

Education Accelerator No 1



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Introduction

BY JOÃO MARTINS
REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF
ADRA EUROPE

Every Child. Everywhere. In School.

This is our aim, and we cannot stop until we get there. There are still 260 million children to go, and the COVID-19 pandemic increased the number of challenges.

By bringing together experts in education from different fields to the Education Accelerator, ADRA Europe wanted to provide a platform for a dialogue that enables a broader vision for educational excellence and equity for all children and youth. It became clear that faith-based actors have a special role in this field.

With this paper, where all the speakers' interventions are collated, we hope to give one more step in promoting visionary thinking about making education accessible for all children. All speeches, coming from

different perspectives, bring the main challenges we need to tackle and concrete recommendations for action.

ADRA Europe deeply appreciates the collaboration of all the Summit's presenters. They were excellent and brought so many brilliant insights to the table. We thank each of them for their time and willingness to share their wisdom and experience in this paper.

In August 2020, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, launched the "Education during COVID-19 and beyond" policy brief. His words resounded loud: "As the world faces unsustainable levels of inequality, we need education – the great equalizer – more than ever."

Education is the great equalizer. We must take bold steps now. Together, we can accelerate access to education for all children and adolescents.



ADRA Europe Education Summit

BY RAAFAT KAMAL

PRESIDENT OF THE TRANS-EUROPEAN
DIVISION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST
CHURCH AND CHAIR OF THE ADRA
EUROPE BOARD

This Summit is building on the ADRA network advocacy campaign that was agreed upon at the annual gathering in Jordan on 25 February 2019. In a nutshell, the objective is to speak up for out-of-school children by empowering girls, refugees and children with disabilities.

Every child. Everywhere. In school. - the slogan of this advocacy campaign - is a global Adventist Church and ADRA-led movement to ensure that every child, everywhere, attends school and completes their education so they can fulfil their God-given potential.

The preferred future is no child should ever be denied an education. Not because of where they live. Not because their government is failing to provide adequate and free education. Not because their family is poor. Not because of conflict or displacement.

Not because of their gender, ethnicity, or disability. Every child, everywhere, has the right to attend school and obtain an education.

We, as a global community, have a responsibility to invest early in childhood education. Investing early in a child's foundational skills helps provide a possibility of a lifetime of learning. Without question, education is transformative, and it is the best way to develop people and communities.

This advocacy campaign to speak up for out-of-school children is directed at some of the most marginalised groups, namely, girls, refugees and children with disabilities.

Here are some statistics which I guess you are familiar with. Despite the good progress made over the past centuries, sadly and on a global scale, 262 million children, adolescents, and youth are currently denied the right to education.

One in five children worldwide is out of school. Around 90% of children with disabilities in the developing world are not in school, while refugee children are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children.



On this last point regarding refugee children, I experienced this first-hand. I was internally and internationally displaced by civil war for eight years. I suffered two war injuries; eighteen of my relatives were killed, our house was hit twice by rockets and once burned down. But the scar that I still have with me today is the disruption to my education for five long years.

Lack of education and disruption in education can impact lives negatively. Disadvantages linger, poverty continues, and scars remain for a long time.

Without a doubt, some of the most meaningful development projects that I was involved in my professional life were education oriented. Adult literacy, school building, income generation training, health training, civil society development – just to list a few – were transformative in every sense of the word, reversing the destinies of those impacted.

With 262 million children out of school, what is at stake is not just 262 million futures but 262 million generations of children. These children can be born healthier, be raised in a household that supports their education, and ultimately have the opportunity to live a better life than their parents, free from

extreme poverty, forced marriage, exploitation, or undignified labour.

With more than 21 million members globally operating the second-largest private education system in the world, the Adventist Church, with its 8,800 schools, in collaboration with ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) and hundreds of governmental, non-governmental, and grassroots partners, have not only a unique opportunity but also a moral responsibility to ensure that every child, everywhere, has the opportunity to attend school and get a quality education.

Every child is a child of God—precious in His sight—and deserves the opportunity to live a life of dignity and purpose, free from exploitation and the shackles of poverty. This is a human right, and we should recognise the value and potential of each individual child.

In conclusion, accelerating access to education for all children must be designed and implemented with urgency. It should be child-centric to help reverse their destinies and break the cycle of the status quo. I appeal to you to reverse their destinies and continue to speak up for out-of-school children by empowering girls, refugees and children with disabilities.



European Actions and Policies for Inclusion and Equity in Education

BY VICTOR NEGRESCU

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND VICE-CHAIR
OF CULT COMMITTEE

I am happy to speak about education and what the European Union is doing in this regard. I will start by saying that in order to make sure that every child gets access to education, it is essential to understand that we need to address this issue properly at a global level. And the European Union can play and should play a more active role in this regard by understanding that no child should be left behind.

And when I say that, of course, I refer to the fact that education is linked to our future, the future of our societies, and the future of each individual person. Education offers opportunities to all those who have access to it, and helps to prepare them for upcoming challenges.

In this regard, the current pandemic has shown the world that we face common global challenges linked to education. We have had to rush towards this digital form of education. Moreover, we have to face all these new changes related to digital and green transformation and understand ourselves to see what we can do better collectively in the future.

Therefore, at the European level - European Parliament and all European institutions - we have managed to elevate the education profile in the EU decision-making profile.

Firstly, we have launched a digital education action plan, showing how member states can tackle the challenges rated by this digital transformation. We speak about the need to have common standards, not leave any child behind, develop adequate infrastructure to ensure that all children in Europe and worldwide have access to the Information Technologies (IT), thus enabling them to get access to education even during lockdown periods. We speak about appropriate facilities, such as improving the schools and developing the technologies adapted for schools. We also speak about making sure that we are developing adequate methods to involve children in the educational process and also raise



the quality of education while, at the same time, keeping the vital role that professors, schools, educators have in the preparation of the upcoming generation.

At the same time, we work intensively in building a European education area. Hence, what we are trying to do at the European level is to bring together the added value that each Member State has by ensuring that we recognise diplomas, different skills and move in the same direction, while considering that there are substantial inequalities in Europe between member states, in terms of quality, access and the available infrastructure. As addressed in my report, we also recognise that the European Union has a global responsibility to develop initiatives and allocate adequate financial resources to tackle access to quality education. Therefore, the European Union has to be more active towards these crucial issues through its international programs. Firstly, by working together with different entities that tackle this issue; and use the know-how that NGO structures and cultural groups have when dealing with access to education. Secondly, by raising the education profile globally, with new initiatives to properly identify solutions to the problems we face worldwide.

We have been speaking about education for many years already

and about the need to ensure that everyone should have access to education, but, unfortunately, the steps that have been made thus far have not been enough. We need to accelerate what we are doing for education and use the existing know-how to learn from the mistakes that we have made while moving forward at a faster pace.

When a child is not attending school, that child's potential will not be fulfilled. So, if we lose one child, we already lose too much. Imagine how much we are losing every year? We are talking about hundreds of thousands of children and people of different age groups who do not have access to education. Unfortunately, the loss is immense when considering what we can do better at a global level. This is the reason why we are tackling this matter through humanitarian aid and development assistance programmes.

The topic of education has also been highlighted due to the pressure exercised by the European Parliament. Therefore, we will continue raising the education profile while simultaneously showing what can be done concretely in dealing with this important matter.

At the European level, I am one of the active promoters and initiators of this important idea. You know very well, maybe those of you that



know more about Europe, that we have developed a plan designed to relaunch Europe after this crisis, and we have already allocated 750 billion euros for it. In addition to this, with my colleagues' support in the European Parliament and several NGOs, I am campaigning to allocate at least 10% of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) funds for education. As a result, we managed to introduce that in a policy recommendation of the European Parliament and have already convinced a couple of governments to launch it.

Concerning the European Union's global intervention, we want to make sure that we allocate sufficient funds for education, at least the referred 10%, for what we are trying to achieve for the global relaunch after the current pandemic. Therefore, we need the support of all engaged groups willing to promote education, and, of course, we are campaigning actively for that. These are some of the issues of paramount concern for us in the European Parliament regarding education.

At the end of my intervention, I want to point out that it is clear that we are facing critical global challenges today and certainly in the years to come. I already referred to the digital transformation, the green challenge, as well as the health crisis. Of course, there are,

and will continue to be, many more challenges ahead of us; and to face them, we must understand that we need to provide a global answer. Politicians, like myself, are firstly responsible to the people who elect us. Yet, sometimes, we tend to ignore areas where we do not allocate enough importance to this global dimension. This is why I believe decision-makers should take this responsibility in explaining to people from both developed nations and developing countries that we are all in this together and should tackle those challenges together.

One of the common denominators of all of these challenges is education. If we want to achieve and face digital transformation, we need trained people with digital skills. If we want to provide a positive answer to the green challenges we are facing, we need green education to teach people how to take care of their environment, their community, and how to be involved in green transformation; thus, working together with the most important entities influencing the process. Furthermore, if we want to face the health crisis, we also need to understand it fully and acknowledge that we should be doing more for it.

The starting point in everything we are doing in our communities, our own countries, and the world should be education. This is why



I am actively fighting for it. I am really happy that I was invited to this conference today and I am pleased to

share with all of you about why I share this point of view that every child, everywhere, should be in school.

Across the Divides: Intersectional and Intersectoral Faith Approaches to Education

BY KIRSTEN LAURSEN MUTH

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF JOINT
LEARNING INITIATIVE ON FAITH AND
LOCAL COMMUNITIES

ADRA's education report is timely given current conversations on financing reforms that are crucial to achieving inclusive education. It is good to see faith perspectives within these conversations, such as the Jubilee Network and Debt Relief.

COVID has increased marginalisation and inequalities. Any work we do, in any sector, must address intersectional vulnerabilities by considering how racial, economic, sex-based, gender-based and other forms of oppression are linked, and ensure that access to education takes these into account in ways that not only increase access to education but also educate our children to create a new future. We also need to remember the historic negative impacts of education, which have harmed and marginalised those living with these intersectional identities.

In the words of Janine Bowen, "Education is a powerful tool - you can either use it to empower or to colonise. It can be used to ignite a movement or to placate a people."

