

Education and Conflict: Expert Consultation for 2011 Education for All Global Monitoring Report

Wednesday, November 18, 2009, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

[Center for Universal Education](#) at Brookings, 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC

Many of the 72 million children who are out of primary school are living in countries affected by conflict, which presents a dramatic obstacle to achieving universal education. Education is critical for peace and social reconstruction; however, it is often neglected in state-building processes. Further, education can be regarded as both a symptom of conflict, including the destruction of infrastructure, injury and death of students and teachers, and damaging effects on trauma on children, and a cause of conflict, including the way in which education interacts with other drivers of conflict and the implications this has for education systems. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report (GMR) is an annual publication developed by an independent, multidisciplinary team hosted by UNESCO to assess global progress toward the six Education for All goals. The report highlights effective policies and practices, drawing attention to emerging challenges, and assessing aid to education. Additionally, each GMR is focused on a particular theme; the 2011 GMR will spotlight education and violent conflict.

On November 18, the Center for Universal Education at Brookings hosted an experts' consultation for the 2011 GMR to help inform the background research and thematic focus of the upcoming report. Two representatives from the GMR team, Pauline Rose and Anna Haas, provided a brief overview of the report's outline. They outlined the two-way linkages between education and conflict, the varying impacts across different conflict settings and affected groups, policy responses that address both access for vulnerable group and quality for contributing to peace and stability, and the role of international actors.

Sarah Cliffe, co-director of the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report (WDR), which will also be thematically focused on conflict and development, presented at the event, highlighting that violent conflict is a major development challenge that can destroy communities and infrastructure and hinder economic prospects. The WDR will include an analysis of "new" types of conflict, specifically violence after ceasefires, which is an increasing phenomenon, and conflict that crosses international borders, contributing to regional destabilization, globalized terrorism, and refugee flows. Ms. Cliffe explained that with respect to education, the WDR will look at impact of conflict on the social arena, including analysis of models of service delivery that contribute to the legitimacy of local and national education systems and methods for trying to preserve human capital during protracted conflict situations.

Presenters Peter Buckland of the World Bank and [Rebecca Winthrop](#) of the Center for Universal Education at Brookings focused on future trends and challenges for education in conflict settings. After providing historical context for the field of education in emergencies, Mr. Buckland emphasized that the future challenge for the field is the need to connect with policy-makers and practitioners outside education. For example, educators working in contexts of armed conflict must find ways to connect with experts in governance, state-building and defense, among other expert fields. Ms. Winthrop expanded on this concept by focusing on the interdisciplinary nature of the scholarly work underpinning the field of education and conflict, including psychology, anthropology, child

development, history, economics, political science and education. She highlighted the strengths of this interdisciplinary nature of the field, including the range of perspectives that enrich the understanding of the relationship between education and conflict, as well as the challenges of having dialogue across academic disciplines that have different standards of what constitutes knowledge and rigorous analysis.

John Williamson of USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF) presented the concept of child protection and education in violent conflict to the group. Children's safety and well-being depends primarily upon the protection of their family and community, as well as the child himself. However, these sources of protection can also be considered the most immediate source of threat to a child's safety and child-focused community groups can play an important protective role. The relationship between child protection and education is increasing as more international organizations adopt a whole-systems approach to strength child protection efforts. Effective child protection must be a well-coordinated, interagency effort that ranges from the family to the state, from the informal to the formal, Mr. Williamson emphasized.

Theresa Betancourt of Harvard University's School of Public Health provided preliminary results of the first prospective longitudinal study of male and female former child soldiers in Sierra Leone. Betancourt's research examines the stigma former child soldiers experience upon reintegration into their communities and the impact it can have on their post-conflict psychosocial adjustment. In communities that demonstrated higher levels of acceptance, former child soldiers experienced less depression and higher levels of confidence and pro-social attitudes (caring about others' welfare and empathy). Furthermore, the longitudinal nature of the study has shown that participation in education is one of the interventions that seems to have had a lasting effect over time. Ms. Betancourt said that sustained access to education is an important part of ensuring the well-being of former child soldiers and, specifically, opportunities to develop literacy and economic skills can help with community reintegration and possibly deter re-recruitment by providing usable and marketable skills. In Sierra Leone, part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process included the creation of interim care centers in the communities that could provide temporary support for school fees and family tracing and reunification services.

