

## **Mobilizing political leadership for education in emergencies and protracted crises**

### **A joint statement of concern and commitment from the International Parliamentary Network for Education & Education Cannot Wait**

COVID-19 has upended our world, threatening our health, destroying economies and livelihoods, and deepening poverty and inequalities.

It also created the single largest disruption to education systems that the world has ever seen, depriving over 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries the opportunity to go to school.

School closures have exacerbated the existing learning crisis in which more than half of children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read or understand a simple text by the age of ten.

Schools also play a critical role in ensuring the delivery of essential health services and nutritious meals, protection, and psycho-social support, which means that their closure has imperiled children's overall wellbeing and development, not just their learning.

#### **Cumulative crises threaten educational progress**

At the same time conflicts continue to rage and the disastrous effects of a changing climate – famine, floods, droughts, fires, and extreme heat – threaten our very existence and are driving record levels of displacement.

128 million children and young people whose education was already disrupted by conflict and crises have been doubly hit by COVID-19, with the pandemic creating a 'crisis upon a crisis'.

For these children - among the most marginalized in the world - their right to a safe, quality education is in peril.

The exclusion of these children from learning stands in stark contrast to the priority that crisis-affected communities place on education.

They and their communities know that education transforms lives, paving the way to better work, health and livelihoods. Moreover, in times of crisis, education can be a life-saver. Continuing education in a safe place provides a sense of normality, safety, and routine for children and young people whilst building the foundations for peace, recovery, and long-term development among future generations.

Out of school, children are easy targets of abuse, exploitation, and recruitment by armed forces and groups.

They tell us their education cannot wait.

### **Breaking the cycle of crisis**

Equipped with the skills and knowledge that come with a quality education, crisis-affected children and young people will be better equipped to navigate the threat of disease and climate change and to foster peaceful solutions to reduce the likelihood of future conflicts.

A quality education will also enable them to seize economic opportunities and secure a decent livelihood when they grow up. With a quality education, children caught up in crises will become the doctors, teachers, architects, and engineers that their countries need to build for the future.

### **A shared commitment**

In the face of a growing range of threats to education for crisis-affected children and young people, the power of education has never been clearer. In response, ECW, the UN global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, and IPNEd, the international network of parliamentarians working to achieve SDG 4, renew our shared commitment “to inclusive and equitable quality education for all” and to ensuring that every child can exercise their right to education.

We affirm our responsibility to inspire political understanding and commitment so that education is viewed by both governments and funders as a top priority during crises.

We commit to growing and mobilizing the political leadership necessary to ensure that children in crisis have access to quality education.

We will work together to support parliamentarians in their roles as representatives, advocates, legislators, budget shapers, and as providers of scrutiny to accelerate the delivery of properly funded, high-quality, and inclusive education systems in emergencies and protracted crises.

### **A focus on financing**

Acknowledging that a persistent and central challenge is a lack of adequate financing for EiEPC, a priority will be mobilising political support to close the funding gap for education in emergencies.

We will work to increase the volume, predictability and effectiveness of international aid to education including by encouraging governments to:

- meet the benchmark of 0.7% of GNI for official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries;
- increase the share of ODA to education as a percentage of total ODA to at least 15 percent;
- increase the percentage of humanitarian aid for education to at least 10 percent;
- support ECW to mobilize at least **one billion USD** for its next strategic cycle.

Acknowledging the specific role that ECW has in increasing and improving the quality of support for education in emergencies we will mobilize political support for ECW-facilitated Multi-Year Resilience Programmes to bridge the current in-country financing gap of **2.7 billion USD**.

### **Leaving no one behind**

We commit to supporting parliamentarians to focus on interventions that are proven to improve educational access and outcomes for the most marginalized children, including girls, children with disabilities, refugees, and internally displaced persons.

### **Addressing the causes of conflict and crises**

We will explore the impact of armed conflict, instability, climate-related disasters, forced displacement, and other protracted crises on education to grow knowledge,

understanding, and commitment among parliamentarians in order to tackle the root causes of the education crisis.

### **Amplifying the voice of those affected**

We will support communities affected by humanitarian crises to engage with political leaders, amplifying the voice, needs, and experience of crisis-affected communities, learners, and teachers.

We will foster a community of practice between parliamentarians and experts in education in emergencies policy and practice, including local and national civil society organizations and youth networks.

We will also support parliamentary advocacy and leadership on a range of related issues, including protecting education from attack, the specific needs of refugees and stateless persons, and the importance of school health and nutrition in emergencies.

We recognize more than ever the urgency to recruit and support a network of parliamentary champions for education in emergencies across donor countries and countries affected by conflict and crisis, in order to mobilize the political leadership that is required to ensure the delivery and funding of high-quality and inclusive education systems for all children affected by crises.