

**EVIDENCE REVIEW**  
**MITIGATING**  
**THREATS**  
**TO GIRLS'**  
**EDUCATION**  
**IN CONFLICT-**  
**AFFECTED**  
**CONTEXTS:**  
**CURRENT**  
**PRACTICE**

**PAOLA PEREZNIETO**  
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**WITH NORA FYLES**

OCTOBER 2017



// This review complements existing literature on education in conflict-affected contexts by shining a spotlight on practices that have supported girls' access to education. Promising approaches to support girls' education can overcome or mitigate the multiple threats girls face in conflict settings. //

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# List of abbreviations

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
APEP	Afghanistan Primary Education Programme
APES	Accelerated Primary Education Support
CA	Classroom assistant
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EFA	Education For All
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCPEA	Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRI	Interactive Radio Instruction
JC:HEM	Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MHM	Menstrual hygiene management
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
RABEA	Radio-Based Education for All

SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
START	National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
TEP	Teacher Emergency Package
UIS	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNCEDAW	United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WISE	Women's Rights through Information, Sensitisation and Education
WRC	Women's Refugee Commission

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# Executive summary

Conflict amplifies existing power dynamics and inequalities in families and societies because of the insecurity and fear caused by the upheaval of support structures. Conflicts generally result in the loss of livelihoods and changes in social roles for men and women. Girls, women, boys, and men have different experiences, face different risks, and have different ways of coping. During conflict, educational needs change and different barriers to education for girls and boys emerge or become more evident.

Structural inequalities often intensify during periods of crisis. Because they tend to be at a lower status than men and boys and generally have less access to financial resources, social capital, and legal means to protect themselves when conflict arises, the poorest women and girls can experience greater dependency, socioeconomic disempowerment, and limited social mobility. The lack of an enabling environment that actively promotes gender equality and equal access to opportunities both before and during crises is a fundamental threat to the ability of girls and women to fulfil their rights, including the right to education. At the same time, the social disruption experienced during conflict can present an opportunity to harness shifts in gender roles and responsibilities to set new precedents for gender equality (Wood, 2008; Nicolai, 2009; UNICEF, 2016).

Discussions of security and peace in the context of humanitarian emergencies do not reflect these inherent structural inequalities. For instance, the average number of women participating in official roles at peace negotiations remains notably low. UN Women (2012) reviewed a sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 to reveal that only four percent of signatories, 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses, and nine percent of negotiators were women. These numbers have not improved significantly since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognises the central role of women in conflict prevention, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

While men and boys experience higher mortality rates as a direct result of armed conflict, women and girls tend to experience higher rates of mortality as a result of the negative indirect effects extending into the post-conflict period (Ormhaug, 2009; Plumper, 2006). Evidence suggests that the disproportionate effect on women and girls linked to their status and role in society results in a lack of access to basic goods and services and leaves them vulnerable to discrimination and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Looking at the impact of conflict through a gender lens is essential in order to inform the development of more gender-sensitive policies and programmes that can help level the playing field for women, particularly through education.

Girls' education outcomes are worst in conflict-affected states, especially as girls enter adolescence. Girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in conflict-affected countries, and adolescent girls are nearly 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school (UNESCO, 2015a). The 2011 Education For All Global Monitoring Report notes that, in countries affected by conflict, girls make up 55 percent of primary-age children who are not in school; they also form the majority of lower-secondary-age children out of school in conflict zones (UNESCO, 2011). In these situations, insecurity and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) combine with harmful stereotypes about the value of girls' education to produce violations of girls' rights to, within, and through education.

Recognising the particular vulnerabilities affecting girls in conflict-affected contexts, this review focuses on girls' education. The cost of not investing in education for girls far exceeds the cost of investing. Girls' education increases economic growth, increases women's wages, improves women's health, reduces child marriage, and increases individual and community empowerment (Murphy-Graham and Lloyd, 2016; Sperling and Winthrop, 2016). Furthermore, actions that enable girls' education in conflict-affected contexts can create 'windows of opportunity' for transformative change that may not have existed prior to the conflict.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/addressing-gender-programming/crisis-conflict>

This review examined the main threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts and interventions that help reduce the barriers girls face during conflict. While some of these types of interventions might also be implemented in non-conflict contexts, they are critical to adapt in conflict settings.

#### THE REVIEW WAS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What are the main threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts?
2. What type of interventions positively contribute to overcoming these threats?
3. How can lessons from these interventions inform programming to improve girls' education in conflict-affected contexts?

First the review drew on consultations with key education-in-emergencies practitioners. It then went on to review rigorous impact evaluations where available, as well as an array of unpublished materials that may not meet the standards of rigour of other reviews yet help illuminate factors that contribute to improving girls' education in conflict settings. We drew additional analysis and examples from reports and documents recommended by reviewers who commented on initial drafts of this paper. This helped fill knowledge gaps due to the dearth of evidence on good practice.

This work contributes to the broader literature on gender equality in education, recognising that while in the short term many programmes and policies justifiably target girls, these efforts need to be carried out with a focus on changing gendered relations and norms, including by working with and for boys.

### Threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts

This study identifies seven main threats to girls' education in conflict contexts. The threats described do not arise in isolation. Multiple threats can affect girls simultaneously, forming complex barriers to safe, quality education and deepening girls' vulnerabilities in conflict settings. Several other threats to girls' education in conflict-affected settings exist, such as lack of water and sanitation facilities and challenges in menstrual hygiene management, but the seven we discuss in this review are deemed the most critical.

#### THREATS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION DIRECTLY LINKED TO CONFLICT:

- Targeted attacks and collateral damage that can result in injury; military use of buildings and use of school buildings by displaced populations
- Forced recruitment of students into armed forces
- SRGBV, including on the way to and from school
- Displacement

#### THREATS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION INDIRECTLY LINKED TO CONFLICT:

- Increasing opportunity costs to girls and their families and greater demand for child labour, including in the household
- Early marriage and early pregnancy, aggravated by violence and higher living costs
- Exacerbated disadvantage of and discrimination toward girls with disabilities

### Key lessons drawn from promising approaches

Analyzing interventions provides useful insights into how different types of programming contribute to improving girls' access to education, particularly marginalised adolescent girls. This review highlights both gender mainstreaming interventions that strengthen the quality and equity of education systems and benefit both boys and girls, and gender-targeted interventions aimed specifically at marginalised girls.

The following lessons were drawn from our analysis of interventions designed to address threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts:

**Community participation and engagement is critical in the delivery of gender-sensitive and contextually relevant education.** One of the practices that stands out as having positive results across several different interventions is community participation in support of girls' education. Working with communities — parents, teachers, traditional and religious leaders, and girls and boys — to change perceptions about girls' education and encourage active participation leads to ownership and sustainability of initiatives. Through advocacy, engagement, and rapport with different stakeholders in the community, it is possible to influence behaviour linked to social norms that would

otherwise hamper girls' education. This can then become one of the bedrocks for more protective environments for girls' education. A critical factor of success has been community member involvement in a number of ways ranging from providing safe spaces to learn through community run-schools, to actively engaging in parent-teacher associations and school management committees to ensure the smooth running of schools and better quality of teaching. Importantly, when persuaded about the value of girls' education, local and religious leaders have been instrumental in changing community attitudes towards girls' education, encouraging families to support it despite the adverse environment in which they are living.

**Financial and in-kind support helps families to send girls to school.** Some positive practices to promote schooling in these contexts have included providing financial (cash or vouchers) or in-kind (food rations or school feeding) support to students. Given the tendency for families to prioritize boys' education, these initiatives often target girls in order to incentivize families to send all their children to school. Although rigorous evidence on the benefits of such support in fragile contexts is limited, what does exist shows this approach is promising.

**Alternative education mechanisms are crucial where standard school systems do not provide the flexibility needed to support learners.** Alternative education, which includes accelerated learning initiatives, has shown potential in improving access to learning opportunities for excluded children, especially girls, in conflict-affected contexts. This model is able to adapt and respond to the

needs of students and the conflict environment through different modes of teaching. Where school sites are damaged or occupied, community schools (which can include holding lessons in teachers' homes) or distance learning may be put in place. Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP) or radio-based educational programmes are effective where students or teachers are threatened, teachers are absent because of conflict, the commute to school is dangerous, or residents have been forced to flee their villages. Alternative education tends not only to include ALPs, so that school cycles can be completed more rapidly, but also flexible schedules. These allow students who have to work to support their families (particularly girls but also boys) or young mothers and adolescent girls with domestic and child- or sibling-care responsibilities, to attend.

**Targeted strategies to mitigate SRGBV must be included in education programmes.** Creating protective environments for girls supports them to continue schooling and mitigating the drivers of SRGBV can reduce incidents. Insights from some promising programmes indicate that it is critical to focus on reshaping harmful social norms relating to gender, sex, and violence that are the key drivers of GBV in the community and by extension in and around schools. Programmes that involve collaborating with communities to foster behaviour change and which emphasize reflecting on the realities of how GBV affects girls and the community more broadly, show potential. Reporting and referral mechanisms, even if informal, are necessary since standard accountability processes may not be in place during conflict. Female teachers or teaching assistants in the classroom and school environment prove to be positive role models and reduce the likelihood of SRGBV because they are less likely to commit SRGBV and can support girls to be assertive and confront harassment and abuse. The presence of female staff in schools can also reassure parents who would otherwise be unwilling to send girls to school. Creating safe spaces for girls in or around schools, where they are provided the tools and capacity to discuss issues of violence, sex and sexuality, and norms openly have shown positive results in enhancing girls' empowerment and self-esteem. Targeted strategies to address SRGBV include improved safety and security for children in and around schools, such as by reducing the distance to school, providing safe means





of transport, building protective walls around schools, and having trusted guards in place who can look out for children's safety.

**Multi-pronged approaches work best to mitigate the multiple risks and vulnerabilities girls face.** The evidence examined for this review indicates that many of these strategies work best when implemented synergistically across different sectors and actors. Combining strategies of (a) working with and through community leaders and community members to influence discriminatory norms and practices that affect girls' education, while also (b) improving the quality, flexibility, and availability of schools and (c) taking steps to reduce barriers such as lack of safety and security and financial constraints has been effective in conflict-affected contexts.

## Recommendations

A key conclusion from the analysis in this review is that in order for interventions to work in a more sustainable manner, programming for girls education should adopt multi-pronged approaches, be responsive to the communities being served, and be combined with programmes that tackle discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and practices while promoting women's economic and political participation.

More systematic research and monitoring and evaluation of education programmes in conflict contexts is required. Knowledge management systems in humanitarian contexts need to be strengthened so that information about useful evidence-based approaches is available for those designing responses on the ground. The mixed nature of the evidence and information reviewed here illustrates that more is being done than is easily found in the literature. Monitoring and evaluation must be incorporated throughout the programme design and implementation and promising practices need to be documented.

### RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM THE ANALYSIS IN THIS REVIEW ARE:

- Providing financial assistance and cash or in-kind support to girls and/or their families helps mitigate the opportunity costs of girls attending school and provides important incentives for girls' education.

- Developing alternative education modalities that are responsive to varying needs in conflict-affected settings is a way to include those excluded from traditional school systems, particularly adolescent girls and young mothers.
- Invest in training and recruiting female teachers and school staff in conflict-affected contexts and training teachers in gender-responsive teaching and learning practices. This aids in reducing SRGBV and promoting gender-sensitive learning environments that encourage parents to send girls to school in conflict settings.
- Community participation and engagement in programme design and implementation helps ensure that actions are contextually responsive and increases the likelihood of success and sustainability.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE AROUND GIRLS' EDUCATION IN CONFLICT SETTINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Increase research and targeted programming on gender-responsive education in conflict-affected countries to make educational responses more available, and to deepen knowledge of contextually appropriate interventions.
- Disaggregate data by sex and conduct gender analysis during programme design stages — both quick, easy, and cost-effective ways to increase the knowledge base around education interventions targeting and benefiting girls in conflict-affected contexts.
- Broaden research to include all levels of education, from early childhood to higher and adult education. This will provide much-needed knowledge in order to support life-long learning and serve currently 'invisible' age groups such as girls with disabilities and from minority groups.
- Adhere to standards of evaluation that improve the rigour of analysis and support a comprehensive mapping of girls' education programmes in conflict situations.
- Expand the scope of research to include impact evaluations of programmes that support transitions between levels of education, transitions to employment, and empowerment. Demonstrating impact is closely tied to the ability to secure long-term project funding, particularly during the post-conflict period.



## Introduction

Conflicts generally result in the loss of livelihoods and changes in social roles for men and women. Upheaval of support structures during conflict causes insecurity and fear, which in turn amplifies existing power dynamics and inequalities in families and societies. Girls, women, boys, and men have different experiences, face different risks, and have different ways of coping. During conflict, educational needs change and different barriers to education for girls and boys emerge or become more evident.

Structural inequalities tend to intensify during periods of crisis. As a result, the poorest women and girls, who tend to be at a lower status than men and boys, generally have less access to financial resources, social capital, and legal means to protect themselves when conflict arises. This results in greater dependency, socioeconomic disempowerment, and limited social mobility. The lack of an enabling environment that actively promotes gender equality and equal access to opportunities both before and during crises prevents girls and women from exercising their rights, including the right to education. On the other hand, social upheaval during conflict can present an opportunity to harness shifts in gender

1

roles and responsibilities to set new precedents for gender equality. For example, conflict situations frequently result in women and girls adopting non-traditional activities that provide opportunities to participate in the economy. However, the potential contribution to recovery and economic growth this presents will not be realized without strategies that address the disproportionate consequences of violent conflict women and girls often face (Wood, 2008; Nicolai, 2009; UNICEF, 2016). Understanding the consequences and impact of conflict on girls and women, while reflecting the needs, experiences, and enlisting the support of men and boys, is essential for developing more gender-sensitive policies and programmes that level the playing field for women and girls, particularly in education.

While men and boys experience higher mortality rates as a direct result of armed conflict, women and girls tend to experience higher rates as a result of negative indirect effects extending into the post-conflict period (Ormhaug, 2009; Plumper, 2006). Evidence suggests that the disproportionate effect on women and girls, linked to their status and role in society, blocks access to basic goods and services and leaves them vulnerable to discrimination

and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Recent evidence suggests early warnings of social and political insecurity can be found in women's changing experiences: increased domestic violence, increased risk of GBV outside of the home, increased numbers of female-headed households, decreased numbers of girls attending schools and increased numbers of pregnancy terminations, among other factors (Crespo-Sancho, 2017). Thus, development and humanitarian policies and approaches to prevent violence and conflict should take gender equality into account (ibid.) – and education is a critical dimension of gender equality.

Girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in conflict-affected countries and adolescent girls nearly 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school (UNESCO, 2015a). The 2011 Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report notes that, in countries affected by conflict, girls make up 55 percent of primary-age children who are not in school; they also form the majority of lower-secondary age children out of school in conflict zones (UNESCO, 2011). This means education outcomes for girls, especially as they enter adolescence, are the worst in conflict-affected states.

In conflict-affected environments, armed conflict, insecurity, and associated displacement have a devastating effect on availability of, access to, and quality of education for all children. Girls face greater threats to their right to education because of various forms of discrimination, including GBV, that affect them disproportionately (UNCEDAW, 2015). For example, girls have more exposure to coerced sex and early and forced marriage and childbearing, increased risk-taking associated with gender roles in family circles, and reduced availability of adolescent sexual and reproductive health services (UNFPA, 2016).

Meanwhile, clashes with soldiers and other combatants from surrounding communities increase the risk of attacks on schools and on routes to and from schools, rendering children particularly vulnerable. In some conflicts, education is specifically targeted, through attacks not only on infrastructure but also on teachers. And in contexts where girls' education is repudiated, girls can be targeted victims of attacks, as in the case of Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan (Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development, 2013).

Violations of girls' rights to education 'undermine the potential for education to act as a vehicle for individual and societal transformation' (UNCEDAW, 2015). Disproportionate impacts of conflict on girls' education have on-going and unequal consequences. Girls facing intersecting factors of marginalisation because of poverty, race, ethnicity, geographical location, or disability and minority status experience the greatest exclusion from education. As such, a range of measures are needed to tackle gender discrimination in all areas of economic, social, cultural, and political life (Tomasevski, 2003).

Both boys and girls are negatively affected by conflict, though the nature of this impact differs, often along gender lines. A greater proportion of boys are forcibly recruited into armed forces; in situations of household poverty, more boys may drop out of school to work because they face greater pressure to contribute to income than girls (Jones & Nay-

// During conflict, educational needs change and different barriers to education for girls and boys emerge, or become more evident. //

lor, 2014). One such example comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where in 2012 a breakaway rebel group seized 32 boys from a school, tied them up, and marched them off to a military camp to train to fight. Recruits who resisted were beaten and others were told they would be killed if they tried to escape (GCPEA, 2014). Statistically, girls' education is more severely impacted than boys'. According to UN Development Programme (UNDP) data, gross enrolment ratios in secondary education are nearly 20 percent lower in conflict-affected countries and are far lower for girls (UNDP, 2015). This is partly because girls' underlying enrolment ratio is generally lower, but it is also aggravated by conflict.

Recognising the particular vulnerabilities affecting girls in conflict-affected contexts, this review focuses on girls' education. We recognise, however, that while in the short

term programmes and policies justifiably target girls, their marginalised status means these efforts need to be carried out with a focus on changing gendered relations and norms, including by working with and for boys. This will make it possible to address the underlying causes of girls' disadvantage in a sustainable manner, as well as helping avoid tensions in communities that can be borne out of the continued emphasis on girls' rather than boys' education (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd, 2016). While it is critical to understand and address the specific gender issues faced by men and boys in conflict situations, particularly as a component of violence prevention strategies, these are different in nature and require a tailored set of approaches that merits a separate discussion.

Mitigating the impact of conflict on girls' education is particularly important for girls who live in contexts where gender inequality is pervasive. There is growing evidence that for girls in particular, the cost of not investing in education far exceeds the cost of investing (UNGEI, 2011). Girls' education is shown to increase economic growth, increase women's wages, improve women's health, reduce child marriage, and increase individual and community empowerment (Murphy-Graham & Lloyd 2016; Sperling & Winthrop 2016).

Actions that enable girls' education in conflict-affected contexts can create 'windows of opportunity' for transformative change that may not have existed prior to the conflict (Wood, 2008; Nicolai, 2009). A useful framework to understand these transformations comes from the World Bank's Education Resilience Approaches programme (Reyes et al., 2013), which considers the interrelation between gender, violence, and education. A resilience lens provides a way to understand the linkages between the three while looking beyond the risks and focusing on the assets (strengths, opportunities, and resources) available to groups that are vulnerable because of their gender and sexual identities, in this case girls. This approach:

... [P]oints at individual and group agency for change, as well as institutional and social responsibilities to support at-risk groups and prevent the sources of violence. It addresses capacity building, empowerment, social injustices, and inequities. Most importantly—in the education sector—resilience provides a framework to deal with the

protection needs of children and youth at risk, in conjunction with the processes and assets that can support their education outcomes: access, learning, graduation, and productive skills. Reyes et al., 2013, p. 13

The resilience approach seeks to identify the risks, threats, and vulnerabilities of actors in contexts of adversity and also places special attention on the individual, community, and institutional assets that can add value to a change process away from violence. Existing and new strengths, opportunities, and resources support individuals and communities at risk, helping them recover, continue to perform, and even transform in the face of adversity (Reyes et al., 2013).

Given the significance of guaranteeing that children — particularly girls — can access education during conflicts and in post-conflict settings, it is crucial to understand the types of interventions that work in such contexts to build resilience and to promote greater access to and completion of education. These interventions can be centred in and around schools, or they can work with communities to transform norms and practices that prevent girls from attending school and help mitigate concerns about girls' safety that are exacerbated during conflict.

## The review was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the main threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts?
2. What type of interventions positively contribute to overcoming these threats?
3. How can lessons from these interventions inform programming to improve girls' education in conflict-affected contexts?

This review is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines the methodology for the literature search on interventions improving girls' education in conflict-affected contexts. Section 3 provides an overview of the threats to girls' education — particularly adolescent girls — in conflict-affected contexts and how these threats prevent access and completion of education. Section 4 highlights interventions that have been shown to mitigate identified threats with positive results for girls' education. Section 5 identifies lessons for programming and Section 6 concludes with some final reflections.



## Methodology

Evidence on good practice in conflict-affected contexts is severely limited, and few studies meet the standards of rigorous methodology set by other evidence reviews (Burde et al., 2015). This owes partly to the lack of rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collected in these contexts, where actions are initiated rapidly and there isn't necessarily time to put in place adequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. Furthermore, much of the information collected and the analyses available in the literature are not sex-disaggregated, so it can be difficult to evaluate impacts on girls' education specifically.

Therefore, rather than using a systematic review methodology, this literature review draws on evidence from rigor-

ous impact evaluations where available, as well as an array of unpublished materials that may not meet the standards of rigour of other reviews, yet contribute to our understanding of what factors help improve girls' education in conflict settings.

This research initially drew on consultations with key practitioners and experts in the field of education in emergencies.<sup>2</sup> Through these consultations, we identified

<sup>2</sup> Representatives were consulted from the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Brookings Institution, Cambridge University, the UK Department for International Development's (DFID's) Girls' Education Challenge, the *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the INEE Gender Task Team, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children, University College London Institute of Education, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Reviews from education in conflict experts Allison Anderson, Lisa Bender, and Susan Nicolai resulted in additional material being considered in the report.

the research questions and developed a list of terms to undertake a comprehensive search for evaluations around gender, conflict, and education. The timeframe of the search was set between 2000 and 2016, as papers from this period were deemed most likely to reflect recent thinking in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We also made a decision to focus on conflict-affected countries categorised as low- and lower-middle-income (by the World Bank) to help us identify countries facing some of the gravest challenges in terms of the impact of conflict on education (see Box 1). The search criteria used for this paper encompasses a variety of conflict and post-conflict contexts at various stages. Because of this we use terminology such as ‘conflict,’ ‘post-conflict,’ and ‘emergency’ in line with the authors of the paper being reviewed, rather than defining each stage itself. While we acknowledge the varying dynamics of each context, we believe the criteria used for this review have identified contexts with similar barriers and challenges that could benefit from the same approaches to overcome threats to girls’ education.

### Defining conflict-affected countries

Conflict-affected countries are defined as:

#### BOX ONE

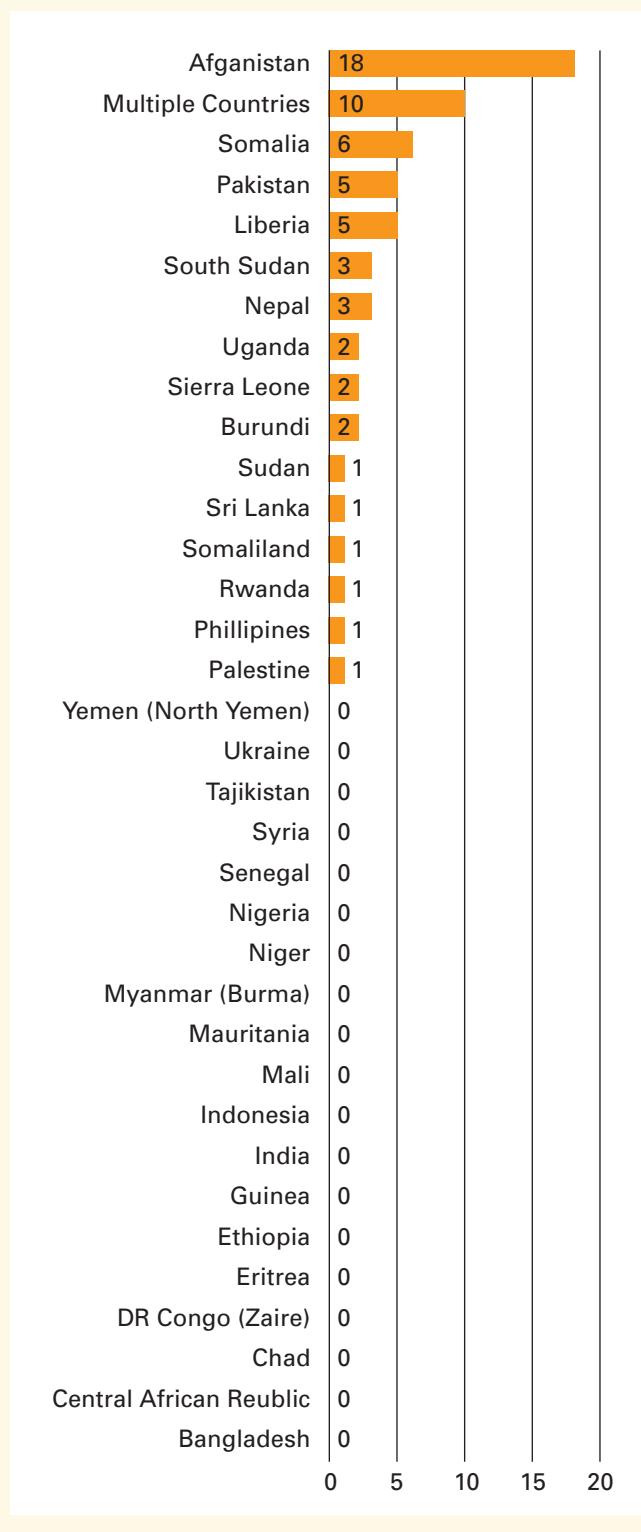
*A low- or lower-middle-income country amid a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths and 5 or more years of conflict, or more than 1,000 battle-related deaths in a given year.*

This definition of conflict-affected countries draws on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (<http://ucdp.uu.se/>), World Bank data on low- and lower-middle-income countries (<http://data.worldbank.org/>) and methodologies developed by Strand and Dahl (2010). See Appendix 2 for a list of countries.

Given these challenges of conducting rigorous studies and evaluations of education in conflict settings, we applied no strict guidelines for quality of evidence at the initial stage, so we could consider a broad range of literature. Instead, we used the list of key terms identified in a pilot search and then refined this list (see Appendix 1).

On performing the pilot search, we determined that the protracted nature of many conflicts led authors to exclude

FIGURE ONE: NUMBER OF STUDIES BY COUNTRY



a number of the key search terms used. Afghanistan provides a case in point: many studies refer to education without mentioning the term ‘conflict’ in the title or abstract, leaving the reader to infer the context of the study. Similarly, studies often provided valuable data on gender through their disaggregation but do not include the key terms within the searchable data fields.

To overcome this issue, we developed a list of conflict-affected countries and performed an additional search of each database without key terms like ‘conflict,’ ‘emergency,’ and ‘crisis.’ We instead included the country name and the non-conflict- and gender-related tags. We then manually reviewed the research identified for relevant gender- and education-specific analysis.

The final search process included key journals, academic databases, and non-governmental and international organisation websites (see Appendix 3). Purposive sampling – that is, the selection of papers that may not have fallen within a very strict initial framework of search terms – also allowed for the inclusion of evaluations that the search criteria did not capture. We complemented these with internal documents shared by key humanitarian and development agencies for the purposes of this paper.

Finally, we performed Google and Google Scholar searches (see Appendix 1 for search terms) to complement the database.

After analysing more than 500 papers on education in conflict-affected contexts, we deemed only 62 papers to have suitable content for this review.<sup>3</sup> Much of the excluded literature was of high quality but failed to disaggregate data by gender or to provide a gender analysis. The literature deemed suitable for the review was found to be concentrated in a number of select countries (see Figure 1). This suggests a number of geographical gaps in terms of available quality research on interventions for girls, likely related to a lack of programming. The research identified was also concentrated on primary education (see Table 1), which means other equally important phases of education are overlooked – notably secondary education, where children and youth are more likely to drop out or be out of school (UNESCO, 2015b) and where they would potentially gain greater or equal returns to education than they would in primary schooling (Colclough et al., 2010). This may be in part because of the MDG-era drive for primary education, as well as a lack of secondary education interventions and research, suggesting a need for greater

<sup>3</sup> While every effort has been made to capture relevant evaluations, as with any review some studies may have been missed. The nature of this particular review – which, because of the paucity of available literature on the subject matter, does not lend itself well to systematic methodologies – may exacerbate such a risk. Extensive research and consultation took place, however, and every effort was made to capture relevant literature.

**TABLE ONE:** NUMBER OF PAPERS BY SCHOOL LEVEL

SCHOOL LEVEL	NUMBER OF PAPERS
Pre-primary	3
Primary	27
Lower-secondary	19
Upper-secondary	17
Adult	10
Unknown	20

efforts across the other phases of education as we enter the period of the SDGs.

Furthermore, while many of the evaluations measured learning outcomes, such as literacy and numeracy, they often failed to measure the impact of schooling and learning on girls’ lives in these challenging contexts. For example during transitions between levels of education and transitions to employment, or as a source of empowerment. It is assumed this limitation is in part the result of the relatively short-term funding available for projects in conflict contexts and a lack of follow-up research after project completion.

Finally, the quality and research approaches of the evaluations varied dramatically. Most projects incorporated multiple interventions, yet the evaluations failed to disaggregate the effects of the different components, leaving an incomplete picture of what works for girls’ education in conflict-affected contexts and highlighting the often-cited need for further research (Unterhalter et al., 2014; Burde et al., 2015; Parkes et al., 2016).

