SEND MY FRIEND TO SCHOOL

# Safe from harm:

**protecting every child and teacher at school**

Marlita*, 16, is in Grade 6.
She uses a wheelchair as her legs
are paralysed because she was hit
by a scooter when she was younger.
She attends school in Chididi, Malawi.

Photo: Jonas Gratzer/Save the Children

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### Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CSSF | Comprehensive School Safety Framework |
| DFID | UK Department for International Development |
| ECW | Education Cannot Wait |
| GADRRRES | Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector |
| GPE | Global Partnership for Education |
| IDC | International Development Committee |

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|---|---|
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| MRM | Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCRPD | United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNISDR | United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction |

* after a name indicates that the name has been changed to protect identity

# Executive summary

### Creating a safe school for every child

Schools should be safe and happy places, where children can benefit from a good education. They should be a space where children can make friends and develop socially and emotionally. Protection through education is achieved when 'schools are physically safe, psychologically and emotionally healing and cognitively transformative'.[1] Giving children the opportunity to learn at school is essential if they are to progress through the education system and secure a better future for themselves and their country.

Unfortunately, millions of children around the world are not safe at school. Too many children face the threat of their school being bombed or attacked by military or armed groups, or they experience violence on their journey to or from school. For others, extreme weather conditions and poorly constructed schools threaten safety. It isn't right that children should experience violence and insecurity simply by exercising their right to an education.

**New analysis for this report concludes that on average at least 15 life-threatening attacks on education occur every school day.**

### A global learning crisis

The world made a bold and ambitious commitment in 2015 to ensure high-quality and equitable education for all children by 2030. But we still have a long way to go. There are currently 264 million children and young people not going to school. And even if children do attend school, too many of them are not learning – 130 million children cannot read, despite having attended primary school for four or more years. And we know that certain groups of children are more at risk of not being in school or not learning. Girls and children with disabilities, for example, are especially likely to be out of school. Across sub-Saharan Africa, 9 million girls will never attend school, compared to 6 million boys.

### Education interrupted by violence and attacks

Attacks on education occur in many countries affected by armed conflict, or in insecure or weak political systems. In at least 30 countries globally, there is a pattern of attacks on education by state security forces and non-state armed groups.[2] The impact of this is that children living in countries affected by armed conflict are less likely to go to school – one in four children living in conflict zones do not attend school.[3]

In addition, we know that attacks on education can have a disproportionate impact on particular groups of children. For example, girls can be affected by violence when their right to education is opposed. They are targeted for sexual violence while at or en route to educational institutions; when searching for a private place to go to the toilet at school; or because their families withdraw them from school for security reasons.[4]

Yet during times of conflict and insecurity, maintaining access to education could not be more important. If they remain safe and protective environments with proper facilities, schools can provide an important sense of normality that is crucial to a child's development and psychological well-being.[5]

### Education disrupted by natural hazards and disasters

Worldwide, we are witnessing an increase in the frequency, severity and unpredictability of disasters.[6] One of the key challenges this presents is ensuring that schools are safe and that girls and boys are as prepared as they can be for times of disaster. Worldwide, approximately 1.2 billion students are enrolled in primary and secondary school; of these, 875 million school children live in high seismic risk zones[7] and hundreds of millions more face regular flood, landslide, extreme wind and fire hazards.

Unsafe learning facilities often leave children and teachers at risk when disaster strikes, and poor planning and preparation also leave young people and their communities vulnerable. Without proper disaster management,

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1   S. Dryden Peterson, 2011. *Refugee Education: A Global Review.* Geneva: UNHCR. p. 34
2   GCPEA, 2018. *The Problem.* Online. See www.protectingeducation.org/problem
3   UNICEF, 2016. *One in Four Children in Conflict Zones Are out of School.* Online. See www.unicef.org/media/media_89782.html
4   GCPEA, 2018. *What is the Impact?* Online. See www.protectingeducation.org/what-impact
5   Inter-Agency Standing Committee Education Cluster, 2013. Education: An Essential Component of a Humanitarian Response. Geneva: Education Cluster Unit.
6   Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2012. *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation* (SREX). New York: Cambridge University Press. Plan uses the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) definition of a disaster, namely a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.
7   Wisner et al. 2004. *School Seismic Safety: Falling Between the Cracks?* London: Routledge

Masegu*, Kalonji*, and Gina* next to their classroom blackboard in DR Congo.

Photo: Joan Marie del Mundo/ Save the Children

preparation and training, schools susceptible to natural hazards become increasingly unsafe places to be, and without education, communities are far less prepared to deal with these catastrophic events when they take place.

### Learning disrupted for marginalised children

Children also suffer from violence in contexts that are not affected by conflict. Some children never even attend school, or they stop attending, because violence or the fear of violence at or on the journey to school stops them. This is particularly true for girls and children with disabilities. Those who do go to school can experience chronic bullying by their peers, sexual violence or corporal punishment. Fewer than half of the world's children are protected by

law from violent discipline in the classroom.[8] In Tanzania and Uganda, for example, more than half of the children who are physically or sexually abused are abused by their teachers.[9] Teachers and other education personnel also face harm or threats to their safety. This leads to educators having to decide between their safety and their livelihood, which can further reduce the workforce available to support children's education.[10]

### The UK's role in protecting children at school

The UK Government is a world leader in delivering education to some of the world's poorest and most marginalised children and young people. The UK has been at the forefront of the global effort to tackle violence against women and girls, and more recently has made inclusive

education for children with disabilities a key priority. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has also played a leading role in providing and championing education in emergencies, particularly by ensuring that refugees and displaced children in the Middle East have access to education.

However, the UK has not yet signed the Safe Schools Declaration – created to strengthen the prevention of, and response to, attacks on students, teachers and schools. A total of 72 countries have signed up, including Britain's long-time allies France and Canada. By signing up to the pledge, the UK would be sending a very strong message to others about the importance of protecting children at school.

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8    UNICEF, 2014. *Children in Danger: Act to End Violence Against Children*. Online. See downloads.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/
     Unicef_ChildreninDanger_ViolencereportW.pdf?_ga=2.219618265.1316526683.1512127345-1723762371.1512127345
9    UNICEF, 2014. *Children in Danger.*
10   GCPEA, 2018. *The Problem.*

# Recommendations

**The Send My Friend to School coalition strongly urges the UK to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and encourage its fellow Commonwealth of Nations member states to do the same.** Schools should be havens of peace and safety. But unfortunately, for millions children around the world, school is a place of violence and danger. Without action now to ensure all children and young people are safe at school, we will never be able to fulfil our promise of a high-quality, inclusive education for all by 2030. We need to take a stand.

As this report will demonstrate, the world remains a long way off achieving this goal while so many children are at risk of harm simply by trying to receive an education. If the world fails to act, its most vulnerable children will continue to be exposed to violence and risks that disrupt their opportunity to learn.

This year thousands of schools and young people across the UK will be sending a sign that safety in schools is essential and calling on the Government to make schools safe. The Send My Friend to School coalition is calling on the UK Government to take the following measures:

**1. Sign the Safe Schools Declaration**
The Send My Friend to School coalition strongly urges the UK to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration. By doing so it would reinforce the view, for which there is growing global support, that attacking schools or using them for military purposes is not acceptable. It would also strengthen the UK's hand in discussions with countries where attacks on schools or their use by military forces is commonplace. The Declaration has already been signed by a majority of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union and Council of Europe member states. The UK's failure to sign, when it has some of the most respected armed forces in the world, sends the wrong message to countries that more readily operate outside the bounds of global humanitarian norms.

**2. Support governments to develop national education policies that protect children and education staff from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation, both within and outside the school setting.**

**3. Support the generation and gathering of evidence on how to tackle violence against children and education staff, and develop and share good practice and research on interventions to keep children safe within schools.**

**4. Ensure that marginalised children are prioritised in its emergency response activities during conflict and disaster situations, especially within the education setting, so that they are more likely to be protected.**

**5. Ensure that its education programmes feature the requirement for all child protection policies to specifically mention the risks faced by the most marginalised children and the strategies needed to keep these children and education staff safe, including outside the school setting.**

# Introduction

In 2015, world leaders signed up to a new set of commitments to make the world a better place by tackling issues such as hunger and poverty. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are a successor to the Millennium Development Goals, and they include a goal to provide education for all by 2030.

There is a global education crisis. In spite of progress made during the run-up to 2015, 263 million children and young people do not attend school, and many of those who do attend are not learning properly.

At the current rate of progress, it will be 2084 before every child is in school. That's over 50 years later than promised. Children are only children once – we are at risk of leaving a whole generation behind.

School 'violence' is one of the causes of this education crisis, and it can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including the following:

- **physical violence** perpetrated against schoolchildren and education personnel
- **psychological violence** that intentionally or unintentionally undermines children's and teachers' psychological well-being; for example, verbal and/or emotional abuse
- **sexual violence** – 'intimidation of a sexual nature, sexual harassment, unwanted touching, sexual coercion and rape', which affects both girls and boys[11]
- **bullying** – 'intentional and aggressive behaviour occurring repeatedly against a victim where there is a real or perceived power imbalance and where the victims feel vulnerable and powerless to defend themselves'[12]
- **exclusionary** curricula, practices, pedagogy and/or facilities that stop children learning.

This report will focus on the impact that physical violence and harm have on the ability of children to enjoy their right to an education. This includes:

- attacks on schools and universities during conflict
- military use of schools
- the risks caused by natural disasters
- violence in and around school during peace time.

Without urgent action now to ensure all children are safe at school, we will never be able to respond to the global learning crisis. The report will seek to understand the impact that violence has on children's ability to attend school and to learn. Attacks on schools weaken education systems – students often do not fully recover lost educational opportunities, and gains in education access and quality are reversed significantly.[13]

Finally, this report will look at how the world has responded to this crisis in education. This includes the role of the UK Government as a leader in delivering education to the world's poorest and most marginalised children – and what it can do to further protect children from harm, so that every child can fulfill their potential.

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11  UNESCO and Global Education 2030 Agenda, 2017. *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*. Paris: UNESCO. See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf
12  UNESCO and Global Education 2030 Agenda, 2017. School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report.
13  Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), 2018. *What is the Impact?* Online. See www.protectingeducation.org/what-impact

# Section 1: Attacks on schools

**The context: growing conflict and instability**

**On 16 December 2015, one of the deadliest attacks ever on a school in any country occurred in Pakistan. Armed militants attacked the Army Public School in Pakistan's Peshawar city, killing 145 people, almost all of them children.[14]**

Over 245 million children are estimated to be living in conflict zones.[15] Right now, in large parts of the world, a generation of children is at risk of being lost to conflict and instability. Children's rights are routinely violated, with devastating consequences. The situations they are in range from being caught in the cross-fire of the Syria crisis to being subjected to sexual violence in conflict – an issue that disproportionately affects girls. The number and severity of conflicts currently underway is greater than at any time in recent years, and children's rights are being violated in atrocious ways and on an appalling scale. Wars are typically more protracted than in the past and involve both state and non-state actors.

