

POLICY OUTLOOK



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EDUCATION'S HARDEST TEST: SCALING UP AID IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Children living in countries affected by conflict, fragility,¹ or emergencies are less likely to enrol, continually participate, and complete their basic schooling than their peers living in more stable countries. In these contexts, there may be few operational schools and inadequate government funding for education, and teachers and education officials may have limited capacity and few training opportunities. Conflicts and emergencies in particular can have wide-ranging impacts on education, from disruption of regular school schedules and destruction of learning materials and schools to the displacement and death of students, teachers and parents.

Thus far, however, donors have failed to provide sufficient resources and support to the education of children and youth in these fragile and conflict-affected states. This Policy Outlook outlines seven challenges that need to be addressed and recommendations for a way forward for donors and the international community:

1. **Providing sufficient resources** – overall aid for basic education needs to significantly increase to meet the estimated US\$16 billion financing required annually and at least 50 percent of all basic education aid should be committed to and disbursed in countries affected by conflict and fragility by 2011.
2. **Supporting recurrent costs** – there is a need to ensure aid modalities for conflict-affected and fragile states support recurrent costs by exploring options beyond budget support.
3. **Putting in place a viable international aid architecture** – the FTI needs to evolve into a revamped and reinvigorated international aid architecture, which is able to effectively support fragile and conflict-affected states.
4. **Coordinating humanitarian and development aid** – donors should ensure consistent policies and mandates to support education in humanitarian and development contexts and the transition between the two.
5. **Having long-term predictable commitments, whatever the context** – fragile and conflict-affected states need to be able to plan for the future through the provision of long-term, multi-year commitments and improving the predictability of aid.
6. **Supporting national-scale education plans and programs** – through using flexible approaches and combining aid modalities in order to meet education service delivery needs and the long-term goal of building state capacity and ownership.
7. **Scaling up education programs** – education programs in fragile and conflict-affected states need to be scaled up by using and creating innovative approaches to managing and disbursing aid that utilize the comparative advantages of various partners within countries.

The most recent estimate suggests that more than 25 million out-of-school children – more than one-third of the total number of out-of-school children – live in low-income countries affected by conflict (UNESCO, 2010: 57).² Including children living in fragile states that are not classified as being affected by conflict, such as Nigeria, Haiti and Zimbabwe, can dramatically increase this number. For example, Save the Children (2009b) estimates that more than half of the world's out-of-school population (a total of 40 million children) live in these contexts. Additionally, children displaced by conflicts or emergencies often have limited or irregular access to education. By the end of 2008, there were an estimated 15 million children between the ages of 5 and 17 who had been

forcibly displaced from their homes, either within their own countries or across national borders. Displaced children are often denied education due to insecure situations, destruction or occupation of schools, absence of official documentation required for enrolment, or inability to pay schooling costs (IDMC, 2009; UNHCR, 2009 and Women's Refugee Commission, 2004).

THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

2010 promises to be an exciting year for progress towards supporting children in countries affected by conflict, fragility and emergencies to go to school. The convergence of recent developments in the global policy and political environments demonstrates the rising importance of this issue internationally and the importance of closely considering how education aid can be delivered in these contexts.

1. Political Opportunities to Raise Awareness Around Achieving Universal Primary Education

In recent years, commitments and initiatives made by several countries, notably the European Union (E.U.), the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (U.K.), have underpinned the global effort to achieve universal primary education (UPE). However, to date these efforts have not succeeded and there is an estimated US\$13.5 billion annual shortfall of the estimated US\$16.2 billion needed in basic education aid in order for UPE to become a reality.³ Building on recent efforts, Barack Obama's call during his campaign for the U.S. presidency for the creation of a Global Fund for Education with a pledge to invest US\$2 billion in an effort to erase the global education gap (Obama, 2008) signified increased hope for addressing the underfunding of education. Looking at the broader political arena, 2010 presents a number of opportunities to raise the profile of global education and to secure increased funding:

- First, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) partnership with the 1Goal campaign⁴ for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa (the first time the World Cup has been held on the African continent);
- Second, in June, the G-8 and G-20 hosted by Canada, which has historically been a strong supporter of education;
- Third, the high-level Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Review Summit scheduled for September 2010; and
- Finally, the shift in global economic leadership from the G-8 to the G-20 during 2009 with certain G-20 countries, including the G-20 co-chair South Korea, rapidly increasing their own development assistance and demonstrating how expanded education can drive economic growth.

