
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Addressing the impact
of armed conflict
on children's education



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Introduction

Education is very important to society, and essential for children. It teaches them critical skills that they can use throughout their professional and personal lives. The impact of armed conflict on education is detrimental. It completely disrupts their education and prevents them from developing, as well as creating crucial social connections with other children. The modern education that we know today was first started in the 18th century, where children sit in classrooms, listening to teachers about different subjects. However, we must note that these are not the only forms of education that children can receive. Children may be taught certain values and 'correct' ways of acting by attending religious ceremonies (Christianity in the church through the bible, Islam through the Quran and more religions). Children can also learn important aspects of life and their own characters through human interaction and a social life. This is majorly impacted by armed conflicts, as children are far less likely to leave their houses. Other forms of education other than the classic concept of school are extra-curricular activities such as sports and creating art in any form. The children that are caught up in these conflicts have no manner of escaping and depend on various factors and situations for life. They do not have access to any education anymore and are isolated from the world.

UNESCO must tackle this problem as they are the United Nations (UN) organisation responsible for the education of young children. It is vital to support these children especially as they are the future generation, responsible for managing the world.

Definition of Key Terms

Education

The understanding of new concepts and ideas through various means such as social interactions, teaching and learning.

Armed Conflict

The use of armed forces from two parties, such as two governments, in order to contest over territory. In the context of this research report we will discuss what the impact of armed conflict is on children.

Refugee

A person that has left their country of origin forcefully because of factors such as natural disasters, conflicts (armed or unarmed) or persecution. According to UNICEF, around 41% of the world's refugees in 2022 were children.

Children

The definition of Children according to UNICEF is Every human being below the age of 18 unless the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

General Overview

Armed conflict has many negative short- and long-lasting impacts on the health and wellbeing of children. The effect on education is immense, as the lives of children are completely disrupted. Children may need to flee their countries of origin and have to reside in another country permanently. Many health experts have warned that the effects of experiencing conflict at a young age has irreversible effects and brings trauma to the children. It can prevent and hinder them from learning essential skills and building up a social network. There are many examples of such armed conflicts, in many different regions across the world which have devastating effects on the education of children.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) are goals that were set out by the United Nations member states in Paris 2015. They aim to promote a world without suffering by 2030. The world is

certainly not on track to reaching these goals, as issues such as no Poverty, Zero Hunger, Quality Education and Clean Water are not being met. If we look closer at SDG 4, quality education, we can see that one of the United Nations' main goals is to provide all people in this world with an ability to educate themselves. Due to the ongoing armed conflicts in many regions of the world in 2023, such as in Ukraine, Palestine-Israel, Syria, etc, the availability of education, not even quality education, is being disregarded. A larger emphasis needs to be placed on achieving these goals by 2030.



Impacts of armed conflicts on children

Armed conflicts have the ability to destroy the lives of many children and even lead to the death of others. According to UNICEF, many children are exploited by their own nations with them being used as child-soldiers or in factories. The experience of war and death at a young age can lead

to severe trauma for a child. This has life-long effects on them, and it is something that they will carry with them for their lives. This has the possibility of preventing the children from openly expressing their emotions. It will affect their relationships with other children and in the future with friends. This is a strand of education which is seen as extremely important, being able to learn and adapt character traits through social interactions.



The conflicts that arise also force some children to flee their countries of origin. They risk their lives fleeing in overpacked refugee boats, and once they have reached their destination they have to face the possibility of being deported back without any support. These children who are affected by armed conflicts are not only unable to create social connections, but their schooling is shut down and they are unable to follow their religious traditions.

Armed conflict and education

The children that live in lands with armed conflicts do not have access to education. Their school educations are disrupted and closed down, whilst their social and religious educations are heavily restricted. They need to live with the fear of danger and being subject to heavy amounts of violence. They do not have a choice but to try and flee to other nations as they don't receive much support from the international community.

It is therefore extremely essential to protect the children that are caught up in conflicts, and to give them the option of staying in their homes while still being secure in terms of education.

Major Parties Involved

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Aims to protect children and provide them with the human rights they are entitled to, including education. UNICEF has and continues to fund projects that explore different methods of providing education and stability to children in crisis and war. These projects focus on sustaining a lifestyle that will allow a child to develop and pursue their potential as well as ensuring their safety and access to community and education.

Sahel Region (Northern Africa)

This region of the world has the lowest education and literacy rate. This is an indicator of the countries' developments and the support they get to sustain and support school children. This region is also most subject to crisis and conflicts as they are often less economically developed and often exploited for their natural resources. As a result of these factors, children are not able to be provided with quality and consistent education that aids them in becoming valuable members of society and change the nature of the regions. This access is especially challenged during these crises as the countries may not have financial support, willingness, or resources to do so.

United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO uses global and regional leadership to ensure the access to education for all. The organization brings together stakeholders to support projects and agendas to create equitable opportunities for all persons to be educated sufficiently, thoroughly, and consistently. They strengthen education systems, making sure that the content is appropriate and beneficial. They also focus on creating new approaches to education combining international cooperation, standard setting, and capacity building.