The consequence of this scenario is that more children are unsafe at school. Regular attacks on schools, students and teachers, or instances of the military use of schools, have happened in 21 countries, which all saw at least ten incidents in the last four years. Research from the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) has also revealed that a dozen countries have seen more than 100 attacks or instances of military use since 2013.[16]

**What are attacks on schools?**
The GCPEA defines attacks on education as including killings, disappearances, abduction, forced exile, imprisonment, torture and maiming, the military use of schools and universities, the laying of landmines around schools, and the destruction of educational buildings and materials.[17] They also include sexual violence and the recruitment and use of child soldiers, where these are part of a political, military or sectarian attack on students or education staff at or on the way to or from an educational institution.[18]

Attacks such as the attack on the Army Public School in Pakistan damage and destroy school buildings, cause injury or death to teachers and students, and terrorise parents into keeping their children out of school.[19] Such attacks and threats of attack on education not only harm the students and families directly affected, they also have an immeasurable long-term effect on society.

And yet, during armed conflict, schools can provide a life-line by offering information on things like landmines, HIV and infectious disease prevention, feeding programmes and psychosocial services, which can benefit the whole community through the children who are able to receive them. Furthermore, schools offer children a safe space from grave violations, such as military recruitment, trafficking and exploitation.

**The threat from extremist groups**
In a number of countries, extremist groups are a significant threat to students and teachers. Some groups may be ideologically opposed to certain children, such as girls, receiving an education.

For example, Boko Haram in Nigeria is one of the deadliest extremist armed groups in the world – it is estimated that the group was responsible for the deaths of over 6,644 people in Nigeria and Cameroon in 2014 alone.[20] The name Boko Haram means 'Western education is forbidden'. They have targeted and killed teachers, education workers and students – at least 611 teachers have been killed and a further 19,000 have been forced to flee since 2009.[21] More than 910 schools have been destroyed and at least 1,500 schools have been forced to close because of attacks.[22]

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[14]   Human Rights Watch, 2017. *Dreams Turned into Nightmares: Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools in Pakistan.* Online.
       See www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/27/dreams-turned-nightmares/attacks-students-teachers-and-schools-pakistan
[15]   UN General Assembly, 2008. Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for
       Children and Armed Conflict, A/72/276. Online. See undocs.org/A/72/276
[16]   Save the Children, 2016. *Alarming levels of attacks on schools must end, Save the Children says ahead of key global Safe Schools conference.*
       See: https://www.savethechildren.net/article/alarming-levels-attacks-schools-must-end-save-children-says-ahead-key-global-safe-schools
[17]   GCPEA, 2018. *The Problem.* See www.protectingeducation.org/problem
[18]   GCPEA, 2018. *The Problem*
[19]   Human Rights Watch, 2017. *Dreams Turned into Nightmares*
[20]   According to the Global Terrorism Index 2015. Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015. *Global Terrorism Index.*
       Online. See economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf
[21]   Human Rights Watch, 2016. *'They Set the Classrooms on Fire': Attacks on Education in Northeast Nigeria.* Online.
       See www.hrw.org/report/2016/04/11/they-set-classrooms-fire/attacks-education-northeast-nigeria
[22]   Human Rights Watch, 2016. *'They Set the Classrooms on Fire': Attacks on Education in Northeast Nigeria*

# CASE STUDY

## Majid*, 15, Iraq



'My elder brother always encouraged us to study hard so we could get a proper job when we grew up, but after ISIS came the school was closed.'

**Majid, 15, is from Iraq. He was doing well in school but then ISIS came to the area where he lived in Iraq and the schools were closed.**

'I was in the fourth grade when ISIS came and was very good at school. My elder brother always encouraged us to study hard so we could get a proper job when we grew up, but after ISIS came the school was closed. Everything became very difficult. We didn't have any money, or even food, especially in the last period when the military operations started.

Many families went hungry, everyone was very poor, and day by day the situation got even worse. In the last few months many families left, and we also wanted to leave but it was very difficult to do so because ISIS would target anyone who was trying to escape. Also, my father and my brother couldn't walk, so we didn't leave, but about two months ago the village became almost empty. Only old people and some farmers stayed, so my father asked us to leave.

With the sunset, we started walking. It was very dark and cold. We walked with another family but we got lost between the hills. We got really exhausted and we were afraid we would get caught by ISIS, so we waited until sunrise and then continued walking.

It took us until the afternoon to find the military area, and from there we were sent to this camp, and once we arrived my mum registered me and my brother in school. We started going to school from the first day we arrived, but because we had been out of school for almost two years, we had to attend some support classes to be able to catch up. There will be an exam in the coming few days so I am studying really hard to be able to go to the fifth grade; otherwise I will have to go back to the fourth grade. I love Arabic literature and I would like to be an Arabic teacher. I want to have a good job and help my family. We have already lost everything we had and I must stand with them.'

(Majid's story was shared by Save The Children)  Photo: Ahmad Baroudi/Save the Children

**New analysis: A snapshot of a year of attacks**

Attacks on education cause untold harm to children and their ability to receive an education. New analysis for this report explores the disruption to learning in just one year.

The *Education under Attack* report[23] is a global study that provides a detailed picture of the scale, nature, motives and impact of attacks on education and of the military use of schools. It was last published in 2014 and the new edition is forthcoming in Spring 2018. The new edition of the study will contain profiles of the most seriously affected countries, where there have been significant patterns of attacks, providing insight into the context in which attacks take place. It will also discuss trends since the last report was released in 2014.

Until then, the UN Secretary-General's 2016 report on Children and Armed Conflict[24] provides the most current global picture of the reality behind this practice in countries of concern to the UN, as reported and verified by the UN throughout 2015.

In 2011, the United Nations (UN) Security Council expanded the criteria for listing parties[25] to conflict, to include perpetrators of attacks on schools or threats of attacks on schools, and protected persons

in relation to schools. UN Security Council resolution 1998 (2011) also requested that the Secretary-General monitor and report on the military use of schools in contravention of international humanitarian law.

**On the basis of the UN Secretary-General's 2016 report, which focused on 21 country situations, Send My Friend to School found:**

- **2,832 reported attacks against education in 20 countries**
- **205 cases of the military use and occupation of schools in 14 countries.**

**This equates to an average of 15 life-threatening attacks on education every school day.**[26] This is likely to be an underestimation. And together these reported incidents represent millions of children's lives disrupted by violence and attack in just one year. These numbers include the following incidents:

- There were 69 attacks on educational facilities and personnel in **Syria**. In 2015, 571 students and 419 teachers were killed. Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 6,500 schools have been destroyed, partially damaged, used as shelters for internally displaced persons or rendered otherwise inaccessible.

- 1,500 schools were destroyed in north-east **Nigeria**, including 524 in Borno State. This has prevented access to education for more than 400,000 children.
- There were 283 incidents in the **West Bank**, including 96 cases of schools coming under fire during military-led operations and clashes, 46 attacks and threats of violence against students and teachers by Israeli security forces and settlers, and 62 instances of interference with education owing to the closure of schools or the arrest and detention of staff and students.
- In **Colombia**, eleven schools were damaged in crossfire and by landmines and explosive remnants of war.
- There were 14 attacks on educational institutions across **Pakistan**, leading to the destruction of schools, including one girls' school.

**Why do attacks on schools happen?**
The nature and drivers of attacks on education vary from one conflict to another. In particular, they differ in intensity, scale and intention. Though attacks on schools may be classified or reported as collateral damage, or as a by-product of an intense conflict, they may occur as part of a strategy to undermine the positive impact of education and its providers. This is particularly

23   GCPEA, 2014. *Education Under Attack.* New York: GCPEA
24   UN General Assembly Security Council, 2016. *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General,* A/70/836-S/2016/360. Online. See www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=s/2016/360&referer=/english/&Lang=E
25   United Nations, 2017. *Identifying Parties to Conflict Who Commit Grave Violations Against Children.* Online. See childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/our-work/sg-list/
26   It is difficult to calculate an average global figure for the number of days children are in school, owing to a lack of data from a number of countries. This calculation was made based on an average of 184 school days at primary and lower secondary countries. See www.oecd.org/edu/EAG2014-Indicator%20D1%20(eng).pdf

# CASE STUDY
## Amnah*, 12, Gaza



> ' We have to wake up very early, in the dark, before the sunrise, so we can reach school on time. We feel stressed during our walk to school. We always walk next to each other holding each other's hands. '

**Amnah, 12, lives in the Johor Al Deek area of Gaza.**

'We are not safe. We live near the border. Shooting can start at any time. Going to school can be risky and dangerous; we walk for almost an hour every day on a slippery, bumpy road, sometimes subject to shooting from the Israeli soldiers. We have to wake up very early, in the dark, before the sunrise, so we can reach school on time. We feel stressed during our walk to school. We always walk next to each other holding each other's hands.

We fear getting shot at by Israeli soldiers and we also fear explosions of suspicious objects! We stay away from everything on the road, because it might be explosive! Last year, I happened to get home early from school. I was waiting for my siblings and cousins to get back, so we could have lunch together.

Suddenly we heard shooting, very near to the road we take to school. I was so scared for my siblings and cousins, then we saw them from a distance, walking together, crying and very scared. They were running away from the shooting. I could see them but couldn't reach them. They couldn't reach us either! This was one of the hardest moments in my life; I felt my heart was going to stop!

I am in my seventh grade, and I want to top my class and study hard. My hobby is reading. I read bed-time stories to my little sister Malak. She loves it when I do!

My dream is to become a doctor in the future; I have seen many war injuries during the last couple of years. I really wish I could become a doctor so I can treat those people and help them!'

(Amnah's story was shared by ActionAid) Photo: Celia Paterson/ActionAid

the case in areas where education is seen to be the key to progress for particular groups of children.

Educational institutions may face attacks because of their curriculum content, or because they are seen to support new or old government structures or political ideologies. In other situations, education is attacked as a means of stopping educational, social and economic progress for particular groups of children, particularly girls, or to cause widespread destruction in communities that are not supportive of an armed group.

**What is the impact on children?**
The impact attacks have on children's access to education and ability to learn is catastrophic. UN Security Council resolution 1612[27] recognised that attacks against schools represent a grave violation against children and are a violation of children's right to education. Yet attacks on education continue to be widespread. They cause damage to children's learning outcomes, to the lives of teachers and other education staff, to school infrastructure and to education systems. With growing conflict and instability, there is also the risk of the situation getting worse.

In emergency situations, vulnerable groups, such as girls and children with disabilities, are most likely to drop out of school and never return.[28] Teachers often have not received adequate training from governments to teach children with disabilities and to meet their particular learning needs, and this is even more likely to be the case in emergency situations with the added complexities of setting up new temporary classes, child-friendly spaces or transitory learning spaces. It is common for there to be an assumption that it is too difficult to include everyone during an emergency, and that therefore children with any additional needs cannot be included.[29] It is also very common that children with disabilities may lose or damage their assistive devices during conflict situations, which further prevents them from accessing education and severely hampers their level of functioning and their independence, also making them more vulnerable.

Girls are also disproportionately affected during times of conflict and crisis. Heightened insecurity, displacement and the resulting breakdown of family and social support networks reinforce existing gender inequalities, rendering women and girls more vulnerable to threats resulting from conflict. For example,

in addition to the direct risks of forced recruitment into armed groups and trafficking, girls often face the double or triple burden of caring for children or elderly relatives and taking on household and income-earning responsibilities.[30] Women and girls generally have less access to financial resources, social capital and the legal means to protect themselves when conflict arises. This results in greater dependency, socioeconomic disempowerment and limited social mobility.

