

Listening to the Voices of Internally Displaced Communities to Achieve Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education



Inter-agency
Network for Education
in Emergencies

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Cover Image:

Displaced children in the village of El Catillo, Colombia take turns solving mathematical problems. J Arredondo, IRC.

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ACRONYMS

AENN	Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria
AEWG	Accelerated Education Working Group
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CBE	Community Based Education
CSE	Conflict Sensitive Education
EiE	Education in Emergencies
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organizations
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNESCO IIEP	UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning

INTRODUCTION

Conflict, violence, natural hazards, and the effects of the climate crisis have forced millions of people to leave their homes in search of a more secure life and better opportunities for their families (UNHCR, 2020). While there are myriad reports in the media about refugees—people who flee across borders in search of safety—an even greater number of people have been displaced within their own national borders. Millions of internally displaced people (IDPs), who make up the largest group of those who have been forcibly displaced, are facing human rights violations and being denied access to even the most basic services. Among them are millions of children and young people who are being denied their right to education. And yet, due to the lack of accurate and reliable data, the challenges these millions of children and young people are facing are not well known.

Definition of IDP

Any person or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.

(OCHA, 2004, p. 5)

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has developed the [Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#) with the aim to provide clarity on the concept of a durable solution and general guidance on how to achieve it. In the list of possible “Indicators of Progress towards Achieving a Durable Solution: Adequate Standard of Living,” the framework includes access to quality education.

Quality education has the power to transform lives, to improve health and well-being, to protect vulnerable children, to build social cohesion, and to reduce conflict and other drivers of displacement. It has a notable impact on individuals’ lifetime earnings and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries. For many young people, education can provide a sense of stability in the face of uncertainty. It also can offer them physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection to help them deal with the trauma of displacement and build their coping strategies and resilience. If needed, teachers and other school personnel also can help children access additional mental health support. Enrollment in quality education programming provides children with access to life-saving information, and it also has been found to reduce the risk of sexual violence, exploitation, and child recruitment into armed groups. Internally displaced children and young people are more vulnerable to these risks than their national counterparts who are not displaced (UNICEF, 2020a). Therefore, it is essential to provide internally displaced children with access to national education systems.

This paper outlines the real-life day-to-day challenges young IDPs experience when seeking access to quality education, which is fundamental to their healthy development and future life chances. It reflects the perspectives of teachers who have been displaced, and the challenges they have faced both personally and professionally in attempting to support the learning of children and young people in their communities. Young IDPs and internally displaced teachers shared these experiences in a series of five roundtable events hosted by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in March and April 2021. The paper also provides insights from other roundtable participants, including education in emergencies (EiE) practitioners, government representatives, United Nations (UN) staff, members of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and local civil society, and other stakeholders who are working to support access to education in displaced communities. They all are calling for taking urgent and concrete action to ensure access to quality education for internally displaced children and young people. The [United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel](#) has a unique opportunity to influence the changes needed to achieve this. The recommendations made in the panel’s final report to the Secretary-General and United Nations Member States will be critical to the future outcomes of millions of children and young people around the world.

The panel has the power, influence, and capacity to amplify the concerns and unheard voices of the IDP community. It can recommend that governments, with the support of the international community and local partners, reduce the barriers IDPs face in accessing education. This can be achieved by making and implementing concrete education policy, building public awareness and social cohesion, adapting the curriculum to the needs of IDPs, and investing in their education. Moreover, if the world is to realize Sustainable Development Goal 4— “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” —and fulfill the goals of Agenda 2030 (UN, 2015), meeting the education and learning needs of the estimated 12.6 million displaced children and youth of school age is imperative (IDMC, 2021).



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HEADLINE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Listen to the voices of internally displaced children and young people and facilitate their participation in decisions affecting their education**, as referenced in the principles of community engagement set out in the [INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response and Recovery](#).
- **Ensure equal access to formal, accredited education for all displaced children and young people.** The right to education is not suspended during emergencies or in contexts of forced displacement. Displaced children and young people maintain their right to education, as enshrined in the [Global Compact for Refugees](#) and the [Djibouti Declaration](#).
- **Strengthen the quality of education for internally displaced children and young people by focusing on the needs of the teachers in displaced communities.** Support for teachers is needed at the policy and implementation levels and can include adapting the [INEE Teachers in Crisis Context Training Pack](#) and related resources.
- **Build education-sector resilience to respond to conflict and disaster risks that could cause displacement.** Ensuring that education-sector plans are crisis sensitive can be guided by the work of the [UNESCO-International Institute for Educational Planning \(UNESCO-IIEP\)](#).
- **Protect all schools and ensure that they are safe places for internally displaced children and young people.** All countries must not only endorse but fully implement the commitments outlined in the [Safe Schools Declaration](#) to protect students, teachers, and schools from the effects of armed conflict.
- **Improve the collection of data on displaced populations.** The lack of reliable data on the needs of displaced populations is a significant barrier in developing evidence-based programming and policies. The [International Data Alliance for Children on the Move](#) is looking to address that gap.