The assessment of ‘quality’ was based on the level of rigour of the quantitative and qualitative evidence provided in the paper (those that were evaluations were deemed to be of better quality than internal reporting documents); whether the paper presented a comprehensive analysis of the data; and whether it presented a logical, strong argument linking different elements of the intervention to positive outcomes.

In addition to the review, we drew analysis and a number of examples from reports and documents recommended by reviewers who commented on initial drafts of this paper. This helped fill some important knowledge gaps.



## What are the main threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts?

Gender inequality is compounded by intersecting inequalities, such as those related to geographical location, disability, ethnicity, and religion. Heightened insecurity and the breakdown of family and social support networks exacerbate these inequalities, rendering women and girls more vulnerable to threats as a result of conflict. For example, in addition to the direct threats of forced recruitment 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. This can sometimes even lead them to be trafficked for sexual and labour exploitation (UNCEDAW, 2015). Discussions of security and peace in the context of humanitarian emergencies must consider structural gender inequalities. For instance, the average number of women

3

participating in official roles at peace negotiations remains very low. UN Women (2012) reviewed a sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 and found that only four percent of signatories, 2.4 percent of chief mediators, 3.7 percent of witnesses, and nine percent of negotiators were women. These numbers have not improved significantly since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognises the central role of women in conflict prevention, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of an enabling environment that actively promotes gender equality and equal access to opportunities is a fun-

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment/addressing-gender-programming/crisis-conflict>



## The challenging nature of education in conflict-affected settings

### BOX TWO

The *2011 EFA Global Monitoring Report* identifies the challenging nature of the context in stark terms:

School children, teachers and schools are on the front line of violence. Classrooms are destroyed not just because they are caught in the crossfire, but because they are targeted by combatants. Young girls living in conflict-affected areas are subject every day to the threat of widespread, systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. Children are abducted and forced into military service. And resources that could be used to finance productive investment in education are wasted on unproductive military expenditure... The starting point is to recognize the scale of the damage caused by the deadly interaction between armed conflict and education. Attacks on school infrastructure, human rights violations and diversion of financial resources to military spending are destroying opportunities for education on an epic scale. (UNESCO, 2011, p. 125)

damental threat to the ability of girls and women to exercise their rights, including the right to education. Because of structural inequalities that cause the poorest women and girls to be at a lower status than men and boys, women and girls generally have less access to financial resources, social capital, and legal means to protect themselves when conflict arises. This results in greater dependency, socioeconomic disempowerment, and limited social mobility.

Four of the five countries with the largest gender gaps in education are facing war or insurgency (Nicolai et al., 2015). Moreover, for those girls able to make it to the end of a school cycle, many are at risk of coming away with no functional literacy and numeracy skills because quality teaching and learning are difficult to sustain in conflict-affected contexts (Hanemann, 2005; UNESCO, 2011).

In conflict-affected environments, there are threats to girls' education that result directly from conflict and others that are indirectly linked but exacerbated by conflict. The former include death or injury of students resulting from targeted attacks on schools or collateral damage to schools and forced recruitment of students into armed forces, which for girls can mean forced marriage, sexual slavery, cleaning and cooking, as well as serving as soldiers. There are also greater risks of school-related GBV (SRGBV) and

GBV when violence levels increase, systems for protection, security, and justice are weakened, and vulnerable populations, girls included, are displaced. These can result in heightened aggression and control in interpersonal relations during times of conflict, including sexual aggression and violence. In some cases attacks are a reaction to the transformative potential of education as a force for change. In other contexts, they reflect the violence girls and women experience in all areas of their public and private lives as a result of deep structural gender inequality (UNCEDAW, 2015).

This study has identified the following seven main threats to girls' education in conflict contexts, based on an extensive review of the literature and consultation with a range of experts working in conflict-affected contexts. While it is not a comprehensive list, it encompasses those deemed most salient at the time of writing:

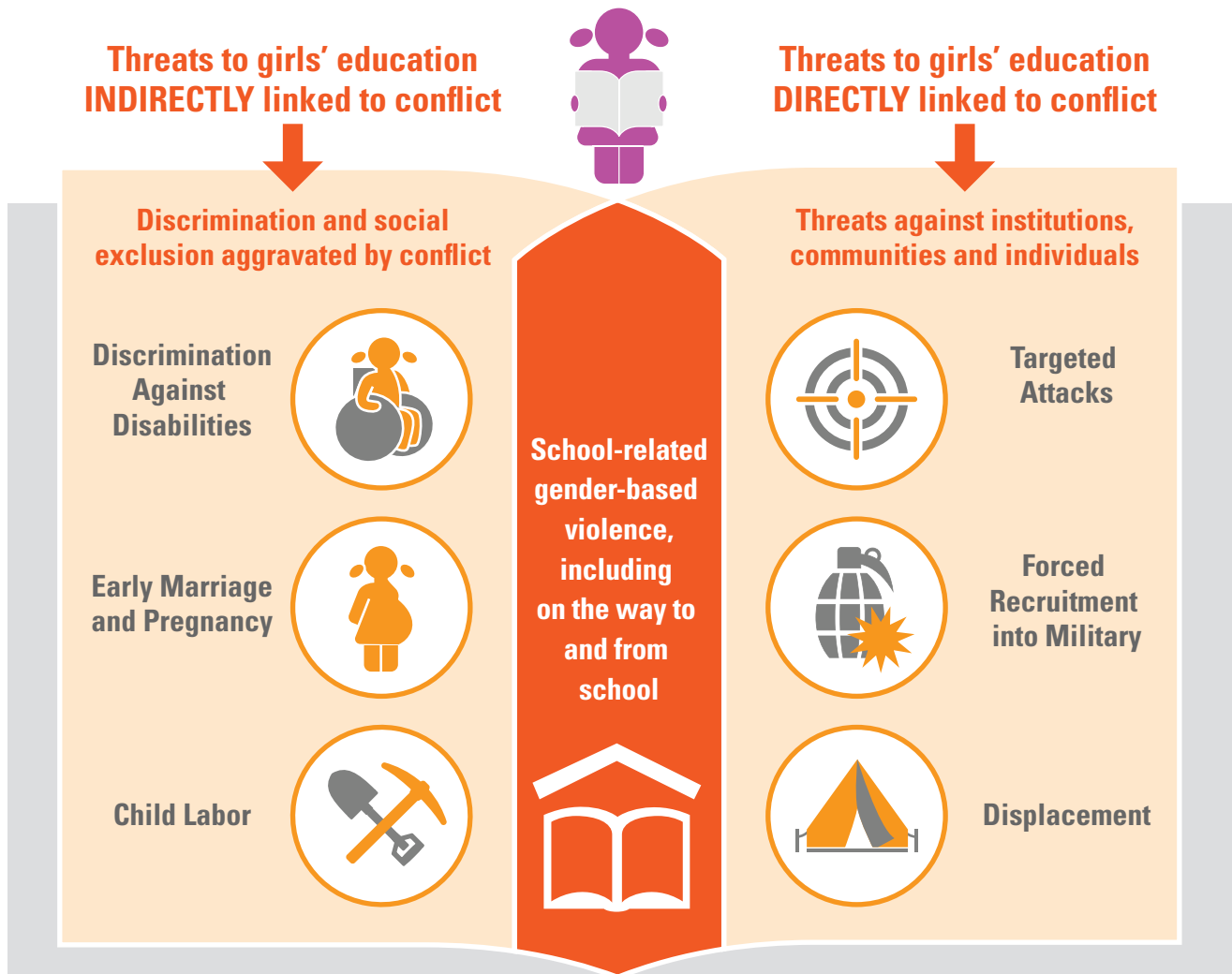
**TABLE TWO: THE MAIN THREATS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION IN CONFLICT**

THREATS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION DIRECTLY LINKED TO CONFLICT
1. Targeted attacks and collateral damage that can result in injury; military use of buildings and use of school buildings by displaced populations.
2. Forced recruitment of students into armed forces
3. SRGBV, including on the way to and from school
4. Displacement
THREATS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION INDIRECTLY LINKED TO CONFLICT
5. Increased opportunity costs of educating girls
6. Early marriage and early pregnancy
7. Increased vulnerability of girls with disabilities

The analysis below answers the first research question: What are the main threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts? The threats described below do not arise in isolation. Different threats can affect girls simultaneously, forming complex barriers to safe, quality education. As such, they magnify and deepen girls' vulnerabilities in conflict settings. The analysis below highlights some of these overlaps, and frames the analysis that appears in Section 4 on responses to these threats.

FIGURE TWO:

# Main Threats to Girls' Education in Conflict



## 3.1 Targeted attacks and collateral damage that can result in injury; military use of buildings and use of school buildings by displaced populations that can result in injury

Where there is increased insecurity and where schools, students, and teachers can be victims of attack, access to and quality of education are compromised (UNESCO, 2011). Schools may also be used for military purposes during conflict, meaning they become military targets (UNCEDAW, 2015). Attacks on schools increased 17-fold between 2000 and 2014, and girls' schools were targeted three times more often than boys' schools (Rose, 2016; UNESCO, 2016). In Syria, for example, where conflict over

the last five years has affected more than 7.3 million children, the UN has verified at least 35 attacks on schools in the first nine months of 2014, which killed 105 children and injured nearly 300 others. One quarter of schools have been damaged, destroyed, or used as shelters or for purposes other than education (UNICEF, 2015a). There is, however, currently very little research on this particular area that isolates the impact on girls.<sup>5</sup>

An analysis of attacks on education in Afghanistan (Glad, 2009) identified various methods of spreading fear and destruction in schools across Afghanistan. Between 2006 and May 2008 the following physical attacks were identified:

- One hundred and twenty-three (123) explosions in

<sup>5</sup> The Coalition for the Protection of Education from Attack has launched a new research initiative but the results will not be available until late 2017.

or near school buildings (including grenades thrown, mines, and rocket attacks);

- Two hundred and fifty-four (254) incidents of arson, where school buildings, tents, or school materials were burned;
- Sixty-four (64) direct attacks against students or education personnel;
- Five (5) incidents of looting; and
- Twenty-four (24) incidents of a different nature (this category includes breaking and entering, use of firearms against schools, and cases of school buildings being damaged in armed fighting).

Girls' education is targeted more than boys' in Afghanistan: Glad's findings indicate that the main perpetrators of attacks against the education of girls are the armed insurgency and community members. Of all attacked schools, girls' schools account for 40 percent and mixed schools (32 percent) and boys' schools (28 percent) make up the rest. This is despite the fact that the number of girls' schools in the country is less than half that of boys' schools.

Teachers, school personnel, and students are also vulnerable to other forms of violence that constitute attacks against schools, such as threats and harassment by armed forces. The insecurity generated by the presence of fighters in and around schools triggers school abandonment, loss of morale, low levels of teacher retention, and overall poor quality of education (GCPEA, 2014). According to Guimbert et al. (2008), enrolment in Afghanistan is nine percent less likely in households in which someone faced a 'security incident' in the previous year.

Attacks on schools are such a consistent abuse of human rights that it is one of the six categories that the UN Security Council has designated a grave violation of children's rights. As such, it is also a UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism trigger, along with 'killing or maiming of children,' 'recruitment or use of child soldiers,' 'rape and other forms of sexual violence against children,' 'abduction of children,' and 'denial of humanitarian access to children' (War Child, n.d.). However, more sex-disaggregated data on all these violations is required in order to better understand the impact on girls and boys.

## 3.2 Forced recruitment of students into armed forces

Around the world, thousands of boys and girls are recruited into government armed forces and rebel groups to serve as combatants, cooks, porters, or messengers, among other roles. Children's forced recruitment into armed forces, often through abduction, is one of the biggest barriers to their education. This is not only because of the immediate effect of not being in school but also because of the longer-term psychosocial effects and trauma, including the difficulties children face while trying to reintegrate into their communities after conflict (UNESCO, 2011).

While data on numbers of child soldiers are limited, the problem is widespread and sex-disaggregated figures on child soldiers are rare. According to recent estimates, 300,000 children are today fighting as child soldiers in over 20 countries worldwide and up to 40 percent of them are girls (UNCHR and Global Protection Cluster Working Group 2007). Recent UN reports document the continued use of child soldiers by government forces or government-supported militias in 15 countries and identify 57 groups recruiting children as soldiers (UN, 2010, in UNESCO, 2011). Children are often abducted from classrooms, creating security fears for them, teachers, and parents, despite the fact that schools are often perceived to be 'safe havens.'

Girls are recruited into armed forces not only as soldiers but also for sexual purposes or forced marriage. Many are recruited by force, though some may join as a result of economic, social, or security pressures (the displacement and dire poverty children experience during conflict make them even more vulnerable to recruitment).

In some cases, armed opposition groups that are openly opposed to girls' education target girls' education programmes for attack and/or for forced recruitment (UNCEDAW, 2015). For example, in April 2014 the Boko Haram movement in northeast Nigeria, which opposes girls' education, abducted nearly 300 schoolgirls (GCPEA, 2014). Girls abducted in Nigeria are being used as suicide bombers (UNICEF, 2015b). During other armed conflicts, girls have been recruited because they are educated. For instance, the Lords' Resistance Army in northern Uganda targeted secondary schoolgirls because their literacy and

numeracy skills made them valuable for military communications work (UNCEDAW, 2015).

### 3.3 School-related gender-based violence, including on the way to and from school

SRGBV refers to acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes and enforced by unequal power dynamics (UNGEI, UNESCO, & EFA GMR, 2015). It violates human rights and undermines the potential of girls and boys to learn and develop with dignity, confidence, and self-esteem (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016). While SRGBV is a global phenomenon, how it manifests varies considerably from one location to another. Conflict has been found to exacerbate the nature and scale of all forms of SRGBV and has been shown to continue into the post-conflict and recovery period. For example, elevated levels of rape and sexual violence continue to be reported in Liberia following the country's emergence from violent conflict, suggesting that such violence has become entrenched in gender relations (UNESCO, 2015c).

While boys and girls, teachers, and other school personnel can all be perpetrators or victims of SRGBV, the degree and forms can differ. For example, evidence indicates that girls are more likely to experience sexual violence and harassment, while boys are more likely to face physical violence (UNESCO, 2015c). In Uganda's conflict-affected Karamoja region, a recent impact evaluation of a school-based gender socialization programme showed that boys were more likely to suffer from the use of corporal punishment than girls (El-Bushra & Rees Smith, 2016b). However, trends vary significantly across different countries and contexts and such distinctions cannot be consistently applied. The complex and multi-faceted nature of SRGBV is further compounded by specific, gendered power dynamics of conflict-affected contexts converging to create particular vulnerabilities to SRGBV, especially for girls (Kirk, 2007). They are more likely to face multiple risk factors in such settings, as the following examples illustrate:

- Barrett's (2015) evaluation of the Let Us Learn project in Afghanistan found distance to school was the single most significant barrier to girls attending school, given security concerns en route to school and cultural

restrictions. Indeed, parents may withdraw girls from school because of fears of exposure to violence on the way to and from school, as evidence from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Papua New Guinea has shown (UNESCO, 2015c).