Children with disabilities are at risk during an emergency and are often among the last to be evacuated. This is because the majority of schools and other public institutions have included them when preparing for disasters, and children who have additional needs and may need specific assistance during an evacuation, for example, have not been taken into account during the planning phases. Although there has been recent lobbying in this area, and indeed the UK Department for International Development (DFID) endorsed the Charter on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016,[31] this is still far from a reality on the ground in most conflict-affected countries.

27  UN Security Council resolution 1612, adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council on 26 July 2005, was a ground-breaking development in the children and armed conflict agenda. It established an unprecedented, UN-led monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) to systematically document and report on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict. UN Security Council resolution 1612 also created the UN Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, a unique high-level structure that oversees the MRM. See http://watchlist. org/un-security-council-resolution-1612-of-2005-the-mrm-the-un-securitycouncil-working-group-and-an-enhanced-protection-from-recruitmentand-use-of-children-by-parties-to-a-conflict

28  UNICEF, 2016. *The State of the World's Children 2016: A Fair Chance for Every Child.* New York: UNICEF.

29  INEE, 2009. *Education in Emergencies: Including Everyone. INEE Pocket Guide to Inclusive Education.* Geneva: Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (c/o UNHCR). See http://toolkit.ineesite.org/pocket_guide_to_inclusive_education

30  United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 2015. *Attacks Against Girls Seeking to Access Education.* Background Paper. Geneva: Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

31  Humanitarian Disability Charter, 2016. *Charter on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.* Online. See humanitariandisabilitycharter.org/the-charter/

**Destroyed school in the Idleb suburbs in Northern Syria. This school was attacked and bombed three times.**

**Photo: Ahmad Baroudi/ Save the Children**

# Section 2: Military use of schools

**What is the military use of schools?**
The military use of schools is a global problem, and needs urgent international attention and an international response. Educational institutions are being either partially or entirely taken over and converted into military bases or barracks. They may be used as detention or interrogation facilities, or to store weapons and ammunition.[32]

For example, in some areas of Pakistan, government security forces have used educational institutions as temporary or permanent barracks or military bases.[33] In the Central African Republic, many children are still prevented from getting an education because armed groups have occupied or destroyed schools.[34]

Since 2007, the military use of schools or universities has been documented in at least 29 countries experiencing armed conflict or insecurity.[35] That number represents the majority of countries that have experienced armed conflict during the past decade, and examples can be found in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

**Why does it happen?**
One of the primary uses of schools by the military is for shelter – and this is arguably one of the most dangerous. It can be prompted by immediate need by personnel involved in the conflict, or it can be a tactical move. Armed groups may either take over a building entirely, or they may encourage classes to continue despite their presence, in the hope that the presence of children and teachers will deter other forces from attacking the building, thereby providing them with additional protection.

When schools are occupied, the space is often adapted in order to better protect the troops seeking shelter or a base. They may create walls, or add reinforcements such as barbed wire and ditches around existing walls, or add sniper posts on top of buildings. They may also choose to have armed guards protecting the space.

Some people have suggested that reinforcements to a building and having armed guards could help to protect the school and its teachers and learners. However, the GCPEA state that this actually increases the likelihood of the school becoming a target and may also create a situation in which it could be argued that the building is now a part of the conflict, and therefore no longer a civilian establishment protected by International Humanitarian Law.[36]

The ongoing occupation of school spaces by armed forces means that these schools are no longer safe environments and therefore cannot be considered as still open for learning, even if armed groups claim that school should continue.

**What is the impact?**
The military use of schools increases the risk of harm and violence to school staff and learners. Whenever school staff and learners are exposed to armed conflict, they face serious risks, not just from the threats of violence against them, but also from the changed environment; for example, having weaponry and ammunition present in a building with children places the children at increased risk. It disrupts the school's functioning, places it at increased risk of attack, and often frightens parents into keeping their children – especially girls – at home.

As armed personnel enter the school they may inflict harm on anyone present, and their presence can cause panic, which may exacerbate the situation as innocent parties attempt to flee, or they may need to use force to enter the building or remain in it, further risking the physical or psychological well-being of learners and school staff.

Abuses by troops in and around schools can have serious consequences for the safety of students and education staff, as well as for the students' ability to learn.[37] Further to this, evidence shows that the military use of schools increases

32   Human Rights Watch, 2017. *Protecting Schools from Military Use: Law, Policy, and Military Doctrine.* Online.
     See www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/20/protecting-schools-military-use/law-policy-and-military-doctrine
33   Human Rights Watch, 2017 Dreams *Turned into Nightmares*
34   Human Rights Watch, 2017. *No Class: When Armed Groups Use Schools in the Central African Republic.* Online.
     See www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/23/no-class/when-armed-groups-use-schools-central-african-republic
35   Human Rights Watch, 2017. *Protecting Schools from Military Use*
36   GCPEA, 2014. *Education Under Attack.* New York: GCPEA.
37   Human Rights Watch, 2015. *'Our School Became the Battlefield': Using Schools for Child Recruitment and Military Purposes in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.* Online. See www.hrw.org/report/2015/10/27/our-school-became-battlefield/using-schools-child-recruitment-and-military

both the actual and the perceived risk of rape and sexual violence by armed actors operating inside or around schools.[38] The military use of schools damages and destroys an often already insufficient and poor-quality infrastructure, as fighters who occupy schools often burn the classroom doors, desks and chairs, as documented by Human Rights Watch in places like eastern Ukraine and the Central African Republic.[39]

Furthermore, when armed forces enter the building, this can prompt crossfire from their opposition and can make the building and grounds a legitimate target for enemy attack.[40]

Finally, even after armed groups have left the school or university, the building may still be a dangerous environment for children if fighters leave behind unused munitions or other military equipment.[41] In a report by Human Rights Watch about the military use of schools in the Central African Republic, schools that were vacated continued to be affected by the close proximity of fighters to the school grounds, which restricted the ability of students to attend lessons.[42]

38  GCPEA, 2012. *Lessons in War: Military Use of Schools and Other Education Institutions during Conflict*. New York: GCPEA.
39  Human Rights Watch, 2017 *No Class: When Armed Groups Use Schools in the Central African Republic*. Online. See www.hrw.org/report/2017/03/23/no-class/when-armed-groups-use-schools-central-african-republic and Human Rights Watch, 2016. *Studying Under Fire: Attacks on Schools, Military Use of Schools During the Armed Conflict in Eastern Ukraine*. Online. See www.hrw.org/report/2016/02/11/studying-under-fire/attacks-schools-military-use-schools-during-armed-conflict
40  Human Rights Watch, 2017. *No Class*
41  Human Rights Watch, 2016. *Studying Under Fire*
42  Human Rights Watch, 2017. *No Class*

# CASE STUDY

## Yasmina*, 10, Iraq



**Yasmina, 10, recently fled fighting in Mosul. She is now living in Hammam Al Alil Refugee Camp.**

'When the soldiers got close to our neighbourhood, ISIS began firing mortars near to our street. It was horrible and we hid in our house. My brother went outside and was speaking on a mobile phone. Then a sniper shot him in his head. He died straight away. He was only 14. When the government soldiers arrived they told us to leave. We walked all the way here [over 20 miles]. We left our home early in the morning and didn't get here until night time. We had to leave all our things. We were really thirsty but when we arrived at the Screening Site we were given food and water. Back in Mosul there was hardly any food or water. For weeks we had been mixing just flour and water to eat – that was all we had. My father lost his job when ISIS took control of Mosul. We had no money to buy food. So we sold all our things. Our furniture, our jewellery, even our clothes. **At school ISIS taught us about bullets and bombs. They showed us how to use weapons. So we left school. They registered me but I didn't go.** We spent the whole time sitting at home. We were bored – there was nothing to do. Even television was forbidden. They left us the television but took the satellite dish and receiver. Now we feel safe in the camp. Before we were in hell and now we are in heaven. Here, I go to the TLS [Temporary Learning Space] every day. They teach us lessons. I am learning the English alphabet. Today we have a maths test. It is on odd numbers and I have been studying hard. I like it there very much.'

(Yasmina's story was shared by Save the Children)  Photo: Mark Kaye/Save the Children

# Section 3: Children at risk from natural disasters

**What is it?**

Worldwide, we are witnessing an increase in the frequency, severity and unpredictability of natural hazards and disasters.[43] One of the key challenges this presents is ensuring that schools are safe and that girls and boys and their teachers are as prepared as they can be for times of disaster. Education is also itself a powerful tool for reducing disaster losses by helping to build societies' resilience to hazards.

One of the most significant consequences of disasters is the impact they have on children's education. Worldwide, approximately 1.2 billion students are enrolled in primary and secondary school; of these, 875 million school children live in high seismic risk zones[44] and hundreds of millions more face regular flood, landslide, extreme wind and fire hazards. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that around 50–60 per cent of the population affected by disasters globally are children. This is particularly concerning, as an upsurge in large earthquakes is expected during 2018.[45] Disasters can affect education in a number of ways, ranging from immediate loss of life, through to long-term impacts on societal health, stability and prosperity.

Many children spend up to 50 per cent of their waking hours in school, yet all too often schools are not constructed or maintained to be disaster-resilient. Poorly constructed school facilities lead to loss of life and life-long injury and disability for millions of children and school staff around the world.[46]

**Why does it happen?**

Unfortunately, in many of the countries that are most at risk from weather-related disasters, climate change is accelerating the frequency of these events, and education systems are not prepared to deal with the impacts.

According to a 2015 report from the UN,[47] the rate of weather-related disasters is growing. Between 2005 and 2014, the average incidence of weather-related disasters was 335 per year, an increase of 14 per cent on the average annual incidence between 1995 and 2004, and almost twice the average recorded from 1985 to 1995. By the end of this decade, up to 175 million children are likely to be affected every year by the kinds of disasters brought about by climate change.[48] In addition to climate-related disasters, slower onset changes in climate are affecting livelihoods and making water and fuel collection

more difficult. These stresses influence families' decisions about whether to send children to school, particularly girls.[49]

Compounding this worrying trend in disaster frequency is the fact that societies are often woefully underprepared to deal with disasters. When disasters strike, it is critical that the communities affected are as prepared as they can be to respond. When schools are not built on safe sites and the materials used to build them are not of sufficient quality, the safety of children is put at risk when disasters occur. Without proper disaster management, preparation and training, schools susceptible to disasters become increasingly unsafe places to be. Before disasters happen, it is crucial that children and teachers are familiar with the drills that can lead to safe evacuation. It is important that there are robust plans in place to reunite children with their families and to ensure that education continues. Teachers and other members of school staff are often not trained to deal with disaster situations but such training can be the difference between life and death in an emergency situation.

