **Acute psychosocial impact:** stress, grief, and anxiety affecting students and teachers.
- **Staff disruption:** absenteeism, loss of teachers and managers; work overload.

Long term effects

- **Cumulative educational deficit:** sustained loss of learning and increased educational poverty.
- **Greater educational inequality:** widening gaps based on gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and territory.
- **Structural damage and reconstruction costs:** need for investment to rehabilitate and adapt infrastructure. In early 2025, it was estimated that the cost of rebuilding the education system in Gaza would be £3.8 billion over the next five years.
- **Loss of teaching staff:** teacher departures or staff reductions, difficulties in continuing teacher training.
- **Deterioration of the school environment and social capital:** less trust in educational institutions and loss of community cohesion.
- **Intergenerational socio-economic effects:** poorer future employment prospects and greater economic vulnerability.
- **Changes in educational demand:** changing migration flows are putting a strain on the already fragile education systems of host countries and communities.

Recommendations for guaranteeing safe schools

Aimed at States, multilateral organisations and educational and children's organisations

■ Risk prevention and reduction

- **Incorporate education into national risk management frameworks.** Assessment of vulnerabilities in schools, safe building codes, and investment plans for resilient infrastructure.
- **Mapping and protection of critical educational infrastructure.** Identification of schools in risk areas and prioritisation of their adaptation.
- **Early warning systems integrated with school communities.** Generating networks for inter-institutional and inter-territorial coordination.
- **Include environmental education in the curriculum.**

■ Preparation for guaranteeing educational continuity

- **Mandatory educational continuity plans for each school:** Clear protocols for distance learning, temporary reception centres and guarantees for basic services.
- **Teacher training on distance learning and remedial actions.**
- **Educational materials ready:** Offline learning packs (printed/USB), educational radios, and community hubs.
- **Mechanisms for establishing rapid funds:** Contingency funds or rapid funding mechanisms for education in emergencies.

Immediate response

- **Restoring safe access to education as a humanitarian priority:** Safe reopening, educational corridors and temporary learning spaces.
- **Integrated services:** Immediate provision of school meals, psychosocial support and child protection screening.
- **Interventions to support catch-up learning:** Diagnostic assessments followed by tutoring, catch-up programmes and intensive programmes.
- **Protection of teachers and students:** Health measures, physical safety, and sexual and gender protection protocols.

Recovery and resilience

- **Investment in repairing and adapting school infrastructure** with sustainability and risk reduction criteria.
- **Integration of lessons learned** into educational planning and multi-year budgets.
- **Strengthening of education data systems** (enrolment, attendance, results) for rapid monitoring after crises.
- **Humanitarian-development coordination using the triple nexus approach:** programmes that link immediate response with long-term educational reconstruction.

Governance, funding and accountability

- **Funding for Education in Emergencies (EiE):** Minimum budget allocation for EiE and transparent accountability mechanisms in countries, adding 10% of humanitarian funds to this item.
- **Public indicators and periodic reports** on educational continuity and quality in emergencies, with a gender-based approach and a focus on vulnerable groups.
- **Adherence to the Safe Schools Declaration** to protect schools from attacks and to the **Comprehensive Framework for School Safety** to make schools resilient.



Aimed at central government and autonomous communities

Prevention and preparedness

- **Include education in civil protection plans and regional emergency plans.** Coordinated protocols between the Ministry of Education, regional councils and Civil Protection.
- **Produce an updated map of the risks faced by schools in the region.** Based on the results, carry out inspections and adapt them.
- Lobby the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sport to activate the ***Contingency Plan for Educational Continuity*** within the Sectoral Conference, in order to establish clear mechanisms to guarantee education after an emergency.
- **Technological resources and universal school connectivity.** Bridge the digital divide through subsidised device and connectivity programmes for vulnerable students.
- **Assess the impact of the DRR training** being delivered for the first time in the 2025-2026 academic year to evaluate its effectiveness and impact and make improvements.

Response and immediate mitigation

- **Protocols for the safe reopening of in-person attendance,** where possible, with appropriate health measures, ventilation and capacity control.
- **Psychosocial support network and training for teachers** in response to trauma and student wellbeing; reinforcement of educational guidance.
- **Funded educational recovery programmes** at national and regional levels, including tutoring, curricular reinforcement and extended school hours during critical periods.
- **Flexible enrolment mechanisms and school reintegration programmes** for students at risk of dropping out.



Long term recovery

- **Permanent programs to reduce educational inequalities:** scholarships, support for schools with high vulnerability rates and focus on inclusion (disability, immigration).
- **Ongoing professional development for teachers** in resilience and hybrid teaching.
- **Alliances within the charity sector** and universities for applied research in learning recovery and impact assessment.
- Creation of **participative spaces** in schools.
- Establish **recovery indicators** that include issues such as:
 - Percentage of schools with an Educational Continuity Plan implemented and tested.
 - Weeks of in-person teaching recovered vs number of weeks lost.
 - Percentage of students who received remedial interventions (tutoring, reinforcement).
 - School dropout rate (before and 1–3 years after the emergency).
 - Percentage of students with access to devices/connectivity after the intervention.
 - Number of schools rehabilitated/adapted with risk reduction criteria.
 - Indicators of psychosocial wellbeing (mental health surveys among students and teachers).