Education approaches are central to advancing social goals, and contributing to cohesive societies that minimise disparities, support relationships and trust amongst diverse groups. I would like to pose some questions to you: How can education offer paths that raise self- and other-awareness and reduce bias and stereotypes? How will we increase capabilities in collaboration and conflict resolution? How will we enable a greater sense of belonging and community in ways that reduce bullying and violence? How can education improve well-being and opportunities for everyone regardless of their identities? And how will we support the most vulnerable students and their families through developing inclusive and caring environments?

There is a vicious cycle between education, inequality and violent conflict. Inequality increases the likelihood of violent conflict, and conflict is associated with loss of schooling and education inequality. According to UNICEF, by 2030, more than 80% of the world's poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. We know that schools, teachers and students are often targets of violence, including



gender-based violence. Climate change increase these pressures and associated impacts on children's learning and wellbeing.

Education is part of a learning ecosystem. We learn in and out of school, through what we are taught and our lived experiences. Faith values are also part of this ecosystem. Historically, education has been rooted in faith, and this is common among all faith groups. Currently, children around the world often learn from both secular state and religious educational frameworks. We have also seen faith-inspired education initiatives to close the gaps from COVID's school closures and isolation, including support to address the social, emotional and spiritual needs of children.

As migration patterns expand, we see increased pluralism within societies that continues to change the religious and cultural contours of many countries and highlights the need for deeper understandings of religious diversity. Omitting religious or spiritual education within the formal educational curriculum can leave voids that can be exploited by extremism.

We can advance by developing a well-being framework outlining principles to guide a values-based educational system. Relational

dimensions are a key aspect of well-being, and spiritual and relational resilience should be strengthened through introducing interfaith curricula, intercultural and interreligious learning, and adopting dialogic approaches to pedagogy. Teachers are mentors and guides, as well as instructors, and their professional and personal well-being also need to be included in education strategies. They also need support in overcoming cultural, religious, and institutional obstacles to inclusion.

Horace Mann once referred to schools as the "great equalizers". Addressing intersectionality and intersectoral opportunities within education will require developing broader educational and multisectoral partnerships between governments, NGOs, religious communities, faith-based organisations, schools and families, as well as the media, corporations, and academia. I am certain this conference will advance these opportunities.

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Global Education Report

BY GERSHON NIMBALKER

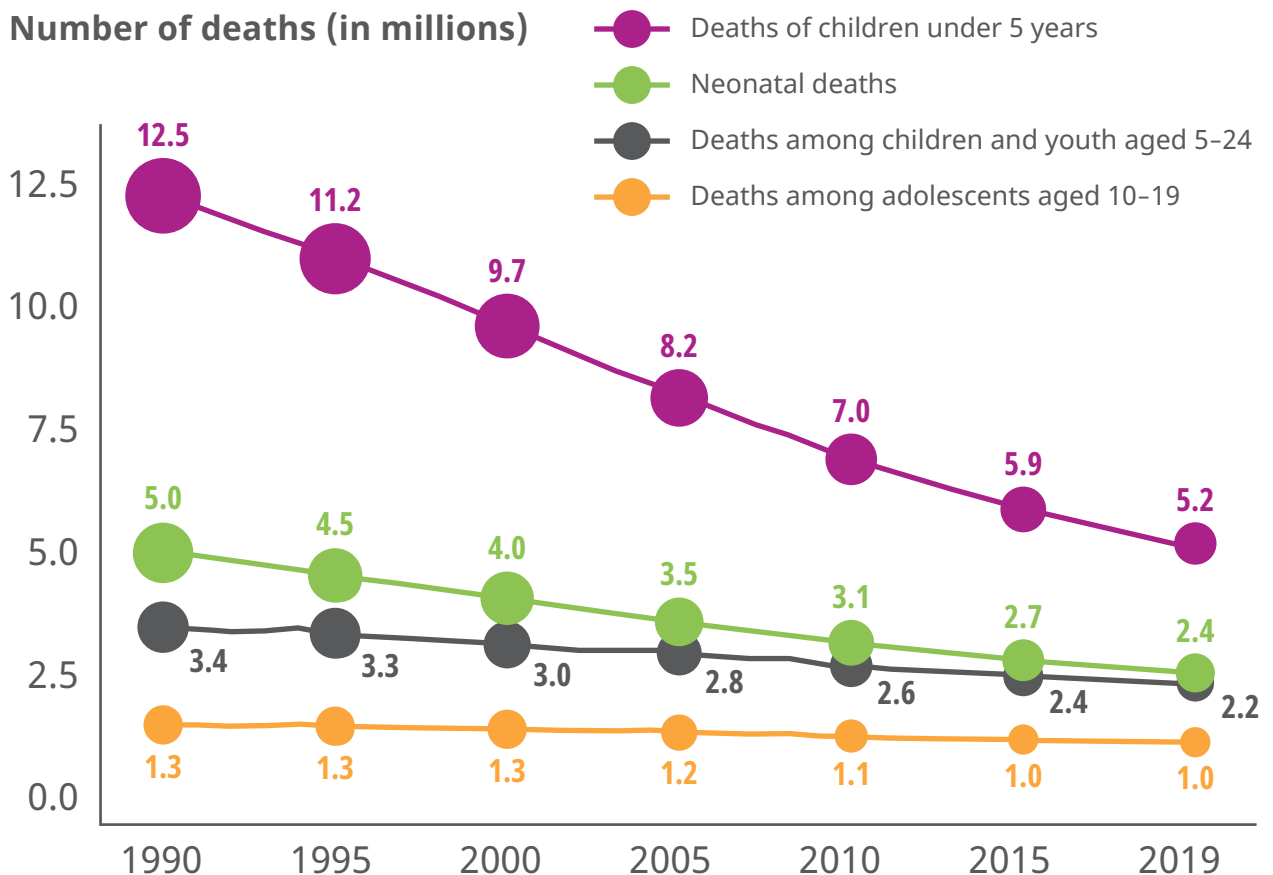
POLICY EXPERT, AUTHOR OF GLOBAL EDUCATION REPORT

In the last three decades leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has experienced an extraordinary period of progress.

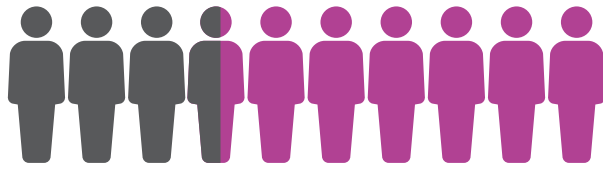
We have had a lot to celebrate on multiple fronts regarding development, and education has been no exception.

Child mortality (see graph below) plummeted from 12.5 million to 5.3 million children per year. Life expectancy has increased from 64 years to 73 years. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita has grown by 50%. Extreme poverty (see graph below) has fallen dramatically from 36% of the world's population to just 10%.

Number of deaths (in millions)



Extreme poverty 1990



35.9 %

These huge gains have been coupled with and propelled by a global education revolution.

Today's high-income countries were the first to recognise the importance of universal education, but the trend has gone global since world war two. Government financing and household demand for education have increased rapidly.

Most of us here will be familiar with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the first set of global goals that expired in 2015. These goals saw a massive release of global effort on behalf of people experiencing poverty and vulnerability around the world. They were responsible for accelerating a lot of the progress we have just talked about, and their impact on education has been notable.

The number of out-of-school children (OOSC) fell dramatically before the pandemic - from 372 million in 1990 to 258 million in 2018,

Extreme poverty 2015



10.0 %

from one out of every four to one out of every seven globally.

Here is one of the most exciting points of progress that we just do not talk about enough. We halved the number of girls out of school, and in doing so, eliminated the out-of-school disparity between girls and boys! That is one of the most remarkable steps towards equality the world has ever achieved.

On top of that, for many lower-income countries, the average years of schooling increased dramatically. For example, in India and Iran, it has more than doubled. India went from 4.2 years to 9.8 years, and Iran went from 3.0 years to 6.4 years!

That is the good news, right. But, unfortunately, that is all pre-COVID news. If it were all good news, we probably would not need an education accelerator like this one.

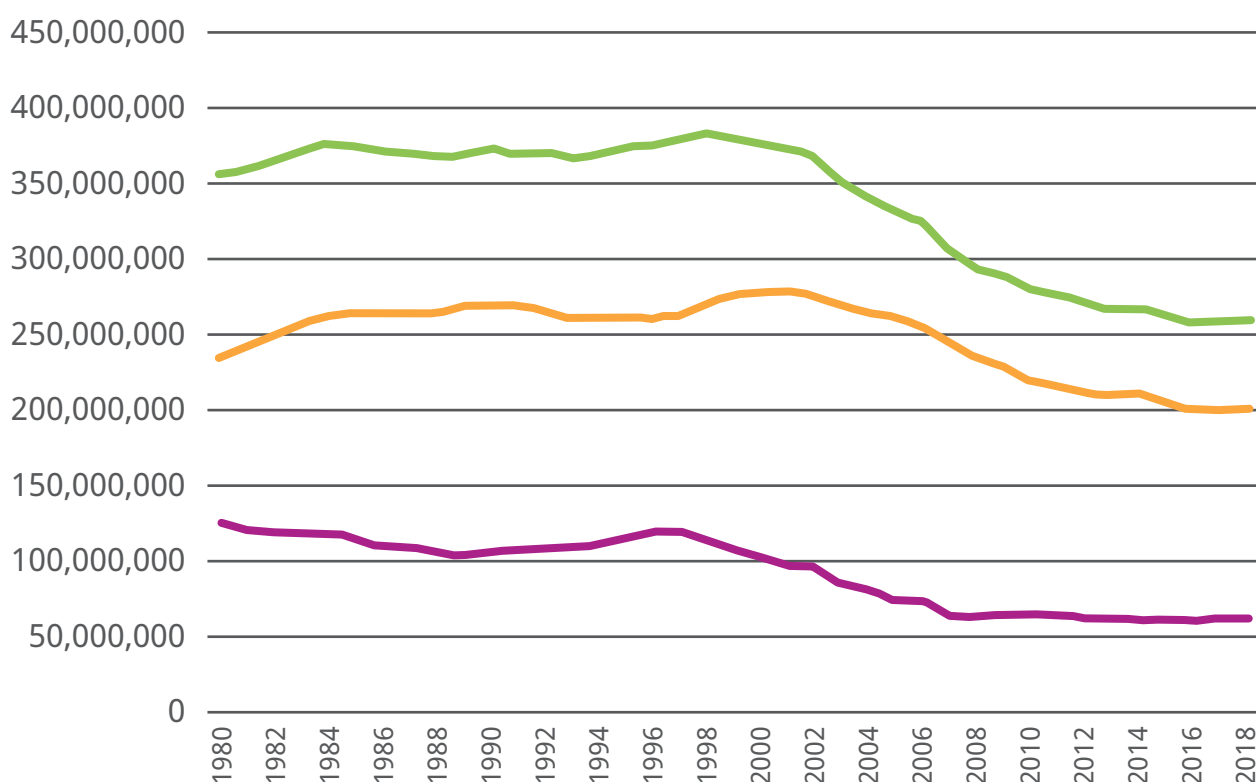
So here is the challenge. Even before COVID, progress had begun to stall.

