



Broken Promises, Displaced Afghan Girls

Over 2016, more than 600,000 people were newly displaced in Afghanistan; half of whom were boys and girls. More than 50 per cent of these displaced children and youth are estimated to be out-of-school. Education must now be acknowledged as a humanitarian priority in Afghanistan that warrants a coordinated and well-resourced response.

Education in Emergencies

Every girl and boy has a right to education, even in emergencies. In 2016, intensifying conflict in Afghanistan led more than 620,000 people to flee their homes, which was compounded by a large-scale, spontaneous return of more than 600,000 Afghan refugees from Pakistan. Over half of all internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and returnees are children or youths, and a large number of them are out-of-school. Research¹ indicates they are not attending school for three main reasons: lack of capacity of schools to absorb additional students (lack of appropriate learning spaces and materials), lack of required documentation (including birth certificates, and previous school records) to enrol in schools, and inability of families to afford school-related costs, and the domestic labour pressures this generates.

Education is not just a human right; in emergencies it provides life-saving and life-sustaining physical,

psychosocial and cognitive protection for displaced children. Education mitigates the psychosocial impact of forced displacement by offering a sense of normalcy, stability and structure as children face uncertainty. It also protects them from exploitation and harm, providing essential knowledge and skills to survive. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Afghanistan has provided education in emergencies (EiE) in some of the most conflict-affected provinces of the country since 2006. During 2016, NRC supported about 80,000 internally displaced persons, refugee and returnee boys and girls in Afghanistan with primary education in the conflict-affected provinces of Faryab, Kandahar, Khost, Kunar and Nangarhar, Kunduz, and Sar-e Pul Provinces. But this is a drop in an ocean of need, as funding is limited.

Education as Casualty

Afghanistan's education system is overwhelmed, particularly due to the increased displacement. The

¹ Research and assessments by NRC (May 2016), an inter-agency assessment (driven by UN OCHA and NRC) in September 2016, and Save the Children in November 2016

Afghan Ministry of Education's (MoE) data indicates that most schools are already overcrowded and insufficiently resourced: the average student to teacher ratio is 42; 45% of existing schools do not have adequate buildings and facilities; 42,800 additional teaching and 10,700 non-teaching staff are needed to meet demands; and textbooks and learning materials are limited. Over three million children are still out-of-school; 75% are girls.

Moreover, education is increasingly a casualty of the conflict, despite significant gains since 2001. **Afghanistan endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration in 2015, committing to protecting education from military use and attacks.** But the Declaration is yet to be operationalised, and respected. MoE estimates insecurity has closed over 1,000 schools.

NRC is concerned that education is no longer acknowledged as an essential component of the humanitarian response in Afghanistan, and consequently displaced girls and boys are denied their right to education. After the MoE was strengthened and the Afghan government took primary responsibility for basic service provision, the Education Cluster in Afghanistan was phased out. However, as humanitarian emergencies have proliferated, the humanitarian funding to education in emergencies has decreased from \$6.2M in 2012, to \$2.5M in 2013, and eventually to \$2.1M in 2016. Whilst education in emergencies was previously included under Child Protection in the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Afghanistan (the main fundraising document), it is now excluded this year. This must be redressed.

Broken Promises

"They broke their promise to Afghan girls," NRC Secretary-General, Jan Egeland stated at the time of the October 2016 Brussels Conference for

Afghanistan. "We spent hundreds of billions of dollars on military operations in Afghanistan. Now, we cannot run away from our responsibilities towards families displaced by this unsuccessful war. Seeing Afghan girls deprived of an education because there now is no money should make politicians ashamed of their priorities."

UN OCHA Director John Ging stated during the New York 2013 *Education Cannot Wait* (ECW) conference that "Education is a compelling priority, but sadly the mobilization of resources is not following that priority. We are not even asking for the right amount of money." **NRC recommends at least 4% of humanitarian response funds are allocated for Education in Emergencies (EiE).** The 2017 Afghanistan HRP requests \$535 million, excluding EiE.

- **Recommendation:** Afghanistan's EiE Working Group is strengthened, for resource mobilisation, technical standards and coordination
- **Recommendation:** An *EiE Response Plan* of at least \$21M is annexed to HRP 2017 and integrated into the Ministry of Education's National Education Strategic Plan (NESP).
- **Recommendation:** All stakeholders reinforce their commitments to the *Oslo Safe Schools Declaration* in Afghanistan, with appropriate protection advocacy.
- **Recommendation:** Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Fund considers Afghanistan as a country targeted for future instalments

Links to other relevant information:

NRC Afghanistan: www.nrc.no/countries/asia/afghanistan

Oslo Safe Schools Declaration 2015: www.protectingeducation.org/guidelines/support

Contact: info@nrc.no