EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES:
A community's need, a child's right

Caitlin Cockroft/Save the Children: 13 year old boy in Akobo, South Sudan

'Despite all the difficulties I faced as due to the war between the SPLA and the Sudan Government army, my education was never interrupted. As the current conflict continues, the Ministers and the Undersecretaries of tomorrow are at school today – but if the war interrupts their education, they won't live up to their potential.'
Undersecretary for Education, South Sudan - Michael Lopuke[1]

The WHS Regional Consultation for East and Southern Africa presents an opportunity to reflect on emergencies throughout the region and ensure that lessons are incorporated into a more effective, accountable and innovative humanitarian system; one capable of supporting communities to overcome crises and protect and promote human rights. In contrast to other regions, the proportion of children and youth as a share of the total population across Africa is growing significantly,[2] so the humanitarian system in the region must take their needs and priorities into account. Save the Children (SCI) recognises the crucial role that children and youth must hold in this process and as such have conducted a series of consultations in four countries across in East Africa - Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya - with children, youth and wider communities in emergency settings.

Based on focus group discussions with 173 children and 92 adults, as well as interviews

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[1] Michael Lopuke grew up in Juba where he attended a local school. He then went to Catholic University of Eastern Africa in and later to Swansea University in the UK. He served as the State Minister of Education in Eastern Equatoria for four years, and is currently the Undersecretary in the National Ministry of Education, Science and Technology – General Education.

[2] By 2050 there will be almost 1 billion people under the age of 18 in Africa and 40% of the world's children under five will live on the continent. UNICEF Generation 2030 Africa

with local officials, staff of Save the Children and key humanitarian agencies[i], this paper argues that an effective humanitarian system must be made more accountable to the most vulnerable communities it works with, particularly children and youth who comprise such a large percentage. Effectiveness also requires response through strategic integration of sectors, rather than by working with each one individually. We have found that sustainability and innovative approaches to interventions are best ensured not only by building on a community's existing capacity but in actively including children and youth, who are the intended beneficiaries. Children and youth are highly susceptible to the impact of conflict and so any efforts to work with conflict-affected communities must prioritise their needs and views. During our consultations, they repeatedly stressed the importance of education as a valuable entry point in accessing other services which help protect them, promote their wellbeing in terms of health and nutrition as well as hygiene and sanitation. Repeatedly, children, youth and their families emphasised that education in emergencies is a priority for them as well as a right.

'Even if there is no food [during a crisis], we have a right to receive education very soon'
14-year-old girl, Bor PoC camp, South Sudan

The East Africa region is a complex context; chronic conflict, recurrent drought and elevated food insecurity across the region have contributed to continued high levels of humanitarian need and protracted displacement. With both slow and sudden onset crises occurring concurrently in the region, the humanitarian system has been repeatedly tested.

Compounding the ongoing crises in East Africa, including conflict in Somalia and Darfur, and exacerbating the chronically high levels of vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters is the conflict which erupted in South Sudan in December 2013. This has resulted in critical levels of humanitarian need in South Sudan and neighbouring countries, caused by the displacement of South Sudanese, as the humanitarian system struggles to meet the demand for assistance. Across the region, in spite of the very high levels of children and

youth among affected populations (up to 60% in some areas), the humanitarian system has repeatedly failed to prioritise children's rights and welfare, including education. For example, although the education cluster in Somalia requested $50.7m USD for its 2014 activities, only 2% of this ask, excluding school feeding, has been funded. In addition, while affected communities consistently prioritise education, it is often deprioritised in favour of other humanitarian sectors. Today under the current Crisis Response Plan for South Sudan, the education cluster's ask is only 37.5% funded.

'We need the humanitarian community – all the NGOs – to support education. We can see the changes. We have been in this situation before. Education is the only answer to all these problems'
Volunteer teacher, UN Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, Juba

Humanitarian effectiveness
An effective humanitarian system must put the needs and priorities of affected communities at eart of every response. Accountability to and participation of crisis-affected populations, including children and youth, should be seen as essential to effective programs and critical in determining the quality of humanitarian action. If a top-down, prescriptive approach to the prioritisation of activities is used, it runs the risk of being ineffective or even detrimental to affected communities. This can reduce the likelihood of generating sustainable gains for children in a response. Throughout the East Africa region, **60.5% of crisis-affected children and adults consulted listed being able to access education as their first priority**.

