

# THE BRIGHTEST HOPE:

ESSAYS FROM AROUND THE WORLD ON THE IMPORTANCE  
OF EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS



**INEE**

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

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an open global network of practitioners and policy makers working together to ensure all persons the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies and post-crisis recovery.

For more information on INEE visit [www.ineesite.org](http://www.ineesite.org)

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Cover photo: A girl writing on the white board at the NRC's Accelerated Learning Program Centre in Lower Dir district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Photo Credit: NRC/Shahzad Ahmad

Back cover photo: Students walking to school in the morning at the Tunkia Secondary School, an IRC Legacy Project supported school in Gorahun, Kenema District, Sierra Leone. Photo Credit: Aubrey Wade/IRC

Design: 2D Studio



*Photo Credit: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun  
A young girl enrolled in NRC's education program in Kobe Camp in Dolo Ado, Ethiopia.*

*"Every day is a happy day when I go to school."*

Antoine, 11, Philippines

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Quality education is a catalyst for poverty reduction, gender equality and women's empowerment, promotion of social justice and peaceful and inclusive societies. Knowing the importance of education in emergencies for individuals and societies it is almost unbelievable that education in emergencies has not received higher priority in humanitarian response. There are still 58 million primary school aged school children out of school, of which 50 percent live in countries scarred by war and violence. Over one-third of the 69 million adolescents out-of-school globally live in conflict-affected countries. Despite the large number of children unable to attain their right to education in crisis situations, less than 2% of humanitarian aid in recent years was directed towards education, leaving millions of children with few prospects and little hope for achieving a quality education.

In launching the Education in Emergencies Essay Contest, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) aspired to increase awareness of the necessity and benefit in providing education alongside other lifesaving measures in humanitarian settings, and to elevate the voices of those whose education has been affected by emergencies.

From the essay submissions came the common theme of a desire for education in times of emergency. The INEE Minimum Standards, which guide education response globally, are predicated upon the right to education and respect for human rights for all. Here are the voices of children, youth, and adults from all around the world who have been affected by crisis, all asking for education- a fundamental human right. We must listen to these voices. It is our commitment as members of the INEE community to amplify the stories of those who strive to attain education in adversity, to advocate for their basic human rights, and to bring the global community together to address these shared challenges.



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## Global Education First Initiative

The UN Secretary-General's Global Initiative on Education

*"Everywhere I travel, places recovering from war or natural disaster – when I ask what the United Nations can do to help, the first thing people ask for is education. Even in the most dire of circumstances, the answer is always the same: people want their children back in school."*

United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon

And children want that too.

This book is a collection of essays written by children and youth who have experienced educational deprivation due to crisis. These young people understand that education is the basic building block of every society - and their society needs to rebuild. They understand that education is the single best investment nations can make - and during an emergency it needs to be prioritized. They understand that education is their fundamental right.

The UN Secretary General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) is working to ensure that every child receives a quality education. Conflict and crises present the most significant barrier to achieving this objective. More than 40 per cent of out of school children and youth live in conflict-affected countries, and millions more are forced out of school by natural disaster every year. The need to fulfill the right to education in times of crises is vital. To ensure it is upheld we must:

1. Increase levels of humanitarian aid to education and improve its delivery mechanism. Currently less than two percent of humanitarian aid is spent on education.
2. Keep education safe from attacks. Attacks against schools, students and teachers are widespread, and in gross violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.
3. Integrate emergency prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in education sector plans and budgets. The lack of plans, capacity and resources makes it harder for schools to keep children and youth safe, and continue to hold classes when a crisis strikes.

Children and youth should not forfeit their right to education in situations of conflict or when emergencies strike. This right must be protected at all times. Education Cannot Wait!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. G. ...', is placed above the contact information.

Secretariat  
Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative



*Photo Credit: Aubrey Wade/IRC*

*Students at work in the classroom of the Tunkia Secondary School, an IRC Legacy Project supported school in Gorahun, Kenema District, Sierra Leone.*

*“Education in emergencies provides hope for the future, because education is brightest hope [for] the future...”*

Riak, 17, South Sudan



## INTRODUCTION

2014 has been one of the worst years on record for children and youth due to the outbreak of war, violence, and the spread of disease.<sup>1</sup> With the growing prevalence of humanitarian emergencies, the number of people forcibly displaced by war or persecution has skyrocketed to 51.2 million- 16.7 million refugees and 33.3 million internally displaced persons- the highest number ever recorded.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, in situations of armed conflict and natural disaster, it is often children who pay the highest price.

Globally, there are an estimated 58 million primary school aged children out of school, of which 50% live in conflict-affected countries.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, hundreds of children were kidnapped from their schools, or on their way to school, while tens of thousands have been recruited or used by armed forces and groups.<sup>4</sup> Attacks on education and health facilities and use of schools for military purposes have also increased in many places.<sup>5</sup> In addition, 100 million children and young people are affected by natural disasters every year. Most of them face disruptions to their schooling.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the urgent need to support learners in crisis, only 1% of humanitarian aid was directed towards education in 2014, leaving millions of children and youth with few prospects and little hope for achieving a quality education.<sup>7</sup> Children and communities in humanitarian crisis express a strong desire for educational opportunities, yet education is too often far down the list of humanitarian priorities.

In order to elevate the voices of children and youth whose education has been affected by crisis, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) launched an essay contest in celebration of the 10-year anniversary of INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response Recovery.<sup>8</sup> Contestants were asked to respond to one of two essay prompts: What has education meant to me in an emergency? Or, Why is education in emergencies important? The contest received a strong global response, with 720 submissions from participants aged seven to 68, in Arabic, French, Spanish and English from 52 different countries around the world.

Many common themes emerged from the essays, most notably a desire for education and an emphasis on the importance of education alongside other life saving needs in emergency settings. Many elementary students described their absolute joy and happiness in seeing their friends and teachers when schools reopened after a crisis. Refugee and internally displaced students displayed fierce determination to return to school as quickly as possible so as to not fall behind in their studies during their displacement. Many students in situations of armed conflict and insecurity expressed feeling safer within their school communities, highlighting the cognitive and physical protection education can offer. Another reoccurring theme throughout the essays was the hope that education provided. Focusing on education in emergency settings allows children and youth to create future aspirations, and to envision a positive future for themselves beyond their current situation.

This booklet features essays from the INEE Minimum Standards 10th Anniversary Essay Contest. These essays give voice to some of the worst disasters in recent years, and they highlight the power of education to be life saving and life sustaining in emergency contexts and situations of adversity.

**JEPHTHAH** *is 19 years old from Nigeria*

**GOING** to school outside of my hometown of Abuja was a big deal for me. I wasn't just leaving home, I was leaving to live somewhere I had never been to. I just heard stories.