- SRGBV is aggravated when teachers in conflict settings take up their jobs untrained or under-trained and with limited awareness of gender equality or the consequences of their actions on girls' and boys' lives. Teachers may reinforce harmful gender norms, make derogatory comments about girls, or engage in sexual harassment and abuse. Elevated levels of vulnerability experienced in resource-compromised conflict settings can leave girls and boys open to exploitation and manipulation into transactional sex for good grades, money, and other favours in school. This is perpetuated by the lack of accountability mechanisms in place for such perpetrations (World Bank, 2013). Negative consequences can be further compounded by conflict-related factors such as mistrust and tensions when teachers are brought in from outside the community without comprehensive orientation, and a host of other factors such as widespread drug and alcohol abuse (El-Bushra & Rees Smith, 2016b).
- The situation is similar for girls who have been displaced or have been made refugees by conflict. According to a recently published briefing paper, in Lebanon, Jordan, and Sub-Saharan Africa, SRGBV in learning spaces for refugee children and adolescents can take the form of harassment and violence en route to and from school, corporal punishment, and verbal and physical abuse at school (UNGEI and NRC, 2016). In West Africa, one study shows that the few girls who remain in the secondary cycle in refugee learning environments become vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation by peers and teachers. The briefing paper also notes that girls commonly report feeling unsafe in school as a main reason for non-attendance.

### 3.4 Displacement

Displacement can have a multiplier effect on the vulnerabilities of and threats faced by girls and women, who make

up around 50 percent of any refugee, internally displaced, or stateless population, with unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, female heads of households, disabled women, and elderly women especially vulnerable.<sup>6</sup> Only 50 percent of refugee children and 35 percent of refugee girls around the world complete primary school, and only 25 percent of refugee adolescents attend secondary school (OECD, 2015). Many miss years of school and subsequently find themselves blocked from enrolling in formal education in host countries. Access to education for refugees is limited and uneven across regions and settings of displacement, particularly for girls and at secondary levels. Enrolment of refugees in primary school is only 76 percent globally, and it drops dramatically to 36 percent at secondary levels. Girls are at a particular disadvantage. For instance, in Eastern Africa and the Horn, only five girls are enrolled for every 10 boys (Dryden-Peterson, 2011).

The breakdown of family and community networks and the loss of social and cultural ties caused by displacement can leave girls and women vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation both in the form of domestic violence<sup>7</sup> and within the community and schools. Poor access to basic services, such as education, shelter, and food, and lack of employment and training opportunities force many internally displaced girls and women into prostitution. This pushes them into exploitative and life-threatening situations and increases the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies with limited access to healthcare.

The high levels of stress and trauma that affect displaced populations magnify pre-existing levels of violence and conflict within families and in schools. Within the learning environment, refugee and displaced students are often targets of verbal and physical violence and discrimination because of their status as refugees, in addition to their gender, language, religion, race and ethnicity, nationality, and being older than other children in their class (UNGEI & NRC, 2016). Meanwhile, while children are on the move awaiting resettlement or access to a camp and in search of the next viable resting place, they are not in school. Limited re-entry pathways, foreign language barriers, unpredictable enrolment

6 <http://www.unhcr.org/women.html>

7 <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/gender-and-forced-migration/conflict-induced-displacement>



regulations, bullying, discrimination, and social and economic exclusion inhibit opportunities to re-engage in education. Indeed, structured formal education may never be available to these young people. Instead, they may need to adopt other survival strategies such as learning a tradable skill to generate income (ibid.). Where limited opportunities exist, this population may also become vulnerable to recruitment, violence, or other criminal activity that perpetuates the cycle of violence and undermines prospects for peace and stability. Evidence has shown that young men are especially vulnerable to adopting such coping mechanisms when they face pressure linked to traditional sociocultural expectations of masculinity to fulfil the role of ‘provider and protector.’ Such dynamics, alongside the absence of ways to address conflict-related trauma, have been shown to be a factor in the prevalence of GBV post-conflict as a means of reasserting a perceived loss of masculinity (Slegh et al., 2014).

On the other hand, conflict and related displacement can sometimes bring girls and women into contact with services such as schools, markets, and health centres they may not have had access to in their place of origin, providing an opportunity to positively transform girls’ and women’s lives. Indeed, shifts in gender roles and relations during displacement can present opportunities for women, who often become the household’s primary breadwinner under such circumstances (Brookings-LSE, 2013). With the right set of interventions, these dynamics can be harnessed to set new precedents on gender equality.

### 3.5 Increased opportunity costs of educating girls

The impact of conflict on household income can be a result of damage to land and housing, injury or death of working adults, or economic recession. Consequently, parents may be forced to remove children from school because they cannot meet the costs of schooling or so that children can contribute to income-generating activities. Families that are already impoverished, including displaced and refugees, may be unable to cover education costs such as uniforms, fees, lunches, books and other materials, certificates, and transportation (Shemyakina, 2011; UIS & UNICEF, 2015).

In some contexts, where it is easier for them to access paid work than girls, it is boys who are more frequently pulled out of school. However, in many contexts girls also engage in paid work and are often at heightened risk of child marriage (as discussed below) or even trafficking as a means for the household to obtain additional income. Also, conflict – particularly protracted conflict – can influence the actual and perceived value of education relative to its costs to families, referred to as the ‘private returns to education’ (Save the Children, 2006). Families may not see much value in investing in their children’s education where the destruction of industries, markets, and infrastructure has shattered job opportunities and eroded the prospect of higher incomes (UNICEF & UIS, 2015). This can reduce the demand for skilled labour and influence parents’ decisions to send their children to school. Girls are generally more disadvantaged in these contexts because parents are unable to see any economic returns from educating girls who, by norm, will be eventually married into another household.

Even in the absence of such shocks, the mere threat of income uncertainty could mean parents require children to be working and contributing to household income as a form of insurance, or undertaking more home duties so that parents can work (UIS and UNICEF, 2015). Adolescent girls in particular are expected to take a larger role in domestic and care responsibilities and forego schooling opportunities.

### 3.6 Early marriage and early pregnancy

According to a Girls Not Brides report (2016), seven out of the ten countries with the highest child marriage rates are considered conflict or fragile states. Further, child mar-



riage rates appear to increase in some crisis situations. For example, while child marriage existed in Syria before the crisis (13 percent of girls under 18 in Syria were married in 2011) recent statistics among Syrian refugee communities show that child marriage has increased alarmingly and in some cases has doubled (Save the Children, 2014). Conflicts exacerbate poverty, insecurity, and lack of access to education, all of which are drivers of child marriage. Parents and families turn to child marriage as a means of alleviating the economic burden of girls, which they view as increasing during times of social instability and economic uncertainty (Tzemach Lemmon, 2014). This negative coping strategy may enable them to receive money or goods as a bride price (Girls Not Brides, 2016).

When girls leave school as a result of conflict and insecurity, they are at much greater risk of marrying at a young age, since parents often see marriage as the best alternative for their daughter. However, as is well established in the evidence, child marriage has many harmful consequences for girls. Child marriage and early pregnancy can also force girls out of school. If a girl has not already dropped out before marriage, she tends to drop out shortly after as a result of her new domestic responsibilities or because her husband or his family does not support education.

Families living in conflict-affected contexts often anticipate a rise in violence and see marriage as way of protecting girls from sexual violence within the community. In many communities, female sexuality and virginity are associated with family honour. During conflict, parents may marry their daughters to protect their virginity from being violated by rebel and armed groups (CARE UK, 2015). In some conflict-affected areas, child marriage may also happen against parents’ will, with girls taken forcibly from

schools or from their homes. Rape, torture, and forced prostitution, sometimes under the guise of ‘marriage,’ have been used as weapons of war to weaken families and communities (CARE UK, 2015; Girls Not Brides, 2016). In Iraq and Syria, for example, terrorist groups have abducted girls and women as ‘spoils of war’ to be raped, sold, and offered or forced into marriage, with particular effects on the Yazidi minority. During 2010 and 2011 in war-torn Somalia, girls were abducted from schools and forced to marry fighters of the Islamist armed group Al-Shabaab. Parents refusing to give their daughters away were threatened or killed (Girls Not Brides, 2016). Forced marriage has also been used tactically, for example by senior Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) leadership in Uganda who methodically organized forced marriages from the tens of thousands of children and youth that were abducted during the conflict. Marriages were forced to boost fighter morale and support systems that served to perpetuate cycles of violence. Girls who were better educated were particularly sought after – serving as a further disincentive for girls’ education in this context (Carlson & Mazurana, 2008). Such experiences can present considerable barriers to re-entry into education after release or return when multiple levels of stigmatisation are experienced, particularly by girls returning with children (World Bank, 2012).

Displacement, discussed in Section 3.4, has also been shown to increase girls’ vulnerability to child marriage, given the breakdown of social networks, the risks of sexual violence, and the lack of educational opportunities for girls in refugee settings (Girls Not Brides, 2016). For instance, in Syrian refugee communities in Jordan, registered marriages for girls under 18 years have increased rapidly in the last 5 years (CARE UK, 2015).

### 3.7 Increased vulnerability of girls with disabilities

According to Save the Children (2005), at least six million children were permanently impaired or seriously injured as a direct result of armed conflict between 1990 and 2005. Though these injuries do not take place exclusively in school settings, for those children who are directly affected, physical injury, psychological trauma, and stigmatisation are sources of profound and lasting disadvantage in education. In Iraq, where conflict has affected an estimated 2.7 million children, at least 700 children are believed

to have been maimed, killed, or even executed in 2014 (UNICEF, 2014b). In Gaza in 2009, as many as half of the 5,000 Palestinians injured during the first three weeks of the conflict were found to be at risk of permanent impairment (Sida, 2014). Children with disabilities in Gaza are at the greatest risk of being excluded from education, and girls are particularly vulnerable (Jones et al., 2016).

In times of increased insecurity, parents or guardians may feel that people with disabilities, especially girls, should stay at home instead of going to education centres (INEE, 2009). According to the UN Children’s Fund, in times of insecurity, children with disabilities tend to be the first to be abandoned by families and the last to receive emergency relief and assistance; they also face a higher risk of becoming victims of abuse and neglect than other children, and are more likely to be exposed to the risk of longer-term psychosocial trauma (UNICEF, 2007). The intersection of poverty, gender inequalities, and disability places young girls at particular risk, including to SRGBV. In Uganda for example, a survey of more than 3,000 primary school children revealed 24 percent of disabled girls reporting sexual violence compared to 12 percent of non-disabled girls (Devries et al., 2014; Groce, 2006).

There is evidence of significant gender disparities in school attendance and dropout rates among children with disabilities in conflict-affected contexts. According to the Women’s Refugee Commission, in all the refugee camp situations surveyed more boys with disabilities than girls with disabilities were attending school (WRC, 2008). Similarly, in post-conflict Sierra Leone, Trani et al. (2011) found that, in general, more than a third of children with severe and very severe disabilities were excluded from school (68.8 percent), compared to only 11.3 percent of non-disabled children, with girls disproportionately affected.

Access to school for children with disabilities is often limited by a lack of understanding about their needs, lack of teacher training, and uncondusive school environments, classroom support and learning resources and facilities (Jones et al., 2016). This is exacerbated in conflict settings: not only does this render infrastructure and resources even less accessible to children with disabilities, these children are much more exposed to violence and abuse than their peers.



## Mitigating the main threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts

This section provides insights into how different types of programming mitigate threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts, with an emphasis on marginalised adolescent girls. The focus is on both gender mainstreaming interventions that strengthen the quality and equity of education systems, benefitting both boys and girls, and gender-targeted interventions aimed specifically at marginalised girls. The analysis also seeks to complement relevant evidence reviews published recently. For example, Burde et al. (2015) conducted a broader study looking at education in crisis-affected contexts and also draws on the literature from non-conflict contexts to assess what might work in crisis-affected contexts. Parkes et al. (2016) examine evidence on approaches to mitigating SRGBV in different contexts, including conflict-affected. This review contributes to this body of work by consolidating evidence on programming to promote and guide education of girls in conflict settings and to prevent and eliminate SRGBV in such contexts.

While some programmes have targeted one of the seven identified threats directly, those that have proven most

**4** effective are those that have adopted multi-pronged approaches to address the threats holistically – as discussed later in this section. Therefore, instead of categorising the findings of this paper by the seven identified threats, they are categorised by approaches that the literature has suggested are most effective. The framework for the analysis of interventions builds on practical strategies and actions to design gender-responsive education programming identified by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE, 2010). Based on the analysis in the INEE Pocket Guide to Gender, we then developed the following categories to classify interventions to address the main threats to girls' education in conflict:

1. Community participation and engagement in education;
2. Financial and in-kind support for girls and families;
3. Alternative education;
4. Programmes to mitigate school-related gender-based violence; and
5. Improving security for children to attend school.

The table in Appendix 4 presents information on the types



of interventions, the number of studies found for each, the countries in which they take place, the implementing agencies and the key promising practices identified.

The interventions analysed combine several strategies that tackle or address different dimensions of the problem or contribute to a holistic approach required to be effective. For example, alternative education programmes have been effective because of a strong element of community engagement. We highlight the elements of interventions that illustrate what works well under each category, bearing in mind the importance of multidimensional approaches.

## 4.1 Community participation and engagement in education

Participation in any humanitarian response by those affected by conflict is a critical tool for the effective delivery of sustainable gender-responsive education services (INEE, 2010). Participation in these contexts refers to the involvement of all actors, from girls and boys, their families, teachers, and communities to local networks, organisations, and government officials. This section examines examples of projects that promote different forms of participation in conflict-affected contexts with positive results for girls' schooling.

### COMMUNITY-LED ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Advocacy campaigns are powerful tools to encourage community engagement and raise awareness of the importance of girls' education. In Save the Children's community-based schools in South Sudan, for instance, parents reported that the work of community social advocacy teams of children and young people made them more aware of the financial benefits of sending their girls to school (Save the Children, 2012).

In 2003, USAID set up the Afghanistan Primary Education Program (APEP), offering emergency access to accelerated elementary education for out-of-school youth between 10 and 18 years of age, focusing on females (Intili & Kissam, 2006). It worked effectively through sensitisation campaigns with key figures in the community to urge families to send children, especially girls, to school. A number of key actors were found to promote girls' education, including members of the local Shura (village council that focuses

on education issues). And, 'although female attendance was mentioned as a problem at all of the sites, the problem usually resolved itself during mobilization team discussions with the Shuras' (ibid.).

