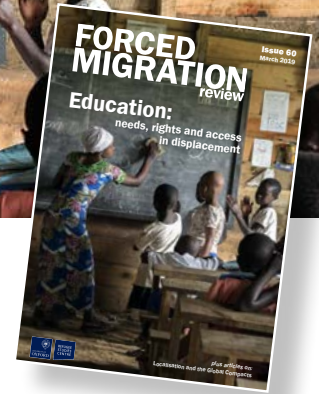


FORCED MIGRATION review

Issue 60
March 2019



Education: needs, rights and access in displacement

This *Editors' briefing* provides an overview of the content of the feature theme articles published in FMR issue 60 on Education, with links to the relevant articles.

Education is one of the most important aspects of our lives – vital to our development, our understanding and our personal and professional fulfilment throughout life. In times of crisis, however, millions of displaced young people miss out on months or years of education, and this is damaging to them and their families, as well as to their societies, both in the short and long term.

In FMR issue 60, authors from around the world debate how better to enable access to quality education both in emergency settings and in resettlement and asylum contexts.

These authors represent governments, international donors, non-governmental organisations, UN agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, academia, local education projects and a legal firm. And some of the authors have themselves experienced the challenges of learning and teaching while displaced.

Visit www.fmreview.org/education-displacement to access this *Editors' briefing*, the full magazine and individual articles (in English, Arabic, Spanish and French).

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Prioritising education in emergencies

Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Head of Swiss Humanitarian Aid and Deputy Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, introduces the issue by speaking frankly about the decades of neglect of education in humanitarian response by donors and the international community ([Bessler](#)). Education was considered a longer-term, development objective, and not a priority during emergencies; however, this runs counter to the priorities of displaced families themselves and to the life-sustaining and protective role of education during conflict and crisis. There is now much greater awareness of how much is at stake, both in the short and the long term, if young people lose out on education. Collaborative, creative approaches are needed, alongside significant financial and operational commitments. The Swiss government has increased its financial support for education and calls on others to do likewise.

Challenges to access and how to address them

The barriers to access to quality education are many and varied. In many countries affected by conflict, education systems and physical learning environments will have already been in a poor state ([Bessler](#); [BrayWatkins](#)), which may be amplified by the effects of conflict.

The physical impacts of conflict can leave **schools out of use** because they have been damaged or destroyed, used for military purposes or used as shelters by displaced persons; conflict also leads to **teacher shortages** ([Singh-Tocchio](#); [BrayWatkins](#)). Children's ability to access schools is hampered by dangerous journeys to school and a general increase in **violence** both outside and inside the school gates ([BrayWatkins](#); [Iversen-Oestergaard](#)).

Conflict can also have a significant impact on children's **psychosocial well-being**, affecting their ability to learn. The **need to feel safe** is an essential element in being able to learn and a number of articles discuss ways to help provide this sense of security ([Singh-Tocchio](#); [BrayWatkins](#); [McEvoy](#)). In Afghanistan, where children and their families face very real physical risks, psychosocial programming can help build children's personal sense of safety and their ability to cope with **stress and trauma**. A collaboration between the Norwegian Refugee Council and the University of Tromsø is helping schoolchildren to identify feelings of stress and to learn calming techniques. Children are also taught to visualise a 'safe space', helping them to cope with traumatic memories and with daily sources of stress. Other elements include encouraging play and discussing strategies for keeping physically safe. The results of pilots are promising, and the programme can be implemented almost anywhere ([McEvoy](#)).

An article by an author working inside Syria discusses the high levels of trauma among internally displaced persons (IDPs), including among children ([Khaddour](#)). The Aga Khan Foundation responded by integrating psychosocial support into their **early childhood development** programmes, with a major focus on providing parenting sessions for both IDP and host-



Syrian refugee children in Turkey, doing their homework.

community parents. This supported families in addressing their own trauma as well as that experienced by their children. The programme was adapted over time but faced two major challenges: consistency of attendance and securing the participation of fathers. The introduction of incentives and the wider use of mobile technology might help in addressing these challenges.

In Yemen and Kenya, the Red Crescent and Red Cross have trained volunteers who partner with schools to set up **child-friendly spaces** where children can play, receive psychosocial support, learn protection skills and also be taught about related topics such as child rights and preventing child marriage ([Singh-Tocchio](#)).