Since the end of the MDGs, the amount of OOSC has hovered at around 258 million. The number of out-of-school children of primary school age has been stagnant for a decade (stuck at around 60 million). In recent years, progress with secondary school students has also ground to a halt.

COVID-19 is not just halting progress; it is reversing it! At the

height of the crisis, 1.6 billion learners in 190 countries across every continent were affected. 94% of the world's student population and 99% in lower-income countries have been impacted. Most troubling, up to 24 million children risk dropping out of school altogether unless we act now to accelerate education progress. This is why we are all here.

Number of out-of-school children



Exclusion versus Inclusion in Education for Roma in Europe

BY ALEKSANDRA BOJADJIEVA
POLICY EXPERT AT THE REGIONAL
COOPERATION COUNCIL FOR ROMA
INTEGRATION

I want to begin with two real-life stories that took place at different schools. The first happened in a classroom, in the second grade of elementary school. The teacher comes into the classroom, and after a while, she realises that her wallet is missing. She gets angry and takes a girl by the hand to the toilet (this is a child who is eight or nine years old), strips her to the skin and locks her there while this child is screaming. This is not a scene from a movie; this is a real scene from recent years, which happened in Europe. In the second story, a boy was beaten severely by his classmates because he was carrying the country's flag where the school was located.

These are examples that often happen to Roma children. When

I talk about these stories to people, I do a little experiment. Sometimes I tell them that these things happen to disabled children and immediately get empathic responses, but I do not get the same reactions when I mention that these things happen to Roma children. The empathy towards Roma across Europe is relatively low.

The stereotypes and prejudices are deeply rooted, and they are not manifested very often. However, in crisis or tense situations, they are expressed and present at the educational level. That is why Roma in Europe tend to have very low numbers in completing compulsory school and higher education levels. They are discriminated against, bullied, isolated, seated in the last benches, and often segregated in many cases. Sometimes they even attend special schools for disabled children without having any disabilities.

We are facing a big challenge, and why is it a challenge? There are 30 million Roma in Europe. They do not have a government to support them or a state of their own; they are a minority everywhere across Europe (the largest minority group without

any political support) and largely marginalised and excluded. This is a young population, and in the next five to ten years, we have to take into account that more than 3.5 million Roma will be the next generation working-force in Europe.

Therefore, we have to take people back to school without forcing them, but rather provide school environments that are welcoming and responsive to their needs.

We have taken some steps for overcoming this challenge. We have been successful to a certain extent to increase the number of Roma children completing primary education, even secondary and university education. However, we are still far from being successful; much more still needs to be done.

What measures have been implemented so far? An example is that a Roma Education Fund has been made available for scholarships. Furthermore, several governments employ teaching assistants to help Roma connect with the school. Other governments are trying to include Roma children into preschool

education free of charge, which is very important as we heard from the opening speeches that investing in early childhood education is essential. This is the measurable progress we have made thus far, with these few examples provided above.

Nevertheless, what needs to be tackled in the next phase is anti-Gypsyism. With the newest EU framework for Roma inclusion, anti-Gypsyism has been finally recognised as the root cause of Roma exclusion from all spheres of life, including education. This will be something that we will work on much more.

By way of illustration, I would also like to highlight, and I wish to thank ADRA, that I am involved in this project, “Every Child. Everywhere. In School.” by volunteering to assist children in doing their homework. I am pleased to do it, and it is gratifying. It is very good to see that we are helping children who have not had the same opportunities as others despite being very bright and clever.

Therefore, I would like to commend this effort and support its continuation.

Is Period Poverty an Economic or a Moral Issue?

BY PAULA KRAGTEN

JOURNALIST, RESEARCHER AND
FOUNDER OF *PERIOD MAGAZINE*,
AUTHOR OF THE BOOK *MOOI ROOD,
IS NIET LELIJK*

As a journalist, content specialist, and founder of *Period Magazine*, a magazine about menstruation, period poverty is obviously a familiar term for me. When you want to empower girls and women, menstrual education is a key factor. When girls and women do not have menstrual products and have to deal with menstrual stigmas, they drop out of school, which is not good for economic prospects.

Surprisingly, it seems that period poverty is also an issue in western countries. Why is this? Firstly, there was a scandal relating to the tampon tax. It turned out that in loads of countries, the tax rate for menstrual products was higher than, for example, for Viagra, condoms or even helicopter maintenance. As a result, there were petitions and other measures to change that worldwide. Many countries have modified their law for this purpose and lowered their taxes.

But we also have other forms of period poverty, which is the lack of menstrual products. I have seen significant initiatives globally that worked to collect funds for menstrual products for schools, college students, and even homeless women. The UK, for instance, did a survey back in 2017 that showed that one in ten girls in school could not afford menstrual products, and as a result, were dropping out of school.

I did a little survey on my own in the Netherlands for my book “Mooi rood, is niet lelijk”, best translated as “Beautiful red isn’t that bad”. Homeless shelters, prisons, food banks, refugee shelters, even scouting groups were contacted for my research. The reason for contacting the Girl Scouts was that there were several initiatives in the United States where Girl Scouts baked and sold cookies to shine a light on the topic of period poverty. The shocking result of the research was that there is no period poverty in the Netherlands.

We obviously face this problem here since we do have low-income families. Where there is a lack of money or funding, there must be period poverty as well! Since last year, this has become a topic in the Netherlands when Scotland made period products accessible for everybody who needs them, a real game-changer worldwide.



As a result, period poverty is high on the agenda in the Netherlands.

How good is this? As long as we have period shame instead of period pride, all awareness and discussion about menstruation, health and economic aspects are welcome. I am not particularly keen on stigmatising when combining the two terms menstruation and poverty. There is nothing wrong with providing free products for those in need. For example, in schools, toilet paper is free. The more we see period products in a normal setting like restrooms, schools, and restaurants, the more common they get, the easier it is to talk about it.

Nevertheless, the problem will not be solved by simply providing period products. Period poverty is not only about an economic issue; it is also about moral standards, how we approach matters in regard to menstruation, and how we think about it. As long as period pride is not the standard, we have some work to do. Therefore, the key solution to

tackle period stigma is education. Empowering girls and women by explaining how things biologically work and teach them all about aspects of menstruation, namely the history of period stigma and period shame, menstrual taboos, normal period, and how much cramps and blood loss are acceptable. The funny thing is that highly educated women are not aware of this and never think about it. Many women do not see their GPs, for example, when they suffer from serious medical complaints.

In short, I think we have to encourage people to think about menstrual taboos and why they exist. The more we openly talk about menstruation, the sooner menstrual stigma and period poverty will vanish. If you do not feel shame talking about menstruation, you will not be ashamed to ask your teacher, employer, or anyone for the support of a Period Project when you need one. So I advocate less period shame and more period pride.

Period Poverty

BY TAMARA RIPASSA

LECTURER AND TEACHER AT SAXION
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

I am a lecturer, and before I became a lecturer, I was a Social Worker. For 15 years, I tried to educate young people to become a wiser, stronger version of themselves. So they can find their way into the big wide world. This beautiful world in which we grown-up in can be very ugly at times.

Did you know that 1 out of 10 girls/women in the Netherlands struggle with period poverty?

People in Holland who are in debt or trying to get out of it have a budget of 50 – 75 euros per week to spend. Buying sanitary pads or tampons on this small budget is no option for them. So they use old socks, brochures or newspapers.

A lack of basic knowledge of how the body works sometimes means that women do not know if something is wrong; more often, they just accept it as part of the menstrual hassle. And, of course, there is the shame that comes with it. Talking about poverty is terrible enough; talking about period poverty means double the shame.

If we teach our children to speak freely about menstrual health at an early age, girls and women will

sooner seek help when needed.

Menstrual products should be available to every woman. The Poverty Fund of the government wants to tackle this problem nationally this year with the help of local aid organisations. They are working on accessible locations to make menstrual products available.

There is, however, still another problem. Even though we know period poverty exists, that does not mean the shame is any less. Looking at our young girls at school, if they have no money to spend, it is difficult for them to fit in. You certainly do not want to let your girlfriends know that you do not have any money to buy tampons or sanitary pads.

Due to period poverty and shame, women will cut back on healthy food, miss work or school.

Every year I asked my first-year students of Social Work at Saxion, the University of Applied Science, to discuss various social topics and thus create awareness about what is happening in the Netherlands and the world. In January, various topics were discussed relating to poverty, discrimination, BLM (Black Lives Matter) and addiction. A group of young students, four young women, chose the subject of period poverty. My class went quiet, very quiet. After the presentation, there was an initial astonishment. Period poverty; who comes up with that idea? How is

this possible? How can this occur in the rich West? In our Netherlands? Then some started talking; stories of a difficult childhood immersed, poverty, food bank - a lot of shame - and then you hear, “we also had no money for sanitary towels or tampons... everything went to food.”

In my class, it went quiet again: sixteen young students, sixteen young professionals, twelve of them had never heard of period poverty. Yes, poverty exists, but for the first time, they realised the human suffering behind poverty. It hit them hard, and then the questions came up, “why are sanitary goods not made available for free in the Netherlands?” “Why do we have to pay for them?”

The sixteen students concluded: menstrual goods should be free and available to everyone, regardless of age or origin. Just everyone!