There were always stories of how cold it was there, how your bathing water could turn to ice before you get into the bathroom, and when the tales got more dramatic, you could hear about how it snowed somewhere in the Plateau. What they never told me though was how this beautiful place could evolve in a second, houses turned into bonfires and an angry mob with sticks and machetes clamoring for your blood shouting right outside your window. What the tourism pamphlets never explained is what caused this hurtful transition.

I was in my first year of Senior class, when on a sunny afternoon, a crisis broke out. It was a military school but the sound of gunfire felt alien to me. Airmen and Officers were moving in and out of the school compound on high alert. Thick black fumes of smoke hung far away in the town and I could only imagine they were fumes from burning tires or a house or someone's business.



*Photo Credit: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun  
Nadifa's younger sister, Hamdi, at school in Kobe camp in Dolo Ado.*



*Photo Credit: ©UNICEF/260811\_Vigneault\_0013/Ivory Coast*

It was very strange to see the transformation of this once beautiful princess into a dragon that kept breathing fire non-stop. Neighbors turning against neighbors they've possibly known for years. The cause of this transformation varied between sources. Some claimed religious differences, others just fought for the adrenaline rush I suppose. Yet, no reason or lust for excitement could justify such cruelty.

I was basically scared for the people at the heart of it because I couldn't imagine what it was like and also for myself because I didn't know if it meant no classes for the meantime, and that translated into endless disturbance from the seniors and fear of the unknown. Although the city was in a state of emergency, luckily, we still had classes. Some teachers who lived within the school compound or close by in unaffected areas, still managed to come. It wasn't like the usual classes but it was still worth it, it kept my mind sane. I felt safe enough that my school was sitting in the air force base but classes still ongoing made it feel more normal, like all was well, though we knew it wasn't. The whole crisis experience felt far and unreal till the day one of our agric teachers, who was an airman, was killed. He was murdered outside the school (possibly beaten because we heard about how his head was torn).

Education meant “peace” to me during this period. It felt like a safe word that kept the evil away. It was the only thing that took my mind off it all. No matter what the subject was, it didn’t matter to me. Even if it was Chemistry which I found boring, it felt like all the subjects said the same things: “Peace” “Keep calm” and “Safety”. For that period, I came to like what I loathed.

I watch a lot of news and see refugee camps in places like Syria and Palestine and see how children like me just roam the streets or are forced to fight just to protect themselves or their families. In some of these places, schools still manage to survive like little leaves growing on the trunk of a tree that was cut down. These kids, they basically don’t have a say in what happens and it’s not their fault either but yet they are the ones badly affected by it. One gunfire and their lives are changed. Their future lying down the barrel of a rifle, yet some are hopeful. Still smiling and saying how they still hope to be doctors or reporters. Personally, I think children who have to go through such experiences are the toughest. Seeing their houses destroyed, parents and people they have known all their lives killed, and still hopeful about a wonderful future, says a lot. With my little experience, what I’d say to these kids is not to ever give up hope and appreciate the education they get and those striving to give it to them.

You still find teachers or other people who strive to give children their education under such tough times. Risking their lives just to restore a little bit of normality to their lives, giving them hope even when their future seems bleak. Once I saw a teacher from a war affected area, interviewed on the news and they asked him how he and his colleagues manage to cope with all that’s going on around them and he told them how they lacked so much in their schools, but yet they try to make the most out of all they have because it helps keep their minds away from the violence and safe from getting dragged into the violence. Sometimes, not all soldiers carry rifles. Some just devote their lives in classes to make other people’s lives better.

*Nigeria has the largest population of out-of-school children of any country in the world.<sup>9</sup>*

**DIANA ELIZABETH** is 12 years old from the Philippines

**TWO** months after Typhoon Haiyan strikes, I decided to go back to school. There, I met again my classmates and my teachers. I was very happy that no one of my classmates or teachers died. We talked to each other, play and laugh even though the fear that we felt during the typhoon was still there. We just stay happy in order for us to forget about it. We received hundred-folds of blessings like school supplies from different organizations from different countries. We were so happy and thankful to them for all the things they've given to us. Many organizations also donated classrooms that are very necessary for us to be comfortable and for us to learn well. Until now, the classroom is still under construction, they also repair the roofs of some of our classrooms that were damaged. And many other organizations are continuing to help up. Now our school is getting better despite all the devastation that we went through.

*In November 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines - the strongest category 5 tropical cyclone to ever make landfall. More than 6,000 people lost their lives, and 4.1 million people were displaced.<sup>11</sup>*

*With more than 5 million children affected by Typhoon Haiyan, many aid organizations worked together to rebuild schools and provide safe learning spaces, and children were able to return to school in January 2014.<sup>12</sup>*



*Photo Credit: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0079/UNMEER Martine Perret  
A girl sits at a desk in her classroom at Coleyah Centre Primary School, in Conakry, Guinea as schools reopen following the Ebola crisis.*

**AYESHA** is 14 years old from Pakistan

**I WOKE** up as the sparkling sun rays fell upon my face. It was my first day at school and my excitement was at its peak. Like any other child belonging to a poor family, school held a different kind of an attraction for me. But I wouldn't have thought that my eagerness was short lived and it was to turn into a tragedy.

I dressed up quickly, gobbled up my breakfast and headed for school. I was almost flying towards the school. The fear of falling down was almost nonexistent. What mattered to me was my education, my school. I was one of the first few students to reach the school. After brief introductions, the teacher started the lesson. I took my seat beside my best friend. My teacher asked us to take out our English books. As I turned towards my bag something caught my attention.



*Photo Credit: Shahzad Ahmad/NRC Pakistan  
Afghan Refugee girl attending classes in NRC's ALP centre in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan.*

I saw an overwhelming stream of water flowing right towards us. I froze. I remembered my father fretting over the recent floods in our province and soon realized what was happening. I couldn't breathe. I turned around to see my class fellows but they were already gone. My heart thudded inside my chest. The flood had hit my town. As I climbed up a nearby tree, I could see people running for their lives. I started crying when I saw my bag floating away.

I don't remember who pulled me down and how I ended up in a camp. When I returned to my senses, I tried to find my parents. Everything was gone. As I roamed around the camps, I saw my mother packing the things that the flood was kind enough to leave behind. I ran towards her. She started sobbing and told me that we were leaving town and moving to 'safer' areas. I could see my brother curled in a ball where my father was sitting holding his head in his hands.