In addition, the broader education curriculum often doesn't include

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[43]   Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2012. *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation* (SREX)

[44]   B. Wisner et al., 2004. *School Seismic Safety: Falling Between the Cracks?*

[45]   R. McKie, 18 November 2017. 'Upsurge in Big Earthquakes Predicted for 2018 as Earth Rotation Slows', *The Observer.* Online. See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/18/2018-set-to-be-year-of-big-earthquakes

[46]   UNISDR, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies and Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, 2009. *Guidance Notes on Safer School Construction.* Online. See www.wcdrr.org/wcdrr-data/uploads/885/Guidance%20notes%20on%20safer%20school%20construction.pdf

[47]   UNISDR, 2015. *The Human Cost of Weather-related Disasters 1995-2015.* Online. See www.unisdr.org/files/46796_cop21weatherdisastersreport2015.pdf

[48]   This is a considered estimate based on data from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies *World Disasters Report* (2006) in Save the Children, 2007. *Legacy of Disasters – The Impact of Climate Change on Children.* London: Save the Children. This figure is an increase from 66.5 million children per year in the late 1990s (A. Penrose and M. Takaki, 2006. 'Children's Rights in Emergencies and Disasters', *The Lancet.* 367, 698–699)

[49]   C. Bangay and N. Blum, 2010. 'Education Responses to Climate Change and Quality: Two Parts of the Same Agenda?', *International Journal of Educational Development* 30(4): 335–450

# CASE STUDY

## Diana*, 17, and Liz*, 13, Peru



'Before the floods, I saved my school supplies. I had to share them with my cousins and friends, we have to support each other so we can all go to school'

Diana, 17, should be finishing school this year. 'My dream is to graduate from school and university so my mother can be proud of me,' she says. But when flash floods hit her community in Peru's Piura Region, her house flooded and she and her mother were evacuated. While her mother decided to save bedding and the television, Diana focused only on saving the school supplies that her uncles had given her so she could continue her education.

When the flood water subsided, Diana and her mother started the clean-up process. Although they have cleared all the debris from the house, the remaining puddles around the building pose the risk of dengue fever. Despite this and the bad odours, Diana returns every Sunday from the shelter where she is living with her mother, to the family home, where she stays for a week to be closer to her school. 'I am staying at my house with my uncles. We have tried to clean everything but the house does not look like before, there are bad smells. Sometimes, my mum comes and visits me,' she says.

'Before the floods, I saved my school supplies. I had to share them with my cousins and friends, we have to support each other so we can all go to school,' explains Diana.

Her school, which was also flooded, is still drying out, creating humid conditions. The walls have lost some of their paint and the green areas have turned to mud. But Diana is one of the lucky ones. Thousands of children are still out of school, and have no idea when they will be able to return. Prior to the floods, Liz, 13, attended a girls' school that is still flooded. 'I miss my friends, the school and the teachers. I really want to go back to school', she says. Although her brothers have been able to return to their school, Liz and her friends are still waiting for the head teacher's announcement letting them know that their school is open again. They hope it will be soon as they do not want to miss any more of the school year. Despite her troubles, Liz is optimistic about her future: 'I want to return to school and study. My dream is to manage my own company.'

(Diana and Liz's stories were shared by Plan International UK.)  Photo: Plan International

important key messages and learning that can reduce risk and build resilience to disaster. When children and young people are not educated on the dangers posed by climate change and natural hazards, their ability to respond effectively is lessened.

**What is the impact?**

Children's education is often one of the first activities abandoned when disasters occur.[50] Families often depend on children's help, particularly that of girls,[51] for household income and to do chores, which can severely disrupt children's education. School buildings are often damaged or used to house disaster-affected communities. Access routes to schools may also be damaged. Children's learning can also suffer during and after disasters as a result of psychological and social stress, or physical injury. When a child's

education is interrupted by a disaster, that child is also more likely to remain out of school permanently,[52] impacting negatively on other development indicators and perpetuating pre-existing cycles of poverty and inequality.

In a DFID review in 2013, it was found that women and girls suffer a 'double impact' from disasters, whereby they are not only impacted by the disaster itself, but also by its repercussions. Evidence suggests that disasters can have a similar impact on girls' access to education. For example, in Pakistan, after the 2010 floods, 24 per cent of girls in Grade 6, compared with 6 per cent of boys, dropped out of school.[53] In Zimbabwe, research conducted by Plan International found that two in three heads of household said boys would be more likely to attend school than girls after a disaster.[54]

[50]   UNICEF and Plan International, 2011. *The Benefits of a Child-centered Approach to Climate Change Adaptation*. Online. See https://plan-international.org/publications/benefits-child-centred-approach-climate-change-adaptation#download-options

[51]   Plan International, 2013. *Because I am a Girl – the State of the World's Girls 2013: In Double Jeopardy - Adolescent Girls and Disasters*. Online. See https://plan-international.org/publications/state-worlds-girls-2013-adolescent-girls-and-disasters

[52]   M. Lewis and M. Lockheed, 2006. *Inexcusable Absence: Why 60 Million Girls Still Aren't in School and What to Do About It*. Centre for Global Development, quoted in A. Warner, A. Malhotra and A. McGonagle, 2012. *Girls Education, Empowerment and Transitions to Adulthood: a Shared Agenda* Washington: International Center for Research on Women

[53]   S. Bradshaw. and M. Fordham, 2013 Women, Girls, and Disasters: A review for DFID. Online. See www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/236656/women-girls-disasters.pdf

[54]   S. Opolot, 2013. *Research to Investigate the Situation of Adolescent Girls in Disasters: An Analysis of Existing Interventions and Related Gaps. Synthesis Report of Studies Conducted in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe & Mozambique*. Research Commissioned by Plan East and Southern Africa Regional Office.

Students and teachers at a floating lower secondary school in Kampong Chhnang province demonstrated their preparedness in the face of a disaster.

Photo: Fauzan Ijazah

# Section 4: Violence in schools during peace time

Certain groups of children, such as girls, children with disabilities, or children from racial, religious or ethnic minorities, tend to be most at risk – both in conflict-affected countries and in more stable contexts. For example, these children are more vulnerable to physical or sexual violence during the journey to school and when looking for a private place to go to the toilet at school, and they are also more likely to experience bullying and discrimination. Likewise, teachers and other education staff also experience violence simply for trying to do their jobs.

This section of the report examines the types of physical harm that affect girls, children with disabilities and teachers, and then looks at why this occurs and what impact it has on those affected. However, many other groups of children not discussed in this report face violence and physical harm simply for trying to get an education. These groups include ethnic and religious minorities, refugees and internally displaced children.

## What is it?
Violence poses a severe threat to the education of millions of children and young people around the world.

One form of this is often referred to as gender-based violence. While this type of violence affects both girls and boys, it is particularly prevalent and damaging for girls because of their physical and/or social vulnerability. Gender-based violence often occurs in unsupervised and private spaces – such as in school toilets or dormitories, or in classrooms outside teaching hours. Where practices become normalised, they can also happen in plain sight of others and during school time. Gender-based violence in schools can be perpetrated by other students, by teachers or by other school staff, and can come in several forms. Plan International estimates that at least 246 million boys and girls suffer from it every year.[55] Schoolgirls are especially vulnerable to sexual harassment, rape, coercion, exploitation and discrimination from teachers, staff and peers, as well as from members of the wider community. An estimated 150 million girls have experienced sexual violence in school.[56]

In sub-Saharan Africa, national surveys of male and female students find that gender-based violence is common at school. In several countries, sexual violence against schoolgirls appears to be an institutional norm.[57] Patriarchal values and attitudes that encourage male aggression, female passivity and harmful traditional practices such as

## Box 1
### Types of school-related gender-based violence

**Psychological attacks**
Acts of intimidation
Bullying, insults
Threats
Negligence
Verbal bullying
Tolerance or encouragement of male domination or aggression within the school environment
Seduction

**Physical attacks**
Corporal and degrading punishment
Fights
Physical bullying
Compulsory chores

**Sexual attacks**
Sexual bullying
Touching without consent
Transactional sex
Rape

[55]   Plan's estimate is based on the following calculation: the 2006 UN Study on Violence against Children (see footnote 47) reported that 20–65 per cent of schoolchildren were affected by verbal bullying – the most prevalent form of violence in schools. Based on UNESCO's 2011 *Global Education Digest* report, 1.23 billion children were in primary or secondary school on any given day, and Plan estimates that 20 per cent of the global student population is 246 million children. Therefore, Plan estimates that at least 246 million boys and girls suffer from school-related GBV every year. Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, 2011. *Global Education Digest 2011: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World.* UNESCO Institute of Statistics: Montreal.
[56]   Plan International, 2013. *A Girl's Right to Learn Without Fear.* Plan Limited: Woking
[57]   F. Leach, 2003. 'Learning to Be Violent: The Role of the School in Developing Adolescent Gendered Behaviour', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education,* 33(3): 385–400.

child marriage are drivers for school-related gender-based violence across sub-Saharan Africa.[58] [59]

Children with disabilities are also at disproportionate risk from physical and sexual violence[60] and discrimination. Violence against children with disabilities – by teachers, other staff and fellow students – is common in schools.[61] Students with disabilities often become the targets of violent acts, including physical threats and abuse, verbal abuse and social isolation. Such cases of violence make schools unsafe places for children with disabilities and perpetuate a cycle of exclusion and high rates of dropout. This violence impacts on children's ability to obtain a quality education. Bullying or the fear of bullying can mean that parents prefer not to send their children, especially their daughters, to school, which can lead to these girls becoming further isolated in their communities and limit their educational opportunities.

Violence is not just perpetrated against students but also school staff, such as teachers. Violence against teachers can take a variety of forms, from physical attacks to intellectual crackdowns. These types of violence 'obstruct teaching and have a malign influence on the working environment

## Box 2
### Violence against teacher-training students in Mexico

Physical violence against teachers has been used across the world, both in conflict and non-conflict zones. One illustrative example is the forced disappearance of 43 teacher-training students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico, in 2014. These students vanished after travelling to Iguala, a historic city in Guerrero State, to protest against discriminatory hiring practices and to try to raise money for a trip to commemorate the Tlatelolco massacre. After a clash with municipal police, the 43 students were never seen or heard from again. These student teachers were targeted for their views, setting a dangerous precedent of violence against dissenters and thereby compromising the ability of teachers to act as advocates for their beliefs.

(This case study was shared by the National Education Union – NUT Section.)

of teachers and the quality of learning of pupils.'[62] It is imperative that teachers are protected from all violence, in order to ensure that schools are safe spaces for them and their students.

### Why does it happen?

**Harmful gender norms**
Acts of gender-based violence against girls are the result of unequal power relations and harmful gender norms and stereotypes, with perpetrators often holding positions of power. Teachers and educational staff have been shown to use the authority of

their position to sexually abuse girls at school. In Cameroon,[63] Central African Republic[64] and Senegal,[65] girls who were victims of sexual abuse at school identified their teachers as the main perpetrators of these acts. Seventy per cent of respondents in a UNICEF study in Botswana had experienced sexual harassment, and 20 per cent had been asked for sex by a teacher. In an ActionAid study in Kenya, 5 per cent of girls reported having been forced to have sex with a teacher.[66]

The unequal power relations that drive gender-based violence are particularly pertinent for girls with disabilities,

58 P.S. Pinheiro, 2006. *World Report on Violence Against Children*, UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children: Geneva. pp.128-30.

59 T.J. Nhundu and A. Shumba, 2001. 'The Nature and Frequency of Reported Cases of Teacher-Perpetrated Child Sexual Abuse in Rural Primary Schools in Zimbabwe', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 25(11): 1517-34.

60 Save the Children and Handicap International, 2011. *Out from the Shadows: Sexual Violence Against Children with Disabilities*. London: Save the Children.

61 UNICEF, 2005. *United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children: Summary report, thematic meeting on violence against disabled children*. New York: UNICEF.