Speaking about menstruation is taboo in many families. How do you make it a topic for discussion if it remains a subject that is hardly discussed? Everyone loves it when a young woman is pregnant, but there are many periods before this, and hardly any thought is given to that. How much better would it be if we could talk freely about menstruation? Do we think enough about the financial struggles that cause this physical discomfort? Are you aware of where period poverty exists in your area? What can you do to help or support?

Addressing Girls' Access to Education – Preventing Child Marriage and Providing Safe School Environment

BY SAMUEL MUTHAMIA

EDUCATION PROJECT MANAGER OF
ADRA SOMALIA AND CHAIR OF
EDUCATION TECHNICAL LEARNING LAB
AT ADRA NETWORK

Investing in girls' education transforms communities, countries and the entire world.

Girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young, which is an enormous challenge in our context, and more likely to lead to healthy, productive lives. They will also get a chance to earn an income, participate in the decisions that mostly affects them, and build better futures for themselves and their families. Girls' education strengthens economies and reduces inequality. Moreover, it contributes to more stable, resilient societies that give

all individuals – including boys and men – the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

However, education for girls is not just about access to school. It is also about girls feeling safe in classrooms; being supported in the subjects and careers, they choose to pursue – including those in which they are often under-represented.

In addition to accessing school, the most difficult challenges are retention, learning and transition. It is one thing for the girl child to go to school, and another retaining them in school. That usually is the hardest issue for any project dealing with girls' education - keeping a girl child in school. The girl child should feel safe in school, look forward to going to school the next day, and move up to the next level of education, thus completing the education cycle. That is why we need to have supportive inputs such as mentors and co-curricular activities that will motivate the girl child to come back to school.

What happens when we invest in girls' education?

1. The lifetime earnings of girls dramatically increase;
2. National growth rates rise;
3. Child marriage rates decline;
4. Child mortality rates fall;
5. Maternal mortality rates fall;
6. Child stunting drops.



Why then do we have girls out of school? Despite evidence demonstrating how central girls' education is to development, gender disparities in education persist. UNICEF estimates 132 million girls are out of school, including 34.3 million of primary school age, 30 million of lower-secondary school age, and 67.4 million of upper-secondary school age. The numbers increase as you go further up from primary school to lower secondary and upper secondary. In our experience, it is usually easier to have girls at lower primary attending school. However, for it to be considered a success, the statistical numbers for girls in school need to move up the spectrum to the upper secondary level; otherwise, we are not achieving much in terms of access to education for girls.

In countries affected by conflict, girls are more than twice more likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation. Estimates are indicating at least 30% of girls did not go back to school when schools re-opened after the pandemic.

We can identify two points that prevent girls from accessing education, namely the demand and supply-side barriers.

Demand for girls' education is low because:

- 1. Socially**, communities do not understand the value of a girl getting educated; even when girls are allowed to attend school, parents remain completely uninvolved in supporting their children to complete an entire course of primary and secondary schooling.
- 2. Psychosocially**, particularly in displaced persons' camps, girls have either undergone trauma or are at risk of sexual or physical violence on their way to school.
- 3. Economically**, the poorest families cannot afford to send all (if any) of their children to school, and girls are the first in line to be deprived of education. For girls in school, their health and nutritional status are often poor because their families cannot afford healthcare or food, which affects the level at which girls can perform.
- 4. Culturally**, girls are assigned a subordinate role in society; girls marry young and have their children at the expense of getting a basic education. Moreover, among traditional pastoralist (rural) populations, livestock care is more important than going to school.

The supply of girls' education is inadequate because:

1. **Politically**, local governments have had and still have a weak capacity to deliver a high standard of inclusive education, monitor its quality, and implement a cohesive gender policy in education.
2. **Economically**, schools (formal and non-formal) are not conducive to learning. They are overcrowded; they do not have sufficient desks and chairs, teaching and learning aids, water points and latrines; and there is a shortage of qualified teachers across the system.
3. **Socially**, teachers prefer to teach in urban rather than rural areas, leaving a gap in qualified teachers for the most marginalised rural populations. Schools (formal and non-formal) and other social services do not openly welcome children from marginalised clans to participate.
4. **Culturally**, curricula have not advanced in providing relevant education for the unique needs of boys and girls.

Gender-equitable education systems should be set up so that they empower girls and boys and promote the development of life skills, such as communication, self-management, negotiation and critical thinking. These are life skills that young people need to succeed. Ensuring this will

close skills gaps that perpetuate inequality around gender, thus building prosperity. Furthermore, striving for gender-equitable systems in our interventions can reduce school-related gender-based violence and harmful practices (child marriage and female genital mutilation). We need to ensure an education free of negative gender norms, and it will also have direct impacts on boys.

ADRA's Work on Promoting Girls Education:

- Tackles discriminatory gender norms and harmful practices that deny girls access to school and quality learning.
- Supports State and Federal Governments to globally ensure that budgets are gender-responsive and that national education plans and policies prioritise gender equality. The advocacy campaign "Every child. Everywhere. In school." is actually lobbying governments to ensure that the national budget has a good allocation for gender activities at the school level.
- Helps schools and Governments use assessment data to eliminate gender gaps in learning.
- Promotes social protection measures, including cash transfers, to improve girls' transition to and retention in secondary school. Education is considered free, but



there are certain hidden costs of education that, in most cases, caregivers and parents cannot afford, for example, the cost of uniforms that are mandatory for a girl to access the school.

- Focuses on teacher training and

professional development on gender-responsive pedagogies.

- Addresses other obstacles, like distance-related barriers to education, re-entry policies for young mothers, and other relevant policies targeting girls' enrolment.

Education in a Refugee Camp – The experience of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Palabek (Uganda)

BY FRS LAZAR ARASU,
UBALDINO ANDRADE AND
ROGER MUKADY

The existence of refugees is a moral, social, geopolitical reality in today's world. At this present time, many human beings worldwide are at the mercy of host countries and of particular communities for their much needed basic necessities for survival. However, at the same time, hosting refugees remains a big challenge for all countries, both the wealthier and the underdeveloped nations, including Uganda.

Uganda is ordinarily known as a "Third World" country, but today it is one of the leading countries hosting refugees. It not only welcomes neighbours who are in war and conflict, but it also opens its doors to people from distant countries. There could be political reasons for welcoming refugees. Still, the credit goes to ordinary citizens who are

welcoming and adapting themselves to hundreds and thousands of neighbours who are refugees in dire need of survival.

Amidst the controversy surrounding the number of refugees in Uganda, we can reliably say that they are a little over one million in Uganda, sheltered in the country's border districts. Palabek Refugee Settlement houses about 56,000 refugees from South Sudan who fled from their country due to insecurity, lack of food and other basic facilities. Though many political explanations are given to the influx of thousands of refugees, we cannot forget the hospitality of ordinary Ugandans who have given lands to the refugees and share the little they have. Enormous credit goes to them. Unlike many other refugee-hosting countries, the host communities live side by side in Uganda and share whatever little resources they have. This is unique in the world. Unfortunately, no one knows when these refugees are returning to their homeland; many of the refugees have been refugees in Uganda two or three times in their life. This is the same situation for the refugees who come from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Uganda also hosts thousands of refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi and a small number of refugees from other countries.

Refugee settlements are filled with young adolescents, especially girls. Often they are pushed to moral problems due to redundancy in the settlement. They have only a few or no opportunities to go to school or learn a skill for living. They are forced to get into marital relationships or end up sexually abused. It is not uncommon to see girls below 16 years of age pregnant and child-mothers. It is urgent to keep young girls in school to avoid many social and moral problems. Since international bodies and non-governmental organisations can only do so much, it is past time for religious men and women to intervene in the lives of these vulnerable youth.

Here in Palabek Settlement, several agencies are involved in providing food, education, and other livelihood needs. Through a large religious community of eight Salesian priests and brothers, the Salesians of Don Bosco in Palabek reach out to thousands of youth people and children. They opened a large Vocational Training Centre, four nursery schools, 16 chapels, many youth centres with play facilities and several other emergency services. The Salesians of Don Bosco in Palabek offer much-needed psychosocial support, life skills for youth through Vocational Training and pastoral care for thousands of Christians. Salesians

are also running four nursery schools for over 1000 little children who have been not taken care of by anyone. Our newly built Vocational/ Technical Training Centre provides life skills in the hopes of living better lives, getting a job and arranging a tranquil existence in the near future. At present, we are six confreres in number, and all of us share in managing the responsibility of the current challenging living conditions of the refugees. We do not count it as a burden but a witness and joy.

The Salesians' favourite ministry is providing skills training. In Africa, the Salesians of Don Bosco run over 100 Vocational/Technical Training Centres (VTCs) in 35 countries of Africa. This ministry is even more relevant to the refugees as they are looking for an opportunity to work and find meaning in their lives. It is good for them to learn a skill within a year and be self-reliant. Here in Palabek Refugee Settlement, we have trained at least 800 young people in two years, and we are happy to see them working and being self-employed. This mainly helps the young women be self-assertive and earn a living amidst numerous trials and abuses. As refugee settlements have more than 60% of young people in their population, offering skill training is very meaningful. Our training is short and hands-on, geared to production and income generation.



When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, we tried to do our best to contribute to protecting the people. Months later, on July 8, 2020, the Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre (VTC) Palabek welcomed Honourable Hillary Onek, the Cabinet Minister in charge of Refugees in Uganda, launching the «Face Mask Project». Visiting the VTC in Palabek centre, she said: “Don Bosco has pioneered in face mask production and has been very innovative not only in the Palabek Settlement but in the whole of northern Uganda and the nation.” The same thought was reechoed by Mr Charles Uma, the Chief Administrative Officer of Lamwo district. Mr Uma also said that ‘when the lockdown was declared in Uganda on March 18, 2020, he received a generous supply of face masks from Don Bosco for the district’s use’. It is not an exaggeration to say that we started producing face masks with very limited resources and did free distribution to the refugees and community workers such as police, army, local leaders, and medical workers.

The minister graced the event and participated with UNHCR top officials and several leaders of the region and Lamwo district. It was unanimously agreed that the event should be held at Don Bosco VTC as it pioneered the production, and also because our

vocational trainees utilized the school facilities for the production.