The journey from the camp to the 'safe' area was a blur. I tried my best to block out the sounds of crying and moaning. We reached our relative's house. As the reality sank in, tears started to run down my cheeks. I knew I was lucky to have made it out alive but my incomplete education left a void inside me. For months, I tried to work as a baby sitter for a rich family who treated me well but my heart used to shrink whenever I saw school-going children.

When my employer offered my mother to pay for my school, I thought it was a joke. It was too good to be true and it went against something I had learned from my past-life is unfair. Today, I consider myself an incredible example of how education moulds our lives. We can easily find millions of children who were not as fortunate as me. I have experienced education in emergency and that's why I consider myself the luckiest survivor.

*20 million Pakistanis were affected by the floods in 2010, which caused massive damage to property, livelihood and infrastructure.<sup>13</sup>*

*8,000 schools were damaged or destroyed, and with an additional 5,000 schools being used as temporary shelters, students faced months of disruption to their education.<sup>14</sup>*

**EVER** since I was a little girl, I knew that if I was to be successful in life, I had to go to school. I come from a small village in Kenya in the Mount Elgon region. I knew that to drive a car, I had to go to school because I was told that anyone who came driving to the village had gone to school. I wanted to come back to the village driving one day and have little children lining up at the side of the road watching and cheering me on, then I would give them candy. In my own little way, education mattered to me.

I attended an academy in Mount Elgon for my Certificate in Primary Education. When I was in standard eight which was the final year in primary education, Mount Elgon region suffered a civic and political unrest. I was lucky to be in a boarding school for my friends who were day scholars would sometimes not attend school because of the insecurity and the fear that had gripped the region.

Rebel forces known as Sabaot Land Defence Forces (S.L.D.F) terrorized Mount Elgon. Their main reason for attack was issues dealing with land. They were merciless; they spared no life, not even animals. They were ruthless in their tactics; they chopped off people's ears, amputated peoples legs, it was a menace. I remember hearing the hushed voices of teachers in the staffroom talking about how bad the situation was. I heard about how one of them had watched his family from a bush being slaughtered and he couldn't do anything about it. I remember hearing him weep about how helpless he felt. School was the only safe place because we had the Kenyan soldiers surrounding the place.



*Photo Credit: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun  
9 year-old boy, Bol, and his brother in Kakuma camp in Kenya.*





*Photo Credit: © UNICEF/NYHQ2013-0448/Huxta*

*In March 2013 in Kenya, a girl smiles, standing in her dormitory at the Modogashe boarding school for primary students, near the remote village of Modogashe, Garissa County.*

Children stopped coming to school. My best friend missed school for close to a week. I was worried sick. He was the only one who could tell me how my family was. I was worried for him and for his family and for my village. The exams were drawing close. Most teachers now lived in school and since most of the standard eight students were boarders we kept on going with our revision for the exams.

Teachers told us that life had to go on, that we had even the more reason to study; education would be our only way out. Amidst gunshots, watching huts rising up in flames in the nearby village, we toiled. We cried for our families' lives in prayer every night which we happened to spend under the beds. We were living in fear; constant hooting of owls, the gunshots were worse and louder at night. Since we could not go outside to the latrine, we had a bucket in the dormitories, the smell was way better than the smell of death and fresh blood that blanketed the night air.

One of the darkest days of those days is when we heard about the death of our Kiswahili teacher. The school was tense. He was a good man. I remember it was a Friday. We raised the flag in a somber mood and sang the National Anthem. We had heard of his passing as a rumour, we waited for confirmation from the school head, hoping that that was all it was, a rumour. His family had been attacked the previous night and since the rebel group always looked for the man of the house, he was hiding in the ceiling; he was found and shot dead as his wife and children watched. We sobbed in silence.

Education had saved our lives. If it were not for being in school, most of us would have lost our lives, or worse still, we would have become child soldiers. Education was the only way out of this menace. We had to let the region know that there were better ways of solving conflicts than war. We would teach the region that land is not the only asset you can have.

The lights in the dormitory had to be switched off at night so as to attract less attention to us, except for the security lights outside. Every night until the wee hours of the morning together with the rest of the students, we crammed at the window, reading with the dim lights. You were lucky if your bed was close to a window. You even got more friends. More favours. More bread during tea break the following day.

Being in school guaranteed us food and water. Food was a scarce commodity during that period. Mount Elgon is an area that has fertile soils therefore most of our food produce is in the farms. The rebels burnt most of that down to paralyze the village. The only food was dry maize which needed to be taken to the Posho mill to be ground but they were all shut down because of insecurity reasons. All shops were closed if not looted by the rebels hence food scarcity, unlike the entire village, we still could have three meals a day and drink clean water.

Most of the young girls had been raped and left mentally scarred, wounds that in more cases than none are almost incurable. Many women and young girls were molested and either infected with HIV and or got pregnant. Those of us in school, education had allowed us the sanity of our innocence.

I remember when the results came out, that was the year our school had performed the best in its history. The government had somehow managed to contain the situation. Most of us had passed and went to prestigious national schools. I went to a national school.

I remember all this like it was yesterday. I am now in my final year in University. Education got me here. Until I can buy a car, drive back to my village; have children lining up by the side of the road and giving them candy, I am not there yet.

*Between 2005 and 2008, the Mount Elgon region of Western Kenya was embroiled in conflict between the Sabaot Land Defense Forces militia group and Kenyan Security Forces over a land dispute.*

*Civilians were trapped between the violence of the warring factions and were consistently moving and relocating in order to find safety and protect themselves which proved to be highly disruptive to students' schooling.<sup>15</sup>*

**MEHREEN** is 12 years old from Bangladesh

**LIFE** can be short, life can be long. Life is always valuable. There are some needs without which life's value is lessened. Needs like education, which is the foundation of a strong future. Being illiterate is like being blind. This is what I felt when my education had been taken away for a short while.

Over the past few years, I had missed some days of school due to political unrest. My learning had been seriously hampered. My school was closed except of a few weekends and my syllabus was incomplete. The seniors communicated online, which my junior class could not do. Without education, I felt restless and disabled.

I would like to tell those in similar situations to quench their thirst for knowledge. When education is taken away, one's curiosity and thirst for literacy may reach an unbearable stage. I am grateful to those who provide learning in these times.

*“After two months I went back to school and I am very excited because I can see my friends and know what’s happened to them. In school we share our experience and I feel safe and confident, after I share my experiences. And now the wound deep in my heart was gone.”*

Nicole, 13, Philippines



Photo Credit: © UNICEF/BANA2015-00026/Kiron  
A nine-year-old girl listens to her teacher attentively during classes at a primary school at Korial slum in Dhaka on 5 February 2015.