2. Commitments by Donors to Support Countries Affected by Conflict and Fragility

Several countries, such as Australia, Denmark, the E.U., the Netherlands, Norway, the U.K. and U.S., have highlighted funding to fragile and conflict-affected states as a core component of their foreign assistance strategies from a security and peace angle as well as from a humanitarian and development angle.⁵ Significant levels of funding from the U.S., the U.K., the Netherlands and others have gone to education in Pakistan, Sudan and Liberia, among others.

3. A Growing International Focus on Aid Effectiveness

The international dialogue on aid effectiveness is built upon several critical documents starting with the *Principles and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship* (OECD, 2003) and the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD, 2005). Following *Paris*, to address the contexts in countries facing problems with weak governance, conflict or fragility, the *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations* were developed (OECD, 2007). The aid effectiveness agenda has caused tensions for some donors working in these fragile and conflict-affected states since in order to improve aid effectiveness, general or sectoral budget support are the best modalities. However, they may not be appropriate or effective modalities for use in fragile or conflict-affected states. In 2008, the *Accra Agenda for Action* (OECD, 2008) was announced as a way of accelerating progress on the commitments outlined in *Paris* and included a note on adapting aid policies for countries in fragile situations. An initial concept note for the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, scheduled for 2011 in Seoul, South Korea, includes “special attention to implications of fragile situations” as one of six key focus points. This concept note posits that leading up to the Seoul meeting, there should be clear results emerging from the commitment of donors and partner countries to monitor the implementation of the *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations*.

4. The Mid-Term Evaluation of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI)

The FTI’s 2009 external mid-term evaluation has illustrated the shortcomings of the initiative: notably that the original framework focused on “good performers” and left out the countries with the greatest need for external support, including many fragile and conflict-affected states (Cambridge Education, Mokoro Ltd. and Oxford Policy Management, 2009). In addition, the overall initiative has not met expectations with respect to mobilizing additional funds for basic education or holding donors accountable for their part of the FTI compact. One-off attempts to address the needs of fragile and conflict-affected states have resulted in a fragmented and confusing process that does not send clear messages to other countries about successful and straightforward ways to engage with bilateral and multilateral mechanisms.⁶ One of the conclusions of the evaluation was that the “FTI should be thoughtfully redesigned and reinvigorated, building on its strengths, to become a more effective partnership in pursuit of the EFA objectives” (Cambridge Education *et al.*, 2009: xi). With a perceived willingness of the FTI Board to engage proactively with this process, 2010 presents a key opportunity for a revamped FTI, which includes those countries most in need – those affected by conflict and fragility.

KEY CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Political will in fragile and conflict-affected states and on the part of donors is key to improving education opportunities and accelerating progress towards the education MDGs in these contexts. However, for bilateral and multilateral donors, even if political will is there, they still need technical capacity, resources, and appropriate aid modalities to support these countries. Projects, pooled funds, multi-donor trust funds and budget support have all been used to channel resources to fragile and conflict-affected states.⁷ Internationally, the FTI is the main global mechanism for supporting education. To date, however, it is acknowledged that both through the FTI and at country level, donors have failed to provide sufficient resources and support to fragile and conflict-affected states. 2010 is the year that this could change *if* the following **seven key challenges** are addressed and overcome.⁸

