Event Title: LEARNING IN EMERGENCIES — BEST PRACTICES IN IMPROVING FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING IN EMERGENCIES

Date and time: Wednesday 22nd June 3-4.30pm EST

Sponsors: UNICEF, Save the Children, Switzerland

Objective:
1) Discuss issues around challenges in addressing the learning crisis in fragile contexts and what we need to do to address them
2) Provide an opportunity to present best practices and solutions to scale up proven interventions in emergencies that are improving foundational learning for marginalized children

Panel Members: (names, titles, and organizations)
- Linda Jones, Senior Adviser, Education in Emergencies, UNICEF
- Tim Murray, Senior Director, Learning Outcomes, Save the Children
- H.E Felix Baumann, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN
- Rob Jenkins, Director of Education and Adolescent Development. UNICEF
- Dr. Olagunju Lateef, Secretary General, Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO
- Taimaru, Regional Children Advisory Group (GANNAR), Save the Children, Venezuela
- Devyani Pershad, Head, International Collaborations, Pratham
- Pamela Mendoza, Advisor, Learning Research, Save the Children
- Thomas Wells Dreesen, Education Manager, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti
- Jennifer Sklar, Education Technical Advisor, International Rescue Committee

Main points raised by each panelist:
- H.E Felix Baumann, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN
  o For too long the international community has underestimated the needs of education as a critical sector of humanitarian action. We did not now the vital and protective role in which education plays for boys and girls, and parents in emergencies.
  o Switzerland is committed to prioritising education in emergency situations and to providing strategic support for coordination, equipment or method, particularly within International Geneva. Last year we inaugurated the Global Hub for Education in Emergencies which aims to make the right to education a reality for all children. The Hub offers a platform for meetings, and synergies between multiple actors for transformative joint action.
  o We are proud to host in Geneva in February 2023 the High-Level Financing Conference for Education Cannot Wait. Education Cannot Wait’s new report shows that he number of school-age children affected by crisis and in need of education support has grown to 222 million – 78 million of these are out of school.
  o It is not enough to go to school, while 120 million children affected by crisis are in school, they are not reaching the basic skills.
  o We call on all member states to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration
- Rob Jenkins, Director of Education and Adolescent Development. UNICEF
  o As recently shared by ECW, 222 million school-aged children are affected by crises globally in the beginning of 2022. Of these, it’s over 119 million children in schools in humanitarian situations who are unable to read or comprehend a simple story and over 78 million children who are out of school. This does not yet include the 6 million school-aged children experiencing education loss due to the Ukraine crisis.
At UNICEF we are calling for governments to take RAPID action to provide a springboard to a future where every child has equal access to quality learning.

The RAPID framework first calls to reach every child in emergencies, making sure they have access to school for the first time or return to school – and are retained in the classroom.

We need to assess children’s learning levels, learning data is critical for educators to tailor catch up instruction. It is equally important for parents and caregivers who are supporting their children’s learning, and for policymakers who are developing broader learning recovery strategies. For example, lessons learnt regarding the use of technology for learning and assessments and tailoring approaches are being deployed in Ukraine right now, when schools were closed due to insecurity.

Third, we need to prioritize teaching the fundamentals in emergencies. This means making sure that children acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, especially in the early grades of primary education.

Fourth, we need to increase remedial programmes so children can catch up and progress. The solutions for remedial learning due to COVID-19 will remain equally effective in other emergencies where education is disrupted, for example, Teaching at the Right Level

Fifth and finally, children in emergencies must receive socio-emotional learning (SEL) and psychosocial and wellbeing support. Children and adolescents in emergencies face heightened vulnerabilities. Psychosocial support and socio-emotional learning work best when integrated into environments – such as safe learning centres – that offer stable routines. Ethiopia’s Bete (‘My Home’ in Amharic) programme is a joint education and child protective initiative aimed at providing a safe space for hard-to-reach, out-of-school children who live amid humanitarian emergencies.

It is our duty to take these five key actions and seize this opportunity to work together, without ambitious action to address the learning crisis, with a focus on the most marginalized children, such as those living in emergency settings, we will have lost an entire generation.

- **Dr. Olagunju Lateef, Secretary General, Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO**
  - Evidence shows that in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, 87% of children do not have basic literacy or numeracy skills by age 10. The literacy rate in north-east Nigeria for is at 50.5% for boys and 31.8% for girls. Enrolment overall in Nigeria is decreasing.
  - Protection-related issues have prevailed across the north-east due to insurgency – attacks on schools, leading to students and teachers abandoning schools. Children need psycho-social support.
  - There has also been mass displacement, denying many children access to education.
  - The Nigerian Government is taking efforts to ensure education can continue in emergencies – including providing home-based learning through low- and high-tech learning. We also use Teaching at the Right Level – using the children’s learning levels not by age to group children. We also provide cash transfers to 50,000 children to increase enrolment. As a result of these interventions there have been increases in literacy and numeracy skills.
  - We are also increasing public financing for education, including early childhood care and development.