## **LOLA** is 19 years old from Indonesia

**WE** usually realize that education is very important when it's no longer in our hands. I live in a developing country, where there is a high gap between high quality and poor quality education. There are so many of us who have never felt studying in a classroom with adequate facilities. Most of us have felt learning in the middle of an unnatural situation.

I've experienced studying three times in the middle of an uncomfortable situation. The first happened when I was in elementary school. At that time, my school still used the old buildings that were very old. In those days, it was raining very heavy and some of my friends couldn't make it to come to school because of flooding and the lack of transportation when the rains come. A week later, the headmaster announced that the school was forced to close due to flooding. Classrooms, chairs, and tables that we used to study all submerged by water, including the test papers and books in the library. For several days, we had to study by ourselves at home for uncertain times.



*Photo Credit: Peter Biro/IRC Ambon, Indonesia.*

After the floods began to recede, school was reopened, but we were forced to learn in the middle of the flood. We studied with crude equipment, we had to take off our shoes because the class was still flooding. Our uniform was wet as well as our books. The rain water dripped from the roof of the school, so many troubles we had to face because of that. Despite the dispirited situation, we remained in school to keep studying because we didn't want to be left behind.

A few years later, another incident happened when I was in high school. I lived in a very dry place surrounded by tropical rain forest. But unfortunately, a lot of illegal logging was going on in there to clear the land in order to build new buildings. To do it quickly, most of the loggers burned the trees until it ran out. Smoke generated by burning spread all over the city. All schools and other institutions had to be closed because the smoke interfered with our breathing



*Photo Credit: © UNICEF/PFPG2014-1082/Balasundaram  
Students in class at Quinapondan Central Elementary School, Philippines one year  
following Typhoon Haiyan.*

and vision. However, we couldn't remain in the house forever. We had to go to school and eventually the school was forced to re-open. We had to study in the midst of a thick haze while wearing a mask to cover our nose and mouth. The way to school was very burdensome because of the smoke that made our eyes sore. The visibility was only a few feet away often made us have to be extra careful to avoid accidents. We couldn't do sports outside the classroom because the smoke makes it difficult to breathe. The school doesn't have air filtering so that it often came through the ventilation of windows and doors even though we've been trying to close it. Some of my friends couldn't even go to school because of the trouble of breathing. The air pollutant standard index diagrams in our city has shown a very dangerous level, which means that it wasn't worthy enough to be lived in. In class, we often heard coughing from students or teachers. Everyday, the classroom was filled only by a few people, but the teacher still continued to come and teach us. Although the situations were not comfortable, we were still trying to study and utilize existing facilities. These events occurred not just once but many times. We experienced it for weeks until finally the President ordered to create an artificial rain. Although it wasn't completely gone, it was enough to help us to learn comfortably.

I really applaud and appreciate the hard work of the teachers who remained faithful to teach us even though they had to withstand the cold water of flooding and heavy smoke.

A year later, when I moved to another town to continue my education at university, an incident happened again. But this time instead of flooding or smog, it was volcanic ashes. The town I'm living in has several volcanoes that are still active. It was on February 14, 2014, a volcano erupted and made our city fully covered by volcanic ashes. For several days, there was no rain. On the first day, the university announced to dismiss the class because of the thick volcanic ashes. But the next day, we still had to come to college

although the remnants of volcanic ashes were still there. Volcanic ashes are very dangerous for breathing, and often make our eyes reddened and sore. On the first day of class, the entire academic community working together to clean up volcanic ashes from campus environment. Some classes even had to be cancelled because of the incident.

Events such as natural disaster, rebellion, and war are sometimes hinder us to get a normal education. The amount of disruption and distraction sometimes make us unable to concentrate on learning. But even so, in my opinion, education should still be running. Education is not merely what is taught in the classroom. Conflicts and wars in an area, natural disasters that occurred in a city, can also be used as a lesson so that we can overcome and minimize it in the future.

Children who keep coming to school and teachers who keep teaching despite the dangerous atmosphere out there, is a real example of why education should continue. Maybe we could have “quit” education for a moment when the events are still occurring, but we can’t quit forever. Education is very important and that condition shouldn’t make us stop learning. If education is stopped, it will be detrimental to the children who have a great desire to learn. It could also be a reference for those who still get a decent education out there, that it’s not threatened by conflict or natural disaster, to always be grateful and keep studying.

*A volcano on the island of Java erupted on February 14th, 2014 killing 3 people and causing a mass evacuation as one hundred thousand were displaced.*<sup>17</sup>

*Floods pose a constant threat in Indonesia, with heavy rains often triggering dangerous landslides. Children and youth often miss out on valuable instruction time during and after natural disasters as schools may be either inaccessible or used as temporary shelters.*<sup>18</sup>

## VIELET BLAIR is 12 from the Philippines

**ON** November 8, 2013, Typhoon Haiyan came in our country, and struck the province in Leyte. Many people suffered and died. Me and my family were worried, because what would we should do after Typhoon Haiyan? In my situation I wanted to help my parents to recover our life but I can't do it, because I'm just a little girl, so I decided to go to school to study well and continue my studies even though our environment is not already recovered, because it is the only way that I can help my parents. I think that education helps us to recover the worst thing that ever happened in our life, and I believe that education is important to us because it can cause a good life for the people who are suffering in their lives now.

On January 6, 2014 is the day that the children will go to school to continue their studies. But I am not here in our school to continue my studies, because I went to another city. On April 29, 2014 when I came back to Tacloban City, I am so very happy, I saw that Tacloban City has already recovered, but other subdivisions here in Tacloban have no light. On June 3, 2014 I came back to my school to continue my studies. I am very happy because I meet my classmates here at my school.

Then I realized that many people suffered from that disaster, but they continue their studies. Now I know that education is not only to know about the class and for future, but it also helps us our moral character and personality.

*“I'm so thankful that my fellow classmates and my teacher are still alive. Even our clothes are gone, even our notebooks are wet we still went to school, because we want to learn. We want to be educated.”*

Charlotte, 14, Philippines



Photo credit: Tyler Jump/IRC  
A student draws a picture of a home on the blackboard at the IRC/RAFI built disaster resilient day care center in northern Cebu, Philippines.

**MAHIKAN DESIREE** is 21 years old from Ivory Coast, living in Liberia  
[Essay translated from original French]

**EDUCATION** derives from the word educate, which means to develop a person's intellectual, moral and physical abilities. Education inculcates good habits and manners. Furthermore, an emergency is a situation that has to be acted upon without delay. In emergencies, care provided during interventions can't be postponed. Moreover, education during emergencies refers to the training that a person, a population or a nation receives during or after a difficult situation: conflict, war or other natural catastrophes. I cannot be put on hold.