KEY CHALLENGE 1: PROVIDING SUFFICIENT RESOURCES

A pressing challenge to improve education access and quality in fragile and conflict-affected states is the need for sufficient resources – from national budgets as well as development and humanitarian aid sources. Despite these countries being home to as many as half of the world’s out-of-school children and carrying over half of the financing gap, they only receive one quarter of basic education aid (Save the Children, 2009b). While education aid to these countries is increasing, it is starting from a low base and still falls far short of what is needed. The 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report estimates that the basic education financing gap is US\$16.2 billion annually and of this US\$6.7 billion is needed for 20 conflict-affected poor countries. This is approximately 41 percent of the total gap for low-income countries and is nearly six times more than the US\$1.2 billion of aid for basic education committed to these countries in 2006-2007 (UNESCO, 2010: 130).

Without increased aid for education, progress towards the EFA goals will not be made. In particular, there is a critical need to increase resources for education in fragile and conflict-affected states. This escalation will require sustained positive action on behalf of donors to increase the level of education aid and to ensure an increased proportion of that goes to helping children in fragile and conflict-affected states have the chance to go to school. In addition to increasing resources, there needs to be an equitable distribution of aid based on needs to ensure that all countries are receiving the support they need and not just a favoured few.⁹ Aid should only be part of the picture of securing additional resources which could also be found from new sources. Innovative financing mechanisms to support education should be explored, and new and emerging donors should be encouraged to play a bigger role in achieving UPE.

Way Forward: A significant scaling up of resources from donors and, based on the needs of fragile and conflict-affected states, at least 50 percent of basic education aid should be committed and disbursed in these contexts.¹⁰ Humanitarian aid for education also needs to increase to ensure education is supported during crises so that systems are not completely undermined and education gains lost. Innovative financing mechanisms should also be identified, which will release additional resources for education.

KEY CHALLENGE 2: SUPPORTING RECURRENT COSTS

Recurrent costs, particularly teachers’ salaries, constitute a significant part of education budgets. Often up to 75 percent of a national education budget is allocated to salaries alone, and unless donor financing can help support these costs, the challenges in education will never be overcome. In order to sufficiently build the size and technical capacity of the teaching service, it is essential to have a sustained and predictable way to cover these costs. Yet this can be difficult in fragile and conflict-affected states. Because of the need to act fast and support immediate educational needs or in order to avoid perceived risks, donors may use project-based aid, which is far less likely to support recurrent costs. Whilst in some cases projects may be appropriate, it is also necessary to ensure recurrent costs are supported. The easiest way of doing this is to use budget support. However, this is often not suitable or used in many fragile and conflict-affected states.

Where government systems are not able to support paying teachers’ salaries, there may be a reliance on school fees to provide or supplement teachers’ salaries, either officially or unofficially. This in turn will exclude the

poorest or most marginalized children from accessing education and will undermine progress towards universal primary completion. Making the transition from salaries supported by school fees to a teacher payroll system is an enormous challenge logistically and financially. For example, this challenge has seriously undermined progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and has become a blockage to scaling up donor funding.

Way Forward: For progress to be made, it is essential that recurrent costs are supported through adequate national budget allocations and, where necessary, through appropriate donor funding modalities. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund has helped pay teachers' salaries and support an expanded teaching force in order to increase enrolment in the country. Increased understanding of the options beyond budget support to enable recurrent costs to be supported are needed. In particular, understanding how to transition from school fee-supported salaries to payroll systems is needed in some contexts, as well as how to ensure teachers are paid a living wage to teach a realistically-sized class.

KEY CHALLENGE 3: PUTTING IN PLACE A VIABLE INTERNATIONAL AID ARCHITECTURE

“Effective multilateral approaches to aid can play a vital role in supporting conflict-affected countries. Such mechanisms enable bilateral donors to pool resources and risk, and to avoid having to create their own delivery systems. One problem with the global aid architecture is the lack of a single unified multilateral framework for education through which donors can channel resources to conflict-affected countries.” (UNESCO, 2010: 246)

The current international aid architecture for education – the FTI – has not been able to effectively support fragile and conflict-affected states. If the FTI was able to do this, it would give donors the opportunity of scaling up their aid to these countries by providing a way for them to channel resources to countries most in need and where they may not have a bilateral presence. There are significant challenges to be overcome for this to happen, which are discussed further in our parallel policy outlook on the FTI, *Financing for All: How to Include Fragile and Conflict-Affected States in the FTI*.