Poverty hinders access to education. In Iran, a new government decree in 2015 removed legal barriers to allow undocumented Afghan children to attend mainstream school but many Afghan families are unable to afford costs such as uniforms, stationery and transport to distant schools. Families who lack documentation can only earn within the informal economy; many rely on their children to generate income. The Norwegian Refugee Council helps households to secure documentation and livelihoods opportunities and also uses cash distributions to improve access to and retention in education. New or other cash modalities may be needed to ensure the cash is used more effectively for educational needs ([Shammout-Vandecasteele](#)). The use of cash or non-cash distributions as incentives is also discussed ([Khaddour](#)). Another article identifies family poverty as one of the reasons for which some children are excluded from the educational sector in Jordan. Unless greater efforts are made to ensure their needs are met, there is a risk this and other groups of learners will have no educational options and limited protection ([Chinnery](#)). And refugee students in the UK discuss the difficulties of accessing student finance, housing and benefits, and the impact this has on their ability to study ([OLive](#)); scholarships can assist considerably but these need to be more broadly available, better coordinated and better publicised.

Gender continues to pose a significant barrier in many situations. Girls' education is consistently devalued and gender stereotypes are insufficiently challenged. Conflict and displacement jeopardise the major achievements that have been made to ensure education rights for both girls and boys; for example, in South Sudan, a country which has experienced many years of war, violent conflict and displacement, it is estimated that only 25% of girls are

enrolled in primary education. The authors of articles by Oxfam IBIS and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, urge all actors involved in emergency settings to incorporate gender responsiveness into their education programming ([Iversen-Oestergaard](#); [Singh-Tocchio](#)). Gender stereotypes need to be challenged and changed; economic barriers addressed; and gender-based violence tackled, both within and outside schools ([Erden](#)). Gender stereotypes also affect the level of engagement of fathers as opposed to mothers ([Khaddour](#); [Belghazi](#)), while more boys may be taken out of school in order to work in informal employment ([Erden](#)).

Conversely, in some cases the predominant role of women in childcare can be turned to advantage. In the UK, the greater involvement of resettled refugee women in accompanying their children to school and playgroups opens up opportunities for learning English, making friends, learning about education in the UK (and becoming better able to support their children's education), and exploring new training and work opportunities ([Belghazi](#)).

Education services for refugee children in Rwanda are well established but the level of access of children with **disabilities** gives cause for concern, including children with intellectual or communication disability ([Barrett-Marshall-Goldbart](#)). Greater awareness, better registration methods, more training and greater use of mainstream education rather than segregation are all needed to enhance access to education and combat social isolation. An article focusing on functional adult literacy in Uganda highlights the fact that there is little participation of persons of either gender who have disabilities, and proposes that specific needs assessments could contribute to creating more accessible learning environments ([Lanciotti](#)). And another article on access to education in the UK highlights the lack of school places for asylum-seeker and resettled children with special educational needs ([Gladwell](#)).

Sexual abuse and coercion by teaching staff is a shocking and significant problem in some contexts and yet is perpetuated in near silence. War Child UK worked with children in the Central African Republic to bring to light 'sex for grades' practices. Factors include poor school governance, a culture of violence and corruption, and a lack of: resources for staff salaries and training, reporting systems, parental engagement and functioning justice systems. The renewed international focus on increasing numbers of pupils in schools should not ignore questions of safety and accountability but rather promote better ways to report and end abuse, and generally raise awareness of such risks among children and school communities ([BrayWatkins](#)).

A group of articles in the issue look at the particular challenges to accessing education in the UK as a result primarily of the country's **education system** and its **immigration and asylum legislation** ([Gladwell](#); [Baron](#); [OLive](#)). An article by a legal caseworker underlines the impact of limitations on asylum seekers' right to study which came into force in 2018, meaning many young people had to drop out of their studies or were unable to access student finance and accommodation ([Baron](#)). Faced with judicial challenges, media attention and interventions by Members of Parliament, the policy was

substantially amended. Another article, by the Refugee Support Network, examines barriers to access to education in the UK and barriers to thriving in education – at both a systemic level and a school level ([Gladwell](#)). This research identified six key factors affecting children's ability to thrive in education: presence of a committed, caring adult; adaptation of curricula; availability of pastoral and mental health support; partnerships to enable on-site advice, guidance and support; peer support and awareness-raising about forced migration; and targeted training for all staff. Further recommendations are given for government and local authorities.

