

High-Level Symposium On 'Conflict Sensitive Education – Why and How?' UNESCO, Paris – 8 April 2013 Final Report

The High Level Symposium was co-organized by UNESCO's [International Institute for Educational Planning \(IIEP\)](#), the [Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\)](#) and its [Working Group on Education and Fragility](#). The symposium brought together education stakeholders to discuss the challenges of providing quality education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts and to offer concrete recommendations to promote the implementation of conflict-sensitive education.

Participants

In addition to numerous ambassadors and representatives from the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO, UN agencies, bilateral organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and Academia, [Ministers of Education from Chad, Liberia, Mali, Palestine, Uganda](#), the [Deputy Minister of Education from Sierra Leone](#) as well as other government representatives from the [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) and [Kenya](#) participated in the symposium.

'Building Peaceful Societies in a post 2015 world', shared information about education programs that the US is implementing in Afghanistan and in other countries to address the root causes of conflicts. Keynote speaker, [Qian Tang](#), Assistant Director General for Education of UNESCO, highlighted the importance of education to help young people become responsible citizens and respectful of human rights and multi-culturalism.

Key messages

[Khalil Mahshi](#), Director of IIEP, [Lori Heninger](#), Director of INEE and [Yolande Miller-Grandvaux](#), Co-Chair of the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility, welcomed the participants and spoke about the role of education to prevent violence and foster peacebuilding and resilience.



The second Keynote speaker [Carol Bellamy](#), Chair of the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education, stressed the importance of inclusiveness, equity and quality to be considered for the post-2015 goals on education. She expressed her fear that the international community would go for the "low hanging fruit", which is to provide

« Education cannot wait because the future of our children and youth will not wait »
 Lori Heninger, INEE Director

United States Ambassador to UNESCO, [David T. Killion](#), moderator of the first Panel on

access to education for children in conflict affected and fragile societies, rather than ensuring they are receiving quality education. Both speakers drew attention on the **funding gap on education in the humanitarian field** and the little recognition given to education in post-crisis recovery. The international community is focused on access without looking at the impact of conflict on education and the role that it can play in the prevention of violence. They called the humanitarian and development sectors to collaborate more deliberately in order to increase the quality of educational investment in conflict- and post-crisis settings.



INEE tools

INEE launched the **Conflict Sensitive Education Pack**, composed of the [Guiding Principles on Integrating Conflict Sensitivity in Education Policy and Programming in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts](#), a [Guidance Note](#) that provides examples and a list of resources to implement conflict sensitive programs, and a [Reflection Tool](#) to support the design, implementation and evaluation of conflict sensitive education programs.

The pack is an effort to develop a common framework to ensure quality, equitable, safe, relevant and inclusive education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. It articulates strategies to ensure that conflict-prevention is integrated in education policies and programmes so as to address conflict dynamics and contribute to the prevention of new conflicts in the future.



During the second panel on **'National Initiatives and Plans to Develop Conflict Sensitive Education Policies and Programmes'**, Ministers of Education shared their experiences promoting quality education and the challenges their education systems face.

Minister Lamis Alami from Palestine highlighted the importance of harmonizing the donor funding in order to implement successful quality education programmes. Palestine is investing in the professionalization of the teaching profession, which includes, among others, leadership training. The monitoring and evaluation system is also being strengthened to measure the development of quality education.

Minister Etmonia Tarpeh from Liberia underlined the negative impacts of conflicts on the learning process of the child. She emphasized the importance of pursuing peace and state building initiatives to prevent violence. To this goal, the Ministry of Education has trained 1300 teachers on Peace, Human Rights and Citizenship Education.

« In the midst of conflict there is absolutely no psychosocial balance in the teaching learning process. The environment becomes uncondusive; some children are introduced to violence and anti-social practices, while some of them involuntarily assume tendencies of early adulthood ».

H.E. Minister Etmonia Tarpeh

Following the outbreak of conflict in Mali, the provision of education became problematic; **Minister Bocar Moussa Diarra** explained how the subsequent suspension of aid from international donors impacted the education system. He highlighted some of the negative impacts on education, such as the difficulty to recruit the necessary teachers to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and the drop out of children as a result of lack of food and school material. Minister Diarra explained that the education system is being greatly affected as a result of the high number of internally displaced children and the traumatism children suffer in the affected areas.



Minister Tchonaï Elimi Hassan from Chad shared the challenges the country faces to ensure access to education for refugees from the Sahel region following natural disasters. He pointed that Chad is now a post-conflict country and as a result the military spending has been decreased allowing increasing the education budget. **Jovin Mukadi** from the Ministry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) affirmed his country's commitment to support education that can support conflict prevention and peace building. He explained that during the whole period of conflicts in the DRC, the education sector was the only one that was able to preserve the national unity as national education programs were kept in place and the people responsible for them were in office throughout the conflicts. He also recalled the Policy Dialogue Forum organized in Kinshasa in October 2012 where a road map was

developed in order to create an education for peace program in the national education plan.

