



What Schools Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Military Use

Global Coalition to
Protect Education from Attack



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About the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack

This paper is published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), an inter-agency coalition formed in 2010 by organizations working in the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected contexts, higher education, protection, international human rights, and humanitarian law who were concerned about ongoing attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity..

GCPEA is a coalition of organizations that includes:

- The Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA)
- Human Rights Watch
- The Institute of International Education
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC, a program of Education Above All)
- Save the Children
- The Scholars at Risk Network
- The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- War Child Holland

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Boys hold books while standing in the ruins of their bombed school in the Hamdan area, west of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, on March 23, 2014.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Schools and universities should be safe places of learning. However, children’s and young people’s rights to education and protection are violated in most countries experiencing conflict or insecurity. Students and education personnel have been threatened, killed, injured, tortured, recruited, and used by armed forces and armed groups, while in school or en route to and from school. Armed parties have also used schools and universities as barracks and bases, for weapons storage, as detention centers, and for other military purposes—jeopardizing the safety of students and staff. The short-term impacts of attacks on education include death, injury, and destruction of educational infrastructure. The long-term impacts include disruptions in attendance, declines in student enrolment, diminished quality of education and learning, and reductions in teacher recruitment—all of which can prevent countries from fulfilling the right to education and other rights, as well as achieving education and development goals.

This paper is primarily intended for Ministries of Education, UN agencies, and international and local non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs) to support school-based actors, namely principals, teachers, school management committees, and community members to develop and strengthen approaches to planning and protecting education from attack and schools from military use at the school-level.

The aim of this paper is to describe what is actually being done in the field at the school-level to protect education from attack, identifying the risks and challenges involved, and drawing out lessons learned and recommendations from these measures as well as other literature on the topic. The measures have not been formally evaluated, so much of our understanding of what is successful and what is not is based on the anecdotal assessment of practitioners and is context-specific.

Seven school-based measures are described and each measure includes country examples and case studies, considerations regarding risks and challenges, as well as other lessons learned. Education actors considering implementing the school-based protection measures described in this paper should review all of the measures to assess the applicability to their own context, the risks involved, and the potential benefits. Since risks and conflict contexts vary from country to country, there is no one approach that can be applied to all situations. Measures must be adapted to meet the context-specific needs of each country or locale, and a conflict-sensitive approach¹ to development and implementation adopted to ensure that measures “do no harm.”

SCHOOL-BASED MEASURES IMPLEMENTED TO PROTECT EDUCATION FROM ATTACK

1. Unarmed Physical Protection Measures

Unarmed physical protection measures have not relied on the use of weapons or force and have been implemented to shield potential education targets from attack, to minimize damage caused by attacks, and to provide schools with a means of self-defense. Measures have included: unarmed guards, protection committees, physical infrastructure (e.g. school bunkers or boundary walls constructed around schools), protective presence and accompaniment, teacher/student housing, community education and mobilization, as well as measures to protect against gender-based violence (e.g. codes of conduct for education personnel).

2. Armed Physical Protection Measures

In countries experiencing ongoing attacks by parties to armed conflict, some schools have used armed guards and patrols to protect teachers, students, and school infrastructure and to provide schools with a means of self-defense. While some schools have implemented armed protection measures on their own initiative, in most cases schools have coordinated with Ministries, local police and security forces, or other government entities. Measures have included: armed guards, armed escorts, and arming teachers.

3. Negotiations as a Strategy to Protect Education

In several countries school and community leaders have negotiated agreements with parties to armed conflict—including government forces and non-state armed groups—not to attack schools or use them for military or political purposes. Negotiations have usually required some type of intervention by a third party that is trusted or acceptable to all stakeholders and have involved either direct dialogue or, if the parties have been unwilling or unable to engage in face-to-face meetings, have utilized some form of shuttle diplomacy.² There have been risks involved for all parties in negotiation.³

4. Early Warning/Alert Systems

Schools in several countries have independently or in coordination with Ministries, UN agencies, or I/NGOs implemented early warning/alert systems to communicate in real time about threats or attacks on schools. When education personnel and parents have been given early warning of potential attacks, they have temporarily closed schools, transferred students to schools in safe areas, or provided alternative delivery of education. Some systems have used mobile phones for communications between school administration, school safety committees, families, local Ministries, and security forces. Through short message service (SMS) text messages, safety warnings have been issued and emergency assistance and other response mechanisms have been activated.

5. Alternative Delivery of Education

To avoid attacks or the threat of violence, schools have implemented a number of measures to provide alternative delivery of education. These measures have been initiated at the school-level, usually in collaboration with community members, NGOs, and sometimes INGOs and Ministries, depending on the conflict context and motivation for attacks. Modifications in time, place, and mode of education delivery have also been devised when normal school sites have been damaged, occupied, or targeted. Alternative delivery of education can better ensure continuity in access to learning opportunities, and can provide structure, routine, and support to students and teachers, which can also bring psychosocial benefits. Measures have included: community-based schools, schedule changes, distance learning, and relocating places of delivery of education.

6. Psychosocial Support

UNICEF defines psychosocial support as “those program components, which assist children, families, and communities to cope with crisis and to reinforce or regain healthy psychosocial development and resilience in the face of challenging circumstances.”⁴ Components of psychosocial support at the school-level have included: temporary educational activities; child-friendly learning environments; referral systems; teacher and caregiver training (in approaches to psychosocial support); services for victims of gender-based violence; codes of conduct; and other measures to assist teachers (e.g. ensuring teachers are regularly compensated).

7. Comprehensive School-based Safety and Security Plans

Schools in a number of countries have chosen to implement comprehensive school-based safety and security plans, often with the support of Ministries, UN agencies, or I/NGOs. These plans require strong leadership from principals and school management or protection committees, with active community and parent participation. The plans have incorporated an array of measures, including protection, mitigation, and response actions. Many of the six other measures described in this briefing paper can be incorporated into a strategic, comprehensive approach to safety and security planning.⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in the report are drawn primarily from reports written by INGOs and UN agencies that have supported school-based measures and represent a synthesis of lessons learned from practices in a number of countries. **The overarching recommendation of the paper is for school-based actors to develop and implement school-based safety and security plans, rather than ad hoc measures, and for Ministries, UN, and other international agencies and donors to support these efforts.** By adopting a coordinated, cohesive strategy, school-based actors could be better prepared, ideally, to prevent and respond to attacks on students, teachers, and school buildings.

Recommendations to School Administrators, Principals, and Head Teachers:

Comprehensive School-based Safety and Security Planning: Develop a comprehensive safety and security plan, tailored to local needs, in collaboration with the school management committee and local education authorities.

Leadership Role: Assume a leadership role in developing and implementing school-based measures, in collaboration with community members, education authorities, and others.

Risk Analysis: Identify possible threats to students, teachers, schools, and community members and the probability of attack.

Community Involvement and School Management Committees: Form a school protection committee and ensure community participation to ensure support for school-based protection measures.

Resources: Seek resources from local education authorities, I/NGOs, UN agencies, and other sources to strengthen protection measures.

Advocacy: Advocate for national and local policies that protect education from attack.

Recommendations to Ministry of Education and Other Ministries:

Policy Development: Develop a comprehensive policy for protecting education from attack and military use, and engage all concerned ministry staff at central and local level in implementing this strategy. Include short term measures for prevention and response, as well as adopting conflict-sensitive education policies and programs that help reduce the risk of future conflict.

Financial and Technical Support: Support schools in developing safety and security plans, and provide financial support, preferably with a multi-year commitment.

Advocacy: Advocate for funding of safety and security plans, including rehabilitation of schools damaged by attacks or military use, with concerned ministries and with donors

(opposite) Internally displaced children attending classes at a displacement camp in Maiduguri, Borno state, September 2015.

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Recommendations to UN Agencies and I/NGOs:

Technical Support: Support the development of school-based safety and security plans, and ensure sustained support for school-based protection measures.

Support Innovative and Evidence-based Measures: Support innovative measures including technology that can facilitate early warning or distance learning.

Advocacy: Advocate with government to budget for and implement safe schools measures, including conflict-sensitive planning and curriculum to reduce the risk of future conflict, promote social cohesion, and strengthen community and individual resilience.

One way in which governments can work to protect schooling is by endorsing and implementing the Safe Schools Declaration⁶, which includes commitments to address systemic education issues, including by introducing conflict-sensitive education policies, taking action to support the continuation of education during armed conflict, and re-establishing educational facilities following attack or military use. The Declaration also includes commitments to strengthen monitoring and reporting of attacks and military use of schools, prosecute perpetrators, and support victims. Finally, by joining the Declaration, states are endorsing the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Attack and Military Use during Armed Conflict*,⁷ which will better ensure the safety of students and teachers and safeguard the right to education in conflict.



A Ukrainian soldier sits on the playground equipment of a school that has been converted into temporary barracks before being sent back to the front lines on March 9, 2015 in Lebedynske, Ukraine.

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INTRODUCTION

“It is critical that boys and girls, as well as education staff, feel safe in their schools to effectively teach and learn. The continuity of education is vital to contain further violence and prevent any aggravation of the crisis. Keeping schools free from any sort of military use is equally vital.”

—IRINA BOKOVA, SECRETARY GENERAL, UNESCO⁸

“...we were on the bus to school and we saw armed men next to our school so we stopped. The teachers were on the way, they weren’t there yet, so the bus driver called them and told them not to come because men were inside the school. So we stopped going to school.”

—NIDAL, 6 YEARS OLD, SYRIA⁹

Schools and universities should be safe places of learning. However, children’s rights to education and protection are violated in most countries experiencing conflict or insecurity. *Education under Attack 2014*, a report published by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), found that between 2009 and 2013, armed forces and non-state armed groups targeted students, teachers, schools, and other education facilities in at least 70 countries worldwide, with 30 countries experiencing a significant pattern of attack.¹⁰ Students and education personnel have been threatened, killed, injured, tortured, recruited by armed forces and armed groups, and harassed while in school or en route to and from school. Armed parties have also used schools and universities as barracks and bases, for weapons storage, as detention centers, and for other military purposes—jeopardizing the safety of students and staff. In its report, *Lessons in War 2015*, GCPEA found that between 2005 and 2015, schools and universities had been used for military purposes in 26 countries around the world—the majority of countries in which there had been armed conflicts in the last decade.¹¹

Education has been targeted for a range of political, military, sectarian, ethnic, religious, or ideological reasons. Attacks may be triggered by a number of phenomena, including: underlying political, economic, or religious conflicts; anti-government sentiment; inequitable distribution of resources or conflict over land and resource use; separatist insurgencies; and marginalization of ethnic groups. In some countries there is opposition to the content of education: curricula may be perceived as “Western,” secular, or excluding the narratives and cultures of marginalized groups. Some schools have been destroyed in opposition to girls’ education or because schools are seen as symbols of government power.¹² Other attacks by armed groups or government armed forces have been motivated by wider political or military objectives, including the use of schools for military purposes by opposing forces.¹³

The short-term impacts of attacks on education include death, injury, and destruction of educational infrastructure. The long-term impacts include disrupted attendance, declines in student enrolment, diminished quality of education and loss of learning, and drops in recruitment of teachers—all of which limit a country’s ability to respect children’s rights to education and other rights, or achieve education and development goals. Ultimately, rather than regarding schools as safe places for learning and play, due to fear, students and teachers may come to believe that schools are places to avoid.¹⁴

The costs of rehabilitating schools after they have been attacked or used for military purposes are also significant. In 2011, the Education Cluster estimated that the cost of rehabilitating schools in South Sudan that had been used for military purposes was US\$ 67,000 per school.¹⁵ This lays to waste the already scant resources that are devoted to education in conflict-affected countries, both by national governments and international donors. The costs associated with lost educational opportunities over a lifetime for individuals and for communities are even greater.

