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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Girls’ Right to Education in Emergencies**

**20 April 2016, United Nations, New York**

At the margins of the United Nations General Assembly High-level Thematic Debate on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Permanent Missions of Portugal, State of Qatar, and Norway to the United Nations in New York and the Ford Foundation held a meeting entitled “*Girls Right to Education in Emergencies”*. The meeting provided an opportunity for Member States, UN entities, and key civil society organizations to discuss strategiesthat will ensure education for girls’ in emergencies is at the forefront of all of the commitments and concrete actions that emerge from the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016, in Istanbul.

The meeting started with opening remarks by *H.E*. *Ms. Alya Al-Thani*, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations (Chair); *H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen*, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations; *H.E. Mr****. Álvaro Mendonça e Moura*, Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations;** *H.E. Dr. Ahmad Bin Mohammad Al-Murekhi*, Director of the Department of International Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar; *Ms. Kang Kyung-wha*, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA**; and** *Mr. David Barth*, Director of Youth Opportunity and Learning, Ford Foundation.

The opening remarks were followed by a panel discussion, moderated by *Ms. Jo Bourne***,** Chief of Education, Programme Division, UNICEF. Included in the panel were: *Ms. Rachel B. Vogelstein*, Senior Fellow and Director of the Women and Foreign Policy Program at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR); *Mr. Fahad Al Sulaiti*, Chief Executive Officer, Education Above All Foundation; *Mr.Alejandro Jose Palacios*, Chief of Staff, Global Partnership for Education; *Dr. Allan E. Goodman*, President and CEO, International Institute of Education; *Ms. Patience Stephens*, Special Advisor on Education, UNWomen; and *Mr. Dean Brooks*, Director, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).

***The following Key Messages emerged from the discussions:***

* Member States, experts, foundations, and civil society reaffirmed the importance of ensuring girls right to education, and that all stakeholders have an obligation to stress out the importance of this issue at the WHS. Estimates show that 80 million children living in 35 crisis affected-countries have their schooling interrupted. Refugee and displaced children are five times less likely to attend school, and the situation is far worse for girls who are 2.5 times more likely than boys, to not attend school in crisis situations. When girls are not in school, the risk to their safety and dignity increases significantly. They face a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence or early forced marriage, recruitment into armed forces and other forms of exploitation and abuse.
* There is a need for a focus on the most marginalized, and children in emergencies (conflict, disasters, health crises, and protracted crises) are part of this group.
* As conflicts play out over decades, marked by long-term displacement and a complex range of needs, the emergency education sector is straining at the seams, with analysts estimating a US$9 billion annual funding gap.
* Less than 2% percent of all humanitarian funding has targeted education, and in 2015 the emergency education sector received just 30 percent of the funding it needed.
* The WHS provides an opportunity to ensure the current status quo changes for better. It is hoped that stakeholder leaders will commit to actions to ensure that girls’ right to education is upheld, and that girls, regardless of the contexts in which they live, are able to enjoy equal and safe access to education.
* The Special Session on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises will launch an ambitious education crisis platform which will aim to deliver on the right to education, by focusing on 5 areas.

**Recommendations to Member States and Stakeholder leaders’:**

* To come prepared, at the WHS, to make bold, firm and transformative commitments on girls right to education at both the Special Session on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises and the high-level Leaders’ Roundtable on *Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality*;
* To abide by the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and University from Military Use during Armed Conflict;
* To endorse the Safe Schools Declaration;
* To push for better coordination between humanitarian and development actors;
* To work on innovative approaches to protect the basic right to education for children worldwide. In addition, tackling girls’ right to education in emergencies requires multi-sectoral partnerships to influence related laws and financing. It requires working with the private sector in order to use technology to advance education for girls; and
* To invest in prevention, preparedness, and resilience, which is more cost effective when compared with approaches that rely exclusively on ex-post response.

***Summary of Interventions***

**H.E. Ms. Alya Al-Thani,** in her capacity as Chair of the meetingnoted the objectives of the meeting, and challenged participants to foster focused and highly interactive inter-active exchanges, generate key messages and some practical, policy guidance that could be taken to Istanbul. She also noted that the meeting was a follow-up to the High-level Meeting held in September 2015 at the UN on the *Right to Education in Emergencies*.