Children in a makeshift school run by the IRC at the Karameh displacement camp in Syria's Idlib Governorate
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GLOBAL OVERVIEW: EDUCATION AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

At the end of 2020, according to the Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021, a record 55 million were living in internal displacement - the highest figure ever recorded. It is estimated that 23 million of these people are below the age of 18. The countries with the highest estimated number of IDPs under age 18 are Syria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Yemen, and Ethiopia; each has more than a million children living in internal displacement. Moreover, the poverty rate in displaced communities is significantly higher than in non-displaced communities, as internally displaced family members struggle to find work to support their basic needs (World Bank, 2020). Internally displaced children and young people are frequently denied access to quality education, due to discrimination and the financial, legal, and security challenges faced by their families. In addition, education institutions in crisis contexts are often the targets of attacks by armed groups, which forces them to close or reduce enrollment rates out of fear for students' safety (UNICEF & IDMC, 2020).

Where IDPs settle after being displaced has a bearing on whether the children can access education. Two-thirds of IDPs are thought to reside in urban areas and their outskirts, while the remaining one-third reside in camps and settlements. Displaced people in towns and cities are often forced to live in collective community shelters or unfinished public buildings, or informal settlements where they face overcrowding and have little access to education. In camp settings, children may have access to education in the camp schools or the host communities, but the distance to the nearest school is often an issue. Walking to school can be a security challenge for these children, especially the girls, who face higher rates of gender-based violence and harassment in displacement (UNICEF & IDMC, 2020). Humanitarian access to IDPs who settle in insecure rural areas may be restricted, which reduces the likelihood that those communities will receive education support. Those who opt to settle in sparsely populated rural areas sometimes have no education facilities at all (UNICEF & IDMC, 2020).

UNESCO researchers have found a correlation between a society's level of education and its likelihood of experiencing internal conflict.

EDUCATION IS KEY IN PREVENTING THE ISSUES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO DISPLACEMENT

Access to quality education is often out of reach for millions of internally displaced children and young people, and education systems and schools are often targeted during an internal conflict, as has been seen recently in Nigeria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and northern Syria.

Quality education has the potential to promote social cohesion. This is achieved through a curriculum that promotes peacebuilding, social transformation and inclusion, and pedagogical practices that promote social emotional skills and equitable education policies. Education also is vital to promoting integration between IDP and host community children.¹ Furthermore, children and youth whose education includes concepts of environmental stewardship and management have great potential to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the effects of conflict and violent unrest, constrained health systems, and damaged economies. IDPs find themselves at heightened risk, due to their crowded living conditions and limited access to basic health care and soap and water. COVID-19 restrictions have further compromised displaced children's and young people's ability to access opportunities that support their learning and well-being. For children and young people whose lives have been uprooted, education offers a key to a more hopeful future, and yet a recent report from Save the Children states that some countries are already seeing higher dropout rates among displaced children. Moreover, half of the internally displaced parents who were surveyed in Yemen said they were unsure whether their children would ever return to school (Save the Children, 2020).

¹ See [INEE's Conflict Sensitive Education Guide](#) for more information.



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HIGH-LEVEL PANEL AND INEE ROUNDTABLES

In 2019, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres announced the establishment of a High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. The panel has held numerous consultations, none of which has focused specifically on education, although the topic has emerged as a priority in consultation with young people. The panel received many written submissions to be considered when producing their final report in September 2021. These included submissions from Save the Children, UNICEF (2020b), and UNHCR (2020). In response, INEE convened a series of five roundtables, held in the five languages of INEE (Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese). The roundtable participants gathered evidence to include in the final report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. The aim was to ensure that education was a key theme of the report, and that it would provide examples of best practices and policies, as well as recommendations for donors, governments, and other stakeholders.

The roundtables were held between March 25 and April 26, 2021 and were attended by 250 participants representing 30 countries. The discussions presented an opportunity for displaced children, their families, teachers, education stakeholders, researchers, and government stakeholders to come together to hear first-hand about the barriers IDPs face and the importance of amplifying their requests for urgent support. These discussions, combined with the results of a global survey mirroring the questions posed during the roundtables, shone a light on the challenges faced in accessing education, the added complexity caused by COVID-19 restrictions, best practices, and practical recommendations for various audiences. The objectives of the roundtables and survey were as follows:

- To meaningfully engage with and amplify the voices of IDPs to highlight the education needs of their children and youth and to propose solutions, while also recognizing that refugee education has received more international attention in recent years
- To understand more fully the challenges of gaining access to and the quality of education for internally displaced children and youth, and to share best practices and evidence-based solutions
- To collect messages, examples, and recommendations that can be included in a synthesis report that will be shared with the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement

The discussions during the five roundtables highlighted several issues related to school safety, barriers to access, protection risks, and the need to support teachers. These issues were both similar to all the groups, and unique to each context, given their distinct realities. The specific regional and country challenges are highlighted in the next section.