Similarly, NRC's Alternative Basic Education (ABE) for youth aged nine to fifteen in Somaliland and Puntland operated in areas where boys and girls were involved in paid labour activities (Skeie, 2012) and established and used community education committees to mobilise support for girls' education. ABE targeted more than 1,000 families and 20 percent of host community children. It also collaborated with religious leaders and incorporated teachings of the Quran that espoused girls' education. A study comparing formal schools, integrated schools (Quranic and secular combined), and ABE in Bosasso found ABE had the most regular attendance (ibid.).

### PARENT-TEACHER-STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Parent-teacher-student associations and school management committees allow for parents to be directly involved in school activities, create ownership and support for education. They encourage parents to stay invested in their children's education and can drive significant changes around promoting girls' education and increasing numbers of female teachers.

Through its work in Afghanistan, Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) (2014, 2016) finds parent-teacher-student associations are often instrumental in keeping girls in school: 'They talk with families when girls stop coming, and encourage them to change their minds' (AKF, 2014, p. 3). Moreover, they are viewed as helping with school management, making sure teachers are present and on time, encouraging attendance, advocating for the school to local government authorities, and undertaking infrastructure improvement projects. An important strategy of the AKF model is the Flexible Response Fund, which provides funds to address immediate needs based on the parent-teacher-student association's input. The participatory decision-making process in the fund created a sense of ownership among community members, who made significant contributions to sustaining the activities initiated, including by providing transportation for stu-

dents, contributing cash and in-kind resources to improve infrastructure, and advocating for the recruitment of local teachers.

The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) financed a pilot project with Afghanistan's Ministry of Education to strengthen Shuras and promote girls' education through community mobilisation (Hall, 2014). According to the programme guidelines, Shuras in girls' schools comprise approximately 13-16 members, 30 percent of whom must be women. The evaluation suggests that the mechanism led to the overall improvement of school infrastructure, creating a noticeable difference in the school environment for girls and an increase in students' motivation (ibid.). Both parents and community members noticed these improvements, which increased trust in the institution. The committees also had an impact on traditional gender dynamics, by promoting more female teachers and female Shura members able to define their own responsibilities.

## COMMUNITY-BASED AND COMMUNITY-RUN SCHOOLS

Community schools can have the advantage of providing safer conditions for students by reducing distances to school. Community members actively involved in establishing and running the schools also make them safe and protective learning environments for girls.

In Afghanistan, IRC's community-based education programme (Kirk & Winthrop, 2012) used single-sex or mixed classes taught by teachers in their homes, their compounds, or a community space such as a mosque. Female teachers, or male teachers known and trusted by the community, made these schools more accessible and mixed community-based school classes were more acceptable for parents of girls because the boys were from the same community. The community supported teachers through small cash and in-kind contributions. IRC provided materials, community mobilisation, teacher training, and classroom-based support. The combination of familiar staff sourced from the community, short distances to school, and familiar contexts helped address the threats to girls' education. Similar results were seen in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan where the



local community was resistant to education — especially for girls. The community was made aware of the importance of education and eventually provided space to set up community-based schools and participated in monitoring and evaluating the programme (IRC, n.d.).

Save the Children's community-based schools in Afghanistan engaged community advocacy teams comprising children and youth councillors. An evaluation found community ownership was key to increasing student attendance (Save the Children, 2012). Moreover, activities such as community advocacy for girls' education and reduction of child labour, as well as child and parent groups following up on child absenteeism, helped persuade parents to send their children to school. According to evaluation data, in 2005 less than 30 percent of students in formal schools in Afghanistan supported by Save the Children were female. By 2009, this had risen to 39 percent, exceeding the national average of 35.5 percent. Between 2008 and 2009, the increase in girls' enrolment in supported schools was three times as large as the increase in boys' enrolment.

## DIRECT ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS

Traditional formal and informal leaders play a critical role in community decision-making. During conflict and crisis situations, these leaders are often given the status of

duty bearers for the entire community. In this section we discuss projects that have made specific efforts to engage community and traditional leaders to ensure their buy-in, both before setting up and during implementation of education programmes.

Save the Children (2008) used community participation strategies to involve religious leaders in community education councils, school management committees, and a selection of parent, teacher, and student associations. As a result, mullahs (religious leaders) regularly spoke in the mosque about the importance of education, particularly for girls, increasing female enrolment and helping counter the misconception that education for girls is anti-Islamic. As Save the Children noted, 'This, in turn, could contribute to reducing the incidents of attacks on schools' (ibid.). Training of male student councillors changed their attitudes towards girls' education, which also entailed them revising their view of education for their sisters.

In Pakistan, The Citizens Foundation engages with communities before selecting a new area for an intervention, ensuring buy-in of influential local leaders through dialogue. The community then identifies school sites, while sustaining relationships with the community through outreach programmes such as adult literacy classes for women, monitoring of girls' attendance and following up on absences, counselling of families, parent-teacher meetings, school events, and flexible fees. Community members report feeling a sense of ownership of the schools and believe their children – particularly their girls – are secure there (Khan et al., 2016).

The Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) is a guide intended to help inexperienced teachers with the start-up of lower primary classes in emergencies. The TEP has different components, one of which is community engagement. An evaluation in 2011 (NRC, 2011a) reported that through active community engagement, the TEP had changed community attitudes towards girls' education. Parents' committees, community leaders, and teachers collaborated to persuade parents to keep their children in school during the harvest, when they would normally work. Local leaders also actively prevented children from being recruited for work. Participants highlighted that the mobilisation of

local communities and sensitisation through parent-teacher associations emphasised treating girls and boys equally at school. The evaluation found a high level of gender parity in enrolment: interviews confirmed that nearly as many girls as boys completed the TEP programme and integrated into the formal system.

Another case study from Save the Children (2008) provides a good example of community engagement in Afghanistan and Nepal aimed at reducing attacks on schools. While not specifically targeted to girls, Save the Children's Rewrite the Future programme (which was active between 2005 and 2010) was introduced in Nepal amid an on-going conflict targeting schools, which created fear among teachers and led to frequent school closures. Local community organisations, including 'village child protection committees,' child clubs, and school management committees, would declare a school a 'zone of peace,' under which the school and the wider community (including local representatives of the political groups behind many of the attacks) agreed on a set of criteria to be respected by all. Interviewees said the process led to an increased sense of security in schools, a reduction of political interference and improved student and teacher attendance.

## SUMMARY

The examples discussed above show that engaging with different stakeholders who are involved directly or indirectly in the lives of children is an effective way to support girls' education in conflict-affected settings. These interventions align with several of the principles of community participation identified by INEE (2010). By promoting the involvement and sensitisation of diverse groups such as children, parents, teachers, and school management committees, as well as of local formal and informal leaders, these interventions minimise the risk of excluding groups and mitigate possible tensions that may arise in the community during the design and delivery of education programmes for girls. At the same time, consultations and the active engagement of relevant stakeholders throughout the assessment, design, and delivery process allows for a deeper understanding of the context and of norms and values that can be harnessed to promote quality and protective education for girls. Consultations with stakeholders during the design phase are crit-

ical to enhance the accuracy of needs assessment data and, importantly, active participation ensures community members' commitment to supporting girls' education both financially and in-kind. This sets the foundation for greater self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Challenges inevitably exist, but in most cases these were resolved over time. Intili and Kissam (2006) note how advocacy work with key figures in Afghanistan required a significant amount of time: female mentors proved difficult to find and discussing female attendance put community mobilisation teams at risk of perceived impropriety. Save the Children (2008) notes challenges around the inclusion of women who live in traditionally segregated societies and the mobilisation of communities lacking a tradition of civic participation. In Afghanistan, Hall (2014) notes a failure of most community groups to reach quotas for women in parent-teacher associations. Nevertheless, different forms of community participation in schooling show promise as a mechanism to improve school attendance and quality of education, as well as to increase girls' participation in particular.

## 4.2 Financial and in-kind support for girls and their families

Conflict affects an entire population and the poorest are likely to be the worst impacted because they are already marginalised financially, socially, and politically. Upfront and hidden costs of sending a child to school become a burden for families, especially the poor, in conflict-affected contexts. Adolescent girls are particularly disadvantaged (Alam et al., 2016) given the high opportunity costs of attending school and the fact that their education is not generally seen as an investment, as it is with boys (see Section 3). Evidence from the Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children (UIS and UNICEF, 2015) and wider research (Bastagli et al., 2016) suggests that demand for schooling can be increased through economic support interventions, including scholarships, social protection safety nets, and cash transfers. While there is ample evidence on the positive impact of cash transfers on schooling from developing contexts, these approaches are relatively new for conflict-affected populations, and evaluations of its impact are scarce. Nevertheless, what evidence does exist shows the approach is promising.

## CASH AND IN-KIND SUPPORT, VOUCHERS, AND FEE-FREE EDUCATION

Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) Accelerated Bridging Education programmes (ABE) for internally displaced children in Somalia had various elements that showed positive results (Skeie, 2012). The programme provided vouchers to support the transition of youth from ABE to formal schools in response to families struggling to meet their basic needs and the opportunity costs of schooling (children were resorting to paid labour at the expense of their education). Vouchers covered key school costs in return for 85 percent attendance. The project also collaborated with the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide school feeding and 'take home rations' for girls. The evaluation suggests that the intervention significantly enhanced retention: during the two years of the programme, school dropout rates were lower for beneficiaries than for the average school population in Somaliland. The programme supported girls in particular, who accounted for 60 percent of voucher recipients.

Other programmes have found success in supporting equal access to education for girls by ensuring education remains free. The NRC Teacher Emergency Package (TEP) programme in Burundi was free of school fees, and included all books, materials, and uniforms (NRC, 2011a). The evaluation found that the programme had a strong impact on the enrolment of children, particularly girls, who had previously not attended school. In qualitative interviews, parents, leaders, and communal inspectors agreed that the TEP being free was a turning point and opened the door for girls to enter the education system in larger numbers. Seeing the results of the TEP, parents continued to sign up girls in the formal school system and 'could no longer use poverty as an excuse,' suggesting costs to education can create both real and superficial barriers that prevent children from attending in favour of household or wage-earning activities (ibid., p. 44).

## SCHOOL FEEDING

School feeding programmes can provide strong incentives for children to stay in school, particularly in contexts where access to food is limited or widespread poverty and lack of income-generating opportunities – common in conflict settings – render parents unable to buy or produce enough food for the family.

For example, Pattugalan (2014) notes that WFP’s flagship school feeding programme has helped increase the enrolment and retention of girls in school. Steinmeyer et al. (2007), in an extensive assessment of the role of WFP feeding programmes in emergency contexts, consistently found that school feeding can act as an effective tool to increase daily retention. In both Sudan and DRC, where food is scarce, a mid-day meal allowed girls and boys to remain in school instead of returning home for lunch or leaving school to find other food. In contexts where children do not necessarily eat before school, a mid-morning meal or lunch is an incentive for them to stay in school. UNICEF representatives in Khartoum explicitly stressed that the ability to improve daily retention was one of the unique advantages of school feeding. Moreover, uninterrupted school feeding programmes implemented in stable contexts have positive nutritional and health effects. In particular, they minimise the adverse consequences for children suffering extreme malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies and improve children’s ability to focus on their schooling (Steinmeyer et al., 2007).

WFP case studies in Chad and DRC indicate that providing take-home food rations for girls in their last two years of primary school contributed to a decrease in the frequency of early marriage. Each girl must attend school 80 percent of the time to receive the rations, which were shared with the family. It was thus in the family’s interest to allow daughters to attend school rather than marry (Pattugalan, 2014).

The limited evidence from conflict-affected contexts available on school feeding programmes suggests they can increase enrolment, provide nutritional benefits, and assist in retention. There is, however, a need to increase knowledge on the impact of feeding programmes, particularly as to how they can promote equality in education. This includes a understanding how these interventions manifest for girls in particular and, importantly, to generate more detail about how they impact education performance in different contexts: development, natural emergencies, and conflict.

Sustainable feeding programmes require sustainable and secure funding linked to education project timeframes. Wesonga (2013), evaluating an NRC Accelerated Primary Education Support (APES) programme in Somalia, found



the feeding component idle mid-project, leading to a decrease in enrolment from 160 students to 100 (and from 70 to 34 girls). Steinmeyer et al. (2007) raise concerns that, in conflict contexts in particular, the delivery of food can become a security risk, with some interview respondents suggesting food stocks turn schools into targets for looting. Moreover, schools are at risk of being seen by local communities as feeding centres rather than as places of learning. Thus further research into mitigating new threats that may emerge from these programmes is required.

### 4.3 Alternative education

Alternative education entails ‘local or systemic/government measures to provide alternate means of accessing education in situations when normal school sites are damaged or occupied, students or teachers are threatened, teachers are absent due to conflict, the commute to school is dangerous, or residents have been forced to flee their villages’ (GCPEA, 2011, p. 15). In most cases, the model of alternative education programmes provided in conflict-affected contexts is ‘accelerated education’ to allow children to catch up with missed curricula at a faster pace of learning or to accommodate fewer school hours. Education is delivered through other modalities depending on the context. These may include alternative or temporary schools, mobile learning programmes, or distance learning programmes.

## ACCELERATED EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Accelerated education programmes (AEPs) are flexible, age-appropriate programmes that promote access to education in an accelerated timeframe for disadvantaged groups – specifically out-of-school, over-age children and youth excluded from education or who have had their education interrupted by conflict. AEPs are typically implemented to fill a critical gap when education services are disrupted because of conflict and to ensure learners receive an appropriate and relevant education responsive to their life circumstances (Baxter et al., 2016). There is still insufficient evidence and documentation on AEPs in conflict-affected environments to understand how they are currently implemented and their impact. Nevertheless, there are some examples of how AEPs can be used to increase access to girls' education in conflict settings.

The AEP programme in Somalia was implemented over three years by a consortium comprising NRC (partnership lead), Save the Children Denmark, and Concern Worldwide, as well as local counterparts like the Ministry of Education. Its specific purpose was to increase the number of school-age children accessing and completing quality primary education, in particular those from poor and marginalised communities and girls. The programme also sought to tackle poor quality of education services and weak management and coordination at sub-sector and regional levels. The government identified constraints to access and participation in education, on both the supply side (such as lack of adequate physical infrastructure, irrelevant curriculum, lack of supplies, and poorly qualified teachers) and the demand side (high direct and indirect costs and limited awareness of the importance of formal education, for example).

The intervention designed appropriate strategies to enhance access (enrolment or re-enrolment) and retention of more than 32,000 learners, of which 15,352, or 47.5 percent, were girls. ABE schools supported by APES also contributed to higher transition rates, with at least 75 percent of children enrolled in ABE schools transitioning to upper primary. Key features of the programme included flexible school hours and subsidised education costs for the marginalised and hard to reach by providing scholastic materials, teacher incentives, and uniforms. For this

purpose, APES used a cost-effective and flexible implementation model, including printing (or procurement) and distribution of ABE learning materials and training of teachers, head teachers, and community education committee members. A competency assessment conducted during the programme period indicated that students in the ABE programme performed much better than formal school students in their various subjects (Wesonga, 2013).