This paper focuses on protection measures implemented in a number of countries at the school-level to protect school infrastructure, students, and teachers and other education personnel from attacks and schools from military use. These measures are not necessarily best or even good practices but are measures that have actually been implemented in areas impacted by attacks and military use of schools as a means of attempting to better prevent attacks and military use of schools or respond to them. The aim of this paper is to describe what has been done in the field to protect education from attack and draw out lessons learned and recommendations from these experiences. It should be noted that the measures have not been formally evaluated, so much of our understanding of what is successful and what is not is based on the anecdotal assessment of practitioners. This highlights a gap in this thematic area which is that there is very little formal research on the effectiveness of responses to attacks on education, and the limited research that does exist is very context-specific, making it difficult to draw any over-all conclusions about effective measures. In addition, there is a lack of research or evidence on how the impact on girls and women of attacks on education is different from the impact on boys and men, and what types of responses would better address these different impacts.

Definition and Types of Protection Measures Implemented at the School-Level (hereafter ‘school-based measures’)

School-based measures are those activities and programs implemented at the school-level by a range of school-based actors, including principals, teachers, school management committees, parents, community leaders, and students/youth, to better protect education from attack and schools from military use. There are two types of school-based measures:

- **Measures initiated** by schools/communities without external support; and
- **Measures implemented** at the school-level with external support, funding, direction, or other assistance from entities such as national or local Ministries responsible for education (hereafter ‘Ministries,’ UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Seven school-based measures are described in this paper and each measure includes country examples and case studies, considerations regarding risks and challenges, as well as other lessons learned. The seven school-based measures described are:

- 1 Unarmed Physical Protection
- 2 Armed Physical Protection
- 3 Negotiations as a Strategy to Protect Education
- 4 Early Warning/Alert Systems
- 5 Alternative Delivery of Education
- 6 Psychosocial Support
- 7 Comprehensive School-based Safety and Security Plans

Those seeking to implement or support any of the school-based protection measures described in this paper should review all of the measures to assess the applicability to their own context; the risks involved; and the potential benefits. Since risks and conflict contexts vary from country to country, there is no one approach that can be applied to all situations. It is important to note that measures must be adapted to meet the context-specific needs of each country or locale, and that a conflict-sensitive approach¹⁶ to development and implementation is necessary to ensure that measures “do no harm.”¹⁷

Despite the lack of formal evidence on the effectiveness of these measures, based on the anecdotal evidence available, this paper concludes that school-based measures can play an important and significant role in protecting education from attack and discouraging the use of schools for military purposes. In addition, despite there being no one response that fits all circumstances, this paper suggests that **school-based actors should focus on implementing measure 7, comprehensive school-based safety and security plans, adapting the different components of the plan to their particular context. These comprehensive plans represent a coordinated approach to integrating the other six measures into a cohesive strategy for protecting education in situations of armed conflict.** This paper also argues that school-based actors often cannot implement protection measures all on their own, but require assistance from government ministries that support education, and where appropriate, inter-governmental agencies such as the United Nations (UN), as well as international and local non-governmental organizations (I/NGOs).

This paper is therefore directed primarily at ministries of education, inter-governmental organizations, and I/NGOs to highlight to them the important role that school-based actors can play in implementing measures at the school-level to protect education from attack, and to encourage their support of these measures. Recommendations are also included for school-based actors. GCPEA will be producing a checklist specifically for school-based actors to implement protective measures at the school-level which will serve as a practical tool that can be adapted to the particular contexts in which these actors live. At the same time, this paper recognizes that school-based protection mechanisms, while important and necessary to better protect education from attack, are not sufficient to secure the safety of schools, their students and staff, as such security depends upon systemic change that addresses the root causes of violence. This systemic change depends upon governmental action, including by ministries responsible for education. GCPEA’s 2015 briefing paper *What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use*¹⁸ discusses the broader measures that ministries can take to effect some of the systemic change necessary to better protect education.

The methodology for information gathering for this paper has included personal interviews and email exchanges with actors involved in developing and implementing measures; presentations by participants at an international workshop organized by GCPEA entitled Promising Practices for Protecting Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use¹⁹ held in Istanbul, Turkey, in October, 2015; and other reports produced by a range of UN agencies and I/NGOs, as well as GCPEA.

SUMMARY OF INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES AND TOOLS RELEVANT TO SCHOOL-BASED MEASURES

International guidelines, standards, and tools for education and protection actors as well as humanitarian workers have been established to ensure the safety and protection of students, teachers, and other education personnel. These standards provide a foundation for education and protection actors at all levels responsible for developing and implementing school-based protection measures. The following is a summary of the guidelines, standards, and tools relevant to school-based protection. International law also provides a foundation for protecting education from attack and schools from military use and a summary is included in Annex 1.

Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.²⁰ The *Guidelines* were developed and drafted through a multi-year consultative process with states, UN agencies, and I/NGOs with the aim of better protecting schools and universities from use by armed parties. They provide practical guidance on how to reduce the military use of educational facilities and mitigate the impact of such use on students' safety and education. They are primarily aimed at parties involved in armed conflict, to encourage them to exercise restraint in using schools for military purposes. However, they are also a useful tool for principals, teachers, school management committees and other school-based actors, as well as Ministries, UN agencies, and I/NGOs to advocate for better protection of education during armed conflict. Principals, teachers, school management committees, and community members can refer to the concrete recommendations contained in the *Guidelines* when dialoguing with parties to armed conflict (whether state or non-state), for instance when responding to or seeking to prevent schools being used by armed parties, or when trying to convince armed parties to vacate schools.

Safe Schools Declaration.²¹ The Declaration was developed through state consultations led by Norway and Argentina in Geneva throughout the first half of 2015, and provides states the opportunity to express broad political support for protecting education from attack. The Declaration is the means by which states endorse the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*. In addition to committing to endorse the *Guidelines* and bring them into domestic law and practice, signatories to the Declaration also agree to: collect data and investigate attacks on education; develop conflict-sensitive approaches to education;²² and ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict.

Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response.²³ The *Sphere Handbook* establishes shared principles and a set of universally recognized minimum standards for quality humanitarian responses by a wide range of actors (e.g. governments, I/NGOs, and UN agencies) across a number of sectors (e.g. protection, health, and education). Four protection principles outlined in the *Sphere Handbook* are relevant to the protection of education from attack: 1) avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of actions undertaken as part of response efforts; 2) ensure that access to assistance is available without discrimination; 3) protect people from physical and psychological harm arising from violence and coercion; and 4) assist people to claim their rights, access available remedies, and recover from the effects of abuse. The *Sphere Handbook* provides the basis for the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) *Minimum Standards for Protection: Preparedness, Response, Recovery* and the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection and Humanitarian Action*.

INEE Minimum Standards for Protection: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.²⁴ INEE's *Minimum Standards* provide concrete tools for: providing education in emergency situations, including tools for analyzing risks, challenges, and opportunities; coordinating responses across sectors and organizations; and involving affected communities in developing and implementing programs. Standards for "Access, Learning, and Environment" outlined in the *Minimum Standards* include a number of key actions (e.g. develop initial education priorities based on a risk assessment²⁵) for ensuring security, safety, and physical, cognitive, and psychological well-being of students, teachers, and education personnel in conflict-affected contexts.

INEE Guidance Note on Conflict-Sensitive Education.²⁶ The *Guidance Note* offers strategies to education policymakers and program planners for developing and implementing conflict-sensitive education policies and programs that "do no harm" and are intended to address the underlying grievances that drive conflict. Conflict-sensitive education strategies are included for each of the five domains outlined in the *INEE Minimum Standards for Protection, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery* (e.g. for Domain 4, Teachers and Other Education Personnel, the strategy includes to recruit and select teachers in a transparent and participatory manner that avoids stereotypes and bias). Establishing conflict-sensitive policies and programs increases education's contributions towards a peaceful society, thus hopefully reducing the likelihood of attacks on education and military use of schools.

Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action.²⁷ These standards set out four basic protection principles: 1) survival and development, which stipulates that aid workers must also consider the effects of the emergency and response on the physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual development of children; 2) non-discrimination in the response of humanitarian workers; 3) child participation in the development and implementation of humanitarian response plans; and 4) best interests of the child, which should guide the development and implementation of all humanitarian response plans. Each principle includes key actions, measurements (including indicators and targets), and guidance notes, a number of which are of particular relevance to actors developing and implementing school-based measures (e.g. community-based mechanisms, and protecting excluded children).

Interagency Standing Committee Mental Health Guidelines.²⁸ The *Mental Health Guidelines* provide guidance on providing psychosocial support and addressing mental health issues in emergency contexts. A number of guidelines and tools relevant to protecting education are outlined, including those related to: 1) inter-sectoral coordination; 2) assessing psychosocial issues and needs; 3) monitoring and evaluation; 4) facilitating community self-help and social support appropriate to communal, cultural, spiritual, and religious healing practices; 5) training aid workers and volunteers in psychosocial support who understand local culture; and 6) strengthening access to safe and supportive education.

Guidelines on Gender-Based Violence Interventions.²⁹ These guidelines, which also include key actions, are intended for use by governments, UN agencies, I/NGOs, and community organizations in establishing and coordinating multi-sectoral interventions to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in emergency contexts. A number of guidelines and key actions are relevant to protecting education, including: 1) determine relevant and appropriate education options for girls and boys; 2) train teachers on gender-based violence (GBV); 3) ensure girls' and boys' access to safe education; 4) include GBV in life-skills training for teachers (male and female), and boys and girls in all educational settings; and 5) establish prevention and response mechanisms to sexual exploitation and abuse in educational settings.

ACTORS INVOLVED IN PROTECTING EDUCATION AT THE SCHOOL-LEVEL

Principals, teachers, school management committees, parents, and students are key to effective implementation of school-based measures, regardless of whether the measures have been initiated at the school-level or developed with the support of other agencies. Frequently, though not always, schools have received financial and technical support and coordinated the implementation of measures with community organizations, Ministries, UN agencies, and I/NGOs.

ACTORS INVOLVED IN PROTECTING EDUCATION

The following actors have been involved in developing and implementing a range of the measures described in this paper.