ARABIC ROUNDTABLE

The Arabic language roundtable was hosted by the INEE Arabic Language Community Facilitator on March 25. It was attended by 65 participants who represented both the IDP community and the education actors working directly with displaced populations. This included representatives from NGOs, universities, and UN agencies. Participants were from various Arab countries, including Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, and Egypt.

ENGLISH ROUNDTABLE

The English language roundtable was held on March 30 and attended by 42 participants from Bangladesh, Cameroun, Denmark, Occupied Territories of Georgia, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen. The participants included IDP students and teachers, as well as various staff members from UN agencies, INGOs, and local NGOs.

FRENCH ROUNDTABLE

The French language roundtable was held on April 15. The event was attended by 41 participants from Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Mali, Cameroun, Chad, Haiti, Sénégal, Burkina Faso, Switzerland, France, Belgium, and Canada, and included learners, teachers, parent representatives, local education authorities, UN agencies, INGO staff, local NGO staff, and members of civil society.

PORTUGUESE ROUNDTABLE

The Portuguese language roundtable on IDP education was held on April 1. It was co-hosted by INEE, UNICEF Mozambique, and World Vision Mozambique. A total of 65 people joined the discussions, including 14 EiE and education professionals, UN and INGO staff, and academics and researchers. A unique contribution to the Portuguese roundtable was the participation of two groups of internally displaced teachers and learners, who joined live from their classrooms in Pemba district, Cabo Delgado, Mozambique.

SPANISH ROUNDTABLE

The Spanish language roundtable, held on April 26, was co-hosted by RET International Colombia, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International Colombia, and INEE. The event was attended by 35 participants representing students, mothers of IDP students, teachers, directors of schools and superior technical institutes, government stakeholders, and representatives of academic institutions.

This paper summarizes reflections from the five roundtable meetings; input from the global survey, to which more than 70 people representing 35 countries responded; and secondary sources and research that reinforce the insights shared through the roundtables and the survey.



A displaced boy takes notes on a pile of tiles in a classroom in the village of Castillo. About 1200 people were forced out of their homes between the months of March and April of 2009; 155 families alone arrived in the village of el Castillo. With limited resources and space, the village classrooms are overflowing and several children stop attending school to begin work in order to help support their families.

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KEY FINDINGS

The section presents the synthesized outcomes of the roundtables, the global survey, and the secondary sources and research that reinforce and help to frame the insights shared.²

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES IDPS FACE IN ACCESSING QUALITY EDUCATION?

Several topics raised across the five roundtables and in the survey results were consistently presented as the most significant challenges to displaced children's and young people's ability to access education. These challenges and some opportunities for improvement are presented below, along with the participants' voices and additional background from the literature reviewed.

² Many of the reflections below are consistent with those raised during the roundtable with refugee children and young people on the impact COVID-19 has had on their education. [Refugee education during COVID-19: Crisis and opportunity](#)

We appreciate being invited to the conversation. Sometimes it feels like we don't exist.

– Yemeni roundtable participant

Listen to the voices of displaced children, youth, and families: IDPs are best-placed to speak to their experience of displacement and how it affects them, and to the interventions most likely to improve their situation. This was a very welcome core aim of the INEE roundtables. One participant at the Arabic roundtable said, “Thank you to the organizers for the session, and I hope this is the beginning of further consultation.” A young person attending the Spanish roundtable reflected on the importance of helping to chart a path forward for other young people: “I am here to be able to contribute so that other children do not go through this. Youth is a time that is meant to be enjoyed.”

Insecurity: Many roundtable participants and survey respondents spoke of the insecure situation faced by IDPs as a threat to accessing education. For example, participants in the Spanish roundtable spoke of the high rate of dropout due to the level of violence in schools, and the threat of recruitment into armed groups. Participants from both the Arabic and Spanish roundtables highlighted the risk of insecurity and of schools being destroyed by attacks from armed militants. Many parents expressed reluctance to send their children to school out of fear for their safety, and/or fear they will be recruited by armed forces. Other participants spoke of the challenge of delivering quality education to IDPs, who may be forced to move frequently due to ongoing insecurity and violence. This means there may be no school nearby, schools may be overcrowded, or they may be in use as emergency shelters, as is sometimes the case in conflict or disaster settings (IDMC, 2019b).

