



## Helpdesk Research Report

# Delivering education during conflict

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## Question

*Summarise the available evidence on effective support to education system resilience and education service delivery during an active conflict.*

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## 1. Overview

Education delivery during active conflict is under-prioritised in humanitarian response as it is often not considered an urgent need by those delivering and funding the aid (UNESCO, 2011, pp. 200-201). For example, in 2010 education delivery only received about 2 per cent of humanitarian aid funding, even though the appeals often underestimate the actual education need (UNESCO, 2011, pp. 204, 206). However, education is important for children's wellbeing, development and future prospects, as well as for a country's peace, stability and economic development; and is often a priority for those directly affected (Save the Children, 2014, p. 3; UNESCO, 2011, p. 200). Despite the challenges of delivering education during active conflict it is possible and UN agencies, NGOs, and donors have supported governments, communities, and local authorities in both government and opposition/rebel controlled areas to do so (UNESCO, 2011, pp. 208-209). Guidelines drawn up by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies establish standards for the provision of education in emergency situations (UNESCO, 2011, p. 209).

This rapid review summarises available evidence of support to education system resilience and education service delivery during active conflicts, including support provided by parents and communities. Information is provided from case studies of support to education in the West Bank and Gaza, Côte d'Ivoire, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Syria, including in rebel/opposition held areas; as well as evaluations of Save the

Children's and the Dutch government's support to education in conflict. Evidence from an evaluation of the effectiveness of community-based efforts to protect education in conflict is also provided.

The literature uncovered during the rapid review is a mix of grey and academic literature. There is very little concrete evidence and information on different types of interventions that support education in conflict rather than post-conflict contexts, and their effectiveness (Davies, 2009, p. 13; Thompson et al, 2014, p. 9). The literature engages with gender issues, and there is some reference to marginalised groups of children, such as children with disabilities.

Save the Children's experience delivering education in conflict resulted in **six principles** to underpin education interventions in conflict-affected contexts: i) community buy-in; ii) participation; iii) resources (physical and informational); iv) motivation; v) understanding; and vi) legal accountability.

An evaluation of **community engagement** in education in conflict-affected contexts found that effective support involves 12 steps, which include: i) coordinating and collaborating; ii) mapping and power analysis; iii) creating social cohesion; iv) identifying issues of concern to community-level stakeholders; v) creating wider ownership; vi) developing a plan; vii) monitoring, evaluating, and ensuring accountability; viii) carrying out a risk analysis; ix) allowing groups to organise themselves; x) capacity strengthening, awareness raising, and/or social behavioural change; xi) resourcing and implementing the plan; and xii) feeding back lessons learned to community groups.

**Challenges** to supporting education in conflict, including support for community engagement, include: i) lack of access and funding; ii) the need for long-term commitments of time and funding; iii) the need for a strong relationship of trust and a good understanding of context; iv) making sure that activities do not exacerbate discrimination or prejudices or endanger community members; v) high turnover in community education as a result of its voluntary nature; vi) teacher motivation and recruitment; vii) the politicisation of education; viii) sustainability; and ix) demonstration of impact.

In the different countries, support to education system resilience and education delivery has involved:

- **West Bank and Gaza:** creating a collective understanding of the value of education; giving students a sense of control and competence, and providing quality pedagogy and socio-emotional support; enabling relevant school level support from a mutually reinforcing network of empathetic staff, peers, and family members, with a sense of shared accountability; focusing on ensuring local relevance and flexibility; supporting teachers; and distance learning and remedial courses.
- **Côte d'Ivoire:** support from parents, civil servants, and rebel leaders controlling the area; negotiating with non-state armed groups and state armed forces; escorting children to school; setting up alternatives to formal education; and school reconstruction.
- **Afghanistan:** low profile support for community based education; providing supplies; training teachers; and working with the government to align community based education with the national education system.
- **Nepal:** support to education which is in line with rebel demands.
- **Syria:** support to school infrastructure; providing school supplies; supporting school clubs; a school feeding programme; investing in teacher training; developing a self-learning programme mirroring the national curriculum for children who cannot attend schools; working with local councils; providing psychosocial support for children and teachers; and negotiating with armed groups to leave schools.