Madam Felicitas Nebril, regional head of UNHCR seeing the productivity of the skilled refugee tailors, said, “This activity is the best example of refugees involved in socio-economic activities. You have taken to heart the motivation given by others and have put it to productive use. It is the best way of returning to normal. You have come forward to contribute to the welfare of the refugees and the local communities. You have indeed become a model to the host community.” She also encouraged the refugees to use face masks and maintain the zero status of COVID infection. At that time, a group of 20 girls had successfully produced at least 10,000 face masks of different shapes and sizes. We continue to produce more face masks and distribute them free of charge.

In his speech, the Honourable Minister said, “The eyes of Don Bosco Missionaries have been sharp to see the needs and challenges of people; when the government did not budget for masks for the refugees, you began producing face masks. And doing it in our district and in this new Training Centre, you have made us proud.” He thanked the Salesians for bringing this Vocational Training Centre to the extreme end of the country when this place had been

abandoned for several decades. He expressed his confidence that the VTC will produce trainees, both refugees and the locals, and bring peace and harmony to the area. Despite many challenges, we are trying to meet these expectations by staying with the refugees and the local people, promoting their right to education.

As we are closing this year in 2021, there are at least 59,000 refugees in Palabek Refugee Settlement. Don Bosco reached out to them by including 21 newly arrived young people in our agriculture training.

During Coronavirus lockdown, we continued to offer training to our students, therefore providing more practical lessons.

We made great progress in agricultural training and building construction, as they involve more hands-on training. Our students have done excellent work in the school's landscaping, fencing, building animal

sheds, building water channels, and other maintenance works.

We did a lot of constructions within our school, employing the skills of our students. We also made significant progress in food security through agriculture projects. Through our Laudato Si Garden project, we have planted over 5,000 trees within the DB TVET premises and several hundreds of trees outside the school compound.

About 250 students will be graduating with a one-year certificate course in December 2021. We are already in the process of recruiting new students for the coming year.

It is reported that the closure of schools in Uganda is the longest in the world record. Thousands of young people were left without education. Don Bosco missionaries in Palabek Refugee Settlement engaged them in special classes, coaching and group study, reaching out to at least a few hundred.

The Central Challenge of Sustainable Financing of Inclusive Education in the Light of COVID-19

BY DAVID ARCHER

HEAD OF PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC SERVICES, ACTIONAID / CONCORD

If we are serious about accelerating progress on inclusive education for all, it is all about the financing.

We know that the impact of COVID-19 on economies around the world, shrinking Gross Domestic Product (GDP), shrinking tax revenues means that education budgets are likely to be cut by about 200 billion dollars in the coming year. Different estimates are out there about how to calculate that, but it is very significant, very likely that serious constraints to education budgets will arise.

Whenever we talk about the financing crisis, my greatest concern is that the overwhelming focus tends to be on what we can do as an international community in terms of aid or loans.

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will be having a replenishment event in a global education setting in July, seeking to raise five billion US dollars from the donor community. And yes, that is important, but it really is peanuts in the big scheme of things.

The big question is how any aid money is used to leverage significant progress on domestic financing on education. And we do not spend enough time as an international community talking about what we can do to support and unblock financing at a domestic level.

The Education Commission estimated that 97% of financing for education globally in developing countries needs to come from domestic sources. And yet, we pay very little attention to what still needs to be done. When we do talk about it, we tend to just talk about the share of the budget. So let us get education to be a bigger share of the national budget, getting to that 20% benchmark, which is important. Yes, we should have countries reaching 20%. However, some countries fall well below - for example, Nigeria and Pakistan - under 10%, lots of countries around 16 or 17% - though there are others who exceed 20%, and still do not have enough financing.

We should always be looking to maintain or increase the share of the budget for education. But in



these times, it is increasingly difficult, particularly when you are competing, for example, with the health sector - who in the context of COVID-19 will make very significant claims for a share of the budget. Other sectors such as water and sanitation, agriculture, social protection, early childcare, public transport, services related to prevention and response to gender-based violence will also be in the bidding.

One of the problems with focusing just on the share of the budget is we sort of set ourselves in competition with other sectors. We should rather be focusing much more on what we have in common with other public services; since the financing of all public services depends on some common core elements around the size of government revenue overall. As an education community, we need to intensify our efforts about those common issues if we want to accelerate progress. These common issues are those relating to tax revenue, the state of debt, and what is happening with macroeconomic policies, which frame the resources available for national governments to invest in public services.

Tax is probably the single most important thing that affects the overall size of the government's budget. Countries with a very low tax-to-GDP ratio are rarely able to provide universal quality public

services, least of all on education. If countries with a low tax-to-GDP ratio, say at 16%, were able to increase their tax revenue year on year, that would lead to a doubling of the revenue that is available to invest in education, in health, in water, in agriculture, in transport and all other public services. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimate most countries could increase their tax GDP ratio by five percentage points within a five-year period,

Expanding the tax-to-GDP ratio is transformative, but it needs to be done fairly and progressively so that those with more resources pay more tax and the burden does not fall on the poorest. Some significant simple steps can be taken. The recent progress being made about a global minimum corporate tax rate is substantial, as are the discussions about how to most fairly tax the big-tech companies. We need the education community to get engaged in those debates because that is where big resources can be mobilised. Countries should have clear, sustained plans to ambitiously increase their tax revenues year on year in the coming years using progressive reforms to VAT, to wealth and property taxes, inheritance and capital gains taxes, progressive income, trade and excise taxes. We need a holistic approach to progressive tax reform because that

will plug the gap in public finances much more comprehensively than anything else.

Of course, debt is also hugely significant. It is unfortunate that you have about 50% of developing countries now who are spending more on debt servicing than on education or health, which has to come to an end. There is a growing recognition of the debt crisis out there, but the present proposals from the G20 are desperately short. They do not reach enough countries, they do not deal with all creditors, and they do not look at a long enough time frame of debt suspension or cancellation to make a real difference to domestic financing. So, as an education community, if we want to accelerate progress, let us engage in those debt debates because that is where we can really add a powerful voice.

The third element affecting the size of the budget is macroeconomic policies. The IMF has been giving out tens of billions of dollars in loans worldwide - the COVID-19 emergency loans. In almost every case, they expect commitments from countries to return to what they call 'fiscal consolidation' within this year. When the IMF talks about fiscal consolidation, we need to hear the word 'austerity'. The IMF has been imposing austerity in countries around the world for about 40 years

now. If we do not use COVID-19 as the turning point to push back against those policies, we are missing a huge opportunity.

The most obvious way in which IMF policies and advice impact education is that the IMF routinely encourages countries to cut or freeze the public sector wage bill. Now, that sounds very technocratic, and it sounds as if all governments employ lots of bureaucrats. However, the single largest group of people on the public sector wage bill are teachers, and the second-largest group are health workers, nurses and doctors. If you have the IMF telling you have got to squeeze the spending on the public sector wage bill overall, the effect is to block countries from recruiting more teachers - many of whom face desperate shortages of teachers - and likewise block countries from employing more nurses, so that there is no prospect of them reaching the World Health Organisation ratios of nurses and doctors to people. If we want to make a breakthrough, if we want to accelerate progress on financing, we need as an education community to get serious on those things that impact the size of the budget - tax, debt, austerity and macroeconomic policies.

Finally, it is all well and good to have a good share of a good size budget. However, we also have to look at the sensitivity of budget

allocations focused on equity. What will drive greater equity is the most important determining force for where the budget should be allocated. If you focus on allocations to the most disadvantaged, you can be confident that everyone will benefit.

But even if you have a good share of a good size budget that is sensitively allocated, if you do not focus on tracking what happens to that budget, there will be problems in practice, particularly in the most disadvantaged communities. So, we need to have systematic scrutiny of what is happening with spending in practice.

And that is the combination of interventions that would accelerate progress on the financing of education, action on the **share**, the **size**, the **sensitivity** and the **scrutiny** of budgets. That is four S's in English. It does not translate very well into other languages; nevertheless, that is the framework. We need to focus

on what is happening with domestic budgets and use aid to leverage better commitments in domestic financing. For further details of this 4S approach, see the resource book **[Financing Matters](#)**.

Therefore, when it comes to the GPE replenishment - the Global Education Summit happening in July, the most significant moment on education financing for a long time - let us not just think about the \$5 billion the donors are committing. Let us look at the commitments made by developing countries' heads of state and ministers of finance to their own citizens. Let us also look at the collective political statement that will be mobilised by President Kenyatta and at serious individual commitments by African leaders calling for action on debt, special drawing rights, and other fiscal space issues from the international community. It is those things that will be most transformative for education.

Key Challenges Facing Children to Access Schools in Yemen

BY MOHAMMED BAHASHWAN
DIRECTOR FOR BUSINESS
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I see many of the summit participants have already answered the major question: How many challenges can a child face if they really want to access the schools safely and adequately? And as many of you know, the world is full of crises, disasters, famine and hunger, but Yemen remains to be the world's worst humanitarian crisis, among many others. And for that, we know that children represent a big portion of people suffering because of conflict and war. Therefore, I will share a small glimpse of the challenges a Yemeni child, whether a boy or a girl, would be facing as a result of this conflict. I will also share some background knowledge to show you how the situation became

much more complex than we all anticipated for many years.

So as many of us know, Yemen is now falling under a long-term crisis and is recognised as the world's worst humanitarian crisis for many years and is heading towards the worst famine the world has ever seen in decades. Today in Yemen, over 20.7 million people, two in every three Yemenis, need some form of humanitarian and protection assistance. The challenges continue to add on and have become more complex, even before these four years of exacerbated war. Yemen is now seeing political instability, ongoing conflict, a collapsed economy, damaged infrastructure, suspended public services, human rights violations, disasters and outbreaks, child trafficking and recruitment, displacement, malnutrition, and natural disasters.

From analysing the conflict timeline, we can see that Yemen has always been in some sort of instability since the 80s and even before that. Yemen moved towards a full-blown civil war between the south and north of the country in the 2000s and continued to be in conflict amongst its tribes and the



government and other political agencies. That political instability worsened in 2011 and then moved into the full coalition war that happened and started in 2015. With that, of course, children suffer the most.