Save the Children has implemented accelerated learning programmes (ALPs) in several conflict-affected contexts to offer a condensed primary education curriculum for those who have not enrolled or have dropped out of school but are too old to join the early grades of a regular school. The programme has made significant achievements, including increased girls' enrolment and retention and improved learning outcomes. The approach is centred on community-based classes provided in close proximity to the learners' homes, with flexible school schedules for a range of vulnerable young people including girls, uneducated youth or those who have dropped out of school, children in remote communities, children formerly associated with fighting forces, and children from minority ethnic groups. However, other features of the programme were deemed to be equally important to its success. Pedagogical features such as more participatory teaching methods and smaller class sizes helped girls who 'responded to a more intimate learning environment' (ibid, p.ix). In South Sudan, a different atmosphere was noted that led to greater participation and literacy improvements. ALP students read 36 words per minute compared to 10 words per minute for students in formal schools. According to the results of a review, the ALP model, with its specific measures to address constraints facing girls specifically (such as distance and lack of female teachers), showed better indicators of gender equality than did formal or mainstream schools in Angola, Afghanistan, and South Sudan (Save the Children, 2012). In Angola, the ALP had a gender-responsive adaptation that showed promise: it allowed young mothers (aged 14-17) to bring their babies and to have the baby in the class if necessary. These young women would not have been able to access basic education without the support these ALP classes provided.

In general, the flexible schedules offered by AEPs are seen as an important benefit for girls and young women,

given the load of care, domestic, and income-earning responsibilities they face, which are particularly burdensome in conflict affected contexts (as discussed in Section 3). Skeie found in Somalia that although some viewed flexible school schedules in ABE schools as disproportionately beneficial for boys, the model was well-received by girls who made up 60 percent of the beneficiaries (2012). As such, further research is needed into the benefits of a flexible schedule on girls and boys and the relationship with labour market demands.

## EDUCATION THROUGH RADIO AND DISTANCE LEARNING

Radio-based educational programmes have also emerged as a modality of alternative education, with positive results in conflict-affected contexts. For example, Feria et al. (2006) evaluated GenPeace, a literacy programme for girls and women in the war-torn southern Philippines that grew into a unique, region-wide network of community-run radio stations that helped build a culture of peace in conflict areas. The programme provided literacy education as well as information on reproductive health, gender issues, livelihood support, empowerment, peace initiatives and other significant topics, developed in response to needs identified in the particular communities. Broadcasts helped fill gaps in education for those who could not reach formal schools, and also informed girls when distances to school were too great, when infrastructure had been destroyed, or when journeys were deemed unsafe. Up to half of all the radio volunteers were young women, who proved to be role models in a region where women are traditionally less active and less involved in community projects.

Similarly, Carlson (2013) also found benefits to radio instruction in conflict contexts when evaluating a USAID Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) programme in South Sudan and Somalia. IRI is an instructional methodology that combines an audio component delivered by radio or recording (three hours per day, up to five days a week) with teacher-facilitated learning activities. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are covered, along with life skills, health, conflict prevention, and mediation. To support formal education in primary schools, the programme has produced 480 Learning Village audio lessons. It supports non-formal education via the ALP and serves out-of-school

youth with 180 Radio-Based Education for All (RABEA) audio programmes that offer the primary school curriculum together with civics, health, and English-language content. The programme reduces the need to attend schools at risk of attack, compensates for the limited availability or inexperience of teachers and poor learning environments, and is shown to contribute to better learning outcomes when the system is significantly stressed (ibid.). Finally, the programme in South Sudan trained teachers in gender-sensitive behaviour, such as making a point of calling on both boys and girls equally. It also had components in the RABEA curriculum that promoted equal rights for women and shared messaging on female health (Baxter et al., 2016).

Distance learning also helps fill the educational gap for uprooted adolescents. To provide educational services to refugees in both urban and camp settings, the Jesuit Refugee Service and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) partnered in 2010 to launch an accredited and degree-giving online learning centre known as the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JC:HEM) initiative. Serving refugees and internally displaced persons living in Afghanistan, Chad, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, it offers both diplomas and certificates and has matriculated over 3,000 students. Sex-disaggregated data indicate that JC:HEM is successfully reaching adolescent girls, with a female student population of 46 percent. The programme revealed that one of the greatest barriers that female students faced was limited foreign language training compared to their male peers. In response, JC:HEM encourages female students to participate in its language classes to prepare them for admission to other programmes. These efforts show gender-sensitive progress that has resulted in positive outcomes: from 2010 to 2015, the female student population in the diploma programme rose from 14 percent to 36 percent (Alam et al., 2016). It thus provides a model of gender-sensitive learning that reaches adolescent girls; an otherwise extremely difficult group to reach.

## VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Some examples of vocational training programmes for girls and young women have also shown success. For instance, Ahmed (2008) evaluates the Youth Education Pack programme run by NRC in Somaliland, which provides func-

tional literacy training, practical skills for employment, and knowledge training on HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, and human rights. The evaluation found that, of the graduates interviewed, 56 percent said they were employed and earned a living from the skills training they had acquired; only 39 percent said they were not employed. Moreover, of the total employed, 90 percent said they had started their own business applying skills acquired in the programme.

## SUMMARY

A key theme throughout the alternative education literature is the ability to incorporate gender-sensitive strategies that were lacking in local government schools (INEE, 2010).

Areas of concern with these types of programmes are that they need to function like a school, become unsustainable once donor funding is withdrawn, and have limited impact in addressing the failures of state-supported education systems. Some programmes have dealt with these concerns by strengthening community committees to support school management committees and provide a bridge between school leadership and the community; by promoting grassroots support and buy-in, such as through local governments taking up operational costs; by improving school infrastructure; and by continued advocacy with education ministries to ensure ongoing commitment of funds (Wesonga, 2013).

## 4.4 Programmes to mitigate school-related gender-based violence

While schools are often seen by parents and community members as protective spaces for children, in conflict-affected contexts incidents of bullying, increased use of corporal punishment, and sexual abuse and exploitation within and around schools are often reported. SRGBV is amplified in crisis and conflict settings because of the already stressed and violent environment within communities. As Section 3 discussed, the risks of SRGBV are heightened in conflict settings and these include soldiers and combatants stationed in and around schools who commit acts of violence against girls and boys, untrained and inexperienced teachers who exploit their position of power to abuse or harass girls and may not be held accountable, and students who face the stress of a violent environment and witness GBV as a common occurrence in their communities and then replicate it within the school environment.

Safe education spaces cannot be taken for granted in conflict settings. Strengthening preventive and protective mechanisms is key to creating a safe and enabling learning environment for all girls, young women, boys, and young men. Efforts are being made in a wide range of contexts to mitigate GBV in and around schools through laws and policies and the provision of prevention, reporting, and response mechanisms. Parkes et al. (2016), during a rigorous review of global research evidence on policy and practice on SRGBV, found that studies of interventions with young people did not look at the gendered dimensions of conflict. Typically, studies of interventions in war zones focused on mental health and psychosocial support and paid little attention to gender beyond noting that girls and boys sometimes differ in their post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. In 2016, UNESCO and UN Women published the Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence, which identifies a series of priority actions to help shift the local, national, and global response to SRGBV. However, resources identifying promising practices in conflict-affected contexts are not readily available. One useful resource is INEE's Education Minimum Standards and its Pocket Guide to Gender (2010), which identifies strategies such as teacher training and awareness-raising, codes of conduct for teachers, and 'safe school' guidelines.

There are gaps in evidence on the nature and extent of SRGBV and promising approaches in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. However, there are some useful strategies, discussed below, that have worked directly or indirectly to reduce SRGBV.

## CONTRIBUTING TO CHANGING SOCIAL NORMS

In South Sudan and Somalia, UNICEF's Communities Care programme was piloted in 2013-2016 to respond to the prevalence of sexual violence and other forms of GBV in conflict settings. In South Sudan in particular, several incidents of rape by teachers had been reported and parents were hesitant to send girls to school. In consultation with the Ministry of Education in each state, several target schools were selected for service provider training, where facilitators engaged in community dialogue — guided by a toolkit manual — around issues of violence, codes of conduct, and reporting mechanisms from the programme's community engagement and action toolkit (El-Bushra & Rees Smith, 2016a). The programme's theory of change



was based on evidence that social norms relating to gender, sex, and violence are all drivers of GBV, and that transforming these norms can generate behaviour change (ibid.). As such, the programme focused on targeting the underlying drivers of GBV, which include gender inequality and harmful social norms related to gender, violence, and sex (Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016).

Indications of the pilot's impacts to date are positive. Prior to the training, 90 percent of participants in South Sudan were unaware of the code of conduct to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse by teachers. They also did not know how to report incidents and refer survivors. After the training, they drafted action plans to prevent and respond to sexual violence in their schools (Read-Hamilton & Marsh, 2016). These were developed in a consultative process with teachers, principals, student representatives, school management committee members, representatives of the parent-teacher association, and officials from the state Ministry of Education. Action plans included:

- Raising awareness during assemblies, association meetings, curricular, and extracurricular activities;
- Establishing reporting and referral mechanisms and training senior female and male teachers to support students and serve as counsellors and focal points for referrals;
- Training teachers on the code of conduct and implementing a 'zero tolerance policy' on sexual exploitation and abuse;
- Incorporating life skills into the curriculum to promote self-esteem and confidence among students and to challenge negative social norms, especially among female students;
- Fundraising campaigns to build latrines and changing rooms for girls at school; and
- Dedicating safe spaces for girls in school to consult with a trained female staff member (ibid.).

While these early observations do not amount to conclusive evidence of sustained change in gender-inequitable or violence-supportive social norms, they represent a promising start (UNICEF, 2016, in El-Bushra & Rees Smith, 2016a).

Bernath (2014) also explores approaches to social norms change by evaluating NRC's Women's Rights through

Information, Sensitisation and Education (WISE) GBV programme in Liberia over the period 2009–2014. WISE sought to empower Liberian civil society to prevent and respond to GBV in post-conflict communities by improving the technical and organisational capacity of education authorities to prevent and respond to GBV locally and nationally and directly improve survivors' access to services. Of particular note are the programme's demonstrably effective strategies to change perceptions and norms that perpetuate GBV, including in schools and by teachers. One of these was engagement with community groups in critical discussions around GBV, working with both teachers who were part of the education system and others who worked in community-based schools. While the programme lacks a robust evaluation, some teachers interviewed for its assessment felt participating in the programme led to their attitude change. For example, with respect to impact on teaching practices, one male teacher reported, 'We know it is wrong to have sex with our students, but here in Liberia, knowing something is wrong doesn't always mean we won't do it. But when I started to understand how the students were impacted by these actions, this is what really stopped me and prevented me from doing it again' (ibid., p. 20).

### INCREASING THE PRESENCE OF FEMALE TEACHERS OR ASSISTANTS IN THE CLASSROOMS

A common theme in the literature in conflict settings is the importance of quality female teachers. This is of particular relevance in contexts with high prevalence of GBV and when parents hesitate to send girls to schools with male



teachers. Projects that put female teachers or classroom assistants (CAs) in place have seen positive results in terms of increased enrolment and retention of female students. We also found an example in the literature of a programme with direct evidence of the presence of trained female class assistants reducing incidents of SRGBV.

Burde et al. (2015) finds some evidence in rural Pakistan that providing all-girls schools and employing female teachers helped increase girls' access to education. They note, however, that the evidence suggests that if parents personally know male teachers who teach their daughters, teachers' gender is not as significant a deterrent to girls' enrolment to schools, at least before puberty (Burde & Linden, 2013).

In rural and remote areas of Afghanistan, AKF identified a need for female teachers as a means of improving girls' participation. A lack of qualified female teachers in these areas led AKF to provide incentive payments, free transportation for teachers and students, and teacher training for female school graduates in remote areas. Save the Children's Rewrite the Future project also sought to recruit female teachers in Afghanistan. To overcome the dearth of qualified female teachers, one strategy used was employing female high school students to work part time as primary school teachers while completing their studies (Save the Children, 2008). Having a female-only teaching staff was also found to be a success factor in TCF intervention in Pakistan (Khan et al., 2016).

IRC's Healing Classrooms project is an example of a project that directly targeted SRGBV by providing female staff at school. According to Kirk and Winthrop (2012) (see also Kirk, 2007), this project altered the gender dynamics of classroom spaces by providing female CAs for Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone and Guinea. The project was specifically designed to address the problem of male-dominated classrooms and to reduce girls' vulnerability to sexual exploitation in schools, where teachers were found to be major perpetrators. CAs were a female presence in Grade 3-6 classrooms with an explicit mandate to mitigate abuse and exploitation of students and support a girl-friendly school and student learning environment. CAs also monitored girls' attendance, followed up on absences with home visits, helped girls with their

studies, supported extracurricular health education and social club activities for girls such as games and sports, and maintained the log-book with students' grades. CAs led these activities in an attempt to avoid situations in which teachers could manipulate and exploit girls for sex in exchange for grades. CAs were recruited from the refugee community and provided with a two- to five-day training workshop run by IRC and were subsequently monitored by IRC supervisors.

All of the interviewed students emphasised the significant impact of the CAs' presence in their classrooms. The authors conclude that there is a clear message from the girls that, with the CAs, the classrooms were 'more comfortable and friendly spaces in which to learn and that they feel encouraged not only by the physical presence of a woman in their classroom, but also by the fact that she will follow up with them on home visits' (Kirk, 2007, p. 127). Of particular note is the observation that occurrences of sexual exploitation were significantly reduced, which was one of the project's aims. The evaluations do not provide quantitative data or baseline comparisons for these claims but do offer some qualitative evidence. A CA interviewed in Guinea noted, 'Things have changed, the teachers don't do it [sexual exploitation of girls] – this is why the girls are so serious now' (Kirk & Winthrop, 2012, p.9). However, the authors note that these gains are largely focused on protecting and changing the girls to better suit the classroom, rather than challenging underlying gender and power dynamics, calling into question the ability of the project to target the root causes of SRGBV or create sustainable change.

To achieve more sustainable results in these adverse contexts, short-term measures to meet the recruitment needs of individual schools such as those discussed here should be matched with longer-term policy development, incentives, or quota systems to promote a gender balance in teachers (INEE, 2010).

## CREATING SAFE SPACES AND GENDER-SENSITIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Establishing gender-sensitive teaching and gender-sensitive learning and school environments is a preventive approach to curbing SRGBV. This approach can involve both female and male teachers and can be implemented in con-

conflict-affected contexts to promote gender equality in education and to create a safer, more balanced playing field for marginalised girls. Teachers, some of whom are community members recruited and trained during conflict to compensate for the limited availability of experienced teachers, can be taught participatory, inclusive, and gender-sensitive approaches to teaching. Training can include awareness of gender stereotypes in teaching and learning materials, promotion of girls' active participation in class, a focus on self-confidence and self-esteem in both girls and boys, and use of gender-sensitive, non-violent, and non-abusive language (INEE, 2010). Recruiting more female teachers with adequate training does not guarantee gender-sensitive teaching, but female teachers can be role models for girls. However, it is important to ensure male teachers also receive robust training on gender equality in order to affect teaching and learning practices in the classroom.