Principal/Head Teacher. Principals have worked with staff, students, school management committees, and local education authorities to develop and implement comprehensive school-based safety and security plans and a range of other measures.

Teachers. Teachers have participated in a range of school-based measures, including organizing security patrols, training students in evacuation and safety, negotiating codes of conduct with armed parties not to use or attack schools, monitoring and reporting attacks on schools, and participating in early warning/alert systems to alert parents and students of security concerns.

School Management Committees. Comprised of principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders, school management committees, some formed specifically to protect education from attack, have implemented physical protection measures (e.g. building boundary walls around schools, and hiring armed or unarmed school guards), established school safety patrols, and developed and implemented comprehensive school-based safety and security plans. These school-based groups have coordinated with national and local Ministries or operated independently. In some countries/contexts, school management committees are referred to as Community Education Committees (CECs) or Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs).

Parents. Parents, both mothers and fathers, have played an active role as members of school management committees and helped to implement a number of measures, such as safe travel for teachers and students to and from school, psychosocial support, and early warning/alert systems included as part of, or independent from, comprehensive school-based safety and security plans.

Students. Students have been involved in protecting education as peer educators in the areas of safety, first aid, and psychosocial support. In some countries, students have served as youth volunteers to mobilize the community and encourage student enrollment³⁰ or served on school management committees.³¹

Local and Religious Community Leaders. Local religious and community leaders have played a role in negotiating with parties to armed conflict in schools as zones of peace processes to prevent attacks on education and military use of schools.

Community Organizations. Local NGOs and civil society organizations have helped to implement a range of measures, independent of or in collaboration with Ministries, UN agencies, and INGOs, including schools as zones of peace, accompaniment programs and alternative delivery of education.

Local and National Ministries. Ministries have established policies and supported measures at the local level, and local education officials have supported the implementation of national policies at the individual school-level.

Education Cluster.³² In a number of countries, education clusters have worked at the school-level to coordinate risk analyses and monitor attacks.

UN Agencies and INGOs. UN agencies and INGOs in a number of countries have provided funding and technical support for a wide range of school-based measures (many of which are included in this report as examples or case studies), including early warning/alert systems, schools as zones of peace, alternative delivery of education, and psychosocial support programs.

MEASURES AT THE SCHOOL-LEVEL TO PROTECT EDUCATION FROM ATTACK

This section presents seven school-based measures: 1) unarmed physical protection; 2) armed physical protection; 3) negotiations as a strategy to protect education; 4) early warning/alert systems; 5) alternative delivery of education; 6) psychosocial support; and 7) comprehensive school-based safety and security planning. The measures described in this section are implemented at the school-level and have either been developed and implemented independently by schools or with the assistance of parents, community organizations, Ministries, I/NGOs, or UN agencies. The measures included in this section are not exhaustive, though they are representative of measures that have been implemented in a number of countries. It is important to note that all measures must be adapted to meet the context-specific needs of each country or locale and that a conflict-sensitive approach to development and implementation is necessary to ensure that measures “do no harm.”

1. Unarmed Physical Protection Measures

Unarmed physical protection measures have not relied on the use of weapons or force and have been implemented to shield potential education targets from attack, to minimize damage caused by attacks, and to provide schools with a means of self-defense.

Unarmed guards

Unarmed guards or escorts have been used to protect schools, teachers, and students in most conflict-affected countries. In many countries, school staff and community members have served as unarmed guards.

Example

- According to the Ministry of Education, Afghanistan has implemented a number of programs to fund unarmed guards, including the donor-funded “School Guards Program” and the Afghan Ministry of Education-funded “Night Guards Project.” There were several challenges to these programs, including a lack of communication technology and increased vulnerability of unarmed guards to an attack without any means of self-defense. As a result of these challenges, the School Guards Program was discontinued.³³

Protection committees

School or community protection committees have been established in many countries, including Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Sri Lanka,³⁴ and Zimbabwe³⁵ amongst others. These committees or school governing bodies, such as parent teacher associations, have made decisions about methods of protection and resource use.

Example

- According to an education consultant, in Zimbabwe, voluntary Teacher-Student-Parent-Defense Units were established to warn schools of impending attacks. There were challenges to the program, including ongoing coordination and cooperation between teachers, students, and parents, and the need to continuously recruit and train new parents into defense units as a result of parents’ loss of interest in the group’s activities once their children had graduated.³⁶



Children play at a kindergarten surrounded by decorated concrete blast walls designed to protect the school against rocket and mortar fire on June 24, 2015, in the southern Israeli Kibbutz of Nahal Oz, located near the border with the Gaza Strip.

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Case Study: The Role of School Management Committees in Unarmed Physical Protection in Afghanistan

In 2006, according to an NGO study, the Ministry of Education in Afghanistan supported the establishment of school management committees or security shuras to lead school protection efforts.³⁷ According to a 2008 survey,³⁸ local communities viewed unarmed security shuras as the best way to defend schools. The shuras consist of, on average, 15 people, including mullahs, village elders, the school principal, parents, and students. They conduct trainings on how to make schools safer for students and teachers, including emergency response training and rescue procedures. According to the Afghan Ministry of Education, the goal of the Ministry has been to avoid using armed forces to protect schools and instead to support the establishment or strengthening of shuras to promote the shared value of the importance of education and the need for schools to be free from military presence.³⁹



A Thai soldier accompanies children en route to school on July 1, 2015.

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Physical infrastructure

Many countries have strengthened school safety infrastructure in response to attacks through measures that include building boundary walls, installing razor wire on top of school walls, and installing safety and security equipment (e.g. security cameras and metal detectors).

Examples

- According to a government official, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, school guards have screened individuals (e.g. through pat downs and bag searches) before allowing entry into schools.⁴⁰
- A community organization has reported that in Sudan since 2012, it has constructed a network of bunkers next to schools in the Nuba Mountains to protect students and teachers from aerial bombardment.
- A Ministry of Education official has stated that Afghanistan has prioritized building boundary walls around schools, with first priority given to girls' schools, in an effort to prevent attacks and abductions.⁴¹

Protective presence and accompaniment

Community members, principals, and parents in various countries have often served as escorts, accompanying students and teachers to and from school. In some cases, their protective presence has helped to prevent harm or harassment of students and teachers, or the denial of access to school by armed forces and armed groups.

Examples

- In Thailand, academics have reported that in the conflict-affected southern provinces, school committees implemented a protective presence program between 2010 and 2011. The program, called Santisuk (Happy) Schools, was implemented in six elementary schools. Teachers and community members developed a rotating schedule, served as escorts for students, and also provided surveillance around schools. However, the program was terminated in late 2012 due to escalating violence and the shooting of a principal at one of the pilot schools.⁴²
- In 2015 in the Central African Republic, according to an international NGO, a humanitarian agency helped organize students and teachers in groups to walk together to and from school to mitigate threats of attack. At least one older child was assigned to accompany smaller children.⁴³

Case Study: The Role of School Accompaniment Programs in Palestine⁴⁴

In Hebron, Palestine, in 2012, community members formed the Al Mahawer Charitable Society to provide protective presence to students while passing through Israeli military checkpoints en route to and from school. According to one of the program founders, some students have felt antagonized when Israeli soldiers have searched students' bags or have, more generally, felt frustrated by the Israeli occupation. As a result, students have thrown stones at Israeli soldiers who have, in response, fired tear gas canisters at students' schools. As part of the protective presence program, parents and community members have accompanied students to and from school and counseled students not to throw stones at Israeli military personnel in provocation or retaliation for harassment or threats, by stressing the importance of education to ultimately securing their country's future. The Al Mahawer Charitable Society has reported that the accompaniment program in Hebron has increased the number of children attending schools as parents have felt their children are more secure; in addition, their reports indicate that the number of tear gas attacks on schools has been reduced since the program was implemented.

Teacher/student housing

Housing has been made available to teachers, and boarding houses have been built for students or teachers near or on campus to reduce the risk of travel on dangerous routes to and from school.

Examples

- In Colombia, an NGO has reported that some communities have set up boarding schools for students to safeguard them from risks posed by armed groups or anti-personnel mines they might face on commutes to and from school.⁴⁵
- In some schools in Pakistan, the Ministry of Education has provided teacher housing, with priority given to female teachers, in areas where teachers were targeted for attack.⁴⁶

Community education and mobilization

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to educate community members about the importance of education and to mobilize community support for, and involvement in, protection.

Examples

- According to an international NGO, in the Central African Republic, community meetings have been held, with the assistance of NGOs, to sensitize community members and armed groups to the importance of keeping schools safe and refraining from using schools for military purposes.⁴⁷
- In Nepal, during the ten-year conflict that ended in 2006, communities and schools mobilized direct action marches, placed message boards in villages, and handed out literature on the need to prevent military and political interference in schools.⁴⁸

Measures to protect against gender-based violence

Girls and boys may be vulnerable to sexual violence, forced abduction, or other forms of gender-based violence by parties to armed conflict, as well as others, at school and on the way to and from school. Girls and young women are often specifically targeted because armed parties oppose the education of girls, or girls are recruited to be sexual slaves, or cooks and servants to soldiers. The risk or perceived risk of sexual violence or harassment can have a disproportional impact on girls and young women. For example, parents are particularly wary of sending their daughters to school when the schools are being used by armed men for military purposes, and will often withdraw them, or girls themselves will drop out.⁴⁹ Boys too, can be targeted specifically for their gender and they may be recruited into armed parties at school or harassed by armed parties, especially if they are occupying the school, for being perceived to sympathize with the opposing force. The range of measures implemented to protect male and female students, as well as male and female education personnel, must be tailored to the specific reasons for their targeting and the different impacts that attacks on education and military use of schools may have on them because of their gender. Measures to protect against gender based violence have included: protective accompaniment to and from school; separation of girls' and boys' latrines, including the reporting of gender-based violence in codes of conduct; and hiring female teachers or classroom assistants.

Example

- Between 2010 and 2012 in the Katanga province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, oversight committees were set up in 31 target schools as part of the USAID-funded 'C-Change' school-related gender-based violence prevention program. These committees reviewed cases of gender-based violence and helped to ensure the enforcement of school codes of conduct.⁵⁰

Considerations Regarding Unarmed Physical Protection Measures

Risks/Challenges

- The cost of strengthening school infrastructure can be prohibitive unless Ministries or other entities provide funding. In some places, school buildings may be so rudimentary and resources so scarce that it is difficult to add any protective infrastructure.
- Strengthening school infrastructure with boundary walls, razor wire, and security equipment can help to protect schools, but it can also give schools an intimidating and militarized appearance, which can be frightening for children and may make opposing forces consider it to be a target for attack.
- Providing housing for teachers and students (male and female) on campus may protect them from attacks they might otherwise face while travelling to and from school. However, teacher and student housing may concentrate students and teachers in one location and make it easier for parties to armed conflict to target and attack students and teachers if the housing is not well protected.
- Accompaniment programs can put the teams that accompany teachers and students at risk of attack by parties to the conflict.
- In conflict-affected areas, there is a limit to what schools and communities can do to protect education from attack through unarmed protection measures and independent of external support. The implementation of other measures and partnership with Ministries, UN agencies, and I/NGOs may be needed.