Indeed, the second round of the October elections coincided with the start of the 2010-2011 school year. We had barely started our classes when Ivoirians were called to the polls. After two weeks, the situation was critical in the city of Danane; at our school, teachers and students were confronting and tearing each other apart over preferred and disfavoured



*Photo Credit: © UNICEF/NYHQ2015-0569/de Mun  
On 11 March 2015 in Guinea, children attend class at the Mangalla school, in the town of Guéckédou, Guéckédou Prefecture. Because of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak, schools across the country remained closed after the conclusion of the July-August 2014 holidays and finally reopened on 19 January 2015.*



political parties. Our school was turned into a battlefield and terrified teachers abandoned their duties and fled home. Students also fled to go back to their villages to be with their parents. When the city of Danane was taken by the rebels, I decided to go back to my village located 65 kilometres away. No vehicles were circulating, the streets of the city were under rebel control. I left my school identity card and all school documents to walk toward the edge of the city. The rebels were looking for teachers and students because they believed that they were part of the opposition. I left my school identity card and documents and pretended to be a local trader. A rebel allowed me to embark on a merchandise vehicle that had just arrived from Man. When I arrived at the village, my family had already left for Liberia. I immediately headed toward the border of Ivory Coast and Liberia. When I crossed the river Nuon on November 5, 2010 for Liberia, I could see my future behind me. I didn't know which saint to worship and I couldn't stop crying because I had already lost four years of schooling during the 2002 crisis. I didn't know how long this one was going to last and I didn't know what had happened to my school.

I arrived in Liberia in despair and was left destitute and traumatized. I had lost everything. Worried, we young Ivorian refugees approached humanitarian NGOs because we desperately wanted to avoid losing more years of schooling. At first things weren't easy, there weren't any answers. When the NGOs saw our courage, one of them took the commitment to open a school and to provide the uniforms, school accessories and many other things. I could never thank the NGO Finn Church Aid enough for their help.

The education that was provided during this period of emergency came at the right moment, at a time when the education we so needed was destroyed in front of our eyes. In reality, we had lost everything (house, belongings and education) so to be able to benefit from the education provided by the NGO gave us the opportunity to mend our desperate, lost and hopeless heart. Thus, access to education during emergencies allowed us to be equals to people of our age who live in peace. Furthermore, education will allow us to achieve our place in the sun (be public servants in our country, international and local NGO workers) because it will enable us to find employment and to achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves and our country.

In difficult times, education allows the younger generation to forget the pain and suffering they experienced. To those who are victim of crisis and who are vulnerable, education opens their future to new opportunities. Indeed, us young refugees need to make up the time we have lost. Those who have benefited from education in emergencies may in the future have opportunities to work for NGOs or to be given international scholarship. Education in emergencies has created important people and can offer the same for those who are now experiencing the same situation. To see us with employment would be a source of pride and honour for Finn Church Aid, the NGO that took the commitment to educate us during this difficult time. To conclude, it is important to emphasize that education in emergencies is the key to success for those in crisis.

*Six refugee camps were established in Liberia to accommodate some 220,000 Ivorians who fled Ivory Coast following the post-election violence over a disputed presidential election in late 2010.<sup>19</sup>*



*Photo Credit: Aubrey Wade/IRC*

*Students at work in the classroom of the Tunkia Secondary School, an IRC Legacy Project supported school in Gorahun, Kenema District, Sierra Leone.*

**L'ÉDUCATION** sort du mot éduquer qui veut dire développer des facultés intellectuelles, morales, physique de quelqu'un. L'éducation elle-même est une formation de bonne manière. Aussi, quelque chose urgente ou l'urgence est ce qu'il faut faire sans différer. Une urgence est l'ensemble des soins des interventions qui doivent être fait sans délai, sans retard. Par ailleurs, l'éducation en temps d'urgence est une formation que reçoivent des personnes, un peuple, une nation pendant ou après une situation difficile : conflit, guerre ou autres catastrophes naturelles. Cela ne doit retarder.

En effet, le deuxième tour des élections d'octobre 2010 avait coïncidé avec la rentrée scolaire 2010- 2011. Nous avons à peine commencé les cours lorsqu'un appel a été lancé à chaque ivoirien d'aller vers les urnes, après deux semaines de cours, la situation devenait critique dans la ville de Danane, dans notre lycée les professeurs, élèves s'affrontaient et s'entre déchiraient pour des parties politiques apprécier par des uns et rejeter par des autres. Le lycée s'était transformé en un champ de bataille, les professeurs les plus terrifiés rentraient à leur lieu de provenance et abandonnaient leur service. Tous les lycéens fuyaient et rentraient dans leur village pour être des parents. Lorsque j'ai décidé de rentrer dans mon village situé à 65 kilomètres de Danane, la ville même déjà prise par les rebelles.

Aucun véhicule ne circulait, les rebelles avaient pris toutes les rues de la ville de Danane. J'ai laissé ma carte scolaire et tous mes documents scolaire pour marcher vers la sortie de la ville. Les rebelles cherchaient les enseignants et les élèves parce qu'ils se disaient que ceux-ci fessaient parti du parti de l'opposition. J'ai laissé ma carte scolaire et documents pour me faire passer pour une commerçante. C'est comme ça que l'un des rebelles m'a laissé monter dans un véhicule de transporteur de marchandise qui venait d'arriver de man. Toute ma famille était rentre au Liberia quand je suis arrive dans mon village. Aussitôt je suis rendue a la frontière cote d'ivoire Libéria. Quand je traversais le fleuve nuon le 05 novembre 2010 pour le Libéria, je voyais mon avenir derrière moi, je ne savais plus a quel saint me vouer, je pleurais sana cesse parce que j'avais déjà perdu quatre ans pendant la première crise de 2002 et je ne savais pas combien de temps cela allait encore durer. Je ne savais plus ce que mon lycée était devenu.

En plus de cela, arrivée au Libéria desesperee, demunis, traumatisée, ayant tout perdu. Nous, jeune ivoiriens refugies avions fait des démarches auprès des ONG humanitaires parce qu'on était inquiet, on voulait atout prix rattraper le temps qu'on perdait. Dans les débuts, les choses n'étaient pas faciles, il n'y avait toujours pas de réponse. Quand les ONG ont vues notre courage, l'une d'entre elles a pris l'engagement de nous ouvrir un lycée, des uniformes, des fournitures scolaires et bien d'autres. Jamais je ne cesserai du plus profond de mon cœur de dire merci à L'ONG Finn Church Aid.