International Bureau of Education

The International Bureau of Education. Responsible for school curriculums, holds a large power in determining the future of children in schools. Education must be of high quality for students to be able to become self-sufficient and successful. The IBE is able to provide technical support and expertise to enhance education and ensure its presence even during times of crisis and extreme

hardship, they are a big factor in ensuring alternative education methods, that would be employed during crisis, still meet standard to enrich the children.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan has faced significant crises, wars, and armed conflict in the last decade. As a result of this their education has been severely affected, especially considering that the conflict was partially surrounding women's roles in society and their opportunities suffered as a result. Factors such as attacks on schools, limited infrastructure, removal of teachers and students, drafting of students and security concerns continue to impede access to education.

Syria and Yemen

Syria and Yemen have been in a state of civil war for around a decade. Both nations have had armed clashes between different groups in their respective nations which has led to children having to flee and schools being temporarily shut. Similarly to Afghanistan, there have been attacks on schools and targeting civilian infrastructure. The conflict has led to children's social lives to be virtually non-existent.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
1925	International Bureau of Education Founded
1949	Geneva Convention IV on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War
1989	United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child
2001	War in Afghanistan Begins
2014	Russo-Ukrainian War Begins
2015	Safe Schools Declaration
2019	Covid -19 Crisis Begins
2021	War in Afghanistan Ends

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has been heavily involved in supporting children and their right to education.

- Security Council Condemns attacks against schools and any other educational facilities, on 29 October 2021, [S/Res/2601]
- Resolution adopted by the general assembly 30 January 1998 fifty-second session
- UNICEF Addressing the learning crisis *An urgent need to better financial education for the poorest children 2020*
- UNICEF Education, Children on the Move and Inclusion in Education, February 2020
- UN Convention on the Rights of a Child, 20 November 1989, [GA/RES/44/25]
- UNHCR Ensuring Access to Education Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas, 2011
- UNICEF Education Under Threat in West and Central Africa, 2019

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Temporary social infrastructure through external educational committees

Sheltering children in and away from school could reduce their exposure to violence and terror, limiting the ways in which their brains are affected by the trauma of these events. Making sure that they can continue living their lives as they are used to, with supportive communities and social practices such as religious, family and school events, significantly helps children to continue to develop in the healthiest, most beneficial way. This could be sustained through the help of external vocational educators and community organizers provided by NGOs that keep families together and allow children to exercise their culture, social and motor skills, and make sure they are able to grow up as “normal” kids. This is extremely important as an increase in children “giving up” and losing hope at a young age is extremely detrimental to both the health of children and the development of society. Community is extremely important, and large gaps in education are very difficult to overcome.

Starlink Internet

Space X's Starlink Internet is a high-speed, low-latency satellite internet infrastructure. The Ukrainian government has invested in this tool, which is critical to maintaining education during the Russo-Ukrainian War. This internet allows students to access constantly updated online resources without the use of a wifi network, which is a great advantage for those who are constantly on the move, being displaced by attacks and a need to get to safety. This internet system also enables students to connect to the internet at high altitudes, such as mountain shelters, and low signal locations, such as underground hiding places. Implementing this solution in other conflicts would be extremely beneficial as it would ensure that students are not learning outdated content and they can keep up and develop with the rest of society.

Possible Solutions

Possible solutions to the impact of armed conflict on children's education may include firstly to put an end to conflicts in the world. This solution is of course extremely difficult and unlikely as armed conflicts exist in many areas and different capacities. However, putting an end or at least pledging to put an end to these armed conflicts will benefit children and their education heavily. Another solution which can be explored is to enforce heavy sanctions against any nation that does not comply with the Fourth Geneva Convention. Any nation that violates these laws concerning what may and may not be targeted during a conflict must be sanctioned and isolated. Both of these solutions are very unlikely to actually have an effect, as it is difficult to monitor what occurs throughout a war. Additionally, if the offenders are larger nations, this solution will be less effective.

One solution that may be plausible but quite expensive is setting up schooling and social areas in underground bunkers that are not susceptible to bombings. These could be placed in strategic locations where it is unlikely they will be targeted. The cons of this solution is that children will have to spend hours on end in underground bunkers, with no other connections than those who are with them, making them practically isolated.

The Starlink Internet initiative by SpaceX could be implemented into other areas which are affected by armed conflict. These areas would need to be updated and discussed every few weeks by the United Nations in order to be effective. An improvement in the technological capabilities of these servers would allow them to be used globally for online schooling in case of conflicts. Lesser

developed nations would need some support in funding for these servers. Additionally, in order to prevent any biases and power manipulation by governments such as the United States of America through SpaceX, the initiative must be transparent. This could be useful to support children in the Sudanese conflict currently.

Other solutions to reducing the impact of armed conflict on children's education are to raise awareness about the negative impacts and educate the global community about the dangers that it may have on the development of children. Raising awareness and educating may not reduce the level of armed conflicts that occur in the world, but it may increase the willingness of people in more fortunate situations to aid the affected children through donations or shelter. An example where this was effective is the taking in of Ukrainian refugees across the European Union.

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