Other Lessons Learned

- Involving respected community members, both male and female, and including religious leaders who represent the diversity of the community, in planning and implementing protection measures can increase school security and gain community members' trust.
- Seeking support from organizations and authorities outside the community at regional, national, and international levels can sometimes strengthen unarmed physical protection measures implemented by education personnel and community members.
- Considering the risks of taking public transportation (e.g. targeting of public transportation by parties to armed conflict, overall security of roads, and the risk of crashes) is important if teachers or students are provided with a travel allowance (intended to maintain their safety) to and from school.
- Providing psychosocial support in schools where physical security measures have been employed, including encouraging children to talk about the implications of the need for increased security measures, may assist in diminishing the negative psychological impact of a more fortified environment on children.

2. Armed Physical Protection Measures

In countries experiencing ongoing attacks by parties to armed conflict, some schools have used armed guards and patrols to protect teachers, students, and school infrastructure and to provide schools with a means of self-defense. While some schools have implemented armed protection measures on their own initiative, in most cases schools have coordinated with Ministries, local police and security forces, or other government entities.

Armed guards

In some countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Thailand,⁵¹ some schools, typically though not always in coordination with armed forces or local police, have used armed guards to protect school property, students, and education personnel.

Examples

- According to a Ministry of Education official, in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, some school administrators have employed their own armed security guards. Armed security guards have also been provided on some buses that transport teachers and students to and from school.⁵²
- According to officials with the Afghan Ministry of Education, in some schools in certain conflict-prone areas, the Ministry of Education assigned local police to serve as armed school guards, deployed motorized security patrols on roads around schools, and established checkpoints near schools to screen those approaching school grounds.⁵³ However, according to a Ministry of Education official, the Ministry later stopped using armed guards on the grounds that the guards themselves had become targets of attack and as such put teachers and students at greater risk.⁵⁴

Case Study: Armed Guards in Nigeria's Safe Schools Initiative⁵⁵

The Safe Schools Initiative (which is distinct from the Safe Schools Declaration), implemented in Nigeria's northern states, has provided technical as well as financial support and interagency coordination for measures intended to protect education from attack. As part of the Initiative, armed guards have been used in some schools in conjunction with other measures. The Safe Schools Initiative has been piloted in more than 500 schools. Each school has developed and implemented the measures that have best fit its context. Options have included: establishing and building the capacity of community-based protection committees; armed or unarmed security guards provided by the government, ex-military personnel, or retired police officers; developing and implementing school-based safety and security plans; and working with the government to develop a rapid response system to repair or rebuild schools after attacks. According to a Nigerian Ministry of Education staff member responsible for assisting in implementing the Initiative, challenges have included: 1) a lack of guidance from the government on using guards in schools; 2) inadequate training, equipment, and remuneration for security guards in schools; and 3) weak coordination and challenges with regular communication between the different organizations and agencies involved in the Initiative (e.g. the Ministry of Education, UN agencies, and schools).

Armed escorts and modes of transportation

In a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan, Palestine, and Thailand,⁵⁶ security forces, armed guards, or local police have escorted teachers and students to and from school, or provided other protection.



Philippine police on heightened alert stand guard to secure school premises as a child sits on a chair for the opening of the 2013-2014 school year on June 3, 2013 in the capital city of Manila.

© 2013 AFP/ Jay Directo

Examples

- In Hebron, Palestine, according to NGO staff, the Israeli military assigned armed escorts to accompany some students to and from certain schools. However, it was reported that some students continued to be harassed by Israeli settlers and sometimes by the military escorts.⁵⁷
- In Colombia, according to UN staff, the government has worked with some local schools to provide armed escorts and school guards, as well as bulletproof vehicles, to protect teachers and students.⁵⁸

Arming teachers

In some countries, the government has armed teachers and provided teachers with weapons training. Arming teachers carries a host of risks; these include potentially provoking attacks, as teachers might be seen as combatants by opposing parties, and militarizing classrooms, which might make students feel fearful and anxious.

Example

- According to a 2010 report, in Southern Thailand, the government had given teachers permission to carry guns and provided weapons training to some teachers.⁵⁹ According to an international NGO, a teacher reported successfully using his own weapon at a government school to fend off gunmen attempting to shoot him.⁶⁰

Considerations Regarding Armed Physical Protection Measures**Risks/Challenges**

- Although some practitioners⁶¹ have argued that posting armed guards outside education buildings or at nearby military checkpoints might deter attackers from approaching, posting armed guards at a school, or arming teachers, may ‘militarize’ the school and potentially make it a target for attack by opposing forces.
- If security personnel are not fully trained, or are poorly disciplined, the risks to students and education personnel could actually increase.
- Parties to armed conflict could seek to infiltrate their own personnel into the school security force and then seek to attack the school, or its teachers or students.
- Armed teachers can affect students’ perception of the school, increase their sense of fear, possibly add to their psychosocial distress, as well as put students and education personnel at greater risk.
- The presence of male soldiers in a school providing security may lead to harassment or perceived risk of harassment, particularly of girls and women teachers, and increase the risk of dropout by female students or parents withdrawing them from school for fear of sexual violence or harassment.

Other Lessons Learned

- Utilizing military or local police to patrol roads leading to education facilities and find and clear bombs or other explosive devices before education personnel and students leave or arrive may be an effective measure for better protecting students and teachers from attack on the way to and from schools.
- Mandating security forces to remain outside of school premises, rather than reside in makeshift camps on school grounds/property, can prevent partial use of school buildings by guards assigned to protect teachers and students; this might help to decrease the risk that schools could become targeted for attack because of the presence of armed guards or might decrease the possibility that education personnel or students might be intimidated and thus stop attending school.
- If security guards are assigned by governments to protect schools, it is important that they equip, train, and pay guards adequately. Additionally, providing international humanitarian and human rights law training to security forces might help to prevent possible abuses.

Guideline 5 of the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*⁶² cautions that:

“The fighting forces of parties to armed conflict should not be employed to provide security for schools and universities, except when alternative means of providing essential security are not available. If possible, appropriately trained civilian personnel should be used to provide security for schools and universities. If necessary, consideration should be given to evacuating children, students, and staff to a safer location.

a) If fighting forces are engaged in security tasks related to schools and universities, their presence within the grounds or buildings should be avoided if at all possible in order to avoid compromising the establishment’s civilian status and disrupting the learning environment.”

3. Negotiations as a Strategy to Protect Education

In several countries, including Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines,⁶³ school and community leaders have negotiated agreements with parties to armed conflict—including government forces and non-state armed groups—not to attack schools or use them for military or political purposes. Negotiations usually require some type of intervention by a third party that is trusted or acceptable to all stakeholders and involve either direct dialogue or, if the parties are unwilling or unable to engage in face-to-face meetings, utilize some form of shuttle diplomacy.⁶⁴ There are, however, risks involved for all parties in negotiation.⁶⁵

Examples

- A 2009 CARE study that examined the protection of education in Afghanistan reported that some negotiations between local shuras and Taliban fighters had been effective both in preventing attacks and in obtaining promises to refrain from further attacks. The study also found that raising awareness in communities of the benefits of education had been a key factor in preventing attacks.⁶⁶
- In South Sudan, the Fashoda Youth Forum, a local NGO, has been involved since 2014 in negotiations to protect schools from military use. Members of the NGO have engaged school and community leaders, local authorities, and military representatives in meetings to end military use of schools. According to Fashoda Youth Forum staff, the presence of local, indigenous staff members serving as negotiators has been a significant factor in securing meetings with parties to armed conflict and throughout the negotiations process, as these staff members have credibility with all parties and are trusted to act in the best interest of the local population.⁶⁷
- In Mali in 2015, according to an Education Cluster staff member, school and community leaders successfully negotiated with rebel forces to permit exams to take place in the town of Menaka. Members of the United Nations Multinational Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) were stationed outside of the exam center to protect students.⁶⁸

Case Study: Negotiating Limits to Military and Political Use of Schools and Declaring Schools as Zones of Peace in Nepal and other Countries

In Nepal, during and after the ten-year insurgency that ended in 2006, schools as zones of peace (SZOP) agreements were made in a large number of schools. Local NGOs worked with school management committees to hold community meetings that involved education personnel, parents, and representatives of parties to armed conflict, including armed non-state actors and the army. These meetings resulted in agreements signed by all parties that restricted military and political use of schools. Codes of conduct for armed groups included rules such as the following:

- No recruitment of child soldiers;
- No weapons;
- No abduction of children or adults for coercion into armed groups;
- No military use of schools as bases, barracks, or weapons caches;
- No political use of schools for campaigning or coercion of teachers to campaign; and
- No electoral use of schools if this is likely to cause violence.

While schools and communities implemented SZOP, the initiative was also supported by civil society in the form of a national movement called “Children as Zones of Peace.” As such, widespread support for SZOP was built at local and national levels.

Results of the negotiation process in several regions throughout Nepal included: 1) reduced political interference in schools, 2) removal of temporary military camps from schools, 3) re-opening of closed schools, 4) improved education environments, and 5) greater support for SZOP from political groups and civil society. Additionally, UNICEF and Save the Children, both supporters of SZOP, reported a reduction in the number of attacks during the insurgency on some participating schools and a reduction in school closures, as well as increasing levels of community cohesion in schools implementing SZOP during the post-Peace Accord period.⁶⁹ However, conflict has continued post-insurgency in many affected communities, sometimes resulting in continued political and military interference in schools and requiring ongoing negotiations.⁷⁰

In 2012, conflict-affected communities in Mindanao, Philippines, adapted the approach utilized in Nepal in the Learning Institutions as Zones of Peace (LIZOP) program.⁷¹ Additionally, Save the Children began in 2015 to provide financial and technical support to develop SZOP in some communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Palestine; these programs have drawn upon recommendations for protecting education from attack and schools from military use outlined in the Safe Schools Declaration and the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.⁷²

Considerations Regarding Negotiations

Risks/Challenges

- Security issues and ongoing violence may make negotiations dangerous for some or all participants.
- If parties involved in negotiations do not establish trust and safety, parties to armed conflict could target participants.
- Some parties to conflict may not comply with codes of conduct established through negotiations. Signatories may ignore or break their commitments to codes of conduct and national events in conflict-affected countries may override local commitments to agreements.
- Negotiations may pose a concern for participants considering involvement in the negotiations process especially, in the case of some governments, if it is seen as legitimizing armed non-state actors.
- Negotiations with perpetrators can reduce attacks on teachers and schools but might have unintended negative consequences (e.g. agreements may include terms that may undermine education quality or education reforms).⁷³

Other Lessons Learned

- Ensuring negotiators are impartial, appropriate for the context and issues of concern, and ideally have some training in negotiations, is important for helping to mitigate risks involved in negotiations.
- Learning the goals and motivations of all parties involved in negotiations is important for successful negotiations.
- Negotiating the cessation of military occupation of schools specifically, and negotiating schools as zones of peace more generally, requires flexibility, persistence, and non-confrontational approaches with all parties.
- Carrying out a comprehensive risk assessment before negotiations begin is critical to help ensure the safety of negotiators as well as community members, education personnel, and students.
- In many contexts, because there is a risk of the recurrence of conflict or parties ceasing to honor their commitments, negotiations many need to be an ongoing process, even during times of peace.