En effet cette éducation, en ce moment d'urgence est venue à point nomme, on n'avait tellement besoin de cette éducation qui hier avait été détruite sous nos yeux. En réalité on n'avait tout perdu (maisons, bagages, même l'éducation), donc en ce moment pareil profiter de cette éducation grâce a cette nous permettait d'apaiser les cœurs qui étaient désespérés, perdus et sans espoirs. Ainsi cette éducation permettait donc d'être au même pied d'égalité que les jeunes de notre age qui sont dans la quiétude, la paix. Par ailleurs cette devrait nous permettre d'avoir une place sous le soleil dans l'avenir (être des fonctionnaires dans notre pays, être agent dans les ONG internationales, dans des sociétés) car nous éduquer nous permettrait d'avoir un travail et serait un but précis dans la lutte que nous menons aujourd'hui.

Enfin l'éducation en ces moments difficiles permet d'oublier les souffrances que les jeunes traversent, leurs ouvre plusieurs portes parce qu'ils sont les plus touchés et sont vulnérables. En effet les jeunes refugies que nous sommes avons besoins de rattraper le temps perdu et peuvent même avoir des opportunités de travailler dans des ONG internationales car la plupart des agents des ONG ont été refugies quelque part et ont bénéficié de l'éducation, et même pour certains des bourses étrangères. Cette éducation a fait de ces personnes des gens importants et peut faire de même pour nous qui nous retrouvons dans cette même situation. Nous voire travailler un jour ferait la fierté et l'honneur de Finn Church Aid qui a pris l'engagement de nous éduquer en ce moment difficile.

Pour conclure il est bien de dire que l'éducation en situation d'urgence est la clé de réussite, de succès pour ceux qui sont en détresse.

**THE** dark page of my education started on September 19, 2002, when the rebels invaded my country Ivory Coast. At that time, I was in the third grade, commonly referred to in Ivory Coast as “CE1”. On the exact day the rebels attacked, we were learning grammar. A few minutes before recreation time, we suddenly heard shots and cries in the form of a bitter noise and immediately teachers, students, including all those who came to sell on the campus, started to abandon the school facilities to pursue our survival. In this escape, we left behind us all our furniture because life was the only important thing at that time. Later on, I met my parents at home while already upset about my life. We later took refuge in the neighboring country Liberia, where we lived as refugees for two years.

While in our country of asylum, the only worry our parents had was their children’s education. Though we used to eat and live in a secure environment, still the parents were only satisfied when a temporary school for Ivorian refugees was opened in Butuo, a town in the eastern part of Liberia.

To be truthful, the education we received from that school was relevant because that was the only gift we can never forget about, even as far as in the grave. In effect, the education we received in that school helped us to keep in touch with learning our language, our history, our culture, and even enable us to be well equipped and up to standard when we returned to Cote d’Ivoire. That education thus helped us to continue our education in Cote d’Ivoire without any problem.

What is more, we even became bilingual because we were able to express ourselves in both French and English, and that education is what is helping me presently to write this essay in English, even though I am Ivorian. In addition to this, those of us who took that education serious are able to write, speak and communicate in English fluently, all because English was the dominant language in which we used to learn just because our host country was Liberia, which is of course an English speaking country.

The question that we want to ponder over is: why should education continue even in emergency situations?

The education that we received was necessary, though being in time of emergency. That education was very important because it kept us busy, prevented us from engaging in gangs, and from having a loose and immoral life course. Besides, it prepared us to be adequately equipped, in order to face successfully the challenges that awaited us when we returned home. Moreover, it made us useful in the society, rather than making us useless. That is to say, we lost everything we had (homes, parents, relatives, friends even food), but education was not lost, because it is the key to a happy life.



*Photo Credit: Erika Perez-Leon/IRC*

*While schools have been closed during the Ebola crisis, the IRC has ensured that children in Sierra Leone have been able to continue to learn through informal learning groups, educational radio programs, and access to library books. Kenema, Sierra Leone.*

**SHEENA** is 14 years old from Pakistan  
[Excerpt]

**I**T was the year 2007; I and my family were living very happily in the North of Pakistan. All the things were going perfect, me and my brother, everyday went to school and my father regularly went to office. We all were happy. But then suddenly a night before my final papers, there was news about earthquake prediction by geological experts, that there would be an earthquake coming at anytime. As soon as this news reached to our school principal she postponed our paper and school was also closed. My father was very scared that as he had seen a ghost. He told us not to sleep the whole night and be very careful and vigilant. To protect ourselves from earthquake the very first thing we all should do is to go in an opened area like ground or something. We and many other families were outside our homes, sitting on the ground and waiting for the earthquake. We had almost spent our whole night there but then unexpectedly at about 3:00 am earthquake came. We all felt it. The power of earthquake in vector scale was about 6.2. That horrible moment can't be explained in words. At that time there was a complete silence. We all were scared and we were praying, crying and hoping for the good. For about 25 to 30 seconds we felt the shakes and then the earthquake was gone. Those 30 seconds had just smashed my life.



*Photo Credit: NRC/Shahzad Ahmad  
A kid is busy in writing his workbook in a school, recently re-built by NRC in village Loi Baba, Bajaur Agency, FATA, Pakistan.*

After the earthquake, we came back to see our home. My home was all fine and we all were also fine. On the other hand the things were all not good. We got the news that many buildings were destroyed by the earthquake and unbelievably our school was one of them. As I heard the news my whole body was paralyzed for some time. As soon as possible I went to see the school. When I reached there I saw the school building has become so rickety that it would definitely fall down by the air. Except my school, there were vast number of other schools, colleges and houses which were totally destroyed. At that time we all were helpless and couldn't do anything but by the grace of God, Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) the organization which works for the betterment of humanity came. They took the very strong and effective initiative. They started a campaign for earthquake victims. They immediately organized an educational camp for children at different centers. AKDN also brought school teachers from all over the Pakistan to teach us. The rich people of our country also showed their tremendous love. They also helped us a lot. They donated a very high amount of money for construction. While the construction work was going on we had to go to camps to get education. Although AKDN had facilitated everything, the only problem was of distance. The camps were very much far from our homes and we had to walk a lot to get there. At that time I actually understand the importance of education. The whole campaign expended for about a year. After that at December 26, The AKDN had triumphantly completed their campaign. The whole community very thankful for the services they provided. Finally my school and other buildings were constructed. After that we continued our studies. At the end everything turned normal.

If I sum up all these things, the main thing which I learned is the importance of education. Besides education the work of AKDN has inspired me a lot. I hope that I also get a chance to serve the needy people as they did and to work for humanity. The children who are facing the same problem like I had faced, for them I will just say that they should not lose their hopes and they should try as hard as they can to get education.