Robert Masese from the Ministry of Kenya shared a very uplifting example of improvement of school environment through the improvement of student participation and better school management. These changes have allowed to enhance their leadership skills and to promote citizenship education for peace building.

The **Minister of Uganda, Jessica Alupo**, shared information about the education policies developed to expand the functional capacity of education structures, to universalize primary and secondary education, and to reduce inequalities in terms of access to education along gender, social classes and geographical lines.

Deputy Minister of Sierra Leone, **Mahmoud Tarawalie**, raised the issue of the gender gap in education. There are more schooled boys than girls at all levels due to negative stereotypes towards girls, the abduction of girls by rebels and early marriages that prevent them from access and proper schooling.

During the discussion, the representative of the Permanent Delegation of Norway to UNESCO brought up the importance not only of access to education but of the content delivered at school. Conflict sensitive education is about how history is taught, the language policies, about teaching of tolerance and respect, and so forth. He raised the question on the assessment of the curricula and textbooks in order to prevent violence and insists on the importance of conflict-sensitive content.

« Education is about ideologies, it's about policies. That is the conflict sensitivity of education. »

Dankert Vedeler
Deputy Permanent Delegate of Norway

Paris Symposium Declaration

One of the outputs of the Symposium was the **Paris Symposium Declaration** expressing the shared commitment of participants to ensure that education programmes and policies are sensitive to conflicts and support the prevention of violence. The Declaration encourages the use of the INEE Guiding Principles and other tools and advocates for the inclusion of conflict and crisis sensitive education in the post-2015 agenda.

The draft Declaration was shared with participants beforehand and additions were made based on inputs and recommendations received from participants before the symposium. At the end of the event, the participants endorsed the declaration by acclamation. All Ministers of Education in attendance, as well as the Global Partnership for Education, the European Commission, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Government of Norway, Save the Children, IBIS, among many other organizations and agencies committed to the Declaration and to the dissemination and use of the INEE Conflict Sensitive Education Pack.

Interested in receiving personal endorsements of the Declaration from the participants, INEE prepared a poster on which participants could write a personal commitment and further inputs. About 50 encouraging statements were collected, among which the promise of **Minister Tchonaï Elimi Hassan of Chad** of his country's adherence to this process. Other participants underlined the importance of training of teachers in conflict transformation and peace building, the development of partnerships with civil society organizations, and the critical need to ensure the psychosocial protection and development of the child.



Funding of Conflict Sensitive Education

An issue that came up several times during the symposium was the funding of conflict sensitive education. In emergency situations, governments do not have the necessary funds to provide quality education, with funds being often scarce even in normal times. International donors need to step in and support such initiatives. Education should be considered as one of the main pillars of emergency response and receive the necessary attention and funding. Donors must intensify their efforts to ensure that no country will be unable to achieve quality conflict sensitive education due to lack of resources.

Concert and reception

The symposium was followed by a narrative concert by Peter Yarrow, best known as part of the 1960s folk group *Peter, Paul, and Mary*. Peter Yarrow talked about his experiences with his foundation, Operation Respect, which aims at developing empathy and solidarity and preventing violence among young people around the world.



During the reception, High-level representatives from Mali, DRC and Kenya expressed their commitment to conflict-sensitive education in short interviews with Lori Heninger, INEE Director.



Next steps

INEE is looking for **Champions committed to implement Conflict Sensitive Education** within their organizations who can support the mobilization of other stakeholders and become leading institutions in this important field.

Participants were invited to:

1. Promote the Paris Symposium Declaration on Conflict Sensitive Education within their organizations and with their networks.
2. Adopt the INEE Guiding Principles on Integrating Conflict Sensitivity in Education Policies and Programming available in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#).

3. Register on the INEE Website and share their plans on the development of conflict sensitive education policies and programs.
4. Use the INEE Guidance Note and Reflection Tool to develop conflict sensitive education programs.
5. Share their experiences, challenges and ideas to ensure that education policies and programs are conflict sensitive and contribute to state and peace building.

Thanks

This symposium would not have been possible without the generous support and unwavering collaboration of ADEA, Comic Relief, the European Commission, UNICEF through its Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Program and USAID.

For further information on conflict sensitive education, please visit the INEE website at inesite.org/education-fragility/conflict-sensitive-education and the INEE Toolkit at toolkit.inesite.org/conflict_sensitive_education

For further information about the symposium, and to access all symposium outputs, please visit inesite.org/education-fragility/conflict-sensitive-education/declaration-on-conflict-sensitive-education