Discrimination and stigma: Related to the issue of insecurity is the challenge of discrimination and stigma toward displaced children and their families at the school and policy levels (when displaced children may not be fully included in national programs or systems). One young roundtable participant spoke of their experience of bullying in school and their failure to integrate with peers from the host community. One participant spoke of the situation in Bangladesh, where the Rohingya are unable to access education beyond primary school and have severe restrictions on their movements. A participant at the Portuguese roundtable expressed the challenge of finding housing in host communities due to discrimination: “Rents are very expensive. IDPs are perceived as an income source. People are taking advantage of IDPs. In some cases, host communities are not very friendly to IDPs. Fortunately, others are.” Even without formal barriers to education, however, internally displaced children frequently find school more challenging than other children and drop out sooner and more often (UNICEF, 2020c). Due to the stigma they encounter, IDPs may be reluctant to identify as members of the displaced community, which has implications for their own access to services, and to the ability to collect reliable data on the scope of the problem. This became apparent during the Arabic language roundtable, where some participants emphasized that the concept of being an IDP is not widely known or understood, and that some such communities may not understand their rights. Measures must be taken at the community level to address these challenges; at the same time, policies to protect the rights of IDPs must be in place and be implemented effectively.

I left everything behind. I miss home. I'm really sad with the conflict...I'm sleeping on the floor. The house I'm staying in here doesn't have good conditions. I miss home.

– Young person, IDP roundtable participant

Gender discrimination: Women and girls are disproportionately affected by internal displacement, in terms of both numbers and impact. In displacement situations, they are at greater risk of sexual gender-based violence and they have less time and opportunity to pursue activities or go to school, as they are tasked with helping to generate income for their families, sometimes through exploitative work (IDMC, 2019c). Girls, like boys, are vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups, albeit at a lower rate. This risk was highlighted by participants during the Arabic roundtable. Participants from each roundtable cited an increase in the rate of school dropout among girls and the higher rate of early marriage among girls in the IDP communities. An assessment of displaced families in Afghanistan carried out by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) found that one in three had forced at least one of their children into marriage (Cazabat, 2019). During the English roundtable, participants also raised the issue of how religious attitudes about the education of girls in IDP communities limited their enrollment.

Education tailored to IDPs' learning needs: Internally displaced children and youth often have been out of school for extended periods of time both prior to and during their displacement. In many contexts, internally displaced children are supported through NGO-managed or community-based non-formal education programs. Several roundtable participants spoke to the importance of such programs in supporting the immediate needs of young people and providing much-needed mental health and psychosocial support. A number of survey respondents reported that the activities that targeted psychosocial support and opportunities for play-based learning were the most successful aspects of their programs. However, they stressed that these non-formal education interventions do not provide a durable solution to accessing an education that is certified, leads to accreditation and/or the opportunity to progress to higher education levels, or teaches the requisite skills and knowledge needed to secure work opportunities. Instead, both IDPs and host community learners would benefit from a formal education that promotes social and emotional well-being. During the English roundtable, the presentation by a participant from South Sudan addressed the challenges IDPs face and highlighted their struggle with language in the host communities. This challenge was echoed by colleagues from Bangladesh.

Internally displaced children and young people are likely to need training in the local language, classes and programs that help them compensate for lost learning, targeted remedial education, and support when making the transition into the formal system. Quality education, which is as essential as access, is rarely found in displacement situations. In some displacement camps, education facilities are limited to children's play areas. Overcrowding, deteriorated buildings, and a lack of books and school supplies can also affect the quality of education. This is currently the case in Yemen, according to a representative of the Education Cluster at the Arabic roundtable.

We left many things behind, but we have the knowledge, the practice of teaching. Our minds are really damaged.

– IDP teacher from Mocímboa da Praia

Support for IDP and host community teachers: Teachers who work in contexts of forced displacement and/or who host refugees or IDPs in their classrooms have important roles to play in the lives of their students that go beyond providing academic support. Teachers facilitate their students' transition to a new schooling environment, help learners build skills in the language of instruction, and support their social-emotional needs and well-being. They learn about their students' educational trajectories before they arrive and are called upon to respect and value the students' cultural practices, which might be quite different from their own (Mendenhall et al., 2015). In contexts where children are integrating into host community classrooms, teachers need to deal with the bullying and discrimination that displaced children often face, and they need to work to create social cohesion.