4. SMS Early Warning/Alert Systems

Schools in several countries have independently or in coordination with Ministries, UN agencies, or I/NGOs implemented early warning/alert systems to communicate in real time about threats or attacks on schools. When education personnel and parents have been given early warning of potential attacks, they have been able to temporarily close schools, transfer students to schools in safe areas, or provide alternative delivery of education. Some systems have used mobile phones for communications between school administrators, school safety committees, families, local Ministries, and security forces. Through short message service (SMS) text messages, safety warnings have been issued and emergency assistance and other response mechanisms activated.

Example

- In some areas in the Central African Republic in 2015, community members, with the support of UNICEF, started a SMS alert system, EduTrac,⁷⁴ that links schools, communities, and local and national Ministries via text messages. In addition to allowing education personnel, especially in schools in remote communities, to communicate education data (e.g. enrollment and attendance) to regional and national Ministries, schools targeted for attack can also utilize EduTrac to inform the Ministries and police of attacks and receive support.⁷⁵

Case Study: Challenges to SMS Alert System in Mali⁷⁶

There are challenges to implementing SMS alert systems. For example, in 2013, UNICEF assessed the feasibility of using a SMS system for monitoring and reporting attacks on schools in Mali. The assessment found that while most teachers had cell phones, there was little network coverage in most rural areas, which would have severely limited the system's scope.

Despite this challenge, SMS alerts have been successfully utilized in several areas in Mali. According to Education Cluster staff, in 2015, some communities in conflict-affected areas established phone trees⁷⁷ to send messages from schools and communities via education personnel and students to local and regional Ministries to warn of attacks or threats of attacks. Local community members in Mali have also used telephones to inform school district officials, the Education Cluster, and the United Nations Mine Action Service about mines near schools. To overcome limited network coverage, education personnel and students make calls or send messages from identified locations where they know coverage exists.

Considerations Regarding SMS Early Warning/Alert Systems

Risks/Challenges

- The SMS system may not be practical in certain geographic areas, particularly rural areas, where there is insufficient network capacity and no resources to improve capacity. However, community networks may be able to pass on messages received as a way to complement technology.
- Schools may lack the resources to provide and pay recurrent charges for mobile phones for school personnel and community members in the alert system.
- Early warning systems may enhance rapid response, but are limited in their ability to prevent attacks.

Other Lessons Learned

- Determining the parties (i.e. specific teachers, parents, and community members) who should be part of the SMS network and ensuring that they can be trusted to uphold the responsibility of receiving and sending alerts and information about attacks is important when establishing early warning/alert systems.
- Ensuring that teachers, parents, and community members included in the SMS network have operating mobile phones with SMS capacity and that there is sufficient network capacity in the area to send and receive SMS messages is necessary when implementing these early warning/alert systems.
- Integrating local security forces or police into early warning/alert systems if and when appropriate, may help to facilitate rapid response.

5. Alternative Delivery of Education

To avoid attacks or the threat of violence, schools have implemented a number of measures to provide alternative delivery of education. These measures have been initiated at the school-level, usually in collaboration with community members, NGOs, and sometimes INGOs and Ministries, depending on the conflict context and motivation for attacks. Modifications in time, place, and mode of education delivery have also been devised when normal school sites are damaged, occupied, or targeted. Alternative delivery of education can better ensure continuity in access to learning opportunities, a commitment that is included in the Safe Schools Declaration,⁷⁸ and can provide structure, routine, and support to students and teachers, which may also bring psychosocial benefits.

Relocating places of delivery of education

In some cases where schools have been threatened or attacked and the risk is too great for education personnel and students to continue teaching and learning there, classes have been moved to homes, community buildings, mosques, or other sites in communities.

Examples

- In Afghanistan and Pakistan, where there has been ideological opposition to secular and girls' education from the Taliban, in some areas girls' classes, in particular, have been relocated to homes and other secure locations. The location of some of these classes has moved frequently to avoid targeting.⁷⁹
- In northern Syria, temporary, makeshift schools staffed by both trained and untrained volunteer teachers have been set up in more secure villages when parents in some areas have been afraid to send their children to their regular local schools.⁸⁰

Case Study: Bush Schools in the Central African Republic

In 2006 when entire communities in conflict-affected areas in northern Central African Republic fled to the bush to avoid fighting and attacks targeting villages, temporary “bush schools” were established by teachers, parents, and community members, with assistance from UNICEF⁸¹ and other donors, including the United Kingdom Department of International Development (DfID) and the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). Parents were offered short teacher training courses and served as teachers in the bush schools. They delivered lessons that attempted to parallel the national curriculum taught in government schools, teaching over 100,000 students in makeshift shelters or under trees.⁸² Eventually, the Ministry of Education recognized bush schools as vital to the reintegration of students into the formal education system.⁸³

Community-based schools

In some areas, smaller schools have been established in villages to minimize risks for education personnel and students traveling to and from larger schools in nearby towns.

Examples

- According to USAID, since 2006, in 13 provinces in Afghanistan, a consortium of organizations, including the Afghan Ministry of Education, UN agencies, and I/NGOs, has supported community-based schools. The Ministry of Education helps to support the schools by providing national curriculum materials and exams and conducting training for community-based teachers.⁸⁴
- According to UN staff, in Mali, after escalating conflict between 2012 and 2013, community members established 27 community-based schools in the Kidal region. Many of these same community members also volunteered as teachers in the schools.⁸⁵ The volunteers provided either religious instruction, teaching from the Koran, or taught a combined curriculum that included components from the secular national curriculum and Koranic instruction.

Schedule changes

In many cases, schools have altered the times classes are offered during the day or altered the academic calendar so that education personnel and students can avoid traveling to and from school during peak times of risk.

Example

- In some girls’ schools in Afghanistan, students’ arrival times have been staggered to avoid drawing attention to schools.⁸⁶

Temporary learning spaces

In many camps for either internally displaced persons or refugees as well as in host communities or informal settlements (i.e. non-camp settings for refugees or internally displaced persons), temporary learning spaces (e.g. tents) have been set-up and can offer safety to school community members within a monitored camp setting or host community. These types of temporary learning spaces can also be set up when it is unsafe for students to attend schools due to attacks, or schools have been closed down due to attacks or military use.



A boy writes on a blackboard at a bush school on July 14, 2007, in Benanh Deux, North West Central African Republic.

© 2007 AFP/Lionel Healing

Example

- According to UN staff, in 2013 in Nigeria's northern states, a large number of temporary learning spaces were established in government-run camps for internally displaced persons, who were largely displaced due to attacks by Boko Haram, including attacks on schools.⁸⁷
- In 2011, following the referendum in South Sudan⁸⁸ several thousand refugees returned from exile in North Sudan or neighboring countries throughout East Africa. As a result, 2012 primary school enrollments were significantly higher than in previous years, resulting in congestion and overcrowded learning spaces. Six temporary learning spaces were constructed in Bor town and the village of Pieri, which provided 700 returnee boys and girls with access to primary education.⁸⁹

Distance-learning

In several conflict-affected areas where ongoing violence prevents schools from remaining open, local and national Ministries and I/NGOs have implemented distance-learning programs.

Case Study: Distance-Learning in the Ukraine⁹⁰

According to Human Rights Watch, distance-learning was offered to students in some government-controlled areas in the Ukraine during periods of intense fighting in 2014 and 2015 between government forces and pro-Russian insurgents. While some schools remained open for students still willing to attend, for students who stopped attending due to the risks involved, parents picked up students' assignments and teachers answered students' questions through phone calls, email, and Skype. In areas where schools temporarily closed, teachers utilized phone, email, and Skype to provide assignments and even lessons.

Considerations Regarding Alternative Delivery of Education

Risks/Challenges

- Education personnel and students may still be at risk of attack in alternative learning sites such as community-based schools or temporary learning spaces.
- It may be difficult to find secure alternative learning sites, procure materials and textbooks, or locate qualified teachers.
- The quality of education is likely to suffer in alternative education spaces as the teachers may not be sufficiently qualified and the facilities may be compromised. It may be challenging to gain the support and cooperation of Ministries to recognize education attainments through alternative education, making it difficult for students to reintegrate into the formal education system.

Other Lessons Learned

- Coordinating between schools, parents, and trusted community members is essential in the provision of alternative education.
- Funding may be required for hiring and training local teachers, establishing community-based or temporary schools, or acquiring teaching materials. Seeking assistance when possible from national or local Ministries can help to facilitate the implementation of these measures.
- Ensuring that education personnel in community-based schools are provided with support as well as monitoring and supervision is important to maintain continuous and effective teaching and learning.
- Shifting students from schools in high risk areas to low risk areas and offering lessons in double shifts (i.e. one cohort of students receives instruction in the morning and the other cohort in the afternoon) to accommodate the influx of students in schools located in low risk areas can potentially better ensure students' safety.
- Utilizing curriculum and assessments aligned as closely as possible with the national education system helps to prevent loss of learning and facilitates the transition of students and teachers back to the formal education system. It is important to work with Ministries to ensure that educational attainments through alternative education are accepted by the formal education system.
- Establishing community protection committees or patrols by local guards or police can potentially help to ensure the safety of alternative learning sites.



Children sit in a makeshift classroom on February 12, 2015, after its opening at a camp in Yeryawah, Iraq that hosts Shiite Turkmen displaced families who fled violence in the northern city of Tal Afar due to attacks by the Islamic State (IS).