62 European Trade Union Committee for Education, 2010. *Updated ETUCE Action Plan on Preventing and Tackling Violence in Schools*. Online. See https://www.csee-etuce.org/images/attachments/ETUCE_Action_Plan_2010_Preventing_and_Tackling_Violence_in_School_EN.pdf

63 D. Mbassa Menick, 2002. 'School-related Sexual Abuse in Cameroon: Results from Research-action in Yaoundé', *Medicine Tropicale* (mars), 62(1): 58–62

64 UNICEF, Plan West Africa, Save the Children Sweden and ActionAid, 2010. *Too often in silence*. Online. See https://www.unicef.org/wcaro/documents_publications_4271.html

65 B. N dour, 2008. *Study of Violence on Girls at School: Initiative for Equity and Gender Equality in General Secondary Education*, cited in Plan, 2014. *Victims of School: School-related, Gender-based Violence Stands in the Way of Girls' and Boys' Right to an Education*. Online. See plan-international.org/publications/victims-school

66 F. Leach, M. Dunne and F. Salvi, 2013. *Global Review of Current Issues and Approaches in Policy, Programming and Implementation Responses to SRGBV for the Education Sector*. Background research paper prepared for UNESCO. Brighton, University of Sussex. p.12. See http://www.ungei.org/index_5709.html

as they experience exclusion and discrimination both on the basis of being female and on the basis of having a disability. These inequalities intersect and create new forms of discrimination. For example, girls with disabilities are often seen as helpless, asexual and powerless, which puts them at particularly high risk from sexual violence. Sexual violence is also perpetuated by harmful stereotypes and myths about disability, such as that having sex with a virgin can lift curses. Girls with specific impairments are also more at risk; for example, in some areas there are myths that having sex with a person with albinism will bring good luck. Girls with disabilities experience sexual violence at severe and chronic levels compared to their non-disabled peers within the family, in institutions and in the community.[67] While data on sexual violence is limited, studies that do exist suggest that girls with disabilities experience higher rates of sexual violence than their non-disabled peers. A study in Uganda found that disabled girls reported slightly more physical violence overall and nearly twice as much sexual violence as non-disabled girls. One in four girls with disabilities reported experiencing sexual violence.[68] Given that many cases of sexual violence go unreported, the real figure is likely to be much higher.

## Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment has been proven to have a negative effect on a child's education. Alongside physical and mental harm, it has also been shown to damage familial and social relationships, and it increases aggressive behaviour.[69] Despite progress made by many countries across the world, only 10 per cent of the world's children are legally protected from all forms of corporal punishment.[70]

When children are victims of physical punishment in schools, they are deprived of their right to freedom from all forms of violence, as well as from their rights to development and education. The acceptance of corporal punishment can often be due to cultural or religious norms; a survey undertaken by Save the Children in Afghanistan showed that 62 per cent of respondents thought their community was tolerant towards the physical punishment of children, and 41 per cent of adults believed that they needed to use physical punishment in order to raise or educate children properly.[71]

Corporal punishment often occurs when teachers feel a lack of control over their pupils or their classroom, which may be as a consequence of overcrowding, either as a long-term situation, or as a result of a humanitarian crisis. Alternatively, it may be due to student behaviour appearing out of control, while in reality these perceived behavioural issues are often caused by disabilities or learning difficulties such as Tourette's syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, and others. Human Rights Watch found that in the US, over 200,000 children a year were punished by being paddled, and that one in five of these children had a disability.[72]

## Bullying

It's estimated that 246 million children will experience some form of bullying or school violence every year;[73] it's a global problem that affects children in every country in the world. Acts of bullying can be passive as well as proactive, and can include forms of neglect, verbal and physical harassment, and exclusion, as well as many other forms of mistreatment and disregard. In schools, perpetrators can be either students or teachers, and either group can be victims. Around 30 per cent of children who experience bullying don't tell anyone,[74] reflecting that under-reporting in everyday occurrences is a significant problem that needs to be tackled.

Children may experience bullying because they have a disability, because of their gender, as a result of ethnic or linguistic differences,

67    Leonard Cheshire Disability and UN Girls Education Initiative, 2017. *Still left behind: Pathways to Inclusive Education for Girls with Disabilities.* London: Leonard Cheshire Disability
68    K.M. Devries, N. Kyegombe, M. Zuurmond, et al., 2014. 'Violence against Primary School Children with Disabilities in Uganda: A Cross-sectional Study'. *BMC Public Health,* 14: 1017
69    Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018. *Research on the Negative Impact of Corporal Punishment.* Online. See http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/research/impact-corporal-punishment.html
70    Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2018. *Countdown to Universal Prohibition.* Online. See http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/progress/countdown.html
71    Save the Children, 2017. *Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on Violence and Harmful Practices Against Children in Afghanistan: A Baseline Study.* Online. See https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/knowledge-attitudes-and-practices-violence-and-harmful-practices-against-children
72    S. Rau Barriga, 2010. *Bringing Schools up to the Standards of Prisons.* Online. See https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/04/26/bringing-schools-standards-prisons
73    UNESCO and Global Education 2030 Agenda, 2017. *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report.*
74    UNESCO and Global Education 2030 Agenda, 2017. *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report.*

## Box 3:

### Bullying and discrimination experienced at school by children with disabilities

‘She wanted to go to school by herself. But when she went alone, children used to tease and beat her. She couldn’t concentrate on class work for long.’

Grandmother of 13-year-old Abida, Bangladesh[1]

‘In school, the other students make remarks. [My grand-daughter] cries when they hit her, but she can’t tell me who the students are that do this. She can’t speak of her studies as all her classmates do… They hit her with stones, but when she returns home she can’t say who has laughed at her and taunted her. She just weeps. So we can’t go to the school and tell them about it… People taunt and tease her so much that she can’t even go outside.’

Grandmother of seven-year-old Sema, Bangladesh[2]

‘Usually her friends tease her for being mad and they get into fights for which teachers would hit Menkhu… Menkhu gets more of the beating compared to other children. That’s why she doesn’t like to go to school.’

Mother talking about her daughter, who has an intellectual impairment, Nepal[3]

1  Sightsavers, 2015. We Can Also Make Change: Piloting Participatory Research with People with Disabilities and Older People, Chippenham: Sightsavers. See https://www.sightsavers.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/VOTM-full-report_WEB.pdf
2  Sightsavers, 2015. We Can Also Make Change: Piloting Participatory Research with People with Disabilities and Older People
3  Plan International and International Centre for Evidence in Disability, 2014. Include Us in Education! A Qualitative Research Study on Barriers and Enablers to Children with Disabilities in Nepal. Surrey: Plan International.

or because of their social status (for example, AIDS-orphaned children in both Zimbabwe[75] and southern India[76] experience significantly higher rates of bullying and other forms of stigmatisation than their peers).

The impact of bullying on a child’s mental and physical health, and on their education, is severe. Students may miss lessons or be unable to concentrate, be kept at home following parental concern, or drop out of school altogether. They also face increased difficulties when forming social relationships, and an increased likelihood of developing aggressive or antisocial behaviour.

The consequences are widespread and affect the whole school as well as those directly involved. Teachers may experience additional stress as a result of concern for pupils experiencing bullying, and it may cause tension between students, and spark further aggressive behaviour within the school. Outside of the school environment, the effects of bullying can resonate in wider society, as antisocial behaviour and social tensions spread, while lower academic attainment leads to lower employment levels – ultimately meaning an increased need for costly state support and intervention.

75  L. Xiaoming and C. Peilian, 2015. ‘Psychological Resilience Among Children Affected by Parental HIV/AIDS: A Conceptual Framework’, Journal of Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, 3(1): 217–35. See http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21642850.2015.1068698
76  S.P. Kumar et al., 2014. ‘Depression Among AIDS-orphaned children Higher than Among Other Orphaned Children in Southern India’, International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 8(13). See http://doi.org/10.1186/1752-4458-8-13

## Discrimination against children with disabilities

Children with disabilities often experience high levels of discrimination and violence, including from their peers, communities, families and teachers. For example, one student in Nepal reported that the teacher 'who beat me the most, he beat me because I couldn't understand what he was saying.'[77]

Some children with particular impairments are at particular risk from violence and exclusion. For example, children who have communication impairments, hearing impairments or intellectual impairments are particularly vulnerable to exclusion in schools. Owing to high levels of exclusion and a lack of accessible forms of communication, they may have trouble advocating for themselves or making themselves understood –both at school and at home. If the teaching, and learning materials used in schools do not take into account the differing needs of children with disabilities, these children may have difficultly attending school and learning.

Children with hearing impairments are often at an increased risk of assault because of communication challenges associated with their hearing loss and lack of access to certain forms of communication, or because perpetrators perceive that they will be less likely to communicate what has happened to them. Perpetrators can take advantage of the fact that these children are less likely or able to articulate what has happened to them. They are also vulnerable as they are less likely to hear signs of danger, such as someone approaching from behind.

Children who exhibit challenging behaviours (often common in children with more severe intellectual disabilities or developmental disabilities such as autism) can be at higher risk of physical violence. They are often misunderstood as poor performers or difficult children. Inappropriate behaviour management techniques are often used, such as chaining the child up and or restraining them, to prevent them from exhibiting challenging or harmful behaviour, self-damage (such as biting oneself) and aggression. This causes children further distress and they are at risk of further assault.

## Rights-based violence and intellectual discrimination

Teachers also face rights-based violence, particularly in relation to unionisation. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has 166 parties, including the UK, sets out '[t]he right of everyone to form trade unions and join the trade union of his choice'.[78] Unions allow teachers to connect and share learning and best practice, as well as to create a united force in support of their rights and freedoms. In some countries, however, unionisation has been seen as threatening, and union leaders have faced persecution. In Iran, for example, the former Secretary-General of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association was targeted for organising peaceful protests and campaigning for free public education for all. Esmail Abdi, a maths teacher, was arrested in June 2015 while attempting to attend Education International's World Congress in Canada. In February 2016, he was sentenced to six years in prison by the Iranian authorities. He began serving his sentence in November 2016.

Abdi represents one of many trade unionists across the globe who have been subjected to rights-based violence as a result of peaceful work in defence of human rights. The persecution of teachers hugely affects their ability and freedom to teach and undermines the teaching profession. Teachers must be allowed to be active participants in their unions, in order to ensure the safety of schools and thereby the education of their students.

Teachers, as educated members of society, are also victims of intellectual discrimination. This sees their thoughts and ideas silenced by governments in a bid to stifle alternative discourses. For example, in Turkey, following the failed coup attempt in 2016, the Government cracked down on education professionals. This resulted in the reported revocation of 21,000 teaching licences and the termination of the employment of 15,000 Education Ministry employees. These teachers and support staff were targeted as part of a government effort to 'weed out' supporters of the coup attempt. They faced persecution as a direct result of their profession.

## Infrastructure and environment

Another compounding factor that contributes to the physical harm of children in and around school is the

77   Plan International and International Centre for Evidence in Disability, 2014. *Include Us in Education! A Qualitative Research Study on Barriers and Enablers to Children with Disabilities in Nepal.* Online. See https://plan-international.org/publications/include-us-disability-inclusion-education

78   The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was opened for signature on 16 December 1966, 993 UNTS 3 and entered into force on 3 January 1976.

school infrastructure and environment. For example, one in three children currently lack access to safe and adequate sanitation while 1 in 10 lack access to clean water.[79] Adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools are as vital to education as pens and books. Yet globally, 31 per cent of schools, and over 50 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, do not have clean water, and 34 per cent lack adequate toilets.[80] This results in millions of children being forced to drop out of school every year, while others are left feeling unsafe.