Support for teachers emerged during all five roundtables as a significant area of concern for participants. The survey responses further reflected a lack of support for teachers and the impact that had on education quality. Participants specifically spoke of the need to address teachers' mental health so they can be in a position to support their students most effectively. One roundtable participant mentioned that teachers from the IDP community in their context were not being well treated or welcomed into the host-community schools and were told they wouldn't be compensated for their efforts. During the French roundtable, participants related that most teachers are unpaid volunteers, often lack training, and are not provided with appropriate teaching and learning materials. As a result, they lose their motivation and ability to teach effectively.

Teachers who are engaged with NGO-managed and community-based schools and learning centers face additional challenges. Most refugee and IDP situations are characterized by mixed employment conditions, which means that teachers are employed through the state teacher service, hired on short-term contracts, enlisted as volunteers, or recruited as "incentive" teachers from the community and paid a nominal stipend for their work (cited in Mendenhall et al., 2019). A Portuguese roundtable participant cited an example from Mozambique:

“ In Mozambique, IDP teachers are being reallocated in schools at the host communities. However, there's not enough space for all at the schools. IDP teachers have no teaching and learning materials, no PPE. Despite the relocation, teachers are under pressure to go back to their original schools [in the conflict areas]. Teachers don't want to go because they don't think it is safe, but they are being told that if they don't go back, they won't get paid. On the personal level, they have no clothes, no hygiene materials. They can't get in touch with their families. Because they are fleeing from conflict and leaving everything behind from one day to the other, they acknowledge that they are not mentally ok. Teachers are in need of specialized mental health support. ”

Challenge of poverty: The majority of IDPs leave their communities of origin in haste and arrive in a new location with just a few possessions. They immediately face the challenge of finding a way to support their families. Displaced people are often vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition, given that they had to abandon their livelihoods and assets, experience arduous journeys, and settle in areas or camps with limited access to basic services and without their social networks. This in turn compromises families' ability to seek out education opportunities, to prioritize education, and to focus on learning when their children are able to enroll. A representative from Cameroun spoke to the challenge of internally displaced children trying to learn when they have limited access to food and poor nutrition at home. He stressed the importance of addressing the barriers families face that prevent children from going to school in the first place. Another participant spoke to the children's high dropout rate, due to poverty and the need to find work to support their families. Even when public school is free, there are other costs, such as uniforms and school supplies, that displaced parents may not be able to afford. As one Yemeni parent explained in an interview with IDMC in 2019: "It's true that education is free, but that's not enough for us. As an IDP, I can't afford basic school supplies for my kids, even though those costs are minimal" (IDMC, 2019a).

Due to the pandemic the situation is not easy, but we remain because we want to become great business people in the future.

– Young person, Spanish roundtable participant

COVID-19: The challenges IDPs already faced have been exacerbated by the restrictions related to COVID-19. For many families, COVID has made it even more difficult to find work opportunities. Many of the communities where IDPs settle have poor internet infrastructure, so children and young people often do not have access to distance learning. Even if they did, most do not have parents who can help them with their studies. A participant from Georgia spoke of the lack of access, despite national campaigns to collect computers and devices to share with internally displaced children. One internally displaced teacher from Mozambique noted that communicating, sharing resources, and supporting teachers during this time has only been available but through WhatsApp, so they have not been able to participate or support the children in their community.

Need for more reliable data: The lack of disaggregated data and, more specifically, the failure to apply a displacement lens to child-specific education data make it difficult to understand the scale of displacement and the impact it has on children, or to propose a way to support them. According to UNICEF, when age-disaggregated data on IDPs is collected, the proportion of children among the IDP population is often greater than that of the rest of the national population (UNICEF & IDMC, 2020). The IDMC does not currently collect education-related data, but they are part of a new initiative, the [International Data Alliance for Children on the Move](#), along with UNHCR, UNICEF, and the International Organization for Migration, that will begin to track these data.

One roundtable participant working for an NGO spoke to the challenges faced when accurate enrollment rates are unavailable and, with that, the specific number of teachers required. One survey respondent spoke of the lack of accurate data from the ministry of education (MoE) in their context. This applied to both the quantity and the quality of non-formal education programs, which enroll many displaced children and youth.

Strengthen the resilience of the education system to crises: The final areas of focus that emerged from the roundtable discussions and surveys speak to the need to look more broadly at the capacity of the education system, and at the coordination between the humanitarian and development actors that support the education system. One French roundtable participant said that, to provide a rapid quality response, better coordination was needed between local authorities from the displacement and host communities and the humanitarian actors. MoEs, local NGOs, and school communities are the frontline actors that connect humanitarian and development initiatives on the ground and build resilient systems. Risk-informed and crisis-sensitive planning can serve as a bridge between humanitarian and development programming, strengthen the education system's resilience to minor shocks and ability to access children and youth in the hardest to reach communities. It can also enable communities to respond to cyclical displacement, as is the case in Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recommendations for working across the humanitarian development nexus can be found in the recently released INEE paper, *Humanitarian-Development Coherence In Education: Working Together in Crisis Contexts*.



