



An international network for education in emergencies
Un réseau international pour l'éducation en situations d'urgence
Una red internacional para la educación en situaciones de emergencia
Uma rede internacional para a educação em situações de emergência
الشبكة العالمية لوكالات التعليم في حالات الطوارئ

Romano Prodi
UN Special Envoy for the Sahel

18 February 2013

Dear Mr. Prodi,

As leading humanitarian and development figures meet this week to discuss the increasingly frequent crises in the Sahel and how best to empower communities to resist, recover from, and adapt to natural disasters, we ask you to emphasise the key role that education can play in building resilience of vulnerable children and communities in this region and address how to incorporate it into current national and regional strategies for the Sahel.

The education of a staggering 8.5 million children was adversely affected at the height of the crisis in the Sahel – the equivalent of almost 14% of the world's out of school children. Thousands of Malian children continue to miss out on education opportunities due to displacement and insecurity, and as recovery begins in other countries in the Sahel, thousands more will struggle to catch up on learning they missed, particularly pastoralist children forced to move due to drought.

Even before the crisis in the Sahel, between 25-40% of primary school aged children were out of school in Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso, particularly those children most vulnerable to crisis due to resilience deficits. Given that the education situation only worsened during the crisis, it is striking that education in the 2012 CAP was just 16% funded of the \$17.8 million. And education in Mali, with arguably even greater and more complex needs, was only 6% funded in 2012. As agencies with experience operating in drought-affected regions in the Horn of Africa, we know how crucial education is to communities coping with, adapting to, and trying to prevent avoidable crises following unavoidable disasters. In light of this, such neglect in funding education is undoubtedly short sighted.

Indeed, the hopes of children and communities for a better future hinges upon access to learning. In a recent study, Save the Children, Oxfam, and IFRC found that children in pastoral and drought-affected communities listed education as the number one method to achieve their aspirations. Education builds the long-term resilience of children and their communities to cope with future droughts and adapt to shocks. Education secures learning that is relevant to children's needs and contexts, building the capacity for innovation within the community itself. An educated population is vital to fighting and ending the structural causes of chronic vulnerability and recurring crisis in the long term. Moreover, education is a platform for other interventions both in humanitarian and development contexts, including nutrition, health, child protection, agricultural education, and disaster preparedness and adaptation.

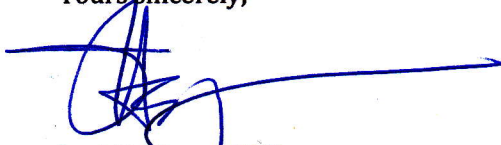
Unfortunately, education is strikingly absent from many international discussions on resilience. As leading agencies meet this week to discuss resilience and the Sahel, we ask that you:

- Promote education as an essential vehicle to deliver resilience messaging and programming by both aid agencies and governments in the Sahel.
- Ensure strategies to improve resilience in the Sahel are informed by education experts together with agriculture, nutrition, and DRR experts to ensure education's vital role in building resilience of children and communities is considered in forthcoming discussions and factored in to regional strategies.

- Ensure that education is incorporated into all future humanitarian needs assessments and is fully funded in drought-affected regions of the Sahel.

We thank you for your leadership on this agenda and look forward to working closely across all sectors to build resilience to deliver sustainable change for the most vulnerable children across the Sahel.

Yours sincerely,



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