© 2015 AFP/Marwan Ibrahim

6. Psychosocial Support

UNICEF defines psychosocial support as “those program components, which assist children, families, and communities to cope with crisis and to reinforce or regain healthy psychosocial development and resilience in the face of challenging circumstances.”⁹¹ Students’ material and social needs should be recognized as part of effective psychosocial support, as these needs are key factors in ensuring students’ psychosocial wellbeing.⁹² The Safe Schools Declaration includes a commitment to provide assistance to victims of attacks on education and military use of schools, one component of which should be psychosocial support.⁹³

Principals, teachers, counselors, parents, and other caregivers have vital roles to play in the provision of psychosocial support. Targeted attacks on schools or students’ frequent or ongoing exposure to conflict outside of school can render schools as highly stressful environments and students may, as a result, drop out or attend with less frequency. It is especially important that psychosocial support be provided in schools when children are separated from their families (e.g. situations of forced migration) or when family members are present but coping with their own stress.⁹⁴ Additionally, education personnel and students’ caregivers should also receive support in these contexts in order to perform their tasks well under difficult conditions.⁹⁵ The implementation of a multi-dimensional approach includes the use of appropriate

communal, cultural, and religious healing practices as well as referral systems for children and adults who may need specialized mental health services.⁹⁶

Schools have initiated their own measures for providing psychosocial support, but community organizations, I/NGOs, UN agencies, and Ministries have often supported schools, financially and programmatically, in implementing psychosocial support programming, as students' as well as teachers' needs for psychosocial support are often beyond the capacity of individual schools to meet. For example, a psychological assessment implemented by Save the Children in 2015 in two locations in the Central African Republic showed that nearly two-thirds of students surveyed had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).⁹⁷ UNICEF,⁹⁸ Save the Children,⁹⁹ the International Rescue Committee,¹⁰⁰ and the Norwegian Refugee Council¹⁰¹ have all developed psychosocial support materials that have been or are currently being used in a number of countries. Additionally, INEE has developed the *Toolkit for Psychosocial Support* that includes a number of international guidelines and resources.¹⁰²

Unlike the other measures described in this paper, there has been significant programmatic experience in the provision of psychosocial support in humanitarian contexts and thus there is more information on what might be effective psychosocial support for students and education personnel. This section attempts to summarize recommendations from guidance that already exists. This is then followed by two examples of ways in which psychosocial support has been provided in contexts where attacks on education have taken place.

Components of Psychosocial Support at the School-Level

- **Temporary educational activities.** These activities, which include drawing and games, are temporarily set up in non-formal learning spaces or alternately in schools during conflict. These activities help students to express their emotions and experiences, grow mentally and emotionally, play, and acquire contextually relevant skills.¹⁰³
- **Child-friendly learning environments.** Child-friendly learning environments are intended to be safe and secure for all students. Teachers should adopt methods of instruction that are participatory and inclusive, gender-sensitive, supportive, and free of humiliation and abuse.¹⁰⁴
- **Referral Systems.** These systems, which refer students to specialized mental health or social services, should be set up in schools to help ensure that students coping with severe stress or trauma receive appropriate support, assuming that these types of specialized services are available.¹⁰⁵
- **Teacher and Caregiver Training.** Psychosocial support training for teachers and caregivers provides them with knowledge of activities (e.g. drawing, role play, dance, and song) and approaches to teaching that present students with a range of different coping strategies and help build students' resilience. Teachers and caregivers should be provided training in approaches to psychosocial support in order to facilitate a safe and supportive learning environment.¹⁰⁶ They must also be able to identify when referrals to trained mental health professionals are needed.
- **Services for Victims of Gender-based Violence (GBV).** These services might include psychological first aid¹⁰⁷ and basic mental or physical healthcare provided by health care workers, and should be provided to victims of GBV.¹⁰⁸
- **Codes of Conduct.** Codes of conduct establish guidelines for acceptable behavior for teachers and students and should be developed and implemented to promote safe, supportive, non-violent learning environments. For teachers, this might include prohibitions on corporal punishment and GBV as well as principles for ensuring child-friendly learning environments. For students,

codes of conduct might address issues of respect and empathy for other students, harassment, and fighting.

- **Measures to Assist Teachers.** Measures to assist teachers might include: 1) ensuring teachers are regularly compensated and able to receive humanitarian support (including psychosocial support); 2) providing regular breaks for teachers throughout the school day; 3) encouraging regular staff meetings and providing teachers with in-service training on methods of instruction and approaches to psychosocial support; and 4) providing teachers with safe transportation to and from school (particularly for female teachers).¹⁰⁹

Case Study: The Healing Classrooms Initiative in Pakistan¹¹⁰

In Pakistan, the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Healing Classrooms Initiative is implemented in camp schools as well community-based schools. The Initiative offers trainings on psychosocial support to teachers working in schools in camps for internally displaced persons. Trainings include strategies for promoting student wellbeing; intellectual stimulation; and positive relationships between students belonging to different ethnic, religious, and social groups. IRC staff members provide teachers with ongoing support and carry out regular monitoring and evaluation of the Initiative. According to program staff, results of the Initiative include: 1) among students an improved sense of classroom safety and security; 2) an increased sense of school ownership among students and parents; and 3) increased coping capacity, creativity, and problem solving among students and teachers.

Case Study: The Better Learning Program in Palestine¹¹¹

Since 2007 the Norwegian Refugee Council, in partnership with the Institute of Education, University of Tromsø in Norway, and the Norwegian Center for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies, has implemented the Better Learning Program (BLP) in Gaza and the West Bank. A school-based intervention that aims to help students suffering from prolonged exposure to armed conflict, BLP has two phases. The first phase, BLP-1, provides psychosocial support to all students in schools that are part of the program. Teachers are offered training on psychosocial support, including approaches to classroom and behaviour management (e.g. relaxation exercises) for students who may have witnessed or experienced traumatic events. The second phase, BLP-2, is provided to children exhibiting significant signs of trauma, including nightmares and depression. Children receive one-on-one counselling and group counselling where they are asked to draw their nightmares and then share their drawings with the group; parents with children participating in BLP-2 also participate in group counselling sessions. An external evaluation of the BLP program conducted in 2014 found that for participants in BLP-2, approximately two-thirds reported that their nightmares had been reduced from between four and five per week at the beginning of the program to between zero and one by the end of the program. Additionally, the evaluation found that teachers participating in BLP-1 reported feeling more effective when teaching students exhibiting signs of stress.¹¹²

Considerations Regarding Psychosocial Support

Risks/Challenges

- It may be challenging for schools to reopen safe learning facilities, ensure sufficient resources and quality of education, and provide psychosocial support to students and education personnel.
- There may be particularly insufficient psychosocial support programs for adolescents and youth (male or female), as programs tend to target primary school-aged children. In addition, specialized and professional mental health services may not be readily available for people who have suffered severe stress and PTSD.
- Teachers may be burdened with their own stress while providing psychosocial support to students; additionally, teachers may also lack sufficient training to provide psychosocial support.

Other Lessons Learned

- Training teachers, parents, and community members to recognize and respond to the psychosocial needs of children and avoiding disciplining students whose academic performance suffers due to mental health or psychosocial problems are important components of child protection.
- Addressing the psychosocial needs of teachers through training that includes classroom management techniques and approaches to coping with their own stress is important when developing and implementing psychosocial support programming.
- Offering psychosocial support activities (e.g. art, song, dance, and drama) that present students with multiple and different ways to express themselves can help to provide students with a range of coping strategies.
- Establishing a referral system to health, psychological, or social services (including religious or local healers), for students in need of specialized help, which includes clear criteria for referral, is important for helping to better ensure students receive appropriate support.
- Seeking assistance from I/NGOs, the Education Cluster, UN agencies, Ministries, or community organizations can help facilitate the development and implementation of quality psychosocial support programming.

7. Comprehensive School-based Safety and Security Plans

Schools in a number of countries have chosen to implement comprehensive school-based safety and security plans, often with the support of Ministries, UN agencies, or I/NGOs. These plans require strong leadership from principals and school management or protection committees, with active community and parent participation. The plans incorporate an array of measures, including protection, mitigation, and response actions. Many of the measures described in this briefing paper can be incorporated into a strategic, comprehensive approach to safety and security planning.

Plans can be prepared by individual schools, drawing on the possible actions listed above. At the level of education systems, the measures in the Table below can provide a framework to support the preparation of safe and security plans in all schools.



Palestinian schoolchildren practice taking cover under desks in their classroom during a civil defense drill in East Jerusalem on April 8, 2008.

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PROMOTING COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL-BASED SAFETY AND SECURITY PLANNING: SAMPLE COMPONENTS

School Safety Committees

Support the establishment of School Safety Committees, comprised of principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders that reflect the diversity of the community. School Safety Committees assist with the development and implementation of school-based safety and security plans, independently of or in coordination with local staff of Education Ministries, I/NGOs or UN agencies.

Coordination

Ensure that locally developed coordination mechanisms (e.g. Parent Teacher Associations), and Ministries or UN agencies and I/NGOs focus on safety and security measures, aligned with context-specific needs.

Comprehensive Planning Process

Ensure that national and sub-national planning processes provide support to school improvement plans. This involves including components in the plan that are implemented at different levels (e.g. school-level and national-level) and coordinating with a wide range of actors (e.g. education personnel, Ministries, and INGOs).

Assessment

Build schools' capacity to conduct a risk assessment before planning begins. Assessment tools can be designed locally, but schools and school management committees can also adapt tools developed by other education actors. Questions might include: What are the types of attacks on education? What are risks and vulnerabilities as perceived by education personnel and students? What measures can be implemented to mitigate these risks?

Protection Measures

Support schools in identifying protection measures to include in their plan, based on risks identified during the risk assessment and that correspond with and are designed to mitigate the types of attacks the school is at risk of, or that have been carried out.

Response Plans

Support schools in developing and implementing response plans, which include evacuation, delivery of first aid, and the repair and rebuilding of schools as well as replacement of school materials after attacks. Community involvement in repair and reconstruction of schools can help to facilitate the return of students and education personnel and also help to prevent future attacks.

Training

Support an emergency training component in school safety and security plans in areas such as first aid, early warning systems, risk analysis, and evacuation plans and drills. Community leaders should be included in the trainings, which should be adapted to local contexts. Education personnel, community members, parents, and students should be trained to implement all phases of the school-based safety and security plan, and training should be done at regular intervals to ensure there are a sufficient number of persons with the capacity to implement the components of the plan. Additionally, training in approaches to psychosocial support should be provided to education personnel and community members.

Early Warning Systems

Where appropriate, promote early warning systems, including SMS alert systems or systems utilizing other technology, and establish coordination mechanisms between school leaders and local and national Ministries to ensure information is transmitted in a timely manner and that there is rapid response system in place (e.g. by local security forces). (If government forces attack schools, community leaders must implement and manage the system independently.)

Education Continuity

Support schools in developing measures for continuity of education that include safeguarding education delivery sites, securing appropriate teaching materials, and recruiting teachers. The plan should also include measures to continue education at home or at other alternative delivery sites if conditions are unsafe for education personnel and students to travel to and from or attend school.

Address Gender-based Risks¹¹³

Incorporate into safety plans an analysis of the particular risks facing female and male students and teachers, and include measures that address these risks.

Examples

- In Nigeria, according to an international NGO, as part of a national strategy led by the Ministry of Education, emergency plans have been developed for some schools and some members of school-based management committees are being trained to act as first responders.¹¹⁴
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Education Cluster has worked at the school-level with teachers, parents, and students in some schools to analyze threats and devise risk-reduction plans.¹¹⁵
- In Colombia, according to UN staff, some schools have worked with local Ministries to develop crisis and risk-reduction plans for preparedness and response.¹¹⁶
- In Uganda, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning has worked with the Ministry of Education to build capacity a district and school level to conduct school vulnerability analyses and plans to reduce conflict and disaster risks.¹¹⁷

Case Study: UNESCO's Crisis and Disaster Risk Reduction Program in Gaza¹¹⁸

Beginning in 2011 in Gaza, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education partnered with UNESCO to deliver a Crisis and Disaster Risk Reduction (c-DRR) program that sought to make vulnerable schools safer by adopting an integrated approach to protection. The program adapted the principles and good practices of disaster risk reduction to a conflict setting and the particular context of Gaza. As part of the c-DRR program, a risk assessment was carried out that collected information on the types and frequency of attacks on education, types of damage to school buildings, and the impacts of attacks on students and teachers. This information was utilized to develop school safety and security plans that supported locally developed strategies, including activities developed by school management committees for protecting schools (e.g. parents calling teachers in the morning to check if the route to school was safe). An evaluation of the c-DRR program identified a number of lessons learned, including that plans should: provide safety trainings for teachers and students as part of annual school development plans; establish safe play areas in or near schools; and involve community members that represent the diversity of the community, including women and girls in development and implementation; and integrate monitoring and reporting of attacks into responses.