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WHAT ARE SOME SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLES OF DISPLACED CHILDREN ACCESSING QUALITY EDUCATION?

The survey and roundtable participants were invited to reflect on some of the more successful programming elements that enabled IDPs to access quality education; their comments appear below. Of note, many of the examples cited below are short-term humanitarian interventions as opposed to longer-term durable solutions. Further recommendations for the High-Level Panel and for interventions to support displaced communities over the long term are highlighted in the final recommendations section.

Several roundtable and survey participants mentioned the key role CBOs played in establishing non-formal educational and protection programming, providing non-food items, and rehabilitating classrooms to support the integration of internally displaced children into formal education. While support for teachers is still lacking in communities with an influx of IDPs, several survey respondents mentioned the short-term teacher training programs that have strengthened their capacity to respond to the psychosocial needs of displaced children. Finally, Spanish roundtable participants spoke to CBO-led efforts to fight the discrimination and harassment faced by new arrivals through awareness-raising community activities and advocacy to promote social cohesion.

The best practices described below have been taken from examples provided during the roundtables, and in various INEE policy papers, research, tools, and guidance.

BEST PRACTICE: THE MOE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN COLOMBIA

During the Spanish roundtable, representatives from Colombia's MoE shared their approach to helping displaced children and young people access education. In 1997, the Colombian government introduced [Law 387](#), which was designed to prevent forced displacement and provide assistance, protection, socioeconomic consolidation, and stabilization for people displaced internally by violence. In 2011, the government introduced [Law 1448](#), which recognized the victims of the Colombian armed conflict. One aspect of the law was Article 51, which ensured access to education for children and young people affected by the conflict. In 2015, Colombia's MoE developed the "[General guidelines for educational care for vulnerable populations and victims of the internal armed conflict](#)," which recognized the different approaches needed to recognize the diversity of internally displaced children, adolescents, youth, and adults, as well as the rights that protect them. This ensured that the right type of education could be guaranteed to the students. [Law 2078](#), which was introduced in 2021, extended the duration of Law 1448 for an additional 10 years in recognition of the

challenges IDPs face following repatriation. The Comprehensive School Risk Management framework, a set of general guidelines for the education of vulnerable populations, including IDPs, will be approved by the MoE in 2021. This framework was designed in response to the country's vulnerability to natural hazards, and to mass displacement across the country. The aim was to increase the quality of life for all actors in the education sector in both humanitarian and post-emergency situations.

BEST PRACTICE: BURKINA FASO—HOLISTIC APPROACHES

Teachers and parents participating in the French roundtable spoke to an innovative program in Burkina Faso that looks holistically at the learning and well-being needs of displaced communities. Developed by local civil society partners, education authorities, the MoE, and the government secretariat responsible for emergency response, the program aimed to ensure quality implementation and strengthen cohesion between displaced and host communities. The program, which is open to all students, follows a strategy called *passerelles*, which enables children who have fallen behind in school to catch up and transition into formal education. The teachers are trained to use differentiated methods based on the adapted curriculum, and to liaise with families so they can follow up at home and support their children's learning progress. The volunteer teachers are recruited, trained, and compensated, and all children and young people may attend school for free. The project staff members relocate groups of learners to safe locations as needed, and reorganize class groups to prevent conflict.

BEST PRACTICE: COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

During the recent high-level event co-hosted by INEE, the IDMC, Save the Children, and the Global Education Cluster, Afghanistan's director general of education spoke of the important contribution community-based education (CBE) plays in ensuring that internally displaced children can access quality education. As highlighted earlier, many internally displaced children have missed out on an education because of the circumstances that led to their displacement. The CBE model is a three-year learning program open to all children and young people that enables them to catch up on lost learning. At the end of the three-year cycle, students are supported during their transition to a local hub or government school. If there is not sufficient space in the local school, the CBE itself can be recognized as a formal school. The model is partly a response to the lack of education infrastructure in Afghanistan, where 40 percent of schools lack adequate buildings and sufficient space. CBE classes are held in community-donated spaces, which strengthens community support for education and offers more children the opportunity to learn. A dedicated department within the MoE is focused on CBE planning, implementation, and monitoring. The classes are implemented by the government, and by international and local NGOs under the auspices of the MoE.

The following best practice examples were taken from different member-produced INEE materials and reports.

