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Education interventions in emergency situations need to be structured in a way that addresses their specific vulnerabilities, and provides them with opportunities to reach their utmost potential.

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Prioritizing Education Response for Internally Displaced Children in Pakistan

As of August 2014, there were over 1 million registered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and unknown numbers of unregistered IDPs living in Pakistan.¹ It was estimated that just over half of those displaced were children.²

The disruption in the lives of young people can have a lasting impact, especially in the absence of basic services. Even where immediate relief is provided in terms of food and shelter, education services are rarely prioritized in emergency response. Using a rights-based approach, this brief establishes the rationale for incorporating the provision of relevant age-appropriate schooling into humanitarian efforts, based on the concepts of non-discrimination, best interests and evolving capacities of the child.

Looking at the complex emergency situation in Pakistan, it explores particular vulnerabilities of children in Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps, as well as urban settings. Finally, it puts forward recommendations for structuring an adequate education response.

Education as a right

Pakistan is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has also committed to the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals, under which it aspires to place every girl and boy in school by 2015. In 2011, it incorporated these international commitments into domestic law through the addition of Article 25a to the Constitution, which stipulates, "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years in such manner as may be determined by law."

The four core principles of the CRC are non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development in accordance with evolving capacities; and respect for the views of the child. It also puts forward certain ideals of the environment that would be conducive to the "full and harmonious development of (the child's) personality."³The right to education is explicitly addressed by Article 28 of the CRC, under which signatory states are mandated to provide free and compulsory primary education, and to ensure that opportunities for secondary education are "made available and accessible to *every* child" (emphasis added). The latter includes access to vocational skills and training. Protection from the traumatic effects of violence, physical and mental abuse is addressed by Article 39, which says:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Keeping the spirit and letter of the CRC in mind, the field of "Education in Emergencies" can be seen as providing both a basic right to which all children are entitled, and an "enabling right," which helps them access other rights.⁴ In emergency situations, schools can be used to support the right to life and to health, imparting information about disaster risk management or public health risks like polio.

Importance of the School Space

Education can either be a "force for fragility" or for stability. It can have an active role at each one of the stages of conflict: in exacerbating or mitigating grievances at the latent or build-up stage; providing protection in case of escalation; and acting as a bridge between the past, present and future during a phase of acute armed conflict. This last is achieved in a school space by helping children connect their lived reality to future opportunities in terms of livelihoods, as well as ideas of a more stable post-conflict situation. 6

The concept of providing education in emergencies would be based on the two "mutually enforcing pillars of protection and empowerment" in the human security framework.⁷ Schools can perform several kinds of protective functions; by providing a safe space where children can learn, play and have a semblance of stability, they can help contribute to psychological recovery following the trauma of witnessing or experiencing violence, disaster or displacement. By reaffirming their faith in the world and re-establishing a sense of security, a school space can help build children's resilience and ability to cope with the stresses of displacement, as well as contribute to the process of healing.⁸

Conflict-related risks include risks to physical security like militant attacks, and sexual or gender-based violence. For boys in Pakistan, the conflict context holds a strong risk of forced or "voluntary" recruitment by the Taliban. The "lure of ideology" and "cults of martyrdom" are particularly strong during early adolescence, during the time of identity formation. A school space can help protect children from the risks of exploitation and recruitment by groups engaged in armed conflict, while facilitating social reintegration. ¹¹

The longer children stay out of school, the less likely they are to return. 12 Where opportunities are denied, adolescents with no possibilities of attending secondary school or vocational education become a latent force for instability. The World Bank's Conflict Analysis Framework lists "high youth unemployment" as among its nine conflict risk indicators. Thus, a vacuum in terms of services has not only an immediate impact on children experiencing a loss of stability, but also has far-reaching implications.

Displacement Patterns in Pakistan

An estimated 5 million people from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA have been displaced by conflict, sectarian violence and human rights abuses from 2004-2014.¹³ The displacement reached its peak in 2009, with 3 million people being forced to move due to a large-scale military operation in Swat valley.¹⁴ Although there has been constant facilitation of returns in areas "de-notified" – that is, declared conflict-free – by the government, this has been partially offset by forced movement due to the ongoing nature of the conflict in FATA. Barriers to registration of IDPs and

stringent criteria for classification mean that there can be no fully accurate estimate of how many people have been forced to flee.