The positive results of better quality teaching and more gender-sensitive learning can be seen in Afghan schools supported by AKF (2014). AKF provided basic training for teachers and head teachers in methods and subject content; mentoring of teachers by project staff on active, student-centred methods; management and leadership training for principals; and established learning circles for mutual support. In 2009, at the beginning of the programme, 225 girls graduated from supported schools; by 2013, that number had increased to over 2,300 (AKF, 2014). Student enrolment increased by approximately 59,000, including 28,998 girls, between 2009 and 2013 in Grades 7-12.

In Uganda, an impact evaluation of a UNICEF-supported training initiative to promote teachers as agents of change for gender equality demonstrated changes in teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices on gender in conflict-affected settings. The research determined that if implemented over the long term, the intervention could have a considerable impact in promoting safer and more equitable schools (El-Bushra & Rees Smith, 2016b). However, this case further highlighted the need for multi-pronged approaches and particularly the need for systems and classroom-level interventions to be complemented by community-based and informal education initiatives aimed at shifting social norms in order to achieve sustained levels of change (ibid).

Creating learning environments where girls feel safe to learn and develop, often beyond school-based education, is critical. Examples include the Protecting and Empowering Displaced Adolescent Girls Initiative, implemented by the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda, and non-formal education centres set up by Plan International in Pakistan. Both these have offered 'safe spaces' for adolescent girls in post-conflict and post-disaster settings and provide young married girls and out-of-school girls living in refugee camps with access to non-formal education (including life skills and discussion of gender-related issues), health services, and financial literacy courses. Although the end line results are not yet available, the evaluation will include child marriage indicators related to education, marriage, and sex (Girls Not Brides, 2016).

A review by Parkes et al. concluded that 'whole school' approaches to preventing and responding to SRGBV are critical. This includes constructing schools as "safe spaces" for generating equitable, inclusive relationships between peers and with teachers, and clarity in the norms, values, and boundaries for dealing with unsafe behaviour' (Parkes et al., 2016). The authors highlight that much more evidence is needed on effective approaches to developing and implementing safety policies in schools, and on linking these policies to broader policy frameworks in order to integrate work on SRGBV into schools' everyday routines.

## 4.5 Improving security for children to attend school

Girls and boys experience many physical and psychological threats, such as the risk of physical and verbal bullying and violent attacks by soldiers and combatants on the way to and from school and in schools. Making school infrastructure and journeys to school safe and protective is crucial to encourage children to attend and remain in school. Measures identified in the literature include those that reduce the distance to school and those that physically protect schools. Though there is scarce literature about this issue from conflict-affected contexts, we also include in this section a brief discussion of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities in schools, as these are very important for adolescent girls to feel safe, secure, and respected at school.

## REDUCING DISTANCE TO SCHOOL

A notable intervention to protect children in conflict-affected areas – particularly girls, who are generally more exposed to security risks – is reducing the distance to school. Burde and Linden (2013), investigated a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) intervention in Afghanistan, using a randomised controlled trial to explore the impact of village schools in close proximity to children’s homes on access and academic performance levels. CRS established alternative schools in close proximity to a number of rural villages. In 13 village schools and among 1,490 primary-school-aged children over a one-year period, girls’ enrolment increased by 52 percent and average test scores by 0.65 standard deviation in comparison with the control group. Boys’ enrolment increased by 35 percent and test scores by 0.4 standard deviation. The authors attributed the increase in enrolment in part to reduced distances to schools and fewer related risks.

In Pakistan, TCF has developed a school model that has contributed favourably to girls’ enrolment and retention. Every school unit is built fit for purpose to standardised designs so that all essential facilities are available (including toilets, drinking water, boundary walls, and wheelchair-accessible ramps). In addition, schools are located within walking distance to students’ homes, even if this means constructing two schools in close proximity to each other. This model – which has other elements in addition to proximity to homes – has been assessed as successful, with higher than average completion and transition rates to upper-secondary school by both boys and girls (Khan et al., 2016).

AKF (2016) found that providing students with accommodation and transportation in contexts where students had to travel long distances to school was a significant factor in improving retention for girls. As with other studies, however, the evaluation failed to unpack how the different elements contributed to the success of the programme.

Some recent studies illustrate how refugee and aid organisations have responded in innovative ways to the challenge posed by distance to school. In Mafrq, Jordan, local organisations organised carpools with families who can afford having a car; in Ramtha, UNICEF provided buses. Palestinian refugees living in a Lebanese camp have creat-

ed a ‘walking bus’ to ensure safe passage for adolescent girls to and from school (Alam et al., 2016). Providing transport to schools is not without its risks: both teachers and students are vulnerable from attack when school buses or other forms of transport are targeted.

## PHYSICAL PROTECTION

Physical protection measures are implemented in order to shield potential targets, minimise damage from an attack, or provide a means of self-defence. Examples include armed or unarmed guards in schools, reinforcing school infrastructure, and reducing the risks en route to school (GCPEA, 2011).

One of the most effective protection mechanisms appears to be one of the simplest. A number of studies find building walls or fences around school grounds increases protection and feelings of protection (Kariuki & Naylor, 2009; Hall, 2014; AKF, 2016; Khan et al., 2016). In South Sudan, a lack of boundary fences meant it was common to see community members walking through school compounds and some of them, especially young men, carrying guns (Kariuki & Naylor, 2009).

In an evaluation of a GIZ intervention in Afghanistan, Hall (2014) found that on average 51 percent of interviewed students attending schools with boundary walls and (in some cases) custodians reported that safety at school had improved. Only 38 percent at schools without boundary walls reported improvements. These improvements were felt most in higher grades, when girls approach puberty and parents fear they will be harassed by boys and men. These results, however, are expected to differ depending on the type of threat to schools.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO WASH AND MHM

Integrated WASH interventions are important for helping adolescent girls feel comfortable attending school, particularly during their periods. There is some promising evidence that they can reduce girls’ absenteeism (Unterhalter et al., 2014), although the evidence is not for conflict-affected settings. The literature in these cases appears to assume WASH facilities are fundamental to the school environment, in line with INEE minimum standards and other guiding principles that emphasise the importance of WASH in school

facilities in conflict settings. However, the evidence on the effect of WASH interventions on girls' participation and performance in school is limited for conflict contexts. The WASH in School for Girls (WinS4Girls) Project implemented by UNICEF and supported by the Government of Canada is making significant strides to reduce this knowledge gap. Formative research conducted across 14 countries (including five affected by conflict) on experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to MHM is expected to inform related policies and interventions. However at the time of writing, results of the survey were unavailable.

An NRC evaluation provides useful insight into the distribution of sanitary kits as part of their educational programming in Somalia (Bishop, 2014). Sanitary kits contained two pairs of underwear, three reusable pads, one bar of soap, one packet of laundry soap, and a usage description sheet. Bishop (2014) finds that sanitary kit distribution contributed to better daily attendance and retention of girls who reached upper primary school. When recipients were asked to reflect on their satisfaction with the kits, 77.5 percent of respondents reported they were very satisfied and 21.9 percent were satisfied.

The same intervention deployed in South Sudan was also well-received (Bishop, 2014). In Juba and Aweil, kits contained bathing soap, washing soap, and reusable sanitary pads. Bishop (2014) found that the project had three overall positive impacts: encouraging attendance, improving academic performance, and motivating girls. One respondent stated that after the kits were provided, the enrolment rate for girls increased from 30-35 percent to 42 percent by the end of the school year.

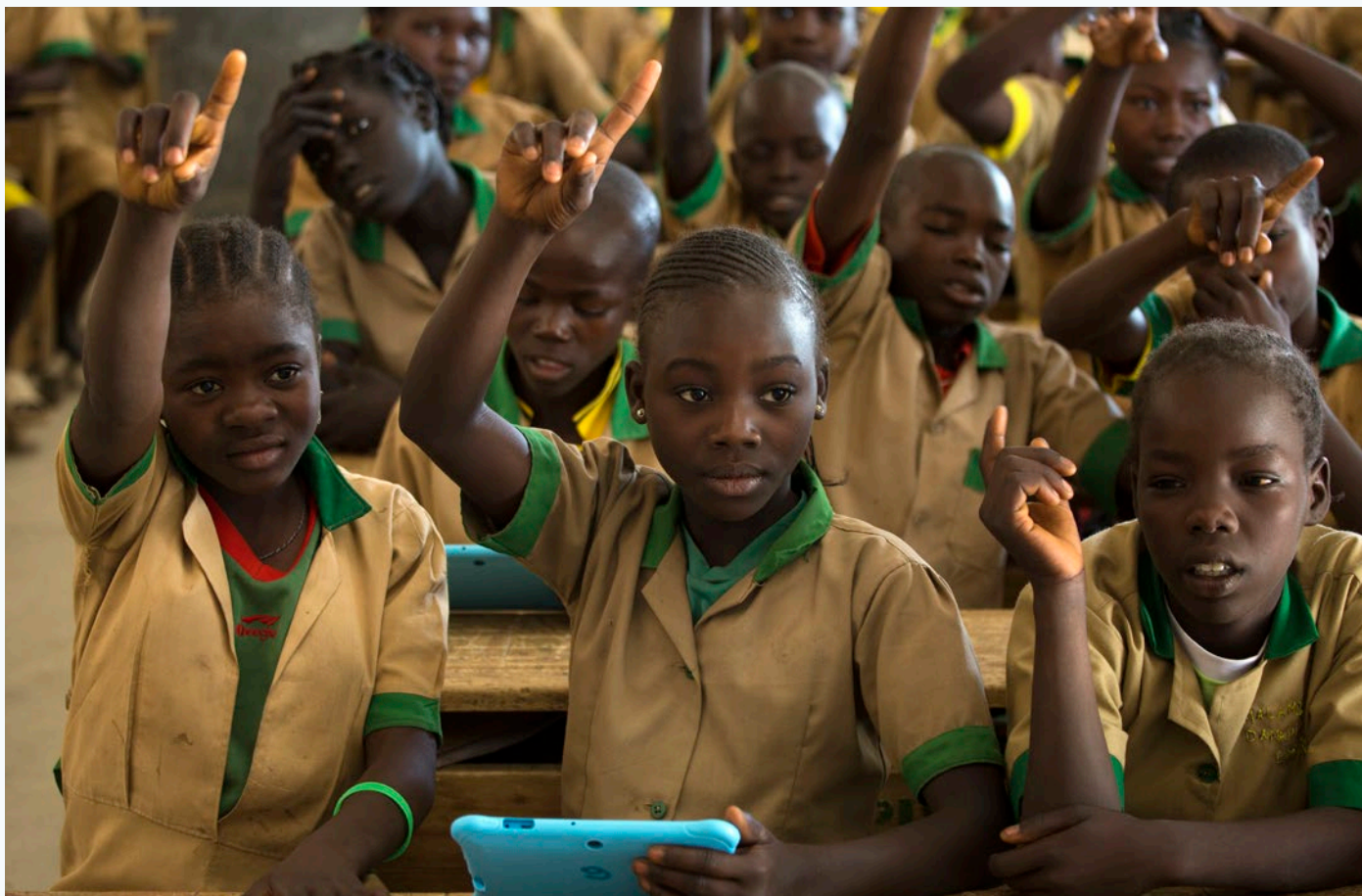
Yet the programme wasn't without difficulties. The evaluation found numerous intersecting barriers to the programme's success, including shortages or lack of female teachers and staff sensitive to the issues of menstruation; the absence of separate latrines and water for washing and suitable spaces for washing the reusable pads; and a stigmatization or limited awareness of puberty that led to girls not feeling comfortable attending school during menses. Oster and Thornton (2010) found in Nepal that menstruation had a very small impact on school attendance (a total of 0.4 missed days in a 180 day school year) and



that girls who randomly received sanitary products were no less likely to miss school during their period. Moreover, the extent to which these participants were affected by conflict is relatively unknown.

Sahin (2015) notes, however, that WASH in Schools programmes are good entry points to improve MHM and give development practitioners an opening to initiate discussions on broader issues related to menstruation. They also provide an opportunity for taking action to address the MHM challenges facing girls in schools, at home, and in their communities, while raising broader questions over the impact of these interventions.

There is a growing interest in the development community, both among researchers and practitioners on WASH and education, to explore how best to ensure schools in low-income countries are girl-friendly and provide MHM for girls and female teachers. However, this has been relatively limited to date in the case of emergencies, aside from the distribution of dignity kits (including in schools). There are gaps in the current knowledge on responding to MHM, such as a lack of evaluations conducted on what has and has not worked in past emergencies. There is insufficient information on why MHM has not been fully integrated to date as a standard part of an emergency response, including the barriers to doing so, and how best to overcome such barriers to ensure adolescent girls' and women's MHM-related needs are effectively met in a timely manner (Sommer, 2012). This is therefore an area where more research and evidence is urgently needed.



## Lessons drawn from promising approaches with positive results for girls' education

The following programming lessons can be drawn from our analysis of the evidence on what works to mitigate threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts.

**Community participation and engagement is critical in the delivery of gender-sensitive and contextually relevant education.** One of the practices that stands out for having positive results across several different interventions is community participation in support of girls' education. Working with communities – parents, teachers, traditional and religious leaders, and girls and boys – to change perceptions about girls' education and encouraging active participation leads to ownership and sustainability of initiatives. Through advocacy, engagement, and rapport with different stakeholders in the community, it is possible to influence behaviour linked to social norms that would otherwise hamper girls' education. This can then become

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one of the bedrocks for more protective environments for girls' education. The examples have shown that community members have been involved in a number of ways ranging from providing safe spaces to learn through community run-schools, to actively engaging in parent-teacher associations and school management committees to ensure the smooth running of schools and better quality of teaching. Importantly, when persuaded about the value of girls' education, local and religious leaders have been instrumental in changing community attitudes towards girls' education, encouraging families to support it despite the adverse environment in which they are living.