Sub-standard toilets within schools are also a risk to many children. Schools toilets may be poorly located, badly lit and lacking doors or locks. Many girls report feeling particularly unsafe[81] at inadequate latrine blocks on school grounds, where bullying, harassment and even rape are all too common occurrences and can lead to girls dropping out of school.[82] Female-only facilities are also important for women teachers. New research from The Gambia, for instance, has found that 'the provision of separate facilities and drinking water is essential for women teachers' if they are to be able to work

79   WHO and UNICEF, 2017. *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines.* Geneva: World Health Organization and UNICEF. See https://washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-launch-version0

80   UNICEF, 2015. *Advancing WASH in Schools Monitoring.* Online. See https://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/Advancing_WASH_in_Schools_Monitoring(1).pdf

81   G.S. Gonsalves et al., 2015. *Reducing Sexual Violence by Increasing the Supply of Toilets in Khayelitsha, South Africa: A Mathematical Model. PLOS ONE* 10(4): e0122244. See https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0122244

82   SHARE, 2011. *Fear and Anger: Perceptions of Risks Related to Sexual Violence Against Women Linked to Water and Sanitation in Delhi, India.* Online. See http://www.shareresearch.org/research/fear-and-anger-perceptions-risks-related-sexual-violence-against-women-linked-water-and

# CASE STUDY

## Agrina*, 15, Zambia



Agrina, 15, lives with her mother, father and two brothers in the Southern District of Zambia. Every day she sets off on her walk to school extremely early, at 4.30am. She arrives at school at 7.15am after walking for nearly three hours, over dry, dusty, hilly, terrain. As her school has no running water, Agrina shares responsibility for collecting water for the school from a pump two kilometres away.

Agrina used to walk to school with her friends, but they dropped out of school so now she has to walk alone. She is scared of animals like poisonous snakes and rabid dogs and gets frightened if she is alone, especially as she feels intimidated by 'men who are not good'.

There are only two filthy latrines at Agrina's school, which are used by over 180 students. The latrines are poorly constructed over pits and there is a concern that these could collapse at any time putting the students at a huge risk. The latrines have no doors, only a wall outside partly shields them from prying eyes. Agrina says she doesn't feel very comfortable in the school toilets because they are so exposed and so she can't relax – in her words 'my mind is always conscious that someone might walk in on me'.

Agrina would love to spend her time studying instead of collecting water and when she is older she dreams of being a nurse. She doesn't have much free time, so when she does she prefers to study than to play because she wants very much to finish school.

(Case study shared by WaterAid)  Photo: Tom Pilston/WaterAid

in rural locations.[83] And when girls hit puberty, they further require access to menstrual hygiene management facilities and education in school. Cultural taboos and myths around menstruation, according to which menstruating women and girls are seen as 'dirty' and 'impure' also exist, and they put girls at serious risk.

Further to this, a lack of secure and accessible provision and infrastructure in schools for children with disabilities leaves these children vulnerable to accidents, abuse and exclusion. For example, few schools have toilets with suitable disabled access, resulting in children with disabilities not being able to relieve themselves during the school day, which causes health problems as well as embarrassment. A lack of accessible and secure toilet facilities, especially in cultures where modesty is emphasised, leaves children with disabilities, especially girls, at risk of abuse and unable to manage toileting and menstruation in a safe way. Furthermore, an inaccessible environment may reinforce stereotypical and negative attitudes about whether children with disabilities can function as students.

To combat these problems, the physical structures within which teachers conduct lessons must comply with building regulations and conform to international standards. Schools must have inclusive designs and protection from the elements, with issues such as asbestos and fire safety adequately addressed. Teachers must be able to feel confident in their

classrooms, knowing that the building and their classroom create a positive learning environment.

Finally, safe schools require adequately staffed classrooms. Every student deserves to be taught by a well-trained teacher in a class of an appropriate size. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education noted in a 2012 report, '[o]vercrowded classrooms undermine quality education in many developing countries'.[84] This will require governments and donors to focus on hiring and retaining staff, particularly as the UNESCO Institute of Statistics has indicated that almost 69 million more teachers are needed globally in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4. An understaffed classroom is an unsafe classroom, both for students and for their teachers.

## Reporting mechanisms

Despite progress, there remains a lack of global data on violence that takes place in and around schools. This is not only because it is an under-funded and under-researched area, but also because there are a multitude of reasons why young people do not report violence. Schoolchildren do not always have access to safe, child-friendly reporting mechanisms, and do not always understand that cultures of violence are not acceptable. The fear of stigma and shame can also deter young people from reporting violence.

Schools often lack or fail to implement effective child protection policies and many do not consider the higher risk of abuse encountered by children with

disabilities. This means that many schools do not have mechanisms to support a bullied child effectively and deal with a perpetrator. Stigma and discrimination also affect how authorities deal with complaints. The disability and gender bias exhibited by some authorities – for example, police and community leaders – does not afford the girls and disabled children enough importance for their complaints of sexual violence and other forms of abuse to be taken seriously.

## What is the impact?

The impact of violence in schools is far-reaching and difficult to quantify. A child experiencing violence in an unsafe school is more likely to skip school and/or achieve lower grades and is at greater risk of dropping out.[85] Violence can lock young people in an intergenerational poverty cycle[86] and can have detrimental long-term consequences for their physical, emotional and psychological well-being.[87] As well as risks to the individual, school violence can have wide-reaching social and economic consequences. A study conducted by Plan International revealed that the total cost of school violence, across just 13 countries where data was available, was almost to US$60 billion. As discussed previously, violence in schools can take place in a multitude of forms, each having its own devastating impact on a child, their education and their long-term development. In addition to this, children and young people who experience

83   Education International, 2018. *The Gambia Teachers Union: Factors Preventing Female Teachers from Taking Up Rural Postings* (unpublished)

84   UN General Assembly, 2 May 2012. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education on Normative Action for Quality Education*, Kishore *Singh*. A/HRC/20/21. Online. See http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session20/A-HRC-20-21_en.pdf

85   UNESCO and Global Education 2030 Agenda, 2017. *School Violence and Bullying*, p.10

86   Plan International, 2010. *Prevention Pays: The Economic Benefits of Ending Violence in Schools*. Woking: Plan Limited. See https://www.planusa.org/docs/education-prevention-pays-2010.pdf

87   K.M. Devries et al., 2014. 'School Violence, Mental Health, and Educational Performance in Uganda', *Journal of Pediatrics*, 133(1): *e129-e137*

An inclusive playground built by Humanity & Inclusion.

Photo: Humanity & Inclusion UK

school violence are more likely to experience depression, loneliness, anxiety and low self-esteem.[88]

Being at the receiving end of gender-based violence in schools is correlated with lower academic achievement and economic security, as well as poorer long-term health.[89] For instance, in West and Central Africa, many girls subjected to school-related violence in the form of rape or forced or coerced sex are more likely to have early and unintended pregnancies and, as a consequence, face an increased risk of their education being curtailed.[90]

Violence against children with disabilities can have similarly detrimental effects. As many as half of the estimated 65 million primary and lower secondary-school age children with disabilities in developing countries are out of school.[91] Many leave after only a few months or years because they are gaining little from the experience. This means that only 5 per cent of all children with disabilities worldwide complete primary school. However owing to a lack of data, the impact violence has on children with disabilities is not fully understood.

Intersecting disadvantages create even greater risks to children's safety and can cause even more disruption to their education. Negative attitudes mean that girls with disabilities are less likely than boys with disabilities to be supported by their families, and that they face multiple forms of discrimination, which can hugely undermine their confidence. Girls with disabilities often grow up being told they cannot achieve. This means that they can be trapped in a mindset of 'knowing they can't be accepted'[92] which can lead to them accepting the advances of men who violate their rights, or not disclosing violence if it takes place Not only do girls with disabilities experience high levels of violence, but the risk of violence also impedes their ability to access high-quality education. Families of girls with disabilities often worry that their daughter will risk sexual violence if she attends school and finds herself in an empty classroom or a secluded part of the playground, or alone in the toilets. This can mean parents are reluctant to send their disabled daughters to school and that these girls miss out on education and become even more isolated in their communities.

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88  UNESCO, 2017. *Let's Decide How to Measure School Violence.* Global Education Monitoring Report: Policy Paper 29. Paris: UNESCO.
89  P.S. Pinheiro, 2006. *World Report on Violence against Children.* In regional consultations for this study, physical and psychological abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and sexual violence in schools were consistently reported as reasons for absenteeism, dropping out and lack of motivation for academic achievement.
90  UNGEI, 2017. *Let's Decide How to Measure School Violence.*
91  The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, 2016. *The Learning Generation: Investing in education for a changing world.*
92  Sightsavers, 2015. *Connecting the Dots Uganda: Investing in Youth with Disabilities for Enhanced Access to Employment in 4 Districts of Rural Uganda. End Term Project Evaluation.* Chippenham: Sightsavers.

# Section 5: The international response to the need to make schools safe

Bold commitments have been made by world leaders to protect children from violence and to ensure that all children can access a safe, high-quality education. Sustainable Development Goal 4 commits world leaders to ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and to promoting lifelong learning. The goal includes a target to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability- and gender-sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

However, as this report documents, the world remains a long way off achieving this goal while so many children are at risk of harm simply by trying to go to school. If the international community fails to act, the world's most vulnerable children will continue to be exposed to violence and risks that disrupt their opportunity to learn.

## Protecting children from attacks

### Global response context
International efforts to protect children at school are accelerating. The UN Security Council has recognised the devastating consequences of attacks on schools and of the military use of schools in a series of resolutions, including, most recently, in Security Council resolution 2225 (2015), which expressed 'deep concern that the military use of schools in contravention of applicable international law may render schools legitimate targets of attack, thus endangering the safety of children' and encouraged all member states 'to take concrete measures to deter such use of schools by armed forces and armed groups'.

In early 2015, the governments of Norway and Argentina led a consultative process, which culminated in the Safe Schools Declaration, a political commitment by countries to do more to protect students, teachers, schools and universities during armed conflict, including by endorsing and undertaking to use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. By endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, states express their support for the continuation of education during armed conflict, and for the implementation of concrete measures to deter armed personnel from using schools for military purposes. As of February 2018, 72 countries have signed the Declaration..

### Why the Safe Schools Declaration was created – and why it's essential for all states to sign up
Neither the Declaration nor the Guidelines are legally binding; instead they build upon international humanitarian law and other international agreements, by outlining specific steps to protect children and young people as a vulnerable group, as well as defending their right to education and the benefits that come with it. The Declaration and the Guidelines have been developed in consultation with military bodies, international organisations and governments.

Toolkits and expert advice are available to governments for the practical implementation of the steps set out in the Declaration and Guidelines.[93] The result is a Declaration that can really work – for military bodies, for national governments, and most importantly for children and their education.

By endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, countries commit themselves to taking several common-sense steps that will make it less likely that students, teachers, schools and universities will be attacked, and to mitigating the impact of attacks that do occur. These include the following:

- collecting reliable data on attacks on schools and universities and on the military use of these institutions
- assisting victims of attack
- investigating violations of national and international law and prosecuting perpetrators
- developing and promoting 'conflict-sensitive' approaches to education
- seeking to continue education during armed conflict
- supporting the UN work on children and armed conflict
- using the Guidelines to protect schools and universities from military use, and bringing them into domestic policy and operational frameworks.

The Safe Schools Declaration could help save the lives of hundreds of students and teachers every year. It could also help encourage children safely back to lessons, especially those who survived attacks or are too scared to travel to school because of fighting.

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93   For example, GCPEA, 2017. *The Safe Schools Declaration: A Framework for Action.* Online.
     See http://protectingeducation.org/news/gcpea-releases-framework-action-implement-safe-schools-declaration

72 countries – over one-third of the world's countries – have endorsed the Declaration, including many that are affected by armed conflict. Global endorsement of the Declaration would be a big step towards preventing further invasions of schools in conflict situations.

So far, the UK has not joined the 72 countries, including its long-time allies France and Canada, that have signed up to the Declaration. This is not because British soldiers have unlawfully attacked schools when they've been fighting in other countries. Far from it. In fact, UK armed forces already operate in line with the Safe Schools promise. By signing up to the Declaration, Britain would be sending a very strong message to other countries and other armies.

**Protecting children from natural hazards and disasters**
While disasters such as earthquakes and floods are very difficult to manage and have a devastating impact on education provision, there are certain steps that can be taken to minimise the risk they present and ensure that children and young people are kept as safe as possible when disaster strikes. In recent years, as the broader risk reduction and resilience agenda has developed, stakeholders in the education sector have taken steps to ensure that education is not left behind in efforts to manage disasters and build resilience.

Following a global conference on Disaster Risk Reduction back in 2005, the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES) was

> # Box 4
> ## Is the Safe Schools Declaration having any impact?
>
> - In the Central African Republic, where fighting between ethnic groups erupted more than two years ago, UN peacekeepers and police have been told by their commanders never to use schools as barracks again, after Human Rights Watch found UN troops sleeping in primary school classrooms.[1]
> - In Afghanistan, where at least 40 schools were attacked in 2016, the Ministry of Education issued two directives demanding that government soldiers stop occupying schools for military purposes. The Education Ministry has used the declaration to advocate for the removal of military checkpoints and bases from schools.
> - Nigeria is formulating a national policy on Safe Schools and working to enhance school security.
> - Somalia's Defence Ministry has expanded its child protection unit and charged it with ensuring student safety.
> - Non-state armed groups in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have been trained in how to protect schools from military use.
> - In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a ministerial directive has explicitly prohibited the requisition of schools, and monitoring and reporting on attacks on schools have improved.[2]
>
> 1  As evidenced in the inter-office memorandum from the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA/OSRSG/046/2015, 24 December 2015. See https://minusca.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/151224-046_minusca_directive_on_the_protection_of_schools_and_universities_against_military_use.pdf
> 2  As evidenced in Ministerial Directive on the Implementation of the Action Plan, Department of National Defence and Veterans, NoVPM/MDNAC/CAB/2089/2012, 3 November 2012, Democratic Republic of Congo. See protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/examples_of_domestic_law_guidance_and_practice.pdf

formed. The group aims to strengthen international coordination, increase knowledge and advocate on risk-reduction education and safety in the education sector. It also aims to contribute to a global culture of safety and resilience through education and knowledge. Last year the group updated its mission and objectives, to ensure alignment with the Sustainable Development Goal framework. In doing so, the group developed a global framework to

be used in policy-making, planning and programming to ensure that education is always as protected as it can be from the dangers posed by disaster.

**The Comprehensive School Safety Framework**
The Comprehensive School Safety Framework is the culmination of the aforementioned efforts to reduce risk and build resilience in the education sector. The Framework sets out to

- protect students and educators from death, injury and harm in schools
- plan for the continuity of education through all expected hazards and threats
- safeguard education sector investments
- strengthen risk reduction and resilience through education.

Comprehensive school safety is addressed by aligning education policy and practices with disaster management at national, regional, district and local school site levels. It rests on three pillars:
1. Safe learning facilities
2. School disaster management
3. Risk-reduction and resilience education.

With support from the UN's Safe Schools Campaign, the Comprehensive School Safety Framework is becoming increasingly visible in education policy and practice. In countries where disasters are common – such as Ecuador, Cuba, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, El Salvador and Panama – disaster risk reduction and disaster-preparedness activities have become part of the regular school curriculum and Safe Schools Programmes across the South American region are already saving lives.

Building on this initiative, the UN has also launched The Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools – a government-led global partnership for advancing Safe School Programme implementation at the national level. The Initiative focuses on motivating and supporting governments to develop national strategies and implement school safety. It also promotes good practice

## Box 5
### Safe School Leader Countries

Committed to supporting the implementation of the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools:

Algeria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, Finland, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Tunisia and Turkey.

and achievements in Safe School Programme implementation for replication in other countries and regions, helps identify challenges and offers technical assistance and particular expertise around the three pillars to support interested governments in implementing school safety at the national level.

**What is the UK doing?**
In its recently published Humanitarian Reform Policy, DFID set out its agenda to better manage risk and invest in disaster-preparedness and resilience. The policy recognises that it is crucial to strengthen education systems in developing countries, so that they are able to cope with crises. Specifically, DFID is committed to 'build the capacity of national health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation and social protection systems that cope with, and respond, to crises'. The policy also pledges to recognise the 'unique needs of girls and women, and boys and men, and the role of women as decision makers and leaders'. DFID now needs to turn this ambitious agenda into action and ensure that words are translated into deeds.

At this stage, DFID has a less structured and organised approach to reducing risk and building resilience through its education programmes and investments. It does not reference the pressing need for greater risk reduction and resilience-building in its education policy documents, and the importance of preparedness in education is not something that it has stated publicly as being important to tackling the global learning crisis.

It is unclear what level of collaboration takes place between staff designing resilience programmes in the Department and its cadre of expert education advisers. While there are advisers at DFID tasked with education in emergencies and gender-based violence in schools, protecting children from the risks of disasters at school is not being given the same level of attention. By supporting developing-country partners affected by natural disasters with the operationalisation of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework, DFID could increase the overall protection it offers to learning.

There are early signs that this may be happening, however. DFID is scaling up its efforts to build resilience to natural disasters and climate change in Nepal. The Nepal Safer Schools Project is expected to run for five

years and aims to operationalise and contribute to the Government of Nepal's School Sector Development Plan (2016–2023). It will prioritise districts in the centre and far West of Nepal that were not affected by the 2015 earthquakes but have been shown to be highly vulnerable to future earthquakes and other hazards, such as landslides, flooding and fire.

In summary, DFID is beginning to take steps to align its global leadership on education with its expertise on resilience and disaster-preparedness. However, natural disasters continue to threaten education and interrupt learning, and climate change will exacerbate this trend in the years to come. If DFID is to deliver on its pledge to tackle the learning crisis, a more comprehensive approach to building resilient education systems is needed.

**Protecting children and teachers from violence in peace time**

**Girls**
In August 2014, a coalition of governments, development organisations, civil society activists and research institutions came together to collaborate on ending gender-based violence in and around schools. The Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence has been a strong advocate for ensuring that schools remain safe places and has done a great deal since to recognise and respond to the violence that girls face in school.

In 2015, individual and collective advocacy from the Global Working Group led to significant gains in including discourse on gender-based violence and discrimination in schools in two key international development frameworks:

- Article 8 of the Incheon Declaration, endorsed at the World Education Forum, states: 'We recognise the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender based discrimination and violence in schools.'

- In Sustainable Development Goal 4a, world leaders have pledged to '[b]uild and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.'

In 2016 UN Women and UNESCO published the comprehensive *Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence*.[94] The document brings together existing literature on the topic and sets out a series of areas for reform.

**What is the UK doing?**
The UK Government has been at the forefront of the global effort to tackle violence against women and girls, and this very much includes violence that takes place in schools. The Department has a Violence Against Women and Girls helpdesk and publishes quarterly newsletters discussing new evidence, policy developments and other useful

pieces of information. In 2014, DFID published its comprehensive programmatic guidance on gender-based violence, entitled 'Addressing Violence against Women and Girls in Education Programming'.[95] DFID is one of a handful of government agencies that is part of the Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence and has spoken on a number occasions about the importance of tackling the issue. DFID has also funded programmes that seek to directly combat gender-based violence and harmful social norms. For example, its Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) has channelled hundreds of millions of pounds into overcoming barriers to education for girls. The Plan International GEC programme in Sierra Leone, for example, is employing innovative techniques to make adolescent girls feel safe from violence in school.

In 2016, at the DFID-hosted Girls Education Forum, the Government pledged to 'support efforts to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence in and around education institutions and communities, and ensure education facilities are child, disability and gender-sensitive to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.' The Department's recently published Education Policy recognises how important tackling school violence is for improving learning outcomes and outlines how the Government intends to further prioritise it from now on.

**Children with disabilities**
Children with disabilities are protected from violence and abuse

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94   UNESCO and UN Women, 2016. *Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence*. Paris and New York: UNESCO and UN Women.
95   See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-against-women-and-girls-addressing-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-education-programming

Jessica* studying with fellow classmates at Igamba Primary School, Tanzania

Photo: Martin Kharumwa/ Save the Children

by a number of international human rights conventions and international humanitarian law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which has been ratified by 175 countries, outlines the legal obligations of member states to protect all persons with disabilities from exploitation, violence and abuse (Article 16). States are also required to protect persons with disabilities, including children, in situations of armed conflict, in humanitarian emergencies and when natural disasters occur, under Article 11, in line with international humanitarian law.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child also requires that states to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, in Article 19. States are obliged to set up mechanisms to identify and respond to cases of maltreatment.

In international human rights law, there are also provisions for women and girls with disabilities; Article 6 of the UNCRPD recognises that they are subject to multiple forms of discrimination and says that states must ensure their rights are respected and protected.

A number of other international policy frameworks exist to promote safety. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 includes elements on disability, to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind in disaster response

and evacuation and that they are considered in emergency planning and preparedness.

The Sustainable Development Goals feature disability in five specific goals. Countries around the world must ensure that people with disabilities are meaningfully included in their country's development. States must ensure that people can access a quality education and productive employment, have safe and clean places to live, and be included in all parts of society.

Furthermore, there are four specific references to ending violence in the Sustainable Development Goals, including Target 5.2 to '[e]liminate all forms of violence against women and girls', and Target 16.2 to '[e]nd abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children'. As the available data clearly show that children with disabilities are more vulnerable to violence, these targets are unlikely to be met without a specific focus on children with disabilities.

**What is the UK doing?**
DFID has recognised the need for a more concerted effort around disability and development. It published its Disability Framework in 2014 and republished it in 2015. The Framework sets out how they plan to ensure that people with disabilities are systematically included in and benefit from international development. More recently, DFID has committed itself to becoming the Global Leader in disability inclusion.[96] Education was one of the initial areas of focus for DFID's work

on disability, with a commitment in 2014 to make sure that all schools it directly funds adhere to universal design principles.