Governance and funding

- **Contingency fund in the budgets of the education system**, both at federal and state levels, for emergency and recovery measures.
- **Inter-administrative coordination** (State-Autonomous Communities-Local Councils-Health) with clear protocols on responsibilities and information flows.
- **Evaluation and transparency mechanisms:** public reports on spending, results, and impact of measures aimed at education in emergencies.
- Lobby the Ministry of Education and the regional education departments of the autonomous communities to ensure they **adopt the Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030** and promote its formal incorporation as public policy, integrating its three pillars. Due to the division of responsibilities between administrations, it is essential to ensure that the framework is linked to the school curriculum.
- Continue to drive and lead the promotion of the **Safe Schools Declaration** in third countries and include it as a tool in your bilateral agreements, as established in the 2025-2028 Foreign Action Strategy.



ANNEX 1

Risk factors

- **Threat:** A latent danger or physical event (natural or man-made) that has the potential to cause damage, loss of life, injury, or damage to infrastructure and livelihoods.
- **Vulnerability:** The susceptibility or fragility of a community or system to suffer adverse effects from a hazardous event. It may be physical, economic, social, environmental, or institutional.
- **Exposure:** The elements (people, property, infrastructure) that are in contact with the threat and could be affected.
- **Coping capacity:** The characteristics, resources, and capabilities that a community, organization, or individual possesses to manage a risk situation and recover from a disaster. Greater coping capacity can reduce the impact of a threat.

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Threat \& Exposure} \times \frac{\text{Vulnerability}}{\text{Coping capacity}}$$



In the education sector

| Main threats

a) Violence and armed conflicts

- Direct attacks on school facilities, military occupation, or vandalism.
- Bullying, gender violence, and discrimination within the educational environment.
- Child recruitment.
- Forced displacement of students and teaching staff.
- Prolonged suspension of classes.

c) Environmental disasters and emergencies

- Hydrometeorological phenomena that damage infrastructure.
- Earthquakes, fires, or landslides that put physical integrity at risk.
- Disruption of transportation and basic services (water, electricity, connectivity).

d) Pandemics and health crises

- Prolonged suspension of in-person classes and loss of educational continuity.
- Digital divide affecting access to distance learning.
- Psychosocial impact resulting from isolation and uncertainty.
- Risk of infection due to lack of adequate biosafety protocols.

Vulnerabilities in the school environment

- Inadequate or deteriorated infrastructure.
- Lack of risk management and school emergency plans.
- Lack of training for teaching staff in crisis management.
- Limited participation of the educational community in DRR.
- Unequal territorial distribution of public resources.
- Digital weaknesses that hinder educational continuity.
- High levels of vulnerability.

ANNEX 2

The right to education: a widely recognised fundamental right

It is a fundamental right and also enables many other rights (food, health, participation, protection) that are extensively covered in both international and national frameworks.

Globally

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948)**

- **Article 26:** Recognises everyone's right to education.
- Establishes that primary education must be **free and compulsory**.
- Emphasises that education should be aimed at the **full development of the human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms**.

- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966)**

- **Article 13:** Details the scope of the right to education, including **accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability**.
- Requires States Parties to progressively implement **secondary and higher education accessible to all**, with a tendency towards free education.

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)**

- **Articles 28 and 29:** Reaffirm the right of the child to education, establishing state duties to guarantee equal access and promote school discipline in accordance with human dignity.

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030 Agenda, UN)**

- **SDG 4:** Guarantee an **inclusive and equitable quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In Spain

- **1978 Spanish Constitution**

- **Article 27:** Recognises the **right to education and freedom of teaching**. States that education shall have as its objective the **full development of the human personality** with respect for democratic principles and fundamental rights and freedoms. Establishes that **basic education is compulsory and free**.

- **Organic Law 2/2006 on Education (LOE), amended by Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE)**

- Develops the constitutional framework, ensuring **equity, inclusion, quality, and freedom of choice of school**.
- Promotes **equal opportunities, education in democratic values, and coeducation**.

ANNEX 3

Analysis by regions and countries Educo has a presence

Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger)

- The education crisis remains a major challenge, with an increase in school closures due to insecurity, from less than 2,000 in 2019 to more than 8,400 in 2025. In 2024, they increased by 50% and in 2023 by 20% compared to the previous year.
- In 2025, 1 million girls in these three countries are not attending school due to fear of violence and terrorism.
- In total, three million students have been affected by attacks on schools, depriving them of their right to education.
- Growing threats (direct attacks on schools, occupation by armed groups), teacher disappearances, destruction of infrastructure.
- According to OCHA, the funding gap for EiE in 2025 is 66% for Burkina Faso, 89% for Mali and 74% for Niger.

Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala)

- In communities in Honduras and El Salvador affected by gang violence, more than half of children were out of school.
- Schools used as shelters after hurricanes, destruction or damage to school infrastructure after storms and hurricanes.
- According to OCHA, the funding gap for EiE in 2025 is 75% in El Salvador, 82% in Guatemala, and 78% in Honduras.

Philippines

- In several regions, many school days have been missed due to weather-related disasters. For example, in the Luzon region, 35 out of 80 school days were missed in CAR; 33 days in Cagayan Valley; and more than 30 days in Ilocos and Calabarzon.
- The estimated learning losses in this context are significant (for example, declines in academic achievement in mathematics and science in 4th grade of up to ~12-14%, equivalent to half a year of learning).
- According to OCHA, the funding gap for EiE is 0, covering all needs in 2025.

Bangladesh

- In 2024, some 33-35 million children had their education disrupted by climate crises (heat waves, cyclones, floods).
- In Sylhet district, accumulated class losses of up to eight weeks are estimated in some places; other areas such as Khulna, Chattogram, and Rangpur have had about six weeks of climate-related school closures this year.
- Flooding damaged 3,724 educational institutions; more than 1,500 secondary schools and madrasas suspended classes; many schools were used as shelters.
- According to OCHA, the funding gap for EiE in 2025 was 100%, meaning that no funds were contributed.



**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.

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