Lili Stern from the U.S. Department of Labor framed the discussion on youth, education and conflict by citing several recent studies that suggest the combination of a large youth bulge and the absence of opportunity, whether it be education or livelihood, are the primary drivers of violence and conflict. Further, recent work has also begun to show the indirect pacifying effect that increasing the education levels of females can have in a country. Thus, in countries where youth are close to half of the population, they hold a massive population to either help or hinder the stabilization of the nation. The policy implications of this finding include prioritizing education, as well as vocational and livelihoods training for youth, especially in countries about to experience a youth bulge or emerging from conflict. Ms. Stern illustrated that short-term remedies should focus on creating meaningful opportunities for idle youth through growth sectors and entrepreneurship promotion; and longer-term policies to mitigate instability should focus on expanding access to and relevance of post-primary education and training for both male and female youth.

Presenter Marc Sommers of the United States Institute for Peace recently completed an extensive qualitative research project with urban and rural Rwandan youth. Through his study, it became clear that few out-of-school youth in Rwanda have a chance to enter a formal education program. In urban areas, youth demographically dominate and yet act as though they are part of an outcast minority. Determining the impact of alienated youth who do not get into one of the limited-capacity education programs may add to a feeling of exclusion, which is a notable negative effect of the program. In

comparing the responses of Rwanda youth to responses from their counterparts in Burundi, it is clear that local context must drive interactions. In particular, the prospects for adulthood were strikingly different: nearly every Burundi youth mentioned education as part of their plan for improving their life situation, while few Rwandan male youth mentioned education, instead focusing on the need to construct their own homes, an important step on the path to getting married and having a family. In Rwanda, the fear of failure to carry out this societal expectation was enormous.

Following the presentations, Ms. Rose and Ms. Haas requested input from the more than 30 participants on the way in which the 2011 report could be most impactful. They asked for the group's help identifying potential priority areas, specific strategies and policies to address, and the key elements that would make the report an essential advocacy and technical tool. Discussion among participants addressed a number of additional related areas that the GMR was encouraged to consider including in its analysis of education and violent conflict:

- **Urbanization:** During and after conflicts, the urban population in major cities often doubles or triples, which impacts how education and development should be approached. A singular focus on developing rural areas will miss many youth who have migrated to the cities.
- **Use of Case Studies:** In relying heavily upon case studies to demonstrate findings, it is important to represent those projects and programs that have not necessarily stemmed from foreign assistance, equally highlighting the indigenous work that is contributing to education reform.
- **Local Resiliency and Peace-Building:** There is growing evidence of what has worked at the local level in terms of leveraging local existing capacities. Furthermore, there is a demonstrable, data-backed relationship between education and the production of stability and peace-building that needs to be understood and shared.
- **Education in spite of Fragility:** There are some examples of an explosion of services when the state cannot provide education; for example, hundreds of madrassas have recently emerged in Mali and current policy frameworks and data-collection methods have not yet addressed this type of phenomenon.
- **Human Development Lens:** It is important to use a human development or life-cycle model – beginning with early childhood and the impact of violent conflict on young children, then their development into school-age children and into youth and adulthood – to really understand full impact of conflict. For example, a surge of youth violence in Bosnia currently can be linked in part to the civil conflict in the mid-1990s, when today's youth were very young children.
- **Beyond Service Delivery:** Education is more than just the delivery of educational services. It is related to government legitimacy – whether the state is capable of delivering a basic service to its people -- and can be used as an instrument for ideological development.
- **Beyond Formal Schooling:** We need to always be asking what we mean by education, and furthermore, education for whom, by whom, for what? Considering what the alternatives to formal schooling may be in each context is important in looking at the ecological structures of the individual, family, community, and country.