For registered refugees, there were three main camps in KPK and FATA, housing nearly 18,000 families in 2013. The largest among these is the Jalozai camp housing over 55,000 people; others are the Togh Sarai camp in Hangu and New Durrani camp in Kurram Agency. However, roughly 90 percent of registered refugees lived outside these camps, either in host communities or in rented accommodation. Still more were and continue to be absorbed into burgeoning slum communities in cities like Peshawar, Islamabad and Karachi. Following Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the majority of families have chosen to settle with host families or rented accommodation outside the new Bakakhel camp in Bannu, with some spilling over the border into Afghanistan.

Current education response for IDPs

The response for IDPs from North Waziristan is still taking shape, with the government having taken some time to accept the assistance of humanitarian organizations in providing basic services.¹⁵ One month after the launch of Zarb-e-Azb, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority was placed at the helm of the coordination committee for humanitarian organizations, including United Nations agencies. These will assume some responsibility for the provision of facilities including health, education, drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition.¹⁶

According to the previous pattern of assistance, the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the national and provincial disaster management authorities had been working in collaboration with UNOCHA, which operates as per the UN inter-agency cluster approach. Responsibility for specific clusters lies with different agencies under the UN umbrella. At present, the two leading organizations for the Education Cluster are UNICEF and Save the Children Pakistan, who work in collaboration with additional implementing organizations like the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Muslim Aid, and smaller local NGOs like the Peace and Development Organization in Kohat. The government of KPK has taken on the role of "partner and custodian" – a development that can be attributed to continued advocacy by aid organizations. The Education Cluster has been present in KPK province since the violence escalated in 2008, but has currently been deactivated at the national level. An additional relevant agency operating in the humanitarian sphere is the UNHCR, which is the lead agency for protection, shelter and camp management.

Local implementing organizations observed that the first wave of assistance for IDPs was focused on the provision of shelter, food security and basic supplies and, as in other humanitarian emergencies, education services received little direct funding. 18 Once established, education services in camps mostly consist of tent schools or Temporary Learning Centres (TLCs)19. Organizations like Muslim Aid are focusing on non-formal education, and Save the Children is focusing on off-camp services. An Education Cluster bulletin issued at the end of 2013 stated that Jalozai camp had a total of 17 functional schools, and four centres for Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP). Togh Sarai had two functional schools, and the New Durrani camp provided services to about 800 children. In addition, approximately 7,700 children were estimated as being enrolled in 48 TLCs in host communities of Peshawar Valley.²⁰ These TLCs are mandated to employ the formal government curriculum, and teachers are recruited either from within the camps or from adjoining areas, with some basic training being provided.²¹ According to a UNICEF representative, the government has deployed its own teachers in Jalozai camp. An additional positive development is that an official notification has been issued by the KPK provincial Education Department, according to which district education officers are to ensure that internally displaced children do not face trouble enrolling in government schools.²²

Gaps

In spite of these steps, huge gaps remain when looking at the bigger picture. According to information collated in 2013, 63 percent of displaced children do not attend school.²³ The gaps in the response can be clustered in the following way:

- a) Barriers in Host Districts: Information compiled from May to December 2013, from ten host districts of KPK, indicates that the two main reasons for not attending were that families had no money for school expenses especially in Peshawar and child labour, particularly in Hangu. Over 4,500 children in seven key districts did not attend school because they "(did) not consider it important." A sizable proportion attended madrassas imparting religious education, and a significant number cited "cultural issues." Interestingly, procedural barriers such as lack of documentation and denial of admission did not come up as significant challenges evidence that there has been some commitment to removing structural barriers for internally displaced children.
- b) Funding issues: Out of about 0.5 million children in need, 15 percent were targeted in 2013 and 5 percent were reached.²⁴ This was in part due to a lack of funding; only 18 percent of the required USD 8.7 million was received by the Education Cluster during 2013²⁵, and a funding shortfall of 86 percent was anticipated for 2014, even before the launch of Zarb-e-Azb²⁶. An Education Cluster Strategic Response Plan was formulated in April 2014; again, an important step towards streamlining activities. The strategy goals are basic and immediate, involving the commitment of funds to support schools in camps; to provide resources and capacity building to teachers, and to reopen closed schools in FATA. However, the success of this plan is contingent on the success of fund-raising efforts.
- **c) Macro-level vulnerability:** One of the benchmarks for evaluating the national response for displacement is whether or not a legal framework exists at the national level for upholding IDP rights.²⁷ While there has been a regional response on the part of the KPK government, which signed a return policy framework with the UN in 2009, there has been no adoption of a national-level IDP policy or law. This means that the federal government or other provincial governments like Sindh or Punjab may not always assume the responsibility for protection and assistance of internally displaced children.

