

ECOSOC HAS

Summary of “Protecting Education in Emergencies” side-event

Hosted by UNICEF, Save the Children and Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)

Moderator

Dermot Carty, UNICEF, Deputy Director, EMOPS

Panellists

Mr. Desmond Bermingham, Global Director of Education, Save the Children

Ms. Ita Sheehy, Senior Education Officer, UNHCR

Mr. Kishore Singh, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for DRR

Summary

The right to education is a right that children do not forfeit when emergencies strike and one that must be protected for children at all times. Education is an essential component of any comprehensive humanitarian response, and identified as a priority by children, youth, parents and communities. Educational services provide safe spaces as well as information and skills that protect, sustain and save lives while bolstering resilience and promoting preparedness and recovery.

In recent years, the expanding community of practice has strengthened standards, surge capacity and increased access to quality education in both man-made and natural disasters. Through improved humanitarian responses, capacity building initiatives and coordination, we are better meeting the needs of refugees and displaced and other conflict-affected children and youth. More and more, states are recognizing the important role education plays in establishing a sense of normalcy after emergencies and restoring hope in the future.

Despite these advancements, the commitment to the right to education in emergencies needs to be better engrained in humanitarian practice and response. Children, youth, parents and communities consistently prioritize education. Humanitarian principles dictate we collectively take action to meet these demands, ensuring accountability be taken seriously. We must respond to the priorities of communities; yet education continues to face significant challenges as part of a humanitarian response. Globally, education accounts for less than 2 percent of humanitarian aid. No sector has a smaller share of humanitarian appeals funded: just 38 per cent of aid requests for education are met, which is only around half of the average for other sectors.

Outcomes

The argument for including education in all humanitarian responses has become more prominent. The international human rights obligation to ensure the right to education is provided in emergency situations lies with all those supporting response in humanitarian contexts. Education needs greater support by donors, governments, INGOs and UN agencies to enable local and international mechanisms to support the rapid provision of quality education in all phases of emergency response, to all affected populations (including refugees, the internally displaced, and asylum seekers).

This side-event discussed how the humanitarian community, together with key education partners and the Education Cluster, can take practical steps to uphold the right to education in emergencies, drawing upon examples from Afghanistan, the Philippines and other countries. All participants underscored the importance of education in emergency situations and the need to take greater steps to protect it, and used the 2010 General Assembly Resolution on Education in Emergencies as an important reference point to monitor international obligations. Participants also recognized the need to maximize education's ability to contribute to preparedness, risk reduction and community based responses to save lives and increase resilience. Concern was expressed, particularly by donor states, on the exclusion of education from humanitarian appeals. There was a call to promote integrated services and recognition that schools provide an excellent point of integrated service delivery (feeding/nutrition, water, sanitation and child protection in particular).