For this ambition to be achieved, DFID will need to continue to include more people with disabilities in its programmes and policies. While some efforts have been made to do this, it is not yet systematic. To ensure the safety of all children with disabilities, DFID must make efforts to understand and address the underlying factors that lead to children with disabilities being at additional risk, such as stigma and discrimination. As stated above, DFID is leading the way on both girls' education and violence against women and girls. It must ensure that the specific experiences of girls and boys with disabilities are being considered and planned for in this work if it is going to effectively reach all children.

**Teachers**
Teachers are both a key means of protecting children in schools and a constituency that needs protecting itself. There are a number of key initiatives that support teachers' rights and help to uphold the status of the teaching profession.

The 1966 'Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers', initiated by UNESCO and the International Labour Organization, serves as the standard for the rights of teachers and the status of the teaching profession.[97] The adoption of this recommendation is marked annually on 5 October, which UNESCO has designated as World Teachers' Day.

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96   Bilateral development review
97   UNESCO and ILO, 1966. *Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers*. Online.
     See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_162034.pdf

Nada* in her tent in North Lebanon. Nada was denied enrolment at school three times because of physical and mental challenges, but is now going to school regularly.

Photo: Nour Wahid/Save the Children

The importance of teachers is recognised in the Sustainable Development Goals under Goal 4c, which states 'By 2030, [world leaders will] substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states.' Having enough teachers in a school is crucial to ensuring that the issue of overcrowding does not occur.

Article 9 of the Incheon Declaration states 'We [world leaders] will ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.' Well-trained and supported teachers create a safe atmosphere in the classroom.

The International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, formerly the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA, was established at the Oslo Education for All High Level Group meeting in December 2008. It is an international alliance of 131 national governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organization, civil society organizations, international development agencies and private sector organizations that 'advocates for, and facilitates the coordination of international efforts to provide sufficient numbers of well qualified teachers to achieve EFA goals'. It furthermore 'participates in and supports teacher development initiatives of policy-making and monitoring, knowledge production and resourcing'.[98]

**What is the UK doing?**
The UK is aware of the importance of teachers and of ensuring a strong teaching profession. In a letter to the Chair of the International Development Committee (IDC) in July 2017, the then Secretary of State for International Development, Priti Patel MP, explained that 'a priority issue should be to tackle the acute crisis in the teacher workforce and we are examining the evidence to support this as part of our policy refresh. This must include tackling endemic issues such as violence in the classroom.'[99] An IDC enquiry, the prompt for this letter, ultimately concluded that '[s]upporting teachers is a key aspect of improving education'.[100] The UK is a leader in international education development and includes training teachers as part of its work in this area.

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[98] UNESCO, 2016. *Our mission*. Online. See: http://www.teachersforefa.unesco.org/v2/index.php/en/about-us/our-mission/our-mission.

[99] Parliament UK, 2017. 'Appendix 1: Correspondence with the Secretary of State for International Development' in *House of Commons - DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind - International Development Committee*. Online.
See: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/367/36710.htm#_idTextAnchor062

[100] Parliament UK, 2017. '4 Improving the quality and equity of education' in *House of Commons - DFID's work on education: Leaving no one behind - International Development Committee*. Online. See: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/367/36707.htm#_idTextAnchor045

# Recommendations

**The UK should sign the Safe Schools Declaration**
The UK is already established as a leader in promoting education and upholding the safety of schools and civilians in conflict, as well as in supporting communities in protracted crises and fragile states. In 2017, the UK reiterated its 'zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse' and urged the UN to follow its lead, calling for 'the highest possible standards of protection for children, including actions to prevent abuse, investigate all allegations, and report annually on progress'.[101]

The Send My Friend to School coalition strongly urges the UK to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and encourage its fellow Commonwealth of Nations member states to do the same. By doing so, it would reinforce the view, for which there is growing global support, that attacking schools or using them for military purposes is not acceptable. This would also strengthen the UK's hand in discussions with countries where attacks on schools or their use by military forces is commonplace.

The Declaration has already been signed by a majority of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union and Council of Europe member states. The UK's failure to sign, when it has some of the most respected armed forces in the world, sends the wrong message to countries that more readily operate outside the bounds of global humanitarian norms.

**Other recommendations**
The UK should also do the following:

**1. Support governments to develop national education policies that protect children and education staff from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation both within and outside the school setting** DFID must work with aid-recipient governments to ensure they are adequately investing in teacher recruitment and creating safe working environments in order to retain teachers.

**2. Support the generation and gathering of evidence on how to tackle violence against children and education staff, and develop and share good practice and research on interventions to keep children safe within schools.** DFID should ensure that this research considers the range of interventions that are needed to keep all children safe, including children who are at higher risk, such as children with disabilities. DFID should support the development of robust practices to monitor the impact of interventions on children and school safety, which will help create a much-needed evidence base. DFID should also commission further research on violence in schools as part of global efforts to end violence against children.

**3. Ensure that marginalised children are prioritised in DFID's emergency response activities during conflict and disaster situations, especially within the education setting, so that they are more likely to be protected.** DFID should ensure that its emergency response activities contain explicit measures to ensure that the most marginalised children are included in planning and implementation.

**4. Ensure that its education programmes feature the requirement for all child protection policies to specifically mention the risks faced by the most marginalised children and the strategies needed to keep these children and education staff safe, including outside the school setting. :** Multi-sectoral violence-prevention strategies should be integrated across all education programmes. DFID should also work closely with multilaterals such as GPE and ECW to promote violence-prevention strategies in their programmes. Further actions DFID should take in its programming include:

a) DFID should review its support to teacher training. It should ensure that future investments support teachers to develop alternative, positive disciplinary approaches, take a whole-school approach to tackling violence, and ensure that teachers have the skills to support children with disabilities.

b) DFID should explore how it can better integrate the Comprehensive School Safety Framework into its bilateral resilience programmes. It should task one of its education advisors with the CSSF portfolio.

c) DFID should expand its 2014 commitment that all schools it directly funds will be accessible to children with disabilities, whether directly or indirectly. It should require these schools to meet universal design principles, as set out in its Policy on Standards of Accessibility for Disabled People.

d) DIFD must ensure that all schools it supports globally have adequate access to water, sanitation and hygiene services and facilities and that all education programmes, strategies and policies include the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, with targets and indicators included.

101   Lord T. Ahmad, 2017. *Protecting Children in Armed Conflict: Access to Education and Ending Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Impunity.* Speech to the Security Council. See https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/children-are-innocent-bystanders-in-times-of-conflict-caught-up-in-the-atrocities-taking-place-around-them

Maha*, 10, holding her book in a school supported by Save the Children in northern Syria.

Photo: Ahmad Baroudi/Save the Children

# ANNEX

**International humanitarian law**

International humanitarian law is a set of rules which seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict. International humanitarian law recognises the importance of providing education to children during armed conflict, offers specific protection to children, and acknowledges that educational facilities are ordinarily civilian objects not to be targeted unless they are turned into military objectives. The Fourth Geneva Convention states that during military occupation 'the Occupying Power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children'.[102]

Under international humanitarian law, education institutions are ordinarily considered civilian objects and awarded protection from attack. However, civilian objects can be converted into military objectives, for example, by using a school as a military barracks or a weapons store. Turning a school into a military objective subjects it to possible attacks from the enemy that might be lawful under international humanitarian law, which can have devastating impact on the safety of children and on their ability to continue their education.

**The Safe Schools Declaration**

The Safe Schools Declaration is a tool used by states to show their support for the protection of education during armed conflict, and demonstrate that as part of their support, they are committed to the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

The Declaration starts by setting out the threats that conflict brings to education and the lasting and widespread impact that attacks can have on schools, students and teachers. It then highlights the benefits that education can bring; not only generally, but also particularly in a time of conflict. These include bringing stability and routine to young people, as well as disseminating often life-saving knowledge. Education is recognised as having a vital role to play in promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations.

The Declaration welcomes existing efforts undertaken at national and international levels; it particularly highlights the importance of both the UN Security Council's mechanisms for monitoring and reporting violations against children and its support for member states on considering how to prevent armed groups from using schools during conflict. The Declaration also stresses the need to end impunity for perpetrators of violations against children and attacks on education.

It sets out seven actions that signatory states agree to:

- using the Guidelines and bringing them into domestic policy and operational frameworks

- collecting reliable data at a national level on attacks on schools and providing assistance to victims 'in a non-discriminatory manner'
- investigating allegations of violations and prosecuting perpetrators
- working on and supporting conflict-sensitive approaches to education
- ensuring that education is not interrupted during conflict, and that education facilities are re-established after being affected by conflict
- supporting the efforts of the UN Security Council's work on children and armed conflict
- meeting regularly (and inviting international organisations and civil society) to review the implementation of the Declaration and Guidelines.

The Declaration contains a number of commitments aimed at strengthening the prevention of, and response to, attacks on education during armed conflict. These include (1) improving the reporting of attacks on schools, (2) collecting reliable data on attacks and on the military use of schools and universities, (3) providing assistance to victims of attack, (4) investigating allegations of violations of national and international law and (5) prosecuting perpetrators where appropriate, plus (6) developing and promoting 'conflict-sensitive' approaches to education.

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[102]  S. Tawil, 2000. *International Humanitarian Law and Basic Education*, International Review of the Red Cross.
Online. See https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jqq4.htm

Further commitments include seeking to continue education and restore access to education faster after attack during armed conflict and supporting the work of the UN on children and armed conflict.

**The Guidelines**
In 2012, in response to growing interest in protecting children at school, a coalition of UN agencies and civil society organisations initiated consultations with experts from ministries of foreign affairs, education and defence, as well as armed forces of countries from various world regions, to develop pragmatic and realistic guidelines directed at both government armed forces and non-state armed groups on how to avoid the military use of schools and mitigate the negative consequences of such use.[103]

In 2014, the Government of Norway took over the global consultation on these guidelines, and in December 2014 it oversaw the release of the finalised Guidelines for Protecting Schools from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

The Guidelines work by first setting out the challenges that are faced on the ground, then making recommendations on how to mitigate against situations that put education at risk in real terms. They aim to work alongside existing international humanitarian law but are not themselves legally binding.

Various states have recognised the need for additional protection for vulnerable groups during times of conflict, and that the Declaration and Guidelines together can provide that protection for children and their right to education.

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[103]  Human Rights Watch, 2017. *Protecting Schools from Military Use*

Send My Friend to School is a UK civil society coalition of international development NGOs, teacher's unions and charities. The campaign undertakes a range of activities designed to increase community awareness of the state of education internationally and generate the political will necessary to ensure the UK plays an active and effective part in efforts to secure education for all. Send My Friend to School is the UK coalition of the Global Campaign For Education movement which is present in over 80 countries around the world, and aligns its work with the organisation's mission and aims.

## The Campaign's UK members are:

ActionAid
Christian Aid
Deaf Child Worldwide
Humanity & Inclusion UK
Leonard Cheshire Disability
NASUWT
National Education Union – NUT section
National Education Union – ATL section
Oxfam

Plan International UK
RESULTS UK
Save the Children
Sense International
Sightsavers
Steve Sinnott Foundation
University and College Union
VSO
WaterAid

**Front cover photo:**
Jonathan Hyams/Save the Children Class at a Save the Children supported school, Estancia, Iloilo, Philippines.