## 2. Education system resilience and education service delivery during active conflict

### *Learning from Save the Children's work on education in conflict-affected countries*

An independent evaluation of Save the Children's work on education in conflict-affected countries shows how it has been possible to make quality improvements in education for children even in the most difficult and conflict-affected environments (Smith in Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. v). They succeeded in getting 1.6 million children into school from 2005 to 2010, and improved the quality of education for 10.6 million children (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. viii, ix-x). Girls enrolment was prioritised and increased (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. ix). Efforts to improve education in conflict included ensuring greater availability of schools by improving infrastructure, tackling the misuse of infrastructure, and using community based schools (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. ix). Alternatives to formal schooling were introduced in the form of Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. ix). ALPs are community-based classes provided for a range of vulnerable young people, including young mothers (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. ix). The quality of education was improved as a result of 'teacher numbers, teaching-learning relationships, teacher professionalism, a sense of belonging, security, and community buy-in' (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. xi, 17-21). A number of challenges related to teacher motivation and recruitment; raising achievement; cultures of violence; sustainability; supervision, training and understanding of teachers; language; and demonstrating impact (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. x-xi, 22-28).

The evaluation draws out six principles for practice which should underpin education interventions in conflict-affected contexts: i) community buy-in; ii) participation; iii) resources (physical and informational); iv) motivation; v) understanding; and vi) legal accountability (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. 29-33). It also found six features of effective teacher education and professional development in conflict-affected contexts, which include: i) experiential and participatory methods; ii) non-violent discipline; iii) running alps and similar non-formal programmes; iv) understanding children's capacities; v) learning to work with the community; and vi) sustainable training (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. 35). It is also important for teachers to receive adequate remuneration; follow-up support; supervision; and codes of conduct to follow (Davies and Naylor, 2012, p. 36). National policy support for the use of local language, and support for students with disabilities and other out of school children and young people is also important (Davies and Naylor, 2012, pp. 36-37).

### *The role of communities in supporting education during conflict*

A study commissioned by the Global Coalition to Protect Education From Attack (GCPEA) found that there is 'some evidence that involving local communities in initiatives to protect education makes these effort more effective' (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 5). This can be as a result of NGOs and communities compensating for lack of capacity from the government to protect education (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 5). Community engagement can also help promote the appearance of political neutrality, which enhances security, as it is less likely to make education institutions a target for attack (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 5). Communities may know and be able to negotiate with real and potential attackers more effectively than external actors (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 5). Involving communities also encourages a sense of ownership, which increases the likelihood of communities ensuring the protection of schools at a later date (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 5).

However, certain challenges and risks to a community-based approach to education exist (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6). Mobilising communities may take a long time and require long-term commitments by NGOs

and donors (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6). The short-term funding frameworks usual in emergencies are not conducive to this (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6). Community engagement requires a strong relationship of trust between external agencies and community members, and a good understanding of the local context by the external actors (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6). It is important to make sure that the activities do not exacerbate discrimination or prejudices existing within a community or endanger community members (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6). The voluntary nature of community involvement may lead to high turnover or lack of willingness to participate in the programme (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6). Some of these risks can be mitigated through thorough assessment and participation of community level stakeholders during the programme planning stages (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 6).

The study outlines 12 steps in the process of working with communities, and includes case studies where available for these steps. The steps may occur simultaneously or iteratively, and include: i) coordinating and collaborating; ii) mapping and power analysis; iii) creating social cohesion; iv) identifying issues of concern to community-level stakeholders; v) creating wider ownership; vi) developing a plan; vii) monitoring, evaluating, and ensuring accountability; viii) carrying out a risk analysis; ix) allowing groups to organise themselves; x) capacity strengthening, awareness raising, and/or social behavioural change; xi) resourcing and implementing the plan; and xii) feeding back lessons learned to community groups (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 10-22). It is also important to: staff the programme with staff who are neutral representatives of the population they will be working with; work with and through local NGO partners; engage children in the process; and adapt the programme to the context so that it does no harm (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 22).