Way Forward: A revamped and reinvigorated FTI is best placed to provide this mechanism but there are serious challenges to overcome first and a need to draw on evidence from other sectors and financing approaches (e.g. health, other global and international funds) as to how to effectively support these countries through an international mechanism. In addition, donors and FTI partners need to commit to the FTI and engage in the process of transforming it.

KEY CHALLENGE 4: COORDINATING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT AID

By the very nature of the context in fragile and conflict-affected states, periods of stability can be broken up by periods of conflict, instability and humanitarian crises. There is often the need for donors to act fast and stay engaged to provide long-term, consistent and predictable support that both ensures progress in education and the rebuilding of systems, as well as guaranteeing that education gains are not lost or undermined during

humanitarian crises. This continuum of fragility needs donors to support education through humanitarian *and* development contexts, including the transition from humanitarian aid to development assistance. All too often education is not supported during an emergency as it is not viewed by some agencies as a life-saving priority. However, when development funding restarts and education becomes a higher priority, systems are often damaged or destroyed and pre-conflict or fragility education gains lost. Even during crises, children still want to go to school; parents still prioritize their children's education; and governments often want to support education, but donor funding is minimal.

Way Forward: To ensure access to education for all children and continued progress in meeting education goals regardless of context, donors need to ensure consistent policies and mandates to support education in humanitarian and development contexts and the transition between the two.

KEY CHALLENGE 5: HAVING LONG-TERM PREDICTABLE COMMITMENTS, WHATEVER THE CONTEXT

“...aid predictability is particularly weak in conflict-affected countries. In 2007, less than half the aid scheduled for disbursement was delivered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Sierra Leone. In Chad and Liberia, none of the scheduled aid was disbursed that year.” (UNESCO, 2010: 234)

In general, aid in these contexts is more likely to be short-term and unpredictable. Yet governments cannot make longer-term plans or recruit and train teachers if they are not confident that they will have the budget the next year or the year after to pay the teachers. In addition, uncertainty over aid flows could compromise peace in some contexts. Long-term, predictable aid is essential to successful education planning. Recognizing this, and the fact that post-conflict countries can absorb twice as much aid as comparable countries at peace, the U.K's DFID in recent years has made 10-year commitments to Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Rwanda (DFID, 2005).

Way Forward: Making long-term, multi-year commitments (through improved donor planning processes) and improving the predictability of aid will increase the ability of fragile and conflict-affected states to plan for the future, while helping to ensure peace processes are not undermined by uncertainty and an inability to deliver basic services. For example, a regular replenishment process for pooled funds is a way to improve the predictability of aid to ensure longer-term commitments.

KEY CHALLENGE 6: SUPPORTING NATIONAL-SCALE EDUCATION PLANS AND PROGRAMS

Following the *Paris Declaration* and the *Accra Agenda for Action* statements on aid effectiveness, there is a commitment from donors to support national-scale education programs for which the national government has ownership and accountability. However, when the government has little legitimacy or capacity to manage such programs, donors must deliver their support in a way that adheres to the *Paris* and *Accra* principles in the longer term by supporting state capacity building and ownership. Donor support must also address education needs

and challenges in the immediate term. This dual mission requires donors to work flexibly and use a range of aid modalities suitable to the context.