'Our fathers and mothers were displaced too and have never been educated which is not something we want for our future.'
12-year-old boy, IDP camp, Garowe, Somalia

Previous research has shown that an integrated approach to a humanitarian intervention which includes education often serves as the most efficient and impactful method of providing

effective support.[3] In situations where there are large numbers of orphaned, unaccompanied or otherwise vulnerable children and youth, a cross-sector approach is required in order to meet all of their urgent needs. Schools or child-friendly spaces (CFS) are exceptionally well placed to be used as an 'entry point' in assessing, meeting and monitoring those needs.

> 'In all sectors, the interventions can only work well if the families are in school.'
> UNHCR official, Arua, Uganda

Save the Children staff found that the provision of education was essential in effectively carrying out activities in other sectors:

> 'As soon as we have an education intervention in place, child protection teams are able to do profiling to find particularly vulnerable children and ensure that they are included in the distribution of food and non-food items (NFIs). Education provides the platform for conducting and maximising child protection interventions.'
> SCI staff member, Kampala, Uganda

Using schools as an 'entry point' to carry out interventions in other sectors has an impact on a far broader cross-section of the community than children or youth alone. One parent displaced in Garowe, Somalia described how he and his wife have a chalkboard in their home and encourage their children to use this in sharing what they have learned each evening after they return from school. This father and many children consulted gave examples of pupils sharing information on good health, hygiene and sanitation practices regularly. A key component in the provision of education in emergencies is to sensitise children and youth on the importance of activities that will promote their and their family's wellbeing. One camp manager who works for the local authorities in northern Uganda claimed:

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[3] The Sphere Project and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) 2009 http://www.ineesite.org/uploads/files/resources/Sphere_INEE_paper_FINAL.pdf

> 'Education creates awareness amongst the whole family in a refugee situation like this. We cannot create awareness on a wider scale informally – it has to take place in a school setting to have real impact. What a child learns in ECD has an impact at home. He will tell his mother about health and sanitation. We have seen the hygiene in this camp improve as children have shared what they learned in class.'

Schools tend to constitute pillars supporting wider community life, particularly in emergency contexts. As well as health or sanitation, education can limit further insecurity within camps or settlements as children and youth who are in school are prevented from spending excessive periods of time 'idle' or engaging, as a number of reports have suggested, in the consumption of alcohol, drug-taking and even crime. In addition, education can have an important role in supporting children and youth as they move into recovery. Effective humanitarian responses will ensure strong linkages and integration with development actors. The immediate and long-term benefits of education are well-documented, and, as a familiar and socially embedded entity, education responses are inherently well-placed to help bridge this gap.

Reducing vulnerability and managing risk

Communities displaced or otherwise affected by emergencies are inherently vulnerable and children are usually among those most at-risk. As support mechanisms such as family units, community networks and law enforcement are either disrupted or break down, a humanitarian response which seeks to manage risk must include children as participants in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in promoting resilience as well as providing protection.

In dynamic contexts, schools can provide an ideal 'safe place' by minimising the exposure of children and youth to hazards often present during a crisis.

> 'When they go to school, we know that there is a teacher to

> take care of them in the classroom.'
> Mother, Bor, South Sudan

Children and youth consulted expressed the importance of the wider community's perception of them during emergencies and how vital this is to ensure their safety. School-going children throughout the region overwhelmingly requested school uniforms to be provided in order to clearly identify them as peaceful and productive members of their community and, therefore, people to be protected in case of hostility.

> 'If you are in uniform, the community sees you as well-behaved and peaceful. If I am a school pupil and someone from outside comes to me with a dispute, the community members will defend me.'
> 15 year old boy, Garowe, Somalia.

As various social networks or 'circles' of protection disintegrate during crises, children and youth automatically become more vulnerable and a humanitarian system which aims to reduce this must recognise the value that not only schools but wider school-centred communities can offer in place of those.