### ***Dutch aid to education and conflict***

The Dutch are widely seen as playing an important role in the provision of aid to education in conflict (Cardozo and Novelli, 2010, p. 1). An evaluation of their approach finds that the qualities of Dutch aid which mean it has been able to play this role in providing support to education in conflict have been: i) flexibility in aid partnerships, which has resulted in multilateral and bilateral aid, and civil society partnerships in Afghanistan; ii) decentralised decision making leading to context specific approaches, which allowed the Pakistani programme to shift its support from the government to NGO programmes; iii) refraining from earmarked aid and flag planting, through support to multi-donor trust funds; iv) combining short term emergency relief and longer term capacity building; and v) searching for innovative strategies (Cardozo and Novelli, 2010, p. 33).

## **3. Country case studies**

### ***West Bank and Gaza***

An evaluation of UNRWA's schools found that their students outperformed students attending public schools in Palestine by a year's worth of learning (Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 1). The mixed methods study looked at the reasons for success of the UNRWA schools and found that this was achieved because of 'the way these schools recruit, prepare, and support teachers; because of instructional practices and pedagogy in the classroom; and because of school leadership, accountability, and mutual support' (Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 3). Parents were also more involved in UNRWA schools and the teachers were more confident in teaching the subjects, had higher job satisfaction, and ongoing professional development and training (Patrinos et al, 2014, pp. 3-4). The teachers are drawn from the same population and are accessible role models for their students (Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 11).

Five resilience supportive mechanisms in UNRWA schools include: 'i) students make sense of adversity and find purpose in education; (ii) school staff understand the challenges students face and model well-being and a positive identity; (iii) student competence in the face of adversity is sustained through academic guidance and socio-emotional support; (iv) partnerships are fostered across schools, families, and communities; and (v) accountability for learning and protection of students is shared and mutual' (Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 54). The UNRWA system helps foster resilience by collectively making sense of adversity and through a holistic vision of education as a meaningful purpose for Palestine refugees ((Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 54). The UNRWA experience suggests that it is important to understand education resilience as a process which may be assessed and then promoted by through strengths, capacities, and opportunities across school-family-community partnerships (Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 13).

The evaluation finds that the effective classroom practices of teachers; strong school leadership; assessments; shared accountability for learning; and support for the resilience strategies of students, teachers, and families, are important features for supporting education provision in adversity (Patrinos et al, 2014, p. 58).

Another World Bank evaluation also looked at education resilience approaches for Palestine refugees (ERA, 2013). The qualitative study also found that education resilience for Palestine refugee students came from: i) creating a collective understanding of the value of education in adversity (pp. 12-14); ii) setting education related goals and objectives to give students a sense of control and competence and create purpose, hope, and support for their motivation to study, as well as providing quality pedagogy and socio-emotional support (pp. 15-17); iii) enabling relevant school level support from a mutually reinforcing network of empathetic staff, peers, and family members, with a sense of shared accountability (pp. 17-22); and iv) UNRWA attempting to address the adversities students face, making education a priority, focusing on ensuring local relevance and flexibility, and supporting teachers (pp. 22-26). The early emergency education response needs to be integrated into longer term plans and policies (ERA, 2013, p. 27). A school-community partnership is important for supporting the learning, socio-emotional, and safety needs of children (ERA, 2013, p. 27).