Approximately 8.1 million school-age girls and boys need education in emergency support across the country. 1.5 million children with disabilities and minority groups face severe challenges in accessing education. Over 171,000 teachers need support and remain without salaries or aid to date. And the total of 2,500+ schools is reported to be either destroyed, damaged or utilised for military purposes and other non-educational purposes.

So, what makes the response to education needs, in addition to what I just mentioned, very challenging to address in Yemen? As the Yemeni community is not very different from communities in the region and some African communities, education is less of a priority during the conflict. Life-saving needs are a more predominant issue to address aside from education. They can take a lot of focus away from specific children's needs, including education. When we speak of other types of needs, we include a range of different necessities that the Yemeni families lack, from water to access to healthcare, food and nutrition.

Children have primarily become victims of military recruitment. Many children in Yemen, both South and North of Yemen and in different regions in the country, are victims of military recruitment from as early as seven and six years old. Over 4 million people, many of whom are children, had to flee their homes, seeking safety and refuge in shelters around the country and other locations due to the ongoing conflict and natural disasters. And many of these families and their children had to be displaced more than once because of the long-term conflict we are seeing. Families also prioritise boys' education over girls. This has been a very predominant cultural issue as there is always that major concern about girls' safety due to the lack of female teachers and gender-sensitive WASH facilities, which increased concerns at the local community level. Also, the distance between a lot of these communities and schools, even before the current conflict, has always been a challenge for families to accept their daughters to go to school at any age.

Furthermore, girls in Yemen face a common issue: attending to domestic needs like fetching water and fulfilling domestic family chores. They are likewise required to go to distant places to fetch water and do income-generating activities. That always puts these girls at risk of not maintaining

their access to education. This then results in the child not having any time, energy, or effort to do anything aside from the day-to-day chores of the household. Yemeni girls are also victims of early marriage, and this problem has been in Yemen for many decades. The conflict now adds to the severity of needs for boys and girls in the community facing the early marriage issue.

In addition to these challenges, education facilities are damaged in many conflict-prone areas and require extensive rehabilitation and reconstruction to be functional. That includes classrooms, sanitation facilities, and other buildings needing washables, adequate lighting, and adequate ventilation. Many of these locations, where damaged schools exist, are prone to another outbreak of conflict, airstrikes from the collision and more.

Yemen has always been known for malnutrition, a big issue in the country because of the lack of adequate food sources and adequate healthcare. Younger school-age children regularly suffer from malnutrition diseases and lack of medical attention. For more than a year now, COVID-19 has put a big strain on the education system and put a bigger strain on the health system to allow children to properly and safely go to school. So, what can be done? The range of issues is quite

complex, but there is a lot we can do as a humanitarian community, as government agencies to address these issues, and I will only highlight a few:

- The humanitarian response needs to be more holistic to address a range of needs as much as possible. Children not only face a challenge to access schools, but they also face a challenge to have access to food, water, nutrition, health care and a range of protection necessities that do not exist as a result of the conflict.
- Humanitarian programmes need to address specific child protection issues, which are in line with the holistic response since they prevent access to education. These issues can range from early marriage, child labour and military recruitment, etc.
- A focus on increasing awareness of health and hygiene practices and safe school practices is becoming essential to enhance the prevention of infectious disease outbreaks, becoming more important due to the global pandemic. Moreover, improving the environment and schools to allow children and their families to be able to maintain good health and ensure safe access to education.
- Funding is scarcer than it was in the past. As the situation worsens, funding is going towards critical

life-saving assistance like food and water, etc. We also need to focus on sustainable funding regarding the importance of education and a range of holistic responses.

- Teachers need to be paid very regularly and provided with aid as required because many of these teachers depend primarily on this single source of income.
- Social behaviour change and barrier analysis can identify the context of specific issues.
- Yemen is in such a complex situation that understanding what prevents children from going to school would be a crucial peace-building effort. While talks and negotiations are happening, even though the results have not been positive for many years, the situation looks like it is heading towards a more peaceful

resolution. That is why it is still imperative to be sure we are building towards peace.

So, last but not least, our responsibility can be to: continue our advocacy for children in Yemen and around the world to access safe education, increase political involvement for peace-building, continue humanitarian funding for emergency and education, ensure a holistic response, build knowledge and experience and also accelerate learning opportunities for children out of school, especially the ones that have been out of school for so many years. ADRA has always been active in addressing educational needs across the country, and it has been in Yemen for the past 25 years. Thanks to the government and private agencies for the support that we are receiving.

European Actions and Policies for Inclusion and Equity in Education during Emergencies

BY FREDERIK SCHUTYSER

DEPUTY HEAD OF UNIT C/1

HUMANITARIAN AID THEMATIC

POLICIES, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The EU commitment to education is enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focused on the importance of quality education and training for all.

The starting point for our actions and policies in humanitarian support to education is the recognition that every child has the right to education. Every child needs education to develop their potential, to build their future, to fulfil their dreams.

The access to quality education should not depend on the children's context, gender, ethnicity, religion, economic or social status.

Education is a priority in all humanitarian crises, including sudden and slow-onset emergencies, conflicts, situations of violence,

forced displacement, disasters or public health emergencies. Our support addresses the most vulnerable children, those out of school or at risk of dropping out, refugees and forcibly displaced children who are unaccompanied, living with disabilities, children associated with armed forces.

The education in emergencies policy framework that we developed in 2018-2019 accompanied by a substantial increase in the investment – going from 1% of the humanitarian aid budget in 2015 to 10% as of 2019 - is a breakthrough for the Commission and for the global approach to education in emergencies and protracted crises.

This policy has changed our work as a major donor, leading by example and addressing children's needs in the most comprehensive way. We know that boys and girls risk missing their entire education cycle without a proactive approach from the humanitarian community.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, we observed the disastrous effects of closed schools and disrupted learning for millions of children. This has been particularly acute for the most disadvantaged, for girls, children with disabilities, children in humanitarian contexts, those deprived of remote learning options. COVID-19 added an additional layer



of complexity to the humanitarian crises, exacerbating risks of violence, school drop-outs and calling into question the Sustainable Development Goals achievements of last years. We cannot afford a lost generation!

We are aware that girls and boys who are out of school in humanitarian settings face increased challenges related to recruitment by armed groups, sexual and gender-based violence, child marriage, child labour and other forms of exploitation and abuse. This comes in addition to serious risks for children who are caught in the crossfire, with hundreds having been killed, maimed, or forcibly separated from their families. Education is an essential element to protect children, and particularly girls, from these threats. It is life-saving and provides a sense of normalcy to help cope with trauma to vulnerable children or youth, otherwise at risk of abuse and radicalisation.

Access to safe, quality education – combined with the provision of lifesaving skills, social and emotional learning, and psychosocial support – can help children and adolescents cope with and recover from crises. The skills and knowledge learned through education can enhance access to opportunities for the next generation, breaking cycles of vulnerability to shocks.

That is why we commit to minimise education disruption, with an aim to return girls and boys to learning within three months of a crisis. This requires both re-establishing education services through support to the formal system and the establishment of temporary non-formal learning opportunities.

Our response strategy is based on a thorough needs assessment and takes into consideration multiple barriers to education faced by children affected by humanitarian crises. They include lack or destruction of schools, safety issues, transportation barriers, lack of appropriate water and sanitation infrastructure, financial barriers, social and cultural constraints, particularly relevant for girls' education, lack of teachers, education policy constraints, etc.

The EU, as one of the largest donors of humanitarian aid in the world, listens carefully to the voices of vulnerable communities and aims to strengthen their ability to cope with the threats, risks and challenges. Supporting education in emergencies is at the heart of our response - education is prioritised by communities, parents and children in all humanitarian contexts.

Change is not possible without adequate investment.

We dedicate 10% of our humanitarian budget to address



access to quality and safe education for all children affected by conflicts. To date, DG ECHO invested more than 600 million EUR in education, benefiting over 9.5 million girls and boys in 59 countries around the world.

Nevertheless, support to education in crisis contexts remains largely underfunded, and we are able to address only a fraction of all needs. This is why we are engaged in advocacy efforts for more and better funding to education,

also linking humanitarian and development support.

We remain committed to sustaining the 10% funding of education projects and expanding our work in this area, particularly when it comes to the education of the most vulnerable children, including girls and young women.

Addressing inclusion and equity is key to building better, stronger and more resilient education systems, open and accessible to all children.

Developing Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Emergencies

BY CARITA CRUZ

SENIOR THEMATIC ADVISER RIGHT TO
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Finn Church Aid (FCA) is present in 13 countries and works in three thematic areas: peace, quality education, and sustainable livelihood. We have four pillars in the right to quality education programme: Education in Emergencies, Linking Learning to Earning, Education Sector Development and Teacher Education.

When it comes to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), we tend to follow the so-called “linking learning to earning” model, which means that all the students who complete the TVET would have a place to go after the training. Whether they start their own business or find a wage job, we help them start their business or career by ensuring they receive career guidance with our counsellors and business coaches.

However, this is not all. We also need to adhere to some requirements, namely a good market assessment beforehand (so we know in which fields there is work), an updated curricula (we have in many countries very old curricula), and the continuous collaboration with authorities, employers and private sector.

By following this model, we seek results in three different levels. Firstly, we enable youth to have decent work and economic self-reliance after the TVET and plan for their future; secondly, we try to bring a skilled workforce into labour markets, preventing the private sector from sourcing it in other countries; and lastly, we strive to promote sustainable economic growth.

This is the kind of model we try to implement in emergency contexts, which is different from a development context as there is a need for marketable and rapidly achieved vocational skills. In other words, this means an informal TVET, i.e. a very short-term training, so that learners will rapidly have access to income whether they start their own business or find a wage job.

TVET also aims to provide protection in emergency contexts, such as the security in the school or TVET institutional environment and how girls and women can access transportation safely. Life skills



are vital in terms of protection in emergency contexts, not only to cover the gaps if youth has not been able to access normal education but also in terms of TVET curricula contents – e.g., peace education or Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) contents and Psychosocial Support (PSS) as well.

However, when we are looking for the nexus to a development context, if a crisis takes longer than we thought, we also strive to connect this informal education to formal and accredited TVET of the country. Thus the students would also have the appropriate certificates to continue their educational studies at a university. It is important to highlight that this could represent an alternative activity for counter-productive alignments, such as military recruitment or rise of crime. But, most of all, it is also essential from the youth's point of view that this will give hope for the future, something to plan for and be expected in the longer run.