BEST PRACTICE: ACCELERATED EDUCATION³

Accelerated education is a flexible, age-appropriate program run within an accelerated timeframe that aims to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, and out-of-school children and young people. This may include those who missed out on or had their education interrupted by poverty, marginalization, conflict, or crisis. The goal of accelerated education programs is to provide learners with equivalent, certified, basic education competencies using teaching and learning approaches that match their level of cognitive maturity. The guidance on accelerated education programming was developed by the UNHCR-led Accelerated Education Working Group. INEE hosts this work on the INEE website and disseminates it through INEE channels. The guidance has been adapted by a number of different governments.

³ The Accelerated Education Working Group resource collection can be found [here](#).

BEST PRACTICE: INVESTING IN TEACHERS IN MALI (SHAH, 2019)

The World Bank carried out an education resilience assessment in Mali in the aftermath of the country's 2012 crisis. The assessment identified several intangible assets (e.g., hope, feeling protected in school) and tangible assets (e.g., community solidarity when families opened their homes to IDPs and schools welcomed students and teachers from the north) and resources that were deployed to keep children in school. At the system level, the MoE's flexible policies enabled displaced teachers from the north to find temporary positions in schools in the south and provided a system-wide structure that fostered school-community interactions during the crisis. This flexibility promoted volunteerism and enabled teachers to provide caring support for displaced children both during and after school.

BEST PRACTICE: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION IN NIGERIA (INEE, 2021)

Under the Addressing Education in Northeast Nigeria (AENN) program, with additional support from the EU, FHI 360, Save the Children, and the state governments, local communities are able to provide internally displaced children with access to accredited, non-formal education. Given the complex nature of support for education projects in Borno and Yobe states, where insecurity and suspicion that outsiders are affiliated with Boko Haram are prevalent, the project has relied heavily on a community-based approach and a conflict-sensitive lens. Key elements of the program include the following:

Community coalitions: Community members have formed coalitions that help oversee the program by facilitating community-awareness sessions, identifying out-of-school children, and supporting the selection of learning facilitators.

Learning center management committees: All non-formal learning centers have management committees composed of parents whose children are enrolled in the program. These committees have led the development of comprehensive school safety plans and taken a leadership role in defining the early warning system.

Local government and CBOs: AENN engages with government officials at various levels to help clarify their roles and responsibilities in the provision of non-formal education to displaced children. The project has also engaged with and built the capacity of local CBOs, which provide another layer of support between the community and the project team and help to monitor program implementation.

BEST PRACTICE: LINKING EIE-SECTOR COORDINATION AND THE LOCAL EDUCATION GROUP IN MYANMAR (INEE, 2021)

The prolonged chronic emergencies in Myanmar (in Rakhine, Kachin, and Northern Shan states) require an increased focus on planning for a transition from EiE to longer-term programming while also ensuring that critical and immediate humanitarian needs are met. Over the past few years, the Myanmar EiE Sector Group, which coordinates partners supporting education for IDPs and those affected by natural disasters, has worked to enhance coordination with the MoE and development partners.

These efforts to unite EiE-sector coordination have led the MoE's short- and long-term sector-planning processes to integrate the education needs of children affected by crises. The outcomes of joint EiE-sector coordination in Myanmar include the following:

- MoE appointment of EiE focal points at the national and sub-national level in five conflict-affected and disaster-prone states (Rakhine, Kachin, Northern Shan, Kayah, and Kayin)
- Earmarking of an EiE budget line for the first time in the MoE 2019-2020 fiscal year budget
- Development of a joint MoE–EiE-sector contingency/emergency preparedness and response framework, with technical support from UNESCO IIEP (in process).



Mali © UNICEF, Keïta

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

I would like to have a notebook, a bag, a uniform to go to school. We ran away from conflict and left everything behind.

– Portuguese roundtable youth participant

Given the global context, the protracted nature and increasing rate of conflicts, and the growing risk of the effects of climate change, more and more people across the globe will be forcibly displaced. Included in that population are children and young people in need of quality education to support their cognitive and social well-being and development in the short term, and their hope for a brighter future for themselves and their community in the longer term. Ensuring that displaced children and young people are successfully integrated into national education systems is a durable solution that will benefit both displaced and host communities. Such a solution will require the support and coordination of communities, humanitarian and development actors, and governments.

Urgent action is needed from governments, which bear the primary duty to protect and fulfil the right to education for internally displaced, migrant, and refugee children and young people. It is therefore imperative that the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement include a strong focus on education in its final report. It must call for urgent action to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all internally displaced children and young people. The recommendations below are targeted specifically at such action, which can and should be taken by prime ministers, presidents, ministers of education and finance, and the international community to protect the right to education of displaced people.