*In October 2005, a 7.6-magnitude earthquake shook Pakistan, which caused more than 80,000 casualties and left an estimated 4 million homeless.<sup>20</sup>*

*The UN estimated that 10,000 school buildings were affected or destroyed by the earthquake. By the end of October, temporary primary tent schools had been established in camps and villages so that children could continue their education.<sup>21</sup>*

***“Education is one of the important things in the world which can finish all the bad things from the world and can produce love, friendship and peace among people and can remove stereotypes.”***

Kanwal, 12, Pakistan

## **SANDI** *is 27 years old living in Jordan*

**AS** I sit before my window and contemplate all that used to be, all the things that happened and could still happen, I compare my life to yours, my friend. I think, if I were you what will I do, you seemed to always know of what should be done. It appears so surreal to me that after all our rebellious years trying to go against the educational system and stop being part of “the masses”, I would begin to miss something I have always took for granted. You see, it has always been important for me to reach somewhere in my life, and I truly believed that I would have the means to know what it would be, and how I would reach it.

Let me tell you something that might explain to you why I turned my back on what we firmly believed to be the truth. As you know, we were robbed of our basic rights by this civil madness that took away our belongings and every fiber of safety we might have felt once. What happened shook my beliefs probably; it seems to me that at times like these, I need most the comfort of knowing that there is hope in the future, of feeling the joy of being surrounded by my classmates, playing, discussing the exams and making fun of the mathematics teacher, who often wore mismatching socks. Or simply, listening to the words of our social studies teacher, who used to repeat that, you can simply agree to disagree, what wonderful words I might add, I wish we could write them on every wall in this city. I need the reassurance that I will be able to say that I want to be a pilot or a doctor, an engineer or a scientist; in short, the comfort of choice that comes with knowledge and excellent education. I try to read my textbooks whenever it is possible, and believe me, it is the most joyful part of the day; it empowers me from the inside and makes me feel as if everything outside is stopping for that time .... In a time like this, I don't care about the system or my personal rebellion. I want my future that I swore that will not be added to the list of what was taken away.

Sometimes our greatest motives come from fear; fear of not attaining what we wish for, in these times, it becomes more intensified and its echoes become deafening. My mind seems to go back over and over again to the story of one old neighbor, who fled his country when he was a boy our age because of the civil war, he used to tell his stories to anyone he would encounter as if he was trying to explain to us all, that we should not judge him on what he was then, but on the person he could have become, if all was not lost. To be honest, I have always listened to him so reluctantly. I didn't care for what he used to say, probably because I never understood. I don't know why I relate the image of an uneducated person to him. He lived an unfulfilled life, he was dissatisfied with what he was, I could sense that in a way, and I surely made him feel aware of his inferiority, by reciting all the big words and complicated theories each time I saw him, I wanted to punish him for “letting go of his dreams”. I was a fool then to believe that, especially now that I know what I know. He had to leave his country, and start a new life, he had to work to provide for his family, at that time he felt that this was more important than what any book could tell him, the present was the most important thing. For him physical needs came before any thoughts of self realization. It gives me the chills to think that I would ever have to make that choice. He had the education that any fifteen-year old boy would have, at that time, he was probably good at it,



as he repeated, however, all of it, faded away year after year, and I believe he was touched by arrogance for making an interesting sum of money at his age, instead of sitting all day listening to teachers speak of dead poets, useless sciences and impossible mathematical equations. It was later, that he realized, that he could surely write and read, but he couldn't tell if what he read was true or not. He didn't have the background that would help him to rise in anger protesting on what had been written in newspapers and transmitted on TV, anything he read or heard was true, and must be defended, if needed. I believe this cycle of ignorance could continue on for generations. Ignorance is a cycle of blind people leading each other none of them admits to his blindness, they all claim to see perfectly well, not caring of all the damage they make

My friend as I sit before my window contemplating the empty street in the flickering lights and loud noises, the bare trees and their scary shadows, everything that strangles hopes and dreams, I grab my textbook closer to my chest and repeat I am going to be an architect and I will rebuild all these houses, I will be a doctor and help all those in need of help and comfort, I will be a builder, a farmer, a politician a lawyer whatever it is, "I will be", and I open my book.

*Jordan is host to large numbers of refugees from neighboring Iraq and Syria, with more than 700,000 registered refugees in country.<sup>22</sup> Eighty percent of these refugees live in urban centers.<sup>23</sup>*

*Roughly half of school-aged Syrian refugees in Jordan do not attend school as they lack adequate psychological support and the financial means to cover costs of books, school uniforms, and transportation to school.<sup>24</sup>*

*“For the host country, the consequences of not having refugees receive an education can lead to the deepening of cultural differences which may in turn fuel anti-immigrant discourses. Education can act as a bridge because schools are a fertile ground for social inclusion and teachers can also play a key role in over-coming stereotypes.”*

Kondwani, 22, Turkey



Photo Credit: NRC/Sam Tarling

Mustafa, 8, from Damascus, attends classes at the NRC community centre in Saadnayel, in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, on Thursday July 24 2014.

*“Crisis provide the opportunity for reconstruction... creating the chance for certain groups like children, girls, teenagers, people with disabilities, refugees and IDPs to access education. Hence, the fulfillment the right to education. The right to education can not and should not be denied under any circumstances, at any point in time, or in any place.”*

Ahmed, 37, Syrian refugee in Jordan

تقدم الأزمات ... فرصة لإعادة البناء على نحو أفضل وهي تتيح الفرصة لأعداد من الجماعات في الغالب من الأطفال الصغار والفتيات والمراهقين والأطفال المعاقين واللاجئين والمشردين داخلياً فرصة التعليم، وبالتالي تيسر حصول الجميع على التعليم لأنه حق للجميع... إن التعليم حق لكل شخص في هذا العالم ولا يمكن إنكاره في أي ظرف من الظروف وفي أي مكان من الأمكنة وفي أي زمان من الأزمنة

-المخيم الاماراتي الأردني / مريجيب الفهود, 37, أحمد محمد أمين الشتوي

**WE** heard the water roaring, a deafening roar that made us all shudder fearfully. Would the embankment around our village and the seventeen homes in it hold and would we survive? This question was being shouted in panicky voices by all the children of our hamlet.

The water surrounded our village, and as if in answer to our prayers, stopped just short of entering our compounds, with the alleys having water a few inches deep swirling through them. But we were all safe, as were our cattle, though there was not much hay left for them to feed on. No one in the village slept much that night, fearful lest there be an onrush of more water. The wailing of children pierced the muggy air as we frequently swatted the mosquitoes off our limbs.

In the early light of dawn, we rushed out of our compounds to look at the water, with the mud in the alleys sticking to our feet. The water was receding, its fury seemed to have been spent. All of us, elders, adults, teenagers like me, even the children, prayed, thanking Allah for having saved us as our foreheads touched the damp earth.