### **Distance Remedial Education Project (DREP)**

In Hebron, the Palestinian community mobilised itself, with UNICEF support, to ensure children got access to basic education during the second Intifada which had resulted in damaged schools and thousands of lost school days (Sultana, 2006, p. 49, 53). They did this mainly through the development of the Distance Remedial Education Project (DREP) (Sultana, 2006, p. 49). Television campaigns were used to encourage children to attend school; students from economically vulnerable families were provided with school bags and had their fees waived (Sultana, 2006, p. 59). The community was mobilised to ensure resources went to the education effort and USD 150,000 was collected in a few weeks, while homes and mosques were offered as schools (Sultana, 2006, p. 59).

Three separate but linked committees were set up in the Directorate of Education in Hebron made up of education supervisors, subject specialists, head teachers, teachers and parents (Sultana, 2006, p. 60). They were responsible for DREP which was made up of: the remedial self-learning worksheets; the remedial after-school programme; and remedial lessons on TV initiative (Sultans, 2006, p. 60). UNICEF provided financial support with a grant of USD 50 000, and technical support for the design and development of the project and materials (Sultana, 2006, pp. 60-61).

The self-working worksheets seem to have been well-received by students and parents (Sultana, 2006, p. 64). There was also a lot of enthusiasm for the remedial education programme from heads, teachers, parents and students (Sultana, 2006, p. 67). However, feedback about the television programmes was less

enthusiastic as they were found to be less engaging (Sultana, 2006, p. 69). Students attained the minimal competencies expected at their grade level and the great majority remained engaged with the school cycle (Sultana, 2006, p. 49, 71). The programme was also felt to have been a source of professional development for teachers as they worked innovatively and creatively, with a new understanding of how children could learn (Sultana, 2006, p. 72). DREP also reinforced and increased the trust parents had in the Education Directorate (Sultana, 20006, p. 73).

### ***Côte d'Ivoire: education delivery in rebel controlled areas***

When rebels took control of northern Côte d'Ivoire in late 2002, they were not interested in administrating basic services (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 4). President Gbagbo issued an ultimatum to civil servants in rebel controlled territory: leave, or be considered traitors (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 4). However, after a few months, primary and secondary schools re-opened throughout the north, staffed with 'volunteers' and financially supported by parents (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 4).

The impetus to reopen schools came from civil servants who had remained despite the president's ultimatum and parents who wanted to ensure their children's education (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 4). However, the rebel leaders also saw an advantage to their image by providing minimal and inexpensive coordination among well-intentioned volunteers and parents raising funds at the neighbourhood level (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 5). This also enabled them to set up a state-like administration in charge of primary and secondary education (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 5). The skilled volunteers were people who had often been previously marginalised by the state (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 5). However, the new institutions were not inclusive as many gaps were filled by those close to the rebels, and accountability and transparency were lacking in the new system (Guichaoua and Lomax, 2013, p. 5).

Attacks on schools continued during the ongoing crisis during 2010-11 but communities have played a role in protecting education by 'engaging in negotiations with non-state armed groups and state armed forces, escorting children to school, setting up alternatives to formal education, and participating in school reconstruction' (Thompson et al, 2014, pp. 25-31). Other activities included: using SMS to monitor student well-being and send warnings and monitoring, reporting and advocacy around attacks (Thompson et al, 2014, pp. 28-29). Some of the most significant ways in which communities act to protect education (e.g. escorting students, using SMS for warning, and negotiating with armed groups) have been independent of external involvement (Thompson et al, 2014, p. 29).

Research carried out on behalf of the GCPEA looked at examples where the steps of community collaboration were taken effectively, with positive outcomes, as well as examples where steps were missed, with negative consequences (Thompson et al, 2014, pp. 31-37). Challenges included: one model of response does not fit all contexts and the response must be sensitive to cultural differences and local tensions; the ethnic and cultural divisions involved in the conflict may be reflected in the staff and communities and cause tensions between the education structure and the community; language barriers; low literacy rates makes relying on written forms of communication difficult; communities may be unwilling to volunteer and donate over a long period of time; the short-term nature of donor is often incompatible with effective local-level collaboration; communities may be opposed to specific aspects of education; and inadequate and ineffective feedback mechanisms eroding trust (Thompson et al, 2014, pp. 37-38).