While the participants in the roundtables and those completing the survey spoke overwhelmingly of the challenges faced by displaced communities, they also shared a sense of hope and optimism, particularly having been given the opportunity to share their thoughts—something not previously possible. Regardless of context, the participants spoke to a series of shared experiences. The following recommendations are based on their reflections. They are arranged in order for global actors, national governments, and NGOs and CBOs.

1. Enable displaced children and their families to participate in decisions that affect their education.

a. Global actors

- i. Ensure that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Accountability to Affected Populations is adhered to in all contexts so that displaced communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in making decisions that directly impact their lives.

b. National governments

- i. Revitalize school structures, such as parent-teacher associations, community child-protection networks, school management committees, and school-based children's clubs.
- ii. Require all school committees—both parent and student committees—to include a representative sample of members of the IDP community.
- iii. Engage teachers and displaced children and young people in the design and evaluation of national education-sector planning and programming.

c. NGOs and CBOs

- i. Engage teachers and displaced children and young people in the design and evaluation of NGO education programming.

2. Ensure equal access to education for all displaced children and young people.

a. Global actors

- i. Establish alternative registration systems for IDPs that require less documentation and build on lessons learned from work with refugees, such as digitalization and biometrics.
- ii. Invest in education provision that can accommodate IDPs, including flexible learning pathways and multi-year programming.

b. National governments

- i. Introduce policies to eliminate school-related fees for all children and young people, and take specific measures to protect displaced people's right to education.
- ii. For personal identification and to measure education levels, establish alternatives to formal documentation from the community of origin.
- iii. Permit students to enroll in school at any point in the year.
- iv. Ensure that data on IDP students at all levels are disaggregated within the national Education Management Information System.
- v. Expand social protection programs (health, nutrition, school meals, protection) to families to ensure that students remain in the education system; focus on vulnerable areas.
- vi. Invest in education provision that can accommodate IDPs, including transitional or catch-up education programming. This should be accredited, and allow students to transition into the formal education system.

c. NGOs and CBOs

- i. Support internally displaced families with non-food items, cash grants for education, and/or subsidies to initiate income-generating activities.
- ii. Work with internally displaced families to navigate the local formal education system.
- iii. Focus back-to-school campaigns on girls, including those of school age who have been forced into early marriage or are mothers.
- iv. Support internally displaced learners with local language classes.

3. Participate in ongoing measures to strengthen the quality of education provided to displaced and host community children and young people

a. Global actors

- i. Engage internally displaced teachers in fora designed to bring together teachers working in crisis contexts.
- ii. Conduct further research into the challenges and opportunities for teachers in displacement and the effectiveness of training programs.

b. National governments

- i. Mobilize an acceptable number of psychologists and guidance counselors to help students and teachers whose experience with violence is compromising their ability to learn and teach.
- ii. Develop and implement policies that ensure that all teachers in the same context receive similar compensation and conditions of work.
- iii. Recognize the certification of teachers from the IDP community.

c. NGOs and CBOs

- i. Support teacher well-being.
- ii. Train teachers and school staff to provide psychosocial support and social-emotional learning, and identify children in need of referral for child protection.
- iii. Build teacher capacity to support students with disabilities.

4. Ensure national education-sector plans are crisis sensitive

a. Global actors

- i. Ensure that IDPs are included in the planning of emergency response appeals for education.
- ii. Continue to advocate for durable solutions for IDPs in nexus

b. National governments

- i. Review education-sector plans and contingency plans annually.
- ii. Engage with UNESCO IIEP for guidance on crisis-sensitive education-sector planning.
- iii. Capture lessons learned from the COVID-19 response to ensure equity in crisis responses (i.e., distance learning).

c. NGOs and CBOs

- i. Work with local actors and through coordination mechanisms to prepare for and respond to cyclical displacement.
- ii. Convene stakeholders to support crisis-sensitive education planning.

5. Make schools safe places for all children to learn and grow

a. Global actors

- i. Continue advocacy work to prevent attacks on education and to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

b. National governments

- i. Governments should endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and take action to formally implement measures and follow best practices from other contexts.
- ii. Introduce school codes of conduct to be adapted and rolled out nationally.

c. NGOs and CBOs

- i. Work with local school groups to raise awareness about the importance of school safety, including protection from attacks on education and school-based behaviors such as bullying.

6. Improve collection of data on displaced communities

a. Global actors

- i. Work at the global level to identify more consistent approaches to data collection for IDP communities that can be rolled out rapidly as part of a wider humanitarian response data-collection processes and aggregation.

b. National governments

- i. Include data collection through the Education Management Information System that is nimble enough to capture enrollment data for IDPs in their community of origin and is then transferred to new communities.

c. NGOs and CBOs

- i. Ensure that data collected by NGOs and CBOs working with displaced communities is standard, consistent, and shared on a regular basis with the MoE.

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