Several articles include discussion of **language** barriers, such as specifically for Syrian refugees in Turkey ([HauberÖzer](#)), for unaccompanied children in government-funded shelters in the US ([Diebold-Evans-Hornung](#)), among refugees in Uganda ([Lanciotti](#)) and for displaced children in Thailand whose mother language is Burmese ([Purkey-Irving](#)). Great importance is placed on displaced and resettled children continuing to use and learn their mother tongue ([Belghazi](#)). Associated with the problem of language is the often widespread and damaging perception that those who struggle in another language lack ability and intelligence ([OLive](#); [HauberÖzer](#)). This is belied by the enthusiasm of children and young adults to learn, as emphasised in the article by 23 refugee students in the UK ([OLive](#)) and the popularity of civil society initiatives providing opportunities for learning ([Hagan](#)).

In some contexts it is the **poor quality of teaching** that has a significant impact on children's learning. One article written by a number of refugee teachers in the Dadaab camps in Kenya ([Duale-Leomoi-Aden-Oyat-Dagane-Abikar](#)) examines the lack of development available to refugee teachers; this is compounded by culturally irrelevant curricula, overcrowding in classrooms, use of corporal punishment and precarious working conditions. These refugee authors call for fundamental reform of refugee education, and the importance of ensuring the participation of refugees in the planning and provision of education.

What is good learning?

Humanitarian agencies and donors rarely have the opportunity to reflect sufficiently on theories of learning but this lack of a theoretical basis may reduce the effectiveness of educational programming. Applying a learning theory retrospectively to a non-formal education programme in Dadaab, Kenya, enabled an assessment of how young people learned and where there remained gaps in their learning ([Krupar-Anselme](#)); expanding (and funding) agencies' application of learning theories could improve the quality and relevance of education programming in crisis-affected settings.

Engaging learners and parents

Several authors stress the importance of **engaging parents and wider communities** when working with children. Parents need to be encouraged and enabled to participate in activities at school and at home ([McEvoy](#); [Khaddour](#); [Shammout-Vandecasteele](#)). Encouraging parents to understand the value of

education also encourages them to send and keep their daughters in school ([Shammout-Vandecasteele](#)).

Similarly, **engaging young people** themselves is important, such as through supporting them in doing their own research to identify the extent of sexual coercion ([BrayWatkins](#)), in giving them a voice, including when resettled children visit their new schools ([Belghazi](#)), and in being physically present, and supported, when assessments of special needs are carried out ([Barrett-Marshall-Goldbart](#)).

Curricula, accreditation and integration

The role of appropriate, relevant **curricula** is discussed in several articles, in terms of providing remedial or catch-up education and opportunities for progression into host country education systems. Associated with this, **accreditation** is an important element in enabling student progression and integration, such as for Palestinian students ([Kelcey](#)), unaccompanied children in shelters in the US ([Diebold-Evans-Hornung](#)) and migrant students in Thailand ([Purkey-Irving](#)). In Nigeria, Street Child is supporting the government in developing an accredited EiE national curriculum, designed to enable the **integration** of displaced children into mainstream education ([Lacey-Viola](#)). In Greece, however, despite government efforts to include students in mainstream schools, some of the policies led to the segregation of refugee children living in reception centres (by creating separate afternoon classes for them); by contrast, students integrated into mainstream school programmes supported by morning reception classes have been able to interact more effectively and improve their language and social skills ([Simopoulos-Alexandridis](#)).

Connected learning

Digital technologies are increasingly being used to help provide access to education in contexts of conflict, crisis and displacement. This style of 'connected learning' is being used in Lebanon, particularly to reach out to Syrian refugees and to Lebanese students living in more remote areas, sometimes through 'blended learning' which uses a combination of traditional and online teaching methods ([ElGhali-Ghoshn](#)). The low cost of such courses, and their relevance to today's labour market, make them attractive. However, bureaucracy, lack of awareness, cultural resistance, skills gaps and slow internet connectivity are some of the challenges to be addressed. Meanwhile, in Rwanda since 2013, students have been able to follow a US-accredited undergraduate programme using a blended learning model through a partnership between NGO Kepler and the Southern New Hampshire University ([Dushime-Manirafasha-Mbonyinshuti](#)). Three graduates of the course discuss the value of such opportunities, and the need to make higher education opportunities a) more inclusive, b) accredited and c) focused on job readiness.