## ***Afghanistan***

In Afghanistan, there have been attacks against schools, teachers, and students during the ongoing conflict (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 205). Education programming has to deal with insecurity caused by the conflict, and with the religious and cultural attitudes of some groups hostile to modern secular education in general and to female education in particular (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 209). Girls' schools, and schools associated with the government and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were attacked more frequently than community-based education programmes (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 210).

Schools and education programmes that were owned and driven by the local community from the beginning 'fared considerably better than externally developed initiatives with limited community buy-in' (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 210). The Ministry of Education has sought to increase community involvement in schooling projects and to minimise or downplay the involvement of PRTs in some areas (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 212). However, it also wants to see aid resources directed towards official schools to 'fulfil the fundamental state service of providing for the educational needs of the people, as well as to reinforce an image of order and authority' (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 212).

As a result of the increased threats on government schools, aid agencies have prioritised community-based schools, although there are worries about how they will be integrated into the national education system (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 213, 214). They represent a small percentage of total schools, but have the advantage in insecure environments of needing no investment in infrastructure, as schooling takes place in homes or mosques (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 213). The community tends to identify the teachers they want and local support to the school is provided by school management committees (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 213). External agency support to these schools involves re-supplying textbooks and stationery to the schools, and providing on-going training for the teachers and school management committees (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 213). NGOs have worked with the ministry to: ensure that community based schools reflect the education curricula; supply education department textbooks; and attempt to include community-based school teachers on the ministry's teacher payroll (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 214).

Gaining broad community consent and support for the school is important for its sustainability (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 213). It has the potential to allow for advance warning when attacks are likely (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 213). Low-profile support from NGOs has helped them successfully implement community-based education programmes (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 214). This involves removing organisational branding from office buildings, vehicles, residences and individual staff members (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 214). There is a heavy reliance on local staff who tend to sanitise anything that might link them to their employer (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 214). Trainers also engage in subterfuge to reach the schools safely (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 214). Local communities in south-eastern Afghanistan have contributed to funding a local bus to transport their children to school rather than the government bus, as they feel it is safer (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 214).

Being perceived as neutral and impartial, which is important for ensuring access and operational security, is becoming harder as the education sector is seen as an extension of the state (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 215). Monitoring the quality of education support programmes is hard because security requirements mean very few international staff visit project sites (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 216). Risks have been transferred to local aid workers (Harmer et al, 2011, p. 216).

### ***Nepal: education delivery in rebel controlled areas***

The Education for All (EFA) project in Nepal<sup>1</sup> was developed and implemented with government officials in the midst of serious armed conflict between government forces and Maoists (Berry, 2009, p. 3). Despite only between 10 and 20 per cent of Nepal's territory being in government control, net primary enrolment rose from 84.2 per cent to 86.8 percent and for girls from 78 per cent to 86.8 per cent (Berry, 2009, p. 4). Trained teachers increased from 38 per cent to 45 per cent and there was an increase in school retention rates to grade 5 (from 76.2 per cent to 79.1 per cent) (Berry, 2009, p. 4).

While schools got caught in the crossfire, there was no attempt to stop or change education through violence by the Maoists (Vaux et al, 2006, p. 29). The theory behind the EFA programme was to reduce exclusion, which was also a significant part of the Maoist agenda (Vaux et al, 2006, p. 29). The scholarships for the marginalised *dalit* people and poorer girls are in the interests of important Maoist constituencies (Vaux et al, 2006, p. 29). The EFA's work on the curriculum resulted in the elimination of provocative elements that existed in the past (Vaux et al, 2006, p. 29). Education was actually a major source of income for Maoists as they imposed a tax on teachers and the management of private schools (Vaux et al, 2006, p. 29).