As the sun rose in the sky, we could see numerous glittering strands on the water. I asked my father what these could be and was taken aback when he told me these were snakes, as the floods always brought snakes with them, along with swarms of flies and mosquitoes. Now it was important for us to resume our studies, so I got together with my cousin who was my age and we rounded up all the children, four year olds and above that were a part of our community and organized classes for them in my family's compound. This also gave us the chance to study our own books so that we would not fall behind too much when we were able to return to school which our elders predicted would take at least a fortnight before we could cycle down to the apex village of our locality where a High School for boys and one for girls were located. I was in the ninth class and would be sitting for my matriculation examination in the coming year, and had to study hard to ensure obtaining good results.

The flood had come at a bad time for me, but by opening an informal school for the community children perhaps I would earn some credit in my school exams. The parents of the children my cousin and I were teaching were also very grateful to us, because their children were not in the way, enabling their families to proceed smoothly with their chores.

Every morning I would put out all the mats in my home on the floor of the compound. My cousin would bring some mats from her home. Our pupils would sit on the mats, holding their slates in their laps, with their books placed before them as they sat cross legged on the mats. My mother was particularly proud of the home school which had become a feature that the entire community came to admire and earned me many pats on my back from grateful parents, who were confident their children would benefit from our teaching them.

From eight in the morning till one in the afternoon, every day, twenty eight children would troop into our compound, during which time my cousin and I would make them read, write, compute and recite. We broke them up into two groups, one group for those who were between age four and age eight, and the second group of those who were between eight and twelve years of age. No teenagers joined our school and we made no effort to recruit them as they would be too close to us in age and perhaps question our authority. Occasionally an argument would break out among our pupils and we would have to be firm in putting an end to their problem with each other. Sometimes the little children would start crying and would want to run home, but we would be strict in preventing them from doing so. And my cousin would hold them in her lap till she managed a smile from them. She would teach the younger group, while I would teach the older boys and girls.



*Photo Credit: Shahzad Ahmed/NRC Pakistan  
A smiling Afghan refugee learner from NRC's Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in Quetta, Balochistan.*

Luckily we had a big shady tree in the middle of our compound and our students would be protected from the sun by the ample shade of the tree. It was extremely humid, but occasionally a breeze would blow and the leaves of the tree would rustle and the sweat would stop dripping down our faces and our backs. It would be easier for us to concentrate when we felt cooler. After my afternoon meal, I would settle down to reading my own course books, dozing off every now and then, waking up as the heat of the sun abated. My home school effort would encourage me to focus more intently on what I read and I found it easier to memorize some of the texts required in my course work. The recitation of my pupils tended to be rhythmic and the sound remained in my ears and enabled me to memorize relatively easily. This was surely an additional benefit of setting up a home school that accrued to me personally.

As the saying goes that ‘every cloud has a silver lining’, the floods had brought hardship to all of us in some form or the other but because of the floods I had managed a personal achievement. In the wake of a natural calamity, an opportunity may also be located. And as my father would remind me, the coming wheat crop that he would sow would benefit greatly by the silt which the flood waters had left behind. When I was able to cycle to my school, I told my teacher about the school that my cousin and I had improvised when the floods cut us off from being able to attend school. My teacher took me to the Headmaster who was so excited by my narrative that he visited my home and made me lay out the mats under the tree in our compound so that he could visualise my effort. He congratulated my parents and asked me to write about my experience, which I have sought to do. He also suggested that I find a way of writing the story for my matriculation exam and that he would give me full credits for it when I cleared my ninth class.

Today I came across a saying which resonated deeply with me and I believe it was the basis of my motivation, although I may not even have been aware of it at the time but I cannot resist quoting it as I conclude my narrative: ‘Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

*“When I and my friends used to go out for a walk; we would walk up to the school building and pray to God that someday we would be able to go to school again. It is harsh studying in such intense weather, the wind blows away the pages of books and our feet freeze but we have no choice but to study in such extreme circumstances because we have missed out on a lot while being displaced.”*

Batool, 16, Pakistan

## END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_78058.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_78058.html)
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002281/228184E.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_78058.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_78058.html)
- <sup>5</sup> [http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons\\_in\\_war.pdf](http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_in_war.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/education/bege\\_61685.html](http://www.unicef.org/education/bege_61685.html)
- <sup>7</sup> [http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha\\_R16\\_Y2014\\_\\_\\_1503241205.pdf](http://fts.unocha.org/reports/daily/ocha_R16_Y2014___1503241205.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> The INEE Minimum Standards are the only globally recognized standards for education throughout all stages of emergency response.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.aworldatschool.org/country/nigeria>
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/7398142/Nigeria-riots-leave-500-dead-after-machete-attacks.html>
- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.careinternational.org.uk/what-we-do/disaster-relief/past-emergency-interventions/typhoon-haiyan-philippines>
- <sup>12</sup> <http://plancanada.ca/press-release/typhoon-haiyan-one-year-after-building-back-better-in-the-philippines>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/89/3/10-083386/en/>
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/oa3/files/pakistan-floods-factsheet.pdf>
- <sup>15</sup> [https://www.aerzte-ohne-grenzen.at/fileadmin/data/pdf/reports/2009/MSF\\_Report\\_MountElgon\\_2008.pdf](https://www.aerzte-ohne-grenzen.at/fileadmin/data/pdf/reports/2009/MSF_Report_MountElgon_2008.pdf)
- <sup>16</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/deadly-riots-after-bangladesh-kills-opposition-leader/>
- <sup>17</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26183880>
- <sup>18</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/disaster/fl-2014-000005-idn>
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/53314ea49.html>
- <sup>20</sup> <http://www.history.com/topics/kashmir-earthquake>
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.refworld.org/docid/45f1480228.html>
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566.html>
- <sup>23</sup> [http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page\\_id=87](http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page_id=87)
- <sup>24</sup> <http://unhcr.org/FutureOfSyria/the-challenge-of-education.html>

*“Education can change the mindset of people as they think that whatever their conditions are right now would remain the same forever... Education can convert their views. It [can make them] aware of how they can by themselves improve their lifestyle and get the strength of changing their world. It is the only key to a bright upcoming future of theirs and their future generations. Because in such conditions, education can become as important as food for a person.”*

Nazirah, 15, Pakistan

# INEE

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

This booklet features essays from the INEE Minimum Standards 10th Anniversary Essay Contest. These essays by children, youth, and adults from around the world give voice to some of the worst disasters in recent years and highlight the power of education as life-saving and life-sustaining in emergency contexts and situations of adversity.