Civil society initiatives

A number of articles focus on civil society initiatives to support children and young people in their desire to learn. One article looks at how, in the face of increasingly limited access to schooling for asylum seekers and migrants in France, volunteer initiatives have sprung up to provide much-needed informal

education ([Hagan](#)); asylum seekers see education as a driver for change and improvement, an essential key to integration and progress, and the School Bus Project and other projects seek to support them in this.

Some schools in the UK are championing pupil diversity, setting up international groups and dedicated space within the school to help refugee, asylum-seeker and migrant children, and unaccompanied minors to feel part of a group and able to express themselves; other partnerships are helping refugee women to meet others and to find work opportunities ([Belghazi](#)).

Long-term programming

The need to have a longer-term outlook when programming and funding education in emergencies is discussed in several articles. Experience from Street Child's work in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria demonstrates how the basis for long-term improvements in education can be laid in the earliest stages of emergency response ([Lacey-Viola](#)). Key to this is building **core school and pedagogical competencies**, including school governance, classroom management, student evaluation, child-centred learning and positive discipline; the addition of school-based income-generating projects raised funds for school improvements and for project sustainability, engaging parents and expanding students' practical and employment-oriented skills. In Nigeria, **temporary learning centres** were constructed in such a way that they can be easily converted later into permanent structures at low cost; they are supported by community education committees. Additional **training of community teachers** boosted the number of qualified teachers in hard-to-reach locations. Importantly, this is being done in collaboration with government authorities.

In Iran, the protracted nature of displacement calls for a longer-term **development approach** that gives education stakeholders enough time to implement changes in policy ([Shammout-Vandecasteele](#)). Meanwhile in Jordan, as the response moves from a humanitarian to a development one, a lack of planning for an **appropriate transition** is excluding some vulnerable groups of learners ([Chinnery](#)). What is needed is: clear, comprehensive transitional frameworks and a common narrative; consultation with a broad range of stakeholders; clarity of roles and responsibilities; and dedication of sufficient resources and capacity development.

The ability to apply the skills of reading, writing and written calculations to daily life – '**functional adult literacy**' (FAL) – is crucial for refugees to realise their rights to education, development and participation, and therefore an essential element of achieving the longer-term goals of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. Even when included in national response plans, however, FAL receives little funding; there needs to be far more investment in it ([Lanciotti](#)).

Evidence for programming – and inclusion of local voices

Donors need to ensure they fund not only educational programming but also the generation of **sound research** to provide more evidence of effective, appropriate educational models. Furthermore, this requires funding research that is freely accessible to, designed for and inclusive of the voices of people and institutions on the ground. Analysis of educational research funding proposals indicates an alarming absence of **input from local actors and end-users**. Approaches tend to be developed by actors in high-income, non-emergency settings – for use by actors in emergency contexts ([Alalami](#)).

Meanwhile, another article expresses concern that the relationship between psychosocial well-being and learning outcomes is still based on general observation and requires more scrutiny ([Singh-Tocchio](#)).

Tools

Two articles by Save the Children discuss tools for use in enabling access to education in emergencies. The Holistic Assessment of Learning and Development Outcomes (HALDO) tool is designed to help practitioners to better understand the needs of learners aged 4–12 ([D'Sa-Krupar-Westrope](#)). Meanwhile, the Improving Learning Environments Together (ILET) toolkit has been developed to look at how learning environments can be improved through community participation; through this, assessments of a school's strengths and weaknesses are carried out, and then fed back rapidly for discussion and the development of a school improvement plan; pilots highlighted various dilemmas inherent in aid and development but also demonstrated the toolkit's usefulness in mobilising local solutions and ownership (and thereby potential longer-term sustainability) ([Bali](#)).

Forced Migration Review (FMR) provides a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between researchers, refugees and internally displaced people, and those who work with them. It is published in English, Arabic, Spanish and French by the Refugee Studies Centre of the Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford.

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Cover image: UNHCR/Brian Sokol

We would like to thank Marina Anselme (RET International), Anthony Nolan (Save the Children International) and Jessica Oddy (Save the Children UK) for their assistance as advisors to the feature theme, and the following donors for their support of this issue: Dubai Cares, Jesuit Refugee Service, Oxfam IBIS, RET International, Southern New Hampshire University, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and UNHCR/Education Section. We would also like to thank all our other donors whose support we greatly appreciate.

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