



*Launched in January 2021 and counting 24 members, the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies is an ambitious commitment to action.*

## **2021 Economic and Social Committee Humanitarian Affairs Segment**

**Education in Emergencies: Disruptions and Opportunities - How humanitarian crises affect children and youth and what we can do about it**

**Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies**

**Wednesday 23 June from 8:30 – 10:00 (Geneva time) – link to join below**

**Co-hosts:** Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, Core Group on Safe Schools, Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict

This is one of the virtual side events to be convened on the margins of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS), which builds on this year's HAS theme: *“Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”*.

### **Background and objectives**

Of the world's approximately 257 million primary and secondary school-age children and youth out of school, 127 million live in countries affected by crises. With no or inadequate access to education, the most at-risk children face augmented threats, including negative effects on their mental health, child marriage, being forced into child labour to support themselves and their families, or becoming associated with armed groups and gangs.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact in 2021 and beyond: it disrupted education for 1.6 billion children across the world. After one year of being unable to access education, it is estimated that 168 million children will fall further behind their peers, and the most at-risk will bear the brunt. Learning losses are mounting and it is critical that children and youth re-engage with the learning process, either with effective remote learning, hybrid options, or returning to safe schemes of in-person education.

Yet, the pandemic is but one disrupter and the world will face more challenges in the coming years: disasters, the climate emergency, violence and attacks on education – with over 22,000 students, teachers, and academics injured, killed or harmed in attacks on education during armed conflict or violence over the past five years<sup>1</sup> - impacting the learning of millions of children and youth. In particular, crisis-affected and displaced children and youth lack inclusive and equitable quality education and safe school environments.

Faced with these complex challenges, mobilizing to enhance respect of existing law and standards must continue. International humanitarian law contains many rules aiming to ensure that people can continue to receive an education during armed conflict and that students, teachers and schools are protected from hostilities. As civilian objects, schools must not be attacked. Human rights law recognises the right of each and every child to receive an education. And commitments such as the Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines can help to strengthen the protection of education from attack and restrict the use of schools and universities for military purposes.

The efficient delivery of quality education in humanitarian emergencies, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education - while building resilient education systems in collaboration with other sectors and across the nexus- is a critical contribution towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of the Global Compact on Refugees. Precisely, this year's World Refugee Day on 20 June emphasises that we all benefit when everyone has access to education and called for greater inclusion of displaced children and youth in national education systems.

Finally, along with being one of the most underfunded sectors in humanitarian response plans, national education budgets are particularly vulnerable to economic shocks, with estimations showing that two-thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries have already cut their education budgets since the onset of the pandemic. While in absolute and relative terms humanitarian funding for education has increased in response to growing needs over the last years, the needs largely outpace the limited resources.

The event will allow participants to learn and discuss the latest about the state and criticality of education in emergencies and reflect on disruptions and prospects related to the current challenges.

Effective preparedness and responses towards quality and inclusive education for all crisis-affected children and youth will be discussed.

The COVID-19 pandemic response has opened a window of opportunity for accelerated educational systems' progress. The future of learning is now.

### **Discussion points or guiding questions**

- What is the state of education in emergencies in 2021 and what are key interrupters of learning?
- What are the opportunities of the moment to address the current challenges?

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<sup>1</sup> GCPEA, [Education under Attack 2020](#) (2020)

- What are successful preparedness and response actions across sectors and the nexus for quality, inclusive education for crisis-affected and displaced children?

### **Key concrete action points and recommendations/take away messages**

- Urgent action is needed to realise a **renewed vision for education**: one in which learning happens for every child and youth, including those displaced or living in crisis-affected contexts.
- **Schools are safe and inclusive learning spaces** - with an all-inclusive approach to prevent and address violence and *leave no child behind*.
- **Teachers are effective and valued** - and are supported to take on an increasingly complex role of facilitators of learning using different modalities at and beyond the school.
- **Learners are safe, prepared and motivated to learn** - with a stronger emphasis on whole-child development and support to *learning continuity beyond the school*.

**Format of the side event:** A virtual panel followed by a moderated discussion.

### **Chair and moderator**

*Kerstin Holst*, Chief of the UNESCO Section of Migration, Displacement, Emergencies and Education

### **Panel composition**

Opening remarks: *Ambassador Thomas Gass*, Assistant Director General and Head of the South Cooperation Department of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

- *Raymond Ombere*, Principal Education Officer, Arua City, Uganda
- *Francisco Benavides*, Regional Education Advisor, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific (tbc)
- *Dahabo Abdi Ibrahim*, refugee student and advocate for education and women rights at Dadaab
- *Najeebullah Qadri*, Afghanistan Education Cluster Coordinator

Planned interventions from the floor: Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

Followed by an interactive Q&A session and discussion.

Closing remarks: *Yasmine Sherif*, Director of Education Cannot Wait

### **Connection details to join the event**

Please RSVP by clicking the link [here](#). Call-in details for joining will be emailed upon registration.

## **Background Material**

- GCPEA, [The Practical Impact of the Safe Schools Declaration](#) (2019)
- GCPEA, [Education under Attack 2020](#) (2020)
- GCPEA, [Toolkit for Collecting and Analysing Data on Attacks on Education](#) (2021)
- INEE. [20 Years of INEE: Achievements and Challenges in Education in Emergencies](#) (2020)
- INEE and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action [No education, no protection: What school closures under COVID-19 mean for children and young people in crisis-affected contexts](#) (2021)
- Swissinfo podcast, [Education: making it a priority in humanitarian emergencies](#) (2021)
- UNICEF, [COVID-19 and School Closures: One year of education disruption](#) (2021)

## **Contact(s)**

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### Geneva Global Hub for EiE members