Considerations Regarding School-based Safety and Security Planning

Risks/Challenges

- Existing tensions between groups can be ignited if representatives from all diverse groups in the community are not involved in the planning process.
- Given the challenging security environments in which many schools in conflict-affected areas operate, there is a limit to what schools and communities can do to develop and implement school-based safety and security plans. Technical and financial support may be needed from the local education authorities, UN agencies, I/NGOs, community organizations, or other sources.

Other Lessons Learned

- Providing technical and financial support is often necessary to implement school-based safety and security plans. Partnership between local education authorities, other national authorities, UN agencies, I/NGOs, community organizations is important.
- Engagement of national or sub-national Education Ministry staff with an Education Cluster (if active in a country) or working group¹¹⁹ in risk-informed planning can help to strengthen school-based safety and security plans.
- At school level:
 - Establishing a school safety committee or integrating school safety and security planning into annual school development plans can help to facilitate the development of school-based safety and security plans.
 - Ensuring that members representative of the diversity of all groups in the community are involved in the planning process (including females and males), and that administrators, teachers, students, and parents are included is important when developing and implementing school-based safety and security plans.
 - Considering the gender implications of types and impacts of attacks and developing gender appropriate responses is critical for an effective plan.
 - Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all actors involved can help to facilitate the implementation of the plan.
 - Including monitoring and reporting of attacks on schools in school-based safety and security plans can help to assist vulnerable schools in reporting attacks or threats of attacks if and when they occur.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Valuable lessons have emerged from examining what school-based actors are doing to protect education from attack in conflict affected communities, despite the limitations of conclusive evidence as to what is effective and recognizing that there are risks and challenges associated with any measure. This paper concludes that the anecdotal evidence from the practitioners consulted and the reports reviewed to prepare this paper, suggests that school-based actors should focus on adopting measure seven, comprehensive school-based safety and security plans, which include components of the six other measures described in this paper.

Overarching Recommendation:

Schools should adopt comprehensive school-based safety and security plans, which include components of the six other measures described in this paper. These plans represent an integrated approach to protecting education from attack that combines a variety of different school-based protective measures, and adapts them to the specific context of the community, weighing the risks and challenges as they pertain to the prevailing conditions. By adopting a coordinated, cohesive strategy, school-based actors could be more prepared to, ideally, prevent and respond to attacks on students, teachers, and school buildings.

However, it is also clear that individual school resources are often insufficient to address the frequency and scale of attacks on education, even when comprehensive plans are developed, and school-based measures, while important and necessary for protecting education, are shorter-term solutions to attacks. Ministries, and where appropriate, UN agencies, and I/NGOs, need to support these school-based efforts, not least because school-based actors are first responders and may not have the luxury of waiting for governments to take action when education is attacked. Moreover, as the people with the closest experience of the attacks, they are uniquely qualified to advise on appropriate responses to the unique dynamics of the conflict and the attacks, and draw on the particular resources of the community. However, national governments, with the support of UN agencies and I/NGOs, should also address the underlying motives for attacks on education and facilitate longer-term, systemic change to the content and delivery of education to ensure that curricula and access to education resources do not become a trigger for conflict. Governments, with the assistance of external agencies should, for example, address the recommendations in UNESCO's 2011 Global Monitoring Report "to prioritize the development of inclusive education systems, with policy on language, curriculum, and decentralization informed by an assessment of the protection impact on long-standing grievances."¹²⁰

Governments should also adopt comprehensive, coordinated strategies of their own to protect education from attack. One way in which they can do this is by endorsing and implementing the Safe Schools Declaration, which includes commitments to address systemic education issues, including by introducing conflict-sensitive education policies, taking action to support the continuation of education during armed conflict, and re-establishing educational facilities following attack or military use. The Declaration also includes commitments to strengthen monitoring and reporting of attacks and military use of schools, prosecute perpetrators, and support victims. Finally, by joining the Declaration, states are endorsing the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Attack and Military Use during Armed Conflict*, which will better ensure the safety of students and teachers and safeguard the right to education in conflict. While systemic changes in the content and delivery of education are beyond the capacity of school-based

actors, they, along with Ministries, I/NGOs, and UN agencies should advocate with governments to join and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

In addition, implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and the *Guidelines* will, in turn, strengthen communities by encouraging social cohesion through education that is conflict-sensitive and helps to build individual and community resilience. This will amplify the work of local schools and communities to better prevent attacks on education, protect schools from military use, and respond to, and mitigate, the impacts of attacks and military use when they do occur in conflict-affected communities around the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations represent a synthesis of lessons learned from measures to protect education from attack and schools from military use in a number of countries as well as findings drawn primarily from reports written by INGOs and UN agencies that have supported school-based measures. The recommendations are directed at three levels: 1) To school administrators, principals and head teachers to assist them in implementing protection measures at the school-level; 2) To national ministries that support education, including the ministry of education, but including other ministries such as child welfare, to support school-based actors in implementing protection measures at the school level; and 3) To inter-governmental agencies such as the UN and I/NGOS to support school-based actors in implementing protection measures at the school-level. As mentioned earlier, actors seeking to implement or support any of the measures described in the paper should review all of them to assess their applicability, the risks involved, and the potential benefits. Since risks and conflict contexts vary from country to country, there is no one approach that can be applied to all situations. It is important to note that measures should be adapted to meet the context-specific needs of each country or locale, and that a conflict-sensitive approach to development and implementation is necessary to ensure that measures “do no harm.”

To school administrators, principals, and head teachers

Comprehensive School-based Safety and Security Planning

- Develop a systematic and comprehensive school-based safety and security plan, tailored to local needs, in collaboration with the school management committee and local education authorities.
- Plan for teachers, both females and males, to participate in trainings and subsequently train other teachers, parents, and community members, to assume leadership roles in emergency response plans. Select teachers, both females and males, who can respond effectively in emergency situations.
- Utilize technology (e.g. mobile phones, email/Skype), if available and appropriate, in implementing and monitoring school-based safety and security, early warning systems, or distance-learning.
- Plan for alternative delivery and continuity of education, for example, community-based schools or distance-learning, to help ensure continuity and access to education.
- Identify needs for strengthening of school infrastructure (e.g. building boundary walls around schools) to deter attacks. If resources are insufficient, seek assistance from local education authorities, local representatives of I/NGOs and UN agencies, or other sources.
- Consider measures to ensure safe passage of students and teachers to and from school and for physical protection of school premises.

Leadership

- Assume a leadership role in developing and implementing school-based measures, in collaboration with community members, education authorities, and others.
- Coordinate the development and implementation of school-based measures with parents, local religious and community leaders, community organizations, local education authorities, I/NGOs, and other organizations as applicable. Additionally, where appropriate, seek resources (e.g. financial and technical capacity-building assistance) from concerned individuals/organizations to implement new measures or strengthen existing measures.

Risk Analysis

- Carry out a risk analysis¹²¹ before developing and implementing school-based measures. A risk analysis should identify possible threats to the school, students, teachers, and community members and the probability of attack. Risk analyses should also assess vulnerabilities in school infrastructure, assess and map evacuation routes, and identify means to mitigate risks and vulnerabilities.
- Utilize findings from the risk analysis to inform the development and implementation of school-based safety and security measures.

Community Involvement and School Management Committees

- Seek support from community organizations and school management committees to develop school-based protection measures and to document program impact.
- Form a school protection committee or work within existing school/community structures (e.g. Parent Teacher Association) to facilitate community involvement in developing and implementing school-based measures or comprehensive school-based safety and security plans.
- Consider involving religious or community leaders in school governance, where appropriate, to establish or strengthen support for education within the community.
- Ensure community participation that reflects the diversity of the community, including women and girls, in developing and implementing school-based measures.
- Ensure that mothers, fathers, and other caregivers, are involved in developing and implementing school-based measures or comprehensive school-based safety and security plans and make available to parents (or other family members) training in first aid, early warning systems, and psychosocial support.
- Make decisions through consensus or other participatory, inclusive, democratic processes to support the independent role of the school management committee and ensure that decisions made reflect the diversity of views and beliefs held by community members.

Resources

- Seek resources (financial and technical capacity-building) where appropriate, from local education authorities, I/NGOs, UN agencies and other sources to strengthen protection measures.

Advocacy

- Advocate for government policies that protect education from attack, through appropriate channels.
- Utilize evidence of attacks that have already occurred to highlight risks to the school community and advocate for protection.

To ministries involved in protecting education, including primarily the ministry of education, but also including child welfare, defence and other ministries as appropriate

Financial and Technical Support

- Provide funding to schools to enable them to implement context-specific, effective, and sustainable school-based measures.
- Support school-based actors in developing comprehensive, school-based safety and security plans.
- Seek to ensure sustained support for school-based measures (e.g. through multi-year commitments).

Policy Development

- Develop a comprehensive policy for protecting education from attack and military use, and engage all concerned ministry staff at central and local level in implementing this strategy. Include short term measures for prevention and response, as well as adopting conflict-sensitive education policies and programs that help reduce the risk of future conflict.

Advocacy

- Advocate with appropriate ministries (e.g. Defense and Foreign Affairs) for the state to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration and implement the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.¹²²
- Advocate with the Ministries of Finance and Planning to support conflict-sensitive reforms to education policies and programs, including the costs of rehabilitating schools after they have been attacked or used for military purposes.
- Advocate for research on the effectiveness of different measures to protect education from attack and schools from military use, including research into the gender impact of attacks and military use and the effectiveness of response measures for boys and girls, men and women.

To UN agencies, and I/NGOs

Technical Support

- Support the development of technical capacity-building assistance to schools to enable them to implement context-specific, effective, and sustainable school-based measures, particularly risk-informed, comprehensive school-based safety and security plans.
- Seek to ensure sustained support for school-based measures (e.g. through multi-year commitments).
- Facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration between education and child-protection sectors in developing and implementing school-based measures.

Support Innovative and Evidence-based Measures

- Support new, innovative approaches to protecting schools, including technology that can facilitate the implementation of early warning systems or distance-learning.
- Assist in evaluating school-based measures to determine their effectiveness.

Secondary School Protection

- Ensure secondary schools are supported in developing and implementing school-based measures, as the efforts of UN agencies/INGOs are often focused on protecting primary schools.