**H.E. Mr. Álvaro Mendonça e Moura, stressed that the new 2030 development agenda, as well as World Humanitarian Summit and the September High-level Meeting on Large Movements ofRefugees and Migrants offer a unique opportunity to address girls’ access to education at all levels, both in refugee and IDP situations, and to take collective action to promote change and deliver more. Portugal is strongly committed to support a paradigm shift to promote higher education in situations of emergency.**

**H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen, noted that many crises around the world are disrupting children’s education, and girls are disproportionately affected. This is a huge problem, education combats inequality and leads to improved development outcomes. Countries with higher levels of education are less prone to conflict and instability, while gender parity in education is closely linked to higher economic growth. There is a need to increase efforts to give girls’ the education they deserve.**

**H.E. Dr. Ahmad Bin Mohammad Al-Murekhi**, highlighted that humanitarian and development interventions, including education, are key contributions to global security, peace and stability in the region and beyond.Qatar maintains a strong focus on education on its international development policy, and has made education a foreign policy priority. A result of Qatar’s deep commitment to education, was the establishment of the Education Above All Foundation, and its renowned initiative ‘Educate a Child’, which targets education in fragile and conflict-affected countries. During the Third Donors Conference for Syria, held in March 2015, Qatar launched a fund to educate and train Syrian children who are either internally displaced or refugees. As a result, 600,000 children have been enrolled in schools in the region, and another 500,000 will be enrolled by September 2016. Moreover, US $100 million were allocated at the Fourth Donors Conference for Syria.

**Ms. Kang Kyung-wha**, noted that while support to education in emergencies – and specifically girls’ education – has gained some ground since the 2010 General Assembly Resolution on the right to education in emergencies, since years on, the need is still greater than ever. The sector stiff suffers from a lack of adequate financing, poor coordination between humanitarian and development actors, and insufficient political will to give it the attention is so badly needs. In Syria alone, the cost of replacing or rehabilitating schools is estimated to be US$3billion, and the economic loss due to the dropout from basic and secondary education is estimated to be $10.6 billion or 18 percent of Syria’s GDP.

She also stressed that in addition to the Special Session on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises, there will be a high-level Leaders’ Roundtable on *Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality*, which will call on leaders to make commitments to deliver on two tenets of the Secretary-General’s Agenda for Humanity: to uphold the norms that safeguard humanity, including eradicating sexual and gender-based violence, and to leave no one behind, by empowering and protecting women and girls. These core commitments – common benchmarks - identified in broad consultations with multi stakeholders led by UN Women. Governments, agencies and NGO’s are asked to come to the Round Table to make specific commitments. She asked participants to come and make specific commitments on girls right to education in this Round Table and at the Special session.

**Mr. David Barth**, told participants that the Ford Foundation’ workfocus on youth who experience inequality in multiple ways across race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, sexual identity, and migration status.Through their commitment to building institutions and networks, they make long-term investments in organizations that are pivotal in fighting inequality and making meaningful progress in this area.He also stressed that youth, especially girls, have the potential to be a force for progress and positive social change in their families, communities, and the world. Yet too many of them face daunting obstacles in obtaining the opportunities they need to develop their full potential and face challenges in making their needs known and their voices heard. Moreover, despite global progress in improving access to primary education, the needs of older youth, including girls, have largely gone unaddressed. Too often, youth-serving education is weak and disconnected, making it harder for young people to succeed and lead. This is especially true for young people who experience an absence of opportunity because of poverty.

**Ms. Patience Stephens**, noted that we need to recognize that the education of millions of children is affected by a wide range of humanitarian crises varying from conflict, protracted crises, violence, impact of disasters, food insecurity and spread of diseases. She stressed that out that investing in prevention, preparedness, and resilience is cost effective when compared with approaches that rely exclusively on ex-post response. Yet very little funding goes towards disaster prevention and preparedness, which can build the resilience of communities to cope with emergencies.

**Mr. Dean Brooks**, highlighted that education programs have to be guided by evidence-based best practices.

**Mr. Fahad Al Sulaiti**, noted the global problem of armed forces using education institutions during armed conflict and how, in the vast majority of conflicts around the world, schools are converted into barracks, logistics bases, operational headquarters, detention and interrogation centers, and recruitment grounds. The practice of using schools for military purposes endangers students and teachers by turning their schools into targets for enemy attack. These tactics affect girls’ right to education. The presence of military actors and the shift in balance often discourage parents from sending their girls to school. Parents fear their daughters becoming victims of gender and sexual based violence. He called on Member States to join the Safe Schools Declaration.

**Dr. Allan Goodman**, discussed how in conflict and crises, higher education matters and the great need for more scholarships, more flexible documentation (including transcripts and credentials), and perhaps even a special visa category for displaced students “refugee camps do not build universities,” he noted.

**Mr. Alejandro Palacios**, stressed the need for better coordination between development and humanitarian agencies. He also noted that ‘Education business as usual’ is unlikely to address the needs of children affected by crisis. There is a need for coordinated decision-making processes and management of risks through preparedness, prevention, response and recovery so that education programmes and policies can be maintained.

**Ms. Rachel Vogelstein,** discussed strategies to elevate the importance and visibility of girls’ education in overallpolicy decisions.This could be done through adequate funding, coordination of opportunities, and political will.