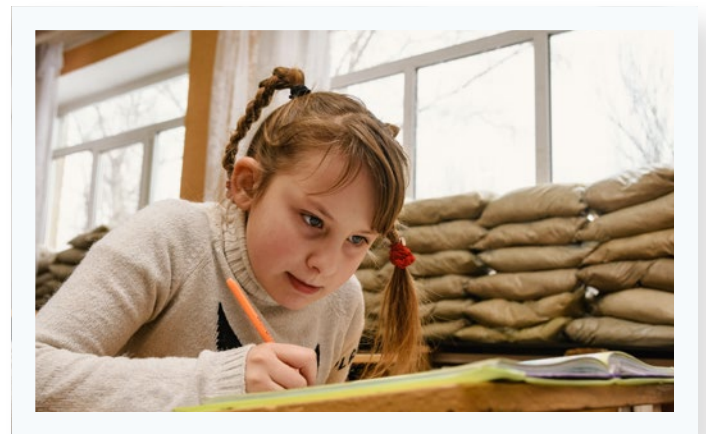
**Financial and in-kind support help families send girls to school.** Positive practices to promote schooling in conflict-affected contexts have included providing financial (cash or vouchers) or in-kind (food rations or school feeding) support to students. These often target girls in order

to increase families' incentives to send all their children to school. Although there is more evidence of the benefits of financial and in-kind support to promote schooling for children in poverty in development contexts, the limited rigorous evidence from conflict settings is promising.

**Alternative education mechanisms are crucial where standard school systems do not provide the flexibility needed to support learners.** Alternative education, which includes accelerated learning initiatives, has shown promise in conflict-affected contexts. This model is able to adapt and respond through different modes of teaching in response to the needs of the students and the crisis environment. Where school sites are damaged or occupied, community schools (which can include holding lessons in teachers' homes) or distance learning may be put in place. Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP) or radio-based educational programmes prove to be effective where students or teachers are threatened or teachers are absent because of conflict, the commute to school is dangerous, or residents have been forced to flee their villages. Alternative education tends not only to include ALPs, so that school cycles can be completed more rapidly, but also to entail flexible schedules. These allow students — especially girls but also boys — who have to work to support their families or have domestic and care work responsibilities to pursue education. Evidence on alternative education modalities in conflict-affected settings shows positive results in improving access for children who are excluded from traditional schools, especially adolescent girls and young mothers.

**Targeted strategies to mitigate SRGBV must be included in education programmes.** Creating protective environments for girls supports them to continue schooling, and mitigating the drivers of SRGBV can reduce incidents. Insights from some promising programmes indicate that it is critical to focus on reshaping harmful social norms relating to gender, sex, and violence as the drivers of GBV in the community and by extension in and around schools. Programmes fostering behaviour change in collaboration with communities, which reflect on the realities of how GBV affects girls and the community more broadly, show promise. Reporting and referral mechanisms, even if informal, are necessary since standard accountability processes may not be in place

during conflict. Providing teacher training on gender-sensitive teaching and learning can promote changes in school and classroom practices and empower teachers as change agents. Female teachers or teaching assistants in the classroom and school environment can be positive role models and reduce the likelihood of SRGBV because they are less likely to commit SRGBV and can support girls to be assertive and confront harassment and abuse. The presence of female staff in schools can also reassure parents who would otherwise be unwilling to send girls to school. Lastly, creating safe spaces for girls in or around schools, where they are provided the tools and capacity to discuss issues of violence, sex and sexuality, and norms openly have shown positive results in enhancing girls' empowerment and self-esteem.



**Targeted strategies to mitigate SRGBV include improved safety and security for children in and around schools** by reducing the distance to school, providing safe means of transport, building protective walls around schools, and having trusted guards in place who can look out for children's safety.

**Multi-pronged approaches work best to mitigate the multiple risks and vulnerabilities girls face.** The evidence examined for this review indicates that many of these strategies work best when implemented synergistically. Combining strategies of working with and through community leaders and members to influence discriminatory norms and practices that affect girls' education, improving the quality, flexibility, and availability of schools, and taking targeted steps to reduce barriers such as safety and security and financial constraints have shown promise in conflict-affected contexts.



## Conclusions and recommendations

**A** key conclusion from this review is that in order for interventions to be more sustainable, programming for girls' education should adopt multi-pronged approaches, responsive to the communities being served and combined with programmes that tackle discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and practices while promoting women's economic and political participation.

Holistic approaches are the most effective in addressing the multi-layered threats to girls' education. These involve the participation of students (both girls and boys),

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parents, teachers, leaders, and the community, and work towards improving the quality of education, including through better and more gender-responsive teaching and gender-responsive learning and school environments, as well as reshaping discriminatory social norms that keep girls away from school. There is a need for approaches that span different sectors and actors, and also the humanitarian/development divide.

This review complements existing literature on education in conflict-affected contexts by shining a spotlight on practices that have supported girls' access to education. Promis-



ing approaches to support girls' education can overcome or mitigate the multiple threats girls face in conflict settings. While some of the interventions explored are also implemented in development contexts, the disruption of routine in conflict settings makes interventions more challenging to set up, implement, and monitor, while at the same time all the more necessary.

A common strategy across several of the interventions referenced in this paper is advocacy with communities and local leaders – including religious leaders – which has contributed to support for girls' education. This strategy has challenged discriminatory beliefs and practices against girls' education and led to increased enrolment and attendance and the establishment of safe schools and learning environments.

At a national and global level, advocacy initiatives and campaigns have shown promise in raising the profile of education in conflict-affected contexts. This is also instrumental in rallying support and resources for this area. These global advocacy efforts have highlighted the importance of specific gender-responsive actions that brought visibility to the needs of girls in conflict settings. One of these campaigns is Save the Children's Rewrite the Future, which focused on improving and expanding education delivery in fragile and conflict-affected states and worked in 20 countries. National advocacy efforts were accompanied by a global campaign that aimed to make the case for increased education financing for fragile and conflict-affected states, demonstrating that large-scale education interventions could be delivered in these complex settings. Save the Children lobbied with governments, donors, and international agencies to recognise the crucial role education plays in protecting children in conflict and other crises, and to take special measures to increase educational resources in these settings. According to campaign reports, Rewrite the Future succeeded in getting 1.6 million children into school between 2005 and 2010 and improved the quality of education for 10.6 million children (Save the Children, 2012). This initiative underlines the relevance of advocacy actions from the ground up and from a policy level down that draw on positive evidence to inform broader policy actions in conflict-affected contexts where elements of the education system are broken.

Programming in conflict-affected contexts requires rapid assessments and rapid responses, especially to fulfill donors' requirements for short-term funding. This adds to pressure on humanitarian workers to implement programmes within short timeframes and without adequate mechanisms to monitor and document best practices and lessons learned. Concrete evidence on what has worked in terms of gender-responsive education in conflict settings is critical to enable practitioners, donors, and decision-makers to make informed programming decisions and choices. The availability of tools and examples of successful interventions will increase the likelihood that programming will respond to community needs and have positive outcomes.

This highlights the need for more systematic research and M&E of programmatic actions in education in conflict contexts. Knowledge management systems in humanitarian contexts needs to be strengthened so that information on useful, evidence-based approaches is made available for those who are designing responses on the ground. The mixed nature of the evidence and information reviewed here shows that more is being done than is easily found in the literature. There is a need for significant investments in incorporating monitoring and evaluation throughout programme design and implementation and documenting promising practices.

## Recommendations

Recommendations from this analysis are twofold: recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research to help identify what works for girls' education in conflict.

Recommendations for practice that can be drawn from the analysis in this review are:

- Provide financial assistance or cash or in-kind support to girls and/or their families to mitigate the opportunity costs of girls attending school and provide important incentives for their education, even in such adverse settings;
- Develop alternative education modalities that are responsive to the needs of those students most excluded from traditional school systems in conflict-affected settings;

- Invest in training and recruitment of female teachers and school staff, and training teachers on gender-responsive teaching and learning that help reduce SRGBV and promote more gender-sensitive learning environments. This also encourages parents to support girls' education, and girls themselves to attend and remain in school; and
- Consult and engage communities in programmes to ensure these are contextually responsive and relevant and to increase the likelihood of success and sustainability. This is critical in order to influence discriminatory social norms and behaviours that hinder girls' education.
- Disaggregate data by sex and conduct gender analysis during programme design — a quick, easy and cost-effective way to increase the knowledge base on education interventions targeting and benefiting girls in conflict-affected contexts;
- Broaden research to include all levels of education, from early childhood to higher and adult education, to provide much-needed knowledge on currently invisible age groups such as girls with disabilities and from minority groups;
- Expand the scope of research to include impact evaluations of programmes that support transitions between levels of education, transitions to employment, and empowerment. Demonstrating impact is closely tied to the ability to secure long-term project funding, particularly during the post-conflict period; and
- Adhere to standards of evaluation that improve the rigour of analysis and support a comprehensive mapping of girls' education programmes in conflict situations. ■

Recommendations for strengthening research and evidence around girls' education in conflict settings are as follows:

- Increase research and targeted programming on gender-responsive education in conflict-affected countries, to improve the availability of educational responses as well as to deepen knowledge of contextually-appropriate interventions;



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## Appendix 1:

# Key search terms

## Database search terms

### KEY WORDS

CONFLICT	EDUCATION
Conflict	Education
Crisis	School
Emergencies	Gender
Humanitarian intervention	Girls
Gender-based violence	Pedagogy
GBV	Boys
SRGBV	Non-formal
School-related gender-based violence	Learning
Violence	Teacher
Fragile	
Fragility	
Post conflict	
Peacebuilding	
Armed conflict	
War	

## Google search terms

GOOGLE (PDFS ONLY):	GOOGLE SCHOLAR:
Education, Girls, Evaluation	Education Girls
Education, Girls, Evaluation, %country name%*	Education, Girls, %country name%*

\* If a country searched for had only pockets of conflict (i.e. Uganda, Pakistan), then the term 'conflict' was added.

## Appendix 2:

# Low- and lower-middle-income conflict-affected countries used for literature search

Afghanistan	DR Congo (Zaire)	Liberia	Nigeria	Sierra Leone	Tajikistan
Bangladesh	Eritrea	Mali	Pakistan	Somalia	Uganda
Burundi	Ethiopia	Mauritania	Palestine	South Sudan	Ukraine
Central African Republic	Guinea	Myanmar (Burma)	Philippines	Sri Lanka	Yemen (North Yemen)
Chad	India	Nepal	Rwanda	Sudan	
	Indonesia	Niger	Senegal	Syria	



## Sources searched

### International organisation websites

- Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)
- INEE Working Group on Conflict and Fragility
- International Consultative Forum on Education for All
- UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP)
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Bank

### Research institution websites

- Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-Pal)
- Brookings Institution
- Chatham House
- Comparative and International Education Society (CIES)
- Echidna Scholars (Brookings)
- Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC)
- humanitarianresponse.info
- IIEP
- INEE
- IPA
- National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)
- Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

### Non-governmental organisation websites

- Aga Khan Foundation (AKF)
- ALNAP Relief Web
- CARE
- Caritas
- Education Development Trust (formerly Centre for British Teachers [CFBT])
- I Choose Life
- Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Learning for Peace
- Leonard Cheshire Disability
- Mercy Corps
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- Oxfam
- Plan
- Population Council
- R4D (UK Department for International Development)
- RedR
- Relief International
- Room to Read
- Save the Children
- Tearfund
- Theatre for a change
- Viva/Crane
- WarChild
- Women’s Refugee Commission
- World Vision
- Academic databases and journals
- Centre for Education Innovations
- Compare
- EBSCO
- ELDIS
- ERIC
- Gender and Education
- International Journal of Education Development
- SCOPUS
- Taylor and Francis

## Appendix 4:

# Promising practices to mitigate threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts

TYPES OF INTERVENTION	NUMBER OF STUDIES	AGENCIES	COUNTRIES	PROMISING PRACTICES
<b>Participation and engagement of different stakeholders in education</b>	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AKF</li> <li>IRC</li> <li>The Citizens Foundation</li> <li>NRC</li> <li>Save the Children</li> </ul>	Afghanistan Pakistan Burundi Somalia South Sudan Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-based education programmes</li> <li>Parent-teacher-student associations</li> <li>Community-based schools</li> <li>Consultations with communities</li> <li>Parents' committees in support of Teacher Emergency Package (TEP)</li> <li>Community education committees</li> <li>School management committees (or shuras)</li> <li>Sensitisation campaigns</li> <li>Community involvement in protection</li> <li>Schools as zones of peace</li> </ul>
<b>Financial and in-kind support for girls and families</b>	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NRC</li> <li>CAMFED</li> <li>Government of Colombia</li> <li>WFP</li> </ul>	Somalia East Africa Colombia Burundi Chad DRC Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vouchers and take-home rations in support of Alternative Approaches to Education</li> <li>Scholarships including uniforms, shoes, stationery</li> <li>School voucher for the internally displaced</li> <li>Schools linked to TEP free of charge</li> <li>Take-home food rations for girls</li> <li>School feeding programmes</li> </ul>
<b>Accelerated education programmes</b>	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NRC (with Save the Children Denmark and Concern Worldwide)</li> <li>Save the Children</li> <li>USAID</li> </ul>	Somalia Afghanistan Angola South Sudan Philippines Somalia IDPs in Malawi, Kenya, Chad, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Jordan and Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accelerated Primary Education Support</li> <li>Accelerated Learning Programme (which includes flexible schedules and other gender-responsive adaptations)</li> <li>Radio instruction and radio-based education programmes</li> <li>Vocational training for girls and young women</li> <li>Distance education</li> </ul>
<b>Creating gender-responsive learning environments that protect against GBV</b>	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CRS</li> <li>The Citizens Foundation</li> <li>AKF</li> <li>UNICEF</li> <li>GIZ</li> <li>World Bank</li> <li>ECCE</li> <li>NRC</li> <li>IRC</li> <li>WRC</li> <li>Plan International</li> </ul>	Afghanistan Pakistan Jordan South Sudan Somalia Ethiopia Tanzania Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing distance to school</li> <li>Safe school infrastructure</li> <li>Supporting transportation (busing, car-pooling, walking bus)</li> <li>Female teachers</li> <li>Building fences or surrounding walls</li> <li>Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy</li> <li>Community-based care and sensitisation</li> <li>Information on women's rights, behaviour change</li> <li>Female classroom assistants (CAs)</li> <li>Non-formal centres, safe spaces</li> </ul>
<b>Gender-responsive teaching and learning</b>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AKF</li> <li>Save the Children</li> <li>IRC</li> </ul>	Afghanistan Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender-responsive and child-sensitive teaching</li> <li>Recruitment of female teachers</li> <li>Female CAs</li> </ul>
<b>Gender-responsive education advocacy in conflict-affected contexts</b>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Save the Children</li> <li>UNICEF</li> </ul>	Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campaign to improve and expand education delivery in conflict-affected and fragile states</li> <li>Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme</li> </ul>

// Through advocacy, engagement, and rapport with different stakeholders in the community, it is possible to influence behaviour linked to social norms that would otherwise hamper girls' education. This can then become one of the bedrocks for more protective environments for girls' education.



// Actions that enable girls' education in conflict-affected contexts can create 'windows of opportunity' for transformative change that may not have existed prior to the conflict. //



// Heightened insecurity and the breakdown of family and social support networks exacerbate inequalities, rendering women and girls more vulnerable to threats as a result of conflict. //