Advocacy

- Advocate with the national government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and implement the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* and/or support implementation when possible and as appropriate.
- Advocate with government to budget for and implement safe schools measures including conflict-sensitive reforms to education policies and programs and advocate with donors for longer term investments in conflict sensitive education that can build social cohesion that, in turn, can strengthen community and individual resilience.
- Advocate with the national government to include a budget line for costing attacks on education, including the costs of rehabilitating schools after they have been attacked or used for military purposes.
- Advocate within the development and donor community to support research on the effectiveness of different measures to protect education from attack and schools from military use, including research into the gender impact of attacks and military use of schools and the effectiveness of response measures for boys and girls, men and women.

ANNEX 1: RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL LAW¹²³

Three regimes of international law are particularly relevant to the protection of education.

1.1 International human rights law (IHRL):

IHRL protects the rights to which all individuals are entitled, regardless of their race, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. It applies to everyone on the territory (and in certain situations beyond the territory) of the state in question, including internally displaced persons and non-nationals (such as refugees), and it applies to all situations at all times. Under this law, states parties have the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill the human right to education. Every single state in the world is party to this law through at least one of the major global human rights treaties.

A number of international and regional treaties provide for a right to education. The treaty most widely ratified¹²⁴ (by 194 States, all except the United States) is the International Convention¹²⁵ on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC).

Convention of the Rights of the Child Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

- (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
- (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
- (c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
- (d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
- (e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;
- (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

See also the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 13¹²⁶, which also provides for a right to education for everyone—not just children—and all levels of education. The ICESCR has been ratified by 160 States.

1.2 International humanitarian law (IHL):

IHL is a body of law that regulates the conduct of parties to an armed conflict. It applies to all parties to a conflict, including states and armed non-state groups. IHL contains some specific protections for education, educational facilities, civilians, and also special protection for children, but it does not provide for a ‘right to education’ per se.

1.3 International criminal law (ICL):

ICL identifies the circumstances that attract individual criminal responsibility for its violation. It explicitly protects educational property by: criminalizing acts of “intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to...education...provided they are not military objectives”; protecting students and education staff against unlawful killings, torture, sexual violence, and against the use of students as child soldiers; and by criminalizing persecution and incitement to genocide.

The relationship between the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, the *Safe Schools Declaration*, and international law

The *Guidelines* are not in themselves legally binding but do complement international law as it stands. Under IHL, schools and universities are normally considered to be civilian objects, and a deliberate attack on a school or university is a war crime. Civilian objects can, however, be converted into military objectives, making them potentially lawful targets for attack by opposing forces. Military use may – but will not necessarily – convert schools and universities into military objectives. At all times, all parties are required to take constant care and all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects from the effects of attacks, and to consider the proportionality of the military advantage anticipated in relation to the impact on civilians.

A core aim of the *Guidelines* is to protect against the risk of armed forces and groups converting schools and universities into military objectives by way of military use and exposing them to the potentially devastating consequences of attack.

Moreover, under IHL, each party to a conflict must remove, to the extent feasible, civilians under its control from the vicinity of military objectives. Thus it is unlawful to use a school simultaneously as a military base, barrack, or firing position and also an educational center.

The *Safe Schools Declaration* also is not a legally binding document. It is the vehicle by which states can make a political commitment to endorse and use the *Guidelines*. The Declaration also includes additional commitments to better protect education in situations of armed conflict.

ENDNOTES

¹ Developed by education policymakers and planners at the ministry level, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed policies and programs are intended to address underlying grievances that drive conflict. For more information on conflict-sensitive education policies and programming, see: INEE, Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education (INEE, 2013), <http://www.ineesite.org/en/resources/inee-guidance-note-on-conflict-sensitive-education>; and UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO International Bureau of Education, and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Safety, Resilience and Social Cohesion: a guide for education sector planners and curriculum developers (IIEP, 2015).

² Shuttle diplomacy is the action of an outside party serving as an intermediary between or among parties; the parties do not directly engage with one another.

³ Melinda Smith, “Schools as Zones of Peace: Nepal case study in access to education during armed conflict and civil unrest,” in Brendan O’Malley, Protecting Education from Attack: A State of the Art Review, (UNESCO, 2010), pp. 261-278, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001867/186732e.pdf>.

⁴ UNICEF, “UNICEF Programming for Psychosocial Support, Frequently Asked Questions” undated, <http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Programming%20for%20Psychosocial%20Support%20FAQs.pdf>.

⁵ These plans may also take note of other safety hazards; for examples of school-level tools for vulnerability analysis and plan development see Anna Seeger and Luke Pye (forthcoming). Lessons from strengthening education sector capacities in Conflict and Disaster Risk Management. (Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning).

⁶ The Safe Schools Declaration, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf.

⁷ Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf.

⁸ UNESCO, “Keep schools out of the conflict says UNESCO General Director as UN launches Gaza Crisis Appeal,” February 8, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/ramallah/about-this-office/single-view/news/keep_schools_out_of_the_conflict_says_unesco_director_general_as_un_launches_gaza_crisis_appeal/#.VSahPZNoc4U.

⁹ Save the Children, Attacks On Education: The Impact of Conflict and Grave Violations on Children’s Futures (Save the Children, 2013), p. 10, http://www.savethechildren.de/fileadmin/Dokumente_Download/Downloadbereich/Attacks_on_Education_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰ Global Coalition Protect Education from Attack, Education under Attack 2014 (GCPEA, 2014), p. 8, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2014_full_o.pdf.

¹¹ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Lessons in War 2015 (GCPEA, 2015), http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_in_war_2015.pdf.

¹² Global Coalition Protect Education from Attack, Education under Attack 2014 (GCPEA, 2014), p. 47, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2014_full_o.pdf.

¹³ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Lessons in War 2015 (GCPEA, 2015), http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_in_war_2015.pdf.

¹⁴ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Lessons in War 2015 (GCPEA, 2015), http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_in_war_2015.pdf.

¹⁵ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Lessons in War 2015 (GCPEA, 2015), p. 14, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/lessons_in_war_2015.pdf.

¹⁶ Developed by education policymakers and planners at the Ministry level, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed policies and programs are intended to address underlying grievances that drive conflict. For more information on conflict-sensitive education policies and programming, see: INEE, Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education (INEE, 2013), <http://www.ineesite.org/en/resources/inee-guidance-note-on-conflict-sensitive-education>; and UNESCO Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO International Bureau of Education, and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, Safety, Resilience and Social Cohesion: a guide for education sector planners and curriculum developers (IIEP, 2015).

¹⁷ ‘Do no harm’ is an approach which helps to identify unintended negative or positive impacts of humanitarian and development interventions in settings where there is conflict or risk of conflict. It can be applied during planning, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure that the intervention does not worsen the conflict but rather contributes to improving it. ‘Do No Harm’ is considered an essential basis for the work of organizations operating in situations of conflict, see INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery. (INEE, 2010).

¹⁸ Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, What Ministries Can Do To Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use (GCPEA, 2015), http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/what_ministries.pdf.

¹⁹ For a description of presentations from the Workshop, see: Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Summary Report of the Workshop on Promising Practices for Protecting Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use (GCPEA, 2016), http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/istanbul_workshop_summary_report.pdf.

²⁰ Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf.

²¹ The Safe Schools Declaration, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf.

²² Developed by education policymakers and planners at the ministry level, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed policies and programs are intended to address underlying grievances that drive conflict. For more information on conflict-sensitive education policies and programming, see: INEE, Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education (INEE, 2013), <http://www.ineesite.org/en/resources/inee-guidance-note-on-conflict-sensitive-education>.

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²⁵ A risk assessment, also referred to as a ‘risk analysis’ explores the potential danger(s) of an activity in order to prevent, mitigate, or respond to those dangers. The risk analysis process explores questions such as: What could go wrong? What is the likelihood of something going wrong? What would be the impact on the people (in this case children), on the monitoring system, and on education if something went wrong? For resources related to assessment in emergency contexts, see: Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies, INEE Toolkit: Implementation Tools: Assessment Foundation Standards, http://toolkit.ineesite.org/inee_minimum_standards/implementation_tools/analysis_standard_1%3A_assessment.

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³⁰ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/65/280-S/2011/250, 11, para. 166, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/280 as cited in Study on Field-based Programmatic Measures to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA, 2011), p. 45, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/study_on_field-based_programmatic_measures_to_protect_education_from_attack_o.pdf.

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⁶⁸ GCPEA interview with Education Cluster staff member (Education Cluster, Mali), on May 5, 2015.

⁶⁹ Melinda Smith, “Schools as Zones of Peace: Nepal Case Study in Access to Education During Armed Conflict and Civil Unrest” in *Protecting Education from Attack: A State of the Art Review* (UNESCO IIEP, 2009), pp. 261-278, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001867/186732e.pdf>.

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⁷⁴ EduTrac is a mobile-phone based data-collection system that helps Ministries of Education collect data (e.g. attendance, enrollment) more frequently at the school level and gives real time information on schools. For more information see: <http://www.unicefstories.org/2015/06/09/using-sms-to-reach-schools-in-five-minutes-in-a-conflict-affected-country/>

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⁷⁶ GCPEA interview with Education Cluster staff, Mali on September 5, 2015.

⁷⁷ A phone tree is a system for contacting a large number of people quickly in which each person who is contacted by telephone then calls a number of other designated people to relay the message to them.

⁷⁸ The commitment of endorsing states’ to alternative delivery of education in the Safe Schools Declaration includes to: “seek to ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict, support the re-establishment of educational facilities and, where in a position to do so, provide and facilitate international cooperation and assistance programs working to prevent or respond to attacks on education, including for the implementation of this declaration.” *The Safe Schools Declaration*, http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf.

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⁸⁶ Rebecca Winthrop, “Emergencies, Education, and Innovation,” Forced Migration Review Supplement (2006), p. 12, as cited in Study on Field-Based Programmatic Measures to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA, 2011), p. 37, http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/study_on_field-based_programmatic_measures_to_protect_education_from_attack_o.pdf.

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⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, Studying Under Fire: Attacks on Schools, Military Use of Schools during the Armed Conflict in Eastern Ukraine (HRW, 2016), pp. 53-54, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/ukraine0216_web.pdf.

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¹²⁰ UNESCO, *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict in Education* (UNESCO, 2011), p. 3, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001907/190743e.pdf>.

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¹²⁴ Ratify is the legal term for ‘to agree to.’ Once a State has ratified a treaty, then it is legally binding and the State is ‘party to’ the treaty.

¹²⁵ Note that a treaty can also be called a covenant, convention, or charter.

¹²⁶ ICESCR, Article 13(1): “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”



What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use

A Menu of Actions

Global Coalition to
Protect Education from Attack



For more information on protecting education from attack during armed conflict, please also refer to this report's companion publication, *What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use: A Menu of Actions*.

Front cover: A schoolgirl walks past damaged buildings in Maaret al-Numan town in Idlib province, Syria on October 28, 2015.

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