- **Taimaru, Regional Children Advisory Group (GANNAR), Save the Children, Venezuela**
  - My experience accessing education during the COVID 19 pandemic was a bit complicated. It was difficult in terms of accessing the virtual classes, because at that time I did not have (digital) access and I know that many of my classmates did not have the same access either. In my case I had a family member who supported me, I had to walk to her home about 40 minutes one way and 40 minutes back to be able to be able to access devices to carry out the activities that I had to deliver during the school year.
  - I think a very big challenge was being away from people. We continue being separated (because of social distancing) but we have to work together in the same spaces. However, we try to maintain that required distance and that makes it a little difficult to socialize.
  - It is difficult, but I think that together, if we make a very big collective effort, we can do our part and look for solutions to these problems that affect us.
  - It’s a very good idea to carry out student campaigns aimed at other students, to be able to solve problems such as the adequacy of the content of the educational pensum. Another suggestion would be to include other areas to the academical pensum such as art or sports, which could help us raise our self-esteem and strengthen our social skills. This would allow us to learn also in a more relaxed way, with less stress so that school is not something overwhelming for us.
  - We need spaces and opportunities where we can be leaders, striving to get our greatest human and academic potential.
**Technical presentations**

- **Teaching at the Right Level:**
  TaRL, an approach pioneered by Indian NGO Pratham, targets the root of the learning crisis by transforming the structures that lead to it. The approach works by dividing children (generally in Grades 3 to 5) into groups based on learning needs rather than age or grade; dedicating time to basic skills rather than focusing solely on the curriculum; and regularly assessing student performance, rather than relying only on end-of-year examinations. Since 2001, J-PAL-affiliated researchers have rigorously tested the theory of change underlying Pratham’s TaRL approach. Through 6 randomised evaluations in India, as well as a growing body of research in Africa, they find that when TaRL is successfully implemented, learning outcomes improve.

- **Save the Children’s REAL Assessment Tool:**
  ReAL is a toolkit for assessing children’s learning outcomes remotely, focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy, and Social and Emotional Learning, drawing from existing SC tools. This tool is for remote use where enumerators can’t assess children in person. It can be administered by smartphone or regular mobile, depending on the context, and there are three different adaptations (High Access, Low Access, Caregiver) dependent on what materials (stimuli), and type of phone the parents/caregivers have access to.

  Over the past year, Save the Children has been piloting the Remote Assessment of Learning (ReAL) tool in four countries. The aim of these pilots was to test the validity and reliability of the ReAL tool to accurately assess numeracy, literacy and social emotional learning from a distance. And today we are excited to finally bring the results of these pilots to you. As well as this, we are now gearing up for the second phase of testing. In this phase we will pilot the revised tool in at least 9 countries. For this phase, we are delighted to partner with the Child Study Center at Yale University who will work with us to coordinate and analyse the data from each site and serve as a critical thought partner. Our partnership with Yale also allows up to bring in local universities and research institutes, whose input for each site is critical. At the end of testing, we will have a tool that is externally validated.

- **UNICEF’s assessment of mobile phones for learning in emergencies:** Basic mobile phones are the most ubiquitous information and communications technology (ICT) available to people around the world. The use of low-cost basic mobile phones in humanitarian settings to provide learning at a distance is critical where access to connectivity and higher cost devices such as laptops are low. The portability of mobile phones combined with their communication features provides multiple different use cases for education in emergencies. This research aims to provide tangible lessons for the uses of mobile phones for learning and learning assessments in emergencies by combining a review of the existing literature, and case studies supplemented by feedback and interviews with EiE practitioners in the field answering three critical questions:
  - How can basic mobile phones be used to support education in emergencies learning programmes, and teacher training/coaching?
  - How can mobile phones be leveraged to support the measurement of learning in emergency settings?
  - What are the key practices undertaken by education practitioners to improve the equity and safety of mobile phone-based education programmes?

- **IRC Intervention on Social Emotional Learning:**
  IRC is invested in designing and testing SEL interventions that will improve children’s academic outcomes in crisis and conflict settings. IRC will present its most recent approach to addressing the challenge of teacher uptake, fidelity and quality implementation of SEL programming in northeast Nigeria. IRC, in close partnership with Harvard Easel Lab, used behavior insight and human centered design approaches to design contextually rooted, low-cost, and flexible SEL ‘kernels’ that can be easily integrated into any classroom setting to improve the social-emotional and academic outcomes of students. The low-intensity SEL activities are co-designed and tested with local teachers and families and include locally sourced games, songs, and stories that resonate with teachers’ priorities, values and beliefs. The presentation will briefly touch on implementation research findings that show teacher improvement in the fidelity and quality of their implementation of SEL activities in the classroom.

**Key messages of the side event:**

New global estimates showing that an alarming 222 million crisis-affected children and adolescents are now in need of education support. Less than half of countries are implementing learning recovery strategies at scale to help children catch up.
We call for urgent action to invest in education recovery in countries affected by humanitarian crises. Despite increased awareness of the problem, EiE continues to be an under-appreciated and under-funded part of humanitarian responses. Specifically, governments should take RAPID action to avert a learning catastrophe:

- Reach and retain every child in school
- Assess learning levels
- Prioritize teaching the fundamentals
- Increase catch-up learning and progress beyond what was lost
- Develop psychosocial health and well-being so every child is reading to learn

Main points raised during the discussion with participants:

- **Financing:** New findings from the EiE Geneva Hub show that across UN-led humanitarian appeals, the education sector was just 22% funded in 2021 - what can be done to make the case for investment in education in emergencies?
- **Data:** We need better quality data collected and transparently shared with government authorities in a timely way to understand who is and is not learning - in order to better support those falling behind. How can we better collect data in emergency settings?

Outcomes of the side event:

- The recording and recommendations were sent to all participants and shared globally through respective organisations to continue the dialogue in advance of the Transforming Education Summit and to share best practices
- UNICEF and Save the Children will continue with their partnership at country and global level to make the case for more funding and action to ensure children affected by emergencies can continue with their foundational learning.
- View the recording of the webinar: [Arabic](#); [English](#); [French](#); [Spanish](#)