We sometimes face challenges connected to the labour market information that is not always available or updated. Therefore, we do not know in what fields there is work, which also harms effective TVET training. For instance, if we continue training people in tailoring and there is no work for tailors, all the resources have gone in vain. Furthermore, in many countries, the

TVET education system is fragmented and less developed than the academic path, thus bringing another barrier to linking the students to formal education if it is not well developed. Another challenge is that TVET is not too attractive, either to the youth or their families, and there are not so many donors funding the TVET projects. So we are aware that this is significant advocacy work that needs to be done. In addition, the quality of TVET and the challenges vary from context to context - there are no ready-made answers, practices or policies among the actors either. Many NGOs work in silos without cooperation.

Nevertheless, FCA has identified some best practices. The collaboration with the private sector is vital since they will feed the contents of the curricula, thus ensuring a match between what is taught in TVET institutions and the skills required to the world of work. We also try to provide on-the-job training or practical skills training and bridge the youth to the labour market. Likewise, we have to accept the “low thousands” as TVET is expensive compared to the academic path. TVET requires many different sorts of machinery and proper infrastructure for the students. Still, the return on education is significant if the youth can support themselves and their families. Accepting an expensive TVET

is not only to call for more money; we can also seek more innovative ways of cooperating with private sectors so that they can also cover some part of the costs, for example, inviting the youth to apprenticeship contracts. Collaboration with national authorities is, of course, important from the certification point of view as well. We must have an authorising entity to issue the certificates; whether it is the Ministry of Education at a secondary level or, for instance, in Uganda, we work with the DIT (Directorate of Industrial Training) - a body of the Ministry of Education. So, TVET has to be linked somewhere.

We have had success with the inclusion of people with disabilities, and the gender balance in our project is equally one of our main aims. In Rwanda, for example, in a refugee settlement, we hired native language assistant teachers to avoid the language barrier with the refugees and the local teaching language.

I see these skills are more and more important, and this COVID-19 crisis has shown that if we have alternatives for contact learning, we will be more resilient to the changes. Moreover, the students have been provided with career guidance and counselling. We have seen that it is a very effective tool in keeping the youth in school and allowing them access to TVET and a career afterwards.

Regarding the recommendations, I think inclusion is still one of the main obstacles if there are no laws in the countries for refugees to have a right to access the TVET or other educational services. So, we need a lot of advocacy work here still. Recognition of prior learning and certificates is equally important in this context. For instance, the Syrian refugees in Jordan tend to have a very good educational background and work experience. We do not want these people to start from zero as they already have a lot of know-how and earlier certificates. The concept of recognition of prior learning is still in an early phase in many countries. We need more multi-actor co-operation. Furthermore, we have to pay more attention to TVET teacher training - very few countries have it in place -, and the Greening TVET or climate response related to TVET, also practically non-existent. We need, likewise, to build up a better TVET educational sector in general since, as I mentioned before, it is challenging to link the youth with the non-formal TVET sector if countries do not invest in it.

In short, the aim is that all the youth access the right to obtain vocational education, which enable livelihood and support the well-being of all society and the private sector.

Impact of Pandemic on Access to Education - Global Education Report

BY GERSHON NIMBALKER

POLICY EXPERT, AUTHOR OF GLOBAL
EDUCATION REPORT

I have met too many students deprived of an education due to crisis and exploitation.

In Ranchi, India, I met a young girl, Jodhi, who desperately wanted an education. She knew that it was her ticket out of poverty and a grinding life of hardship. After two years without monsoon rains, her parents' farm was hit by drought, crops failed, and their whole family was thrust into poverty.

She gave up her education, she gave up her pathway to an easier, better life and decided to work as a maid in the city. Unfortunately, she was exploited and abused there. She said to me about her decision to go to the city, "What was I going to do, stay and watch as my family starve?"

As war engulfed the nation and displaced millions in Syria, countless learners were thrown into refugee camps, unable to access schools for

years. In just one day, Roula lost her father, her cousins' daughter, who was in her care, and her son, while he was in her arms. A bullet pierced his heart while she was carrying him. After that, she, her husband and her daughters fled to Lebanon.

Her life was a mess. Her girls were out of school, and she was worried for her future. It was a faith-based organisation that helped turn things around for them. They gave her support and showed her care, but things really changed when her daughters went back to school. They were learning again; they had a future and hope.

Conflict, natural disasters and now COVID-19 have tremendous power to disrupt education and learning. Prior to COVID-19, 104 million children aged 4-17 were out of school because of crises. And where children stop attending school because of a crisis, many will stop learning altogether.

War and disaster not only stop children from safely attending school, they often destroy infrastructure, disrupt the supply of needed educational resources and provision, and sadly end the lives of too many educators.

Despite this, the most shocking thing is that humanitarian aid to education is only a tiny proportion of the global humanitarian assistance budget, making up just 2.7% in 2016.



The pandemic has been the biggest crisis in our lifetime. As mentioned before, many times now, 1.6 billion students across the planet have been impacted by school closures. These closures have meant up to 360 million children have been missing out on school meals, placing them at increased risk of hunger, child stunting, and food insecurity.

School also is a valuable safety net for many students. It provides students with a safe place, a refuge from violent homes and access to child-safe reporting mechanisms and psycho-social support. It also allows, in many circumstances, parents a place to learn.

While the full impact of the pandemic may not be known for some time, alarm bells should be ringing, especially on behalf of the most vulnerable. The Ebola outbreaks in West Africa saw the number of girls out of school almost treble, from 8 to 21%.

The crisis closed schools for eight months. Teenage pregnancies spiked, vaccination schedules were disrupted, and immunisations decreased by 30% - with schools being a key component of vaccination programmes.

Without immediate and urgent action, the effects of the pandemic will be far worse than those of the Ebola crisis. Child marriage, teen pregnancies, child labour, trafficking,

malnutrition, home-based violence will all increase and have significant knock-on effects on education unless we act to push back the tide. The clear and immediate priority is that we must re-open schools. In many areas, schools have begun to come back online. As vaccines roll out across the planet, teachers in many countries should be among the first to be vaccinated to ensure ongoing education.

UNESCO has very handily been tracking school closures, and still, more than 178 million learners remain affected, and 28 country-wide closures continue in force.

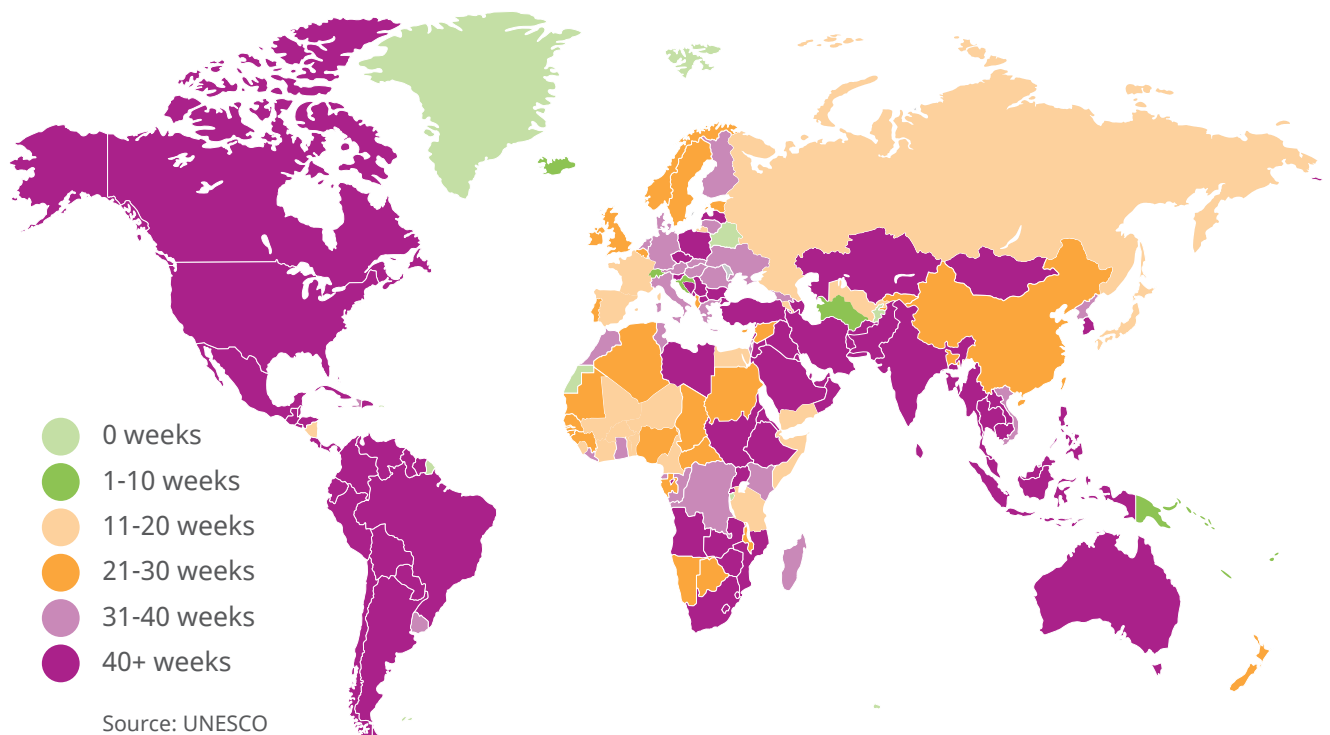
At the same time, instances of natural disasters and the number of people being impacted have been widespread and increasing across the globe. Cyclone and hurricane intensity has been building. Fiji, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Nicaragua and many other countries have witnessed the devastation.

In the Philippines, typhoon Mike led to increases in students needing to repeat a school year, and poorer performance amongst learners increased. Hurricane Mitch resulted in a 45% increase in child labour amongst the most affected households in Nicaragua.

Even after disasters ebb, their consequences can be ongoing.

Cycles of drought and flood impact agriculture, incomes and the

Total duration of school closures due to COVID-19



economy. As we saw with Jodthi's story, these cycles also impact decisions for education. They also affect levels of malnourishment, which in turn has knock-on effects on cognitive development. Earthquakes can be devastating to nations and their infrastructure. In Haiti and Nepal, we have seen how protracted the recovery can be to school infrastructure and the return to schooling.