Structuring an adequate response

On a positive note, a concerted education advocacy campaign has raised awareness of the general "Education Emergency" in Pakistan. The support of international donors and pressure from an active civil society has prompted the government to announce that by 2018, it will aim to spend 4% of GDP on education²⁸. The national plan of action 2013-2016 places emphasis on enrolment of out-of school children, 50% fee waiver for remote area children²⁹. In the light of these developments, bringing attention to the urgency of the situation of internally displaced children may help in addressing the major funding challenges.

Placing the individual child at the centre of analysis and keeping the core principles of the CRC in mind, education interventions in emergency situations need to be structured in a way that addresses their specific vulnerabilities, and provides them with opportunities to reach their utmost potential. On the individual level, there is a need to take age and gender into account, in order to appropriately handle the requirements of boys and girls as well as different demographic groups. Differences due to geography, in terms of being camp or off-camp, should also be considered.

Among the out-of-school children who were previously displaced, an overall 27.4 percent had no money for school expenses; 18.5 percent were attending madrassas, and 10.3 percent cited cultural barriers³⁰. A holistic, practical education response would address these constraints faced by displaced families, demonstrating sensitivity to economic as well as cultural concerns. Unless families can see the value of investing precious income in education for their children, government and development sector interventions will not have the desired impact. Beyond enrolment, the perceptions of the utility of schools will affect attendance, retention rates and the individual child's motivation to work and to learn. The following can be identified as areas of priority for the education response:

a) Academic priorities: It follows from the preceding discussion that a "useful" education will offer skills that children can employ and apply to their immediate as well as future lives. Beyond basic literacy and numeracy, curricula, textbooks and supplementary materials should cover core competencies including early learning, life skills, health and hygiene practices³¹. Given the vulnerability of the northern areas to flooding and natural disaster, there is also a window for incorporating Disaster Risk Reduction, environmental education, conflict prevention and psychosocial well-being in formal and non-formal curricula. Finally, the cultural sensitivity of the content can be reviewed to understand why cultural barriers to enrolment may exist – and if they can be addressed through community outreach.

Recruitment of "emergency" teachers must be a well-thought out and transparent process, with clarity in terms of incentives and future opportunities. One challenge faced by learning centres in KPK is that female teachers are not always available, and para-teachers need to be employed from neighbouring districts. ³²

Female teachers are important in order for girls to be able to attend school, for communities where cultural barriers to female education have been strong.

From the Streets to Schools in Colombia

In Colombia, the Escuela Nueva Learning Circles provide an interesting model to link formal and non-formal learning for displaced students. Based on principles of active, collaborative learning and child-centered pedagogy, the Learning Circles were developed to provide displaced students with the skills needed to transition back into the official education system. Learning Circles operated off-site from mainstream 'mother schools,' but were linked via shared calendars, grading and extracurricular activities. Children would be officially associated with the 'mother school', but would work together in groups of 12-15 students in spaces within local communities, under the supervision of a 'youth tutor,' until prepared to transfer. This was not a parallel system, but was integrated and recognized by the Ministry of Education "to ease the transition from the streets to school."

Source: Mckinney, Guidance Notes on Teaching and Learning, 6.

One possible issue that could act as a barrier to enrolment, retention and learning is children's previous experience of schooling, especially for girls and older learners. At present, there is not enough information currently being collated regarding the educational experiences of children. However, an interview with a representative from UNICEF revealed that female education does come up as a problem due to the conservative nature of Pashtun culture³³. For children whose age and learning levels are not compatible, an **Accelerated Learning Program** was developed and rolled out in Mohmand and Bajaur Agencies during 2012-13, for about 2,000 girls and boys between the ages of 9 and 14. The curriculum condensed a 5-year program into a one-year course, and was designed by the FATA education department with UNICEF support. After the course, children were given the opportunity of gaining certification after passing examinations³⁴. While this is an important step towards bringing out-of-school back into classrooms, there will be a need to follow up on what happens to them afterwards.