In some contexts, such as Afghanistan, supporting this type of scaling up has worked. However, in other contexts, such as the DRC, progress of this kind has not been possible. There is no blueprint on how to achieve the right balance of developing sustainable education systems whilst addressing immediate service delivery needs as it is likely to be context-specific. Approaches, plans and priorities are often dependent on political priorities, personalities, knowledge and skills in the country, and the donors present at the country-level. Whilst building state capacity and improving governance is a priority in fragile and conflict-affected states, the importance of building governance and ownership from the bottom up through education should not, however, be overlooked, as has been pursued by the European Commission (EC) in Somalia.¹¹

Way Forward: There is a need to use flexible approaches, combining aid modalities in order to meet the diversity of education service delivery needs and the long-term goal of building state capacity and ownership. Traveling the road to *Paris* and *Accra* in terms of pursuing aid effectiveness principles in fragile and conflict-affected states may take time, yet it can and has been done. The principles of ownership, alignment, and harmonization will need to be interpreted and applied in ways that advance a best-fit-for-progress approach. Whilst there are different levels of governance, capacity and legitimacy amongst state and non-state actors across fragile and conflict-affected states, there is a need to better understand the mix of modalities and implementing agencies that can have the most impact in different contexts.

KEY CHALLENGE 7: SCALING UP EDUCATION PROGRAMS

With and without the political will of the government, scaling up education programs can present particular challenges in fragile and conflict-affected states. There is often a need to increase enrolment, improve quality, recruit and train teachers, and in some cases re-establish assessment systems. The challenges can be formidable, particularly in contexts with a large proportion of out-of-school children or in systems decimated by years of conflict. In protracted crises and where countries have been dependent on humanitarian aid, there is frequently a reliance on non-governmental organization (NGO) projects, which due to funding, logistical or capacity constraints can be small-scale and fragmented.¹²

Lack of government capacity and the need to scale up services rapidly often means the need for third party actors to deliver services in the short term, and possibly for the medium to longer term. Ensuring that these third party actors work closely with government and other parties is vital. Key to the success of interventions is innovation and the commitment of donors and governments, as well as using the comparative advantages of various partners. For example, if NGOs have been on the ground in a crisis, using their capacity, expertise and trust of the local population can ensure rapid education gains are made. There are approaches which have effectively led to a scaling up of resources. For example, the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund has allowed for teachers salaries to be paid and supported increased access to education for children. Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia have all managed to scale up resources for education. However, in other contexts similar approaches may not have been so successful.

Way Forward: In order to scale up education programs and aid, it is necessary to be flexible and innovative in the use of modalities; use the comparative advantage of various partners at the same time as recognizing the limitations in capacity and mandates; and ensure progress is being made towards short-term goals and the longer-term goal of governments taking ownership and accountability of education.

CONCLUSION

Children living in countries affected by conflict, fragility and emergencies should have their right to go to school, their opportunity to learn basic skills, and the chance to contribute to their economies and societies. Providing these opportunities for children now is likely to have a positive impact on peace and security within the near future, improve active citizenship and democracy, and ensure improved capacity to deliver basic services in those countries – preparing future teachers and education officials, as well as doctors, lawyers and other key personnel. 2010 promises to be *the* year for education – the exciting 1 Goal campaign and a number of high-level international summits and meetings mean there is a real chance of securing increased aid and commitment for education. 2010 must also be *the* year for education for children in countries affected by conflict, fragility and emergencies. They can no longer be left out of the international aid system. Donors and others must work to ensure that education aid to these countries increases and that the challenges of scaling up education programs are addressed, even in the most difficult contexts. With increasing political will to support these countries, there is a chance that 2010 may be *the* year that this finally happens and children in countries affected by conflict, fragility and emergencies get their chance to go to school.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

1. Significantly increase overall aid for basic education to meet the estimated US\$16 billion financing required annually and ensure at least **50 percent of all basic education aid** is committed to and disbursed in countries affected by conflict and fragility by 2011.
2. Ensure aid modalities for fragile and conflict-affected states **support recurrent costs** by exploring options beyond budget support.
3. Evolve the FTI into a **revamped and reinvigorated international aid architecture**, which is able to effectively support fragile and conflict-affected states.
4. Ensure donors have consistent policies and mandates to **support education in humanitarian and development contexts** and the transition between the two.
5. Enable fragile and conflict-affected states to be able to plan for the future through the provision of **long-term, multi-year commitments and improving the predictability of aid**.
6. Use **flexible approaches and combine aid modalities** in order to meet education service delivery needs and the long-term goal of building state capacity and ownership.
7. Scale up education programs in fragile and conflict-affected states by using and creating **innovative approaches to managing and disbursing aid** that utilize the comparative advantages of various partners within countries.

