

European Humanitarian Forum

Forum humanitaire européen



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European Humanitarian Forum

Education in Emergencies: stepping up international engagement

22 March 2022, 09:00-10:45 CET

Panelists:

- **Young leaders:** *Anojitha Sivaskaran*, Sri Lanka; *Fatimah*, Syria; *Magartu*, Kenya.
- **Panellists:** *Augusto Santos Silva*, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Portugal; *Gordon Brown*, UN Special Envoy for Global Education; *Margarita Focas Licht*, acting Deputy CEO of the Global Partnership for Education; *Inger Ashing*, CEO of Save the Children; *Yasmine Sherif*, Director of Education Cannot Wait; *Geert Cappelaere*, UNICEF Representative for European Union Institutions; *Sameera Noori*, Education Programme Manager in Citizens Organization for Advocacy and Resilience.
- **Interventions from the floor:** *Kelly Clements*, UNHCR; *Serap Altinisik*, Plan International; *Nevena Valentinova Saykova*, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack; *Margaret Nguhi*, Humanity and Inclusion; *Yannick Du Pont*, SPARK; *Annelies Claessens*, War Child; *Mahieddine Khelladi*, Secours Islamique France.

Executive Summary:

The panel discussed the **importance of stepping up engagement and increased support** to Education in Emergencies, against a background of increasing challenges (e.g. COVID-19, conflicts, unprecedented levels of child displacement, attacks on education, increased learning deficit, dropout rates, and inequalities). Testimonies from young leaders highlighted the need for infrastructure, equipment and technology, but also protection and support for mental health.

Education has long been “in a state of emergency” with millions of children deprived of the basic right to access education and others at the risk of dropping out of learning. COVID-19 exacerbated the negative trends and provoked **world-wide learning crisis**. The school closures have had a significant impact on nutrition, with many children relying on school feeding to provide sometimes their only meal of the day. Some crises and conflict, such as the one in Afghanistan and the war in Ukraine, have demonstrated again how the right of children to education is in danger in every emergency, and how the risk of poverty, violence and abuse increases, especially for girls. At the same time, participants welcome the dramatic **increase in awareness** of the importance of this topic.

The panel took stock of needs, highlighted that **education is the foundation to build the future**, an investment in humanity itself and noted DG ECHO’s 10% commitment. **Political support** – through such commitments, but also for example the Safe Schools Declaration - is essential.

Several interventions called for **significant investment into education, with multi-year commitments** and importance of efficiency, addressing longer-term reforms and **strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus**. It was noted that EiE funding should not be an afterthought in crises – instead, anticipatory action (e.g. forecasting, pre-agreed funding) is important. The panel suggested **additional considerations** which are essential to address the needs, such as **building resilience**, the **role of education in peace building**, and **innovative approaches** (but it was noted that nothing can replace in person learning). It is important that different vulnerable groups, including girls and children with disabilities, receive a **tailored response**. There is an important role for **local authorities and responders** and coordination should be enhanced to ensure better rapid response at international level.

An agile and flexible response is needed, tailored to the needs and promoting a whole of child approach, combining learning with protection, safeguarding and well-being.

A dedicated DG ECHO event in autumn 2022 will allow for further debate and discussion on this important topic.