For education providers, the first priority in the emergency situation is providing access; ensuring quality in terms of learning outcomes, efficacy and sustainability is seen as part of the

- recovery phase.³⁵ However, as previously discussed, issues of quality can determine access, when families are deciding the value of sending their children to school.
- **b) Psychosocial well-being:** Internally displaced children may be facing several kinds of psychological stressors from the witnessing of violence, to the loss of a home or of one or multiple family members, to the continuing stressors of displacement and disruption, and the experience of new forms of adversity in the camp or urban setting. Creating a child-friendly environment that can strengthen protective factors and mitigate risk factors, will help children build resilience³⁶. Providing teachers with the sensitization to become attachment figures, or representatives of stable and safe spaces, is important for the psychosocial well-being of children.

Child Well-being in Afghanistan

The case of Child Well-Being Committees in Afghanistan is particularly pertinent here, due to cultural similarities with Pashtun IDPs. In order to monitor and respond to child protection challenges, Child Friendly Spaces were used to create well-being committees consisting entirely of children. Using a participatory methodology, a group of approximately 10 boys (or girls) from each village engaged in risk mapping by drawing the village and identifying where bad things happened to children. These were communicated to villagers through role plays that showed, for instance, young children being injured by falling into uncovered wells. The next step was the formation of gender-segregated Child Well-Being Committees that included both adults and children. Over time, challenges like forced early marriage of young girls were addressed by collaborating with imams, and raising awareness regarding the potential harms caused by the practice. Initially, there had been concerns that adults would object to giving young people too much power. However, the children themselves appropriate means of participating without being disrespectful. Feedback showed that both parents and children felt the combination of Child Friendly Spaces and Child Well-Being Committees had helped to create a protective environment for children.

Source: Wessels and Kostelny, "Child Friendly Spaces: Promoting Children's Resiliency Amid War."

c) Livelihoods and Life Skills: Currently, the education response does not incorporate skills or capacity building for the world of work. As discussed earlier, livelihoods considerations constitute one of the key barriers in terms of access to education for IDP children. This is particularly true for off-camp families forced to rely on negative coping strategies for survival. For some families, the tradeoff is between books and income. It is important to ensure that links exist between formal and non-formal programs, as well as with the job market, local businesses and entrepreneurs. Here, girls would need to receive separate consideration, as their options for the future may be different from those of Pashtun boys. Thinking about how they can eventually contribute to household income or productivity would help provide them with a sense of empowerment from an early stage. For working children, non-formal education systems can be developed, characterized by flexible times and curricula. The important part is ensuring learning, and providing links with the mainstream education system.

d) Education for Peace: Education is among the most powerful tools for resolving conflict within groups, as well as transforming the national narrative for a fragile, fragmented state such as Pakistan³⁷. It is therefore of the essence for initiatives to be informed by a broader vision, and long-term strategy addressing drivers of conflict. That way, organizations can ensure that they are not just working *in* the conflict, but also *on* it. Apart from ensuring that the curriculum is free from material reinforcing biases and hatred, identifying appropriate analogies and local references can help make peacebuilding messages relevant to children's lives.

Conclusions

Children displaced by conflict in Pakistan are exposed to the general risks of abuse, exploitation and recruitment by non-state armed groups; a lack of legal protection; and, as illustrated by evidence from families, specific barriers to accessing school in host districts. The education response for internally displaced children in Pakistan before Zarb-e-Azb showed that the government and the development community are beginning to acknowledge the importance of schooling, especially to avoid the creation of a "lost generation." However, education is not simply about the construction of physical spaces of learning. What is being taught, how it is being delivered and how the experience of education relates to the immediate and future lives of children, all are highly important considerations. In order to be meaningful, the form taken by the education response needs to be tailored to the context of the crisis, and take into consideration the challenges faced by children in attending schools, even where services are available.

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