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ENDNOTES

1. While each country affected by conflict or fragility is situated within its own country-specific context, there is some agreement on a foundational definition of “fragile states” that focuses on those states that are unwilling or unable to provide the basic core services needed for poverty reduction, development, and to safeguard the security and human rights of the population (OECD, 2007).
2. For this calculation, countries affected by conflict are ones that are categorized as “least developed nations” or “low-income countries” and have experienced armed conflicts resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year over at least three years between 1999 and 2007 or more than 1,000 in one year during the same period. Higher estimates of out-of-school children by Save the Children and others have included countries identified as fragile, but not in conflict as well as some middle-income, conflict-affected countries.
3. This is calculated on the basis of an annual US\$16.2bn financing requirement for low-income countries and, in 2006-2007, aid to basic education in these countries being just US\$2.7bn leaving an annual financing gap of US\$13.5bn. Even if the 2005 Gleneagles commitments were met securing additional aid to basic education, the annual deficit would still be approximately US\$11bn (UNESCO, 2010).
4. <http://www.join1goal.org/> 1GOAL is a global team that will voice to world leaders the need to keep their promise of giving everyone an education by 2015.
5. See Save the Children (2009a) for information on the Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and the EC; DFID (2009), AusAid (2006), and the U.S. Department of State (2009a) and (2009b) for information on the U.K., Australia, and the U.S., respectively.
6. Four of the FTI-endorsed countries considered to be affected by conflict or fragility – Sierra Leone, Haiti, Liberia and Central African Republic – have each gone through a different process to access pooled funding from the FTI’s Catalytic Fund, including waiting for a-yet-to-be-established Education Transition Fund. In Liberia’s case, the country did not receive Catalytic Funding in May 2007 when it applied on the basis that its plan was judged not to meet the minimum standards required to access funding.
7. The choice of mechanism tends to be driven by the context, with projects and humanitarian aid being used in the most difficult contexts where there maybe on-going conflict and insecurity; a mix of modalities being used in countries where government capacity and will is increasing; and in contexts of early recovery it may be possible to use pooled funding and budget support. See Brannelly, Ndaruhutse and Rigaud (2009) for more information.
8. Note: these challenges are not in a particular order of importance or priority.
9. “In Afghanistan, aid has played a critical role in expanding education opportunities. Overall, however, the aid allocation patterns raise questions about donor priorities regarding the different recipient countries. In some cases, there are marked disparities in aid levels between conflict-affected countries in the same region, or even neighbouring countries – such as Burundi and Rwanda.” (UNESCO, 2010: 242)
10. Given the significant underfunding of education in fragile and conflict-affected states, there is a need to have a benchmark to help accelerate and monitor progress. Targets or benchmarks, whilst controversial for some, have been effective at accelerating change in education. The benchmark of 50 percent represents a realistic, minimum benchmark and is based on the estimated need and the proportion of the overall funding gap that these countries represent – estimated at 41 percent for 20 conflict-affected countries (UNESCO, 2010) and 58 percent for 28 conflict-affected fragile states (Save the Children, 2009b).
11. Based on eight years’ experience in Somalia, the EC identified one of its operating principles as “focus on the local level” – this improved targeting of projects heightened the sense of ownership and positively impacts on sustainability (European Commission – Somalia Operations, 2006).
12. Where an Education Cluster exists in countries, it works to improve coordination amongst humanitarian actors during emergencies.