ADRA Fiji has been cleverly responding via an advocacy campaign to address the education fallout of natural disasters. Hurricanes have become commonplace. Sadly, all too

often, one of the safest evacuation and shelter points during a storm are the local schools. This usually means that education is closed down while communities rebuild homes and fix infrastructure. Also, as schools closed due to the pandemic, too many students do not have access to the digital tools or learning resources they need to continue their education effectively.

They have been working with the ministry of education and campaigning to see multi-purpose centres in crisis-prone communities be established that have the necessary tools, resources and digital



A country that has more than 87% of its children in school can decrease the risk of conflict by nearly 75%.

access to facilitate ongoing education, even amid crisis. They know this will help to minimise education days lost. A clever intervention like this can go a long way in helping mitigate the impact of the crisis.

Furthermore, the conflict has demonstrated time and again to be one of the most devastating forces for keeping children out of school.

In areas affected by conflict, children are two times more likely to be out of school than in non-conflict affected countries. In Yemen, the ongoing crisis is being exacerbated by COVID. Even before the pandemic, 6.5 million school-aged children had their education impacted. School closures are frequent, teachers are being killed or are fleeing for safety, and children are becoming severely malnourished.

In the Central African Republic, half a million children have been deprived of the opportunity to attend school. Many being thrust into child marriages, forced labour or worse, turned into child soldiers.

As we saw in Syria, conflict is one of the most significant drivers of the refugee crisis. Refugee children are five times less likely to attend school than the surrounding population.

Conversely, however, education is a great mitigator against conflict.

Here are four ways to respond to a crisis:

1. For countries prone to natural disasters and conflict, build crisis into **long term education planning**. Find innovative solutions like in Fiji.
2. There should be a globally supported push to **include** refugee children in national education systems.
3. Donor countries should provide **flexible and accelerated funding** in times of crisis designated for education.
4. **Prioritise re-opening schools** and, where necessary, ensure teachers are prioritised for vaccinations.

Education in Post-pandemic Times

BY IRENA JOVEVA

MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF CULT
COMMITTEE

It is my pleasure to be able to give some remarks at this closing event of the Education Accelerator. When I was asked to speak on Education in post-pandemic times, I immediately said yes; as a Culture committee member, this topic is very close to my heart.

The pandemic has tremendously affected everyone, especially young people. A year full of adjustments, isolation, changes, and uncertainty. Probably the only certain thing for the post-pandemic era is that most things will not be the same.

The fact is that last march, in a matter of weeks, COVID created an extraordinary new reality and completely changed the education process, as the billions of children around the world became homebound. It has been a great shock because educational systems

worldwide have been based on the traditional, one-size-fits-all approach for at least the last century. Now, due to the pandemic combined with the fast-growing digital developments, the educational systems are undergoing unprecedented changes.

Even though educational institutions have been put into an unenviable position with having to make a prompt switch from in-person learning to, basically, home-schooling online education, arguably, the change of educational methods has started long before the pandemic hit. The fast-developing digital technology has been preparing for the future as several different AI-related technologies for educational purposes have already been created, and for years the ideas of new transformative approaches have been explored by developers and policymakers; however, we were nowhere near ready to make the transition to the hybrid modes of learning.

The pandemic undoubtedly accelerated the transition, highlighting and demonstrating how technology can help transform the methods of how we teach and learn. But at the same time, it has

shown us a lot of weaknesses. As the dependence on IT was exacerbated, it became obvious that social factors became essential; those students coming from the more unstable and weaker economic and social background were put into the disproportionately worse positions. Essentially, the most vulnerable ones - pupils without sufficient access to the internet and computers were hit the hardest. Inequality is of paramount concern to most policymakers in the EU. That is why I genuinely believe we will further activate existent mechanisms, such as the EU Child Guarantee, to support children from vulnerable backgrounds and tackle child poverty in a sustainable and strategic way, thus providing them with an equal opportunity.

I have read a lot of speculations about the future of education in the post-pandemic era. I agree that the aftermath will probably resort to investments in IT skills and STEM education. However, I do not agree with speculations that education will completely transform to online platforms. I am certain that some aspects and methods of teaching implemented in the last year will be used in the future, creating a sort of hybrid way of the educational system. But it cannot replace the human contact and exchange between pupils and teachers, as schools also serve as a tool for developing one's character,

such as learning social skills, creating common values and respecting them, making friends, and most of all, building an independent person. And that cannot be achieved through a screen from the comfort of your own home.

Having a digital approach in education from an early stage can improve children's readiness for later stages in education and open new horizons to have interactive talks with speakers from around the world and, why not, language classes with students from abroad to grow their intercultural competencies.

Education is and will keep on reinventing itself, but the inevitable human contact and social interactions will be kept while they can be improved or boosted with additional digital options. To do so properly, schools will need the state's support. Even though currently, education systems still remain Member State's competence, I do believe we will one day create a common EU education system, much like we are trying to do now with the upcoming European Health Union – transforming health policies previously also a Member State's competence.

By creating common policies, we would be able to create a platform for sharing lesson plans and developing mechanisms that encourage collaboration for innovation and development, which would improve

the equality of the remote and online educational experience throughout the EU.

If another crisis happened, we would be better prepared after the hard-learned lessons from the COVID pandemic. But we also saw that human interaction is inevitable and that we cannot transform our entire world to the screens. The same applies to our educational systems,

which need to be made more resilient.

Let me conclude with this: The way education systems will actually work in the post-pandemic era, and the future is still undetermined; all we can actually do is make estimates and assumptions. However, I am fairly certain that it will change, and I sincerely believe it will change for the better.

Every Child. Everywhere. In School: ADRA and the Adventist Church

BY MATTHEW SILIGA

VICE-PRESIDENT FOR MARKETING AND
DEVELOPMENT, ADRA INTERNATIONAL

In my presentation, I would like to focus on what we are doing and what we will continue to do. However, before that, I would like to give you some background synopsis of ADRA and its initiatives.

As the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, we have been carrying the colossal burden that we are just not doing enough, which is probably not different from what many other actors are currently taking.

I would like to believe that I am the first to say that we are doing excellent work. I can list several different education initiatives from school feeding industries to building classrooms, entire schools and providing quality teaching across multiple continents around the globe. Still, it is not enough when you consider the global need right now.

Today's whole purpose of this meeting is to find out how

we accelerate education and its outcomes.

As a global organisation, ADRA needs to be more intentional about this area of advocacy. Therefore, we started the campaign "Every child. Everywhere. In school." with the Seventh-day Adventist Church; that is to say, ADRA worked together with the Church headquarters leadership and Church leaders across the globe.

We had the support of our church leaders from different continents and regions globally - such as Raafat Kamal, who opened this conference - and leaders within our multiple ministries (education ministries, communication ministries, health ministries, children's ministries, youth ministries, etc.). The aim was to take an entire Church approach to get every child in school.

There was a lot of activity around the campaign, which brought many people together and massive response to the petition. We launched the campaign at the end of 2019, and throughout 2020, we asked our Church and its spheres of influence, our Church communities, to join us and rally behind this message of "Every child. Everywhere. In school." For more information, see the campaign video: **#EveryChildEverywhere | Annual Council 2019 - YouTube.**

We have set the goal of one million signatures, but I am pleased



to report that after eight months of campaigning on this cause, we got 1.3 million people signing this petition from 240 countries across the globe.

As people signed the petition, they were highlighting three main things:

1. Education is critically important.
2. Every child has the right to access education.
3. Something is not quite right in our country. It could be public policy limiting access to education or foreign assistance policy that does not provide enough funds or allocate them in the right areas, or even social-cultural barriers to education.

Whatever the identified issue was, the people who signed our petition came together to say, “We need to do something about this, and we need some changes in our country and other countries.”

Now that we have completed phase one of the campaign and rallied 1.3 million people, it is time to raise their voices.

Hence, phase two of our campaign focuses on three key areas:

1. Individualise the campaign for each country, adopting a different strategy for each one that has a unique issue concerning education.
2. Define a clear ask(s). Our Global Education Report, which Gershon

shared in his presentation, helps us identify some of the critical game-changing policies that can be amended in many countries facing such issues.

3. We need to increase communication, engagement and alliances. We are currently facilitating dialogue within the education sector, stating that we understand education is necessary and recognise the challenge. However, how can we accelerate change, intensify our impact and come together as an alliance?

This presentation was not put together for promotional purposes. A quick look at our website will provide an understanding of the kind of work that we are doing. This presentation is actually an offer: for those of you from the sector, how can we help you? Let me flip the question: how can you help us? I will admit, I may be the first to say that there are many things that we do not know. So how can we help each other?

We are all here because we want to accelerate education outcomes. Whether it is access education or addressing quality issues in education, that is why we are here, but what can we do together? How can we keep this dialogue going? Who is missing in this dialogue today? Who do we need to speak

to or influence so they can do the bidding for us and with us?

For those in the education and NGO sectors, who carry the burden I shared earlier, the question is: "How can we do more?" I believe advocacy is the answer. It is an area where there are probably more questions than answers when you are starting. At times, it seems as though we are running faster than our capacity and our resources allow, but it is the right way to go, and it is also a learning journey. Moreover, understand that some agencies have been trailblazers in this path, and others are walking this path and finding their way through it, just like you.

Finally, if you are from the faith-based sector, I just want to say, "Do not be afraid to take a church agency approach." I recognise that Churches and their development agencies sometimes speak different languages

regarding how we do our work and conduct our daily business. It will also take some level of understanding to learn and map out the structures within the agency and the Church, but it is going to be well worth it. The strength that you can harness from a global voice that stems from the power of your Church should be taken as an opportunity.

However, my caution for you when going for a joined-up approach is that you are not seeking a partnership; you should not want to corporatise, commercialise, or systematise what this is. It is not a partnership because it is our social and moral responsibility. As a Church, it is our Christian responsibility since that is what we have been called to do. So, take that courage with you as you join up your Churches and take on this great challenge together.

TOGETHER
+ EXPLORE
+ ACCELERATE

+ Every child. +
Everywhere.
+ In school.



ADRA

*Justice.
Compassion
Love*

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