Of those children consulted, many knew signs which indicate the presence of landmines or unexploded ordnance (UXOs) in a given area. Nearly all these children and youth claimed that their teachers had taught them about the risks posed by mines and how they should avoid them, thus enabling them to spread key DRR messages throughout the community. Similarly, many also highlighted that they had been made aware by teachers of different kinds of abuse and exploitation and how to protect themselves from increased exposure to these dangers. Girls consulted referred to early marriage, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and underage prostitution as being risks they hoped to protect themselves from by continuing their studies.

> 'If I don't go to school, I might be forced into an early marriage.'
> 17 year old South Sudanese girl, northern Uganda

Save the Children

Education in emergencies is also necessary in the promotion of other forms of resilience; it is the simplest means of helping children and youth to overcome stress or trauma experienced as a result of conflict or natural disasters. One parent in Awerial, South Sudan described one of the key psychosocial benefits of education as:

> 'Washing away past events and shifting their focus to school'

This sentiment was echoed by dozens of other children, parents and teachers as it not only negates some of the impact of stress but provides opportunity for the child to be part of building a constructive future.

If children are at school parents or guardians have more time to engage in other activities that can strengthen a family unit and their resilience as a whole. Time available for adults to engage in social activities and find methods to address some of their own psychosocial needs can help to sustain the family unit and prevent young people from being subjected to domestic abuse usually fuelled by a build-up of stress.

As well as protection, DRR which includes children as active participants must be as much of a priority as it is for adults affected by crisis. Education in emergencies is the simplest way to mainstream DRR by providing knowledge that empowers children to protect themselves, identify and mitigate risk, prepare for or slow down the onset of crises and adapt to changing circumstances such as the changing climate or the recovery period after a of crisis. Education empowers a generation to build a future – you cannot reduce vulnerability or manage risk in the long term without it.

Given that many communities affected by crises live in extreme poverty, ensuring that children are in a safe environment during the day also means that parents and guardians have the opportunity to engage in income-generation and asset-building, enhancing resilience through improving the family's economic situation.

> 'As a community we are very poor and when children are in school we are confident knowing that they are in a safe place while we try to earn some money.'
> PTA member, Garowe, Somalia

Jonathan Hyams/Save the Children - Habiba Ibrahim Noor, 13, (centre) is enrolled in Save the Children's Alternative Basic Education programme (ABE) in Heleweyn camp, Dollo Ado, Ethiopia

Without education in emergencies, children, their families and wider communities are likely to remain vulnerable in the long-term; economically, socially, psychologically and physically.

Serving the needs of people affected by conflict

'Children are competing with time. If we leave them they will grow up without education and a good future. We don't know how long the war will take so they should at least be in school.'
Mother, Bor PoC Camp, South Sudan

Given the nature of current conflicts in the region, primarily in Greater East Africa, rooted in medium to long-term instability and highly volatile environments, children and youth who require a sense of structure and routine are consistently amongst the most affected groups. Conflict has a particularly severe impact on children and youth whose vulnerability is easily exploited by armed groups who use children in conflict. Consultations indicate that timely emergency support for education would reduce the chances of recruitment. In South Sudan, the UN estimates that at least 11,000 children and youth have been recruited to fight for both rebel and government forces.

Community leaders, teachers, parents and children felt that children who are educated are considered less susceptible to manipulation and therefore less likely to be targeted by armed groups who use child soldiers. One community leader in South Sudan's Awerial County explained this theory:

'Those who are fighting see a difference among children who are in school or not. They will leave a child in school because that child thinks independently and makes their own decisions.'

Education empowers children and provides them with a much-needed structure and purpose to counteract any perceptions of 'power' they might think they possess in armed groups. Even among refugees in Uganda who fled the conflict 10 months ago and have been living in relative peace with some services, there are concerns that without education some youth are likely to risk returning to South Sudan

to take up arms as they do not see alternative opportunities for their future.