### ***Syria***

During the ongoing conflict in Syria there have been a number of initiatives to support education delivery, about which limited information is available. One initiative is the No Lost Generation Initiative (NLGI)<sup>2</sup> (Save the Children, 2014, p. 3). It was launched in October 2013 by a group of governments, donors, UN and international agencies and non-governmental organisations and is active in Syria and the neighbouring refugee hosting countries (Save the Children, 2014, p. 3). In the 2013/2014 school year, it has increased enrolment in Syria by around 440,000 to 3.68 million<sup>3</sup>. The increase in enrolment was achieved through support to school infrastructure; providing school supplies; supporting school clubs; a school feeding programme; investing in teacher training; and developing a self-learning programme mirroring the national curriculum for children who cannot attend schools (NLGI, 2014, p. 3). However, the education component of NLGI is significantly underfunded and only 29 per cent of required funding has been received (in Syria, only 23 per cent has been received) (Save the Children, 2014, p. 4; NLGI, 2014, p. 11).

Save the Children and its partners have been supporting 53 schools in three governorates in northern Syria, (Save the Children, 2014, p. 6). Save the Children works with each area's local council before beginning education activities in order to identify a safe and protected location for the school (Save the Children, 2014, p. 10, 14). Working closely with the community is especially important in northern Syria where 'most areas are currently controlled by armed opposition groups, the Ministry of Education is no longer functioning, and there has been an erosion of traditional governance bodies with which Save the Children would normally engage' (Save the Children, 2014, pp. 14-16). While the local councils provide some of the 'most effective governance structures' for education provision in northern Syria, they often lack the capacity to deliver quality education to all the children who need it (Save the Children, 2014, p. 16).

Other initiatives include People in Need (PIN) which works with local councils in both in Aleppo and Idlib areas to select 'Temporary Learning Spaces', spaces safe enough to restart education activities (Burbach,

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<sup>1</sup> Funding came from FINIDA, DANIDA, NORAD, DFID, and the World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/No\\_Lost\\_Generation\\_Strategic\\_Overview\\_\\_January\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/No_Lost_Generation_Strategic_Overview__January_2014.pdf), <http://childrenofsyria.info/> and <http://nolostgeneration.org/>

<sup>3</sup> The situation today: <http://nolostgeneration.org/situationtoday>

2014, p. 12). Not working with political or religious actors but with the local civil administrations has helped gain local acceptance for PIN activities (Burbach, 2014, p. 35). Due to the volatile situation in the areas it works in, PIN does not address the curriculum as it is a very sensitive issue for the different political and/or religious actors in the area (Burbach, 2014, p. 35). The Syria Child Protection Network (SCPN) has also established local community educational centres that are operated by community members (Burbach, 2014, p. 12). SCPN designed an accelerated curriculum that covers basic subjects and adapted it to the needs of the community (Burbach, 2014, p. 36). At the recommendations of local community members, sometimes parts of the curriculum were removed that were related to political conflict (Burbach, 2014, p. 36). SCPN has also helped coordinate the removal of some armed groups from schools and helped find alternative accommodation for displaced people sheltering in schools (Burbach, 2014, p. 19).

News reports also suggest that there have been attempt to provide education in opposition held areas, including the Kurdish cantons of Rojava (Kobanê, Efrîn and Cizîrê)<sup>4</sup>; and the rebel-held Latakia countryside<sup>5</sup>, although information is limited.

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<sup>4</sup> Education in Rojava: 'academy and pluralistic' versus 'university and monism': <http://www.diclehaber.com/en/news/content/view/439551?from=872396949>

<sup>5</sup> Teaching Revolution: Education in Wartime Syria: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/05/01/teaching-revolution-education-in-wartime-syria>

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## Key websites

- Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA):  
<http://www.protectingeducation.org/who-we-are>
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE): <http://www.ineesite.org/en/>
- SABER-ERA (Education Resilience Approaches):  
<http://saber.worldbank.org/index.cfm?indx=8&tb=14>

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## **About this report**

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