> 'Some of the youth are thinking of going back [to South Sudan] to fight because they have no means to go back to school'
> 17-year-old South Sudanese boy, northern Uganda

Timing is important too in minimising this risk. One father living in a camp for the internally displaced in Puntland, Somalia claimed:

> 'If I don't take my children to school straightaway, people can use him for other purposes… Armed groups will use him. Time waits for nobody.'

Even those children and youth who aren't directly drawn into the conflict are particularly susceptible to its impact. Many of the conflict-affected children and youth consulted either as IDPs or refugees spoke of overwhelming loss and trauma as a result of death or separation from family members as well as physical attacks or simply their experience of having to flee their homes under difficult circumstances. **Of children and youth consulted 82.5% called for education to resume straightaway or within one month of an emergency,** with the primary reason from all groups being that it supports their psychosocial wellbeing.

> 'We want children to forget what happened quickly because if they stay without school for a long time they start to develop other interests that are harmful' Parent, Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya

With further uncertainty often occurring as a result of the unknown duration of a conflict, children need the sense of stability and routine that comes from going to school and, as one father claimed:

> 'Without school, they won't think about tomorrow'.

Schools are also key to fostering a sense of community and mutual understanding on an individual or community level by providing a neutral space where families from different communities gather with shared objectives: the welfare of their children. Children too are taught the importance of coexistence as they learn and play with people from other backgrounds and this helps to prevent conflict.

> 'I have seen a change in the educated children here. Before school started we had mothers and community members who would fight daily over their children. When children fought amongst themselves, they took this to parents who would escalate the dispute to a clan level. Now in school they are well disciplined and calm and we leaders are less involved in resolving disputes.'
> IDP Community Camp Leader, Puntland, Somalia

Too many schools in conflict-affected communities are occupied either by displaced people or armed groups while countless others continue to close due to a lack of resources required to pay teachers' salaries or incentives. The humanitarian community must recognise the role of schools and teachers and work to preserve them as safe places, free from military use as outlined in the Lucens Guidelines.[4]

The humanitarian system must do more than meet the basic needs of children and youth in conflict; it must invest in empowering communities to enable them to be part of the solution to long-term conflicts and addressing chronic vulnerabilities. Education is an essential part of ensuring that children and youth know their rights and can participate meaningfully in discussions and debates about their future.

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[4] http://www.protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/draft_lucens_guidelines.pdf

Transformation through innovation

The humanitarian system should place emphasis on seeking opportunities to transform and rebuild communities, using their own capacity and based on their own priorities and aspirations. Integrated interventions can achieve much more than saving lives by promoting overall regional stability and education is a vital part of this.

Throughout the region, but particularly in South Sudan and Somalia, there are large numbers of unoccupied, often disaffected youth, many of whom are members of armed groups but many more are at risk of being engaged in this way. Unless directed into more peaceful and developmentally productive alternatives, whole generations of children and youth are at risk of being consumed by the cycle of conflict.

The humanitarian system should also see education in emergencies as a longer-term opportunity for promoting stability in chronically vulnerable areas. Learning environments foster innovation, giving children and youth the chance to create their own solutions to the risks and challenges of emergencies. Enabling children to engage with and think creatively about issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction and preparedness from an early age will foster innovation both for the present and the future.

Emergency education interventions targeting disaffected children and youth throughout the region could help to secure a more stable and productive future not only for those individuals and their communities but on a national level too. If applied strategically across the wider humanitarian system, the inclusion of education in emergencies can contribute towards broader regional stability, feed into post-conflict reconstruction and be a ready source for innovation in the humanitarian sector.

Education Cannot Wait

- The humanitarian system should be accountable to the communities it works with, including the voices of

Cat Carter/Save the Children, Nimco attends a school supported by Save the Children in Bosaso, Puntland, Somalia.

children and youth, and prioritize the needs identified by them.
- Education is a critical sector in the humanitarian system and is an opportunity to support sustainable gains which can empower communities to be stakeholders in a transition to development or in reducing their collective vulnerabilities.
- As the population of children and youth grows in East Africa, education is essential to the future stability and prosperity of the whole region, particularly for states affected by chronic conflicts and recurrent natural disasters

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[i] Data was collected by Save the Children and LWF partners in Kenya.