



# PROTECTING EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS IN AFRICA

Local realities and community voices from Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This synthesis report draws from the rich qualitative evidence generated by national researchers and National Education Coalitions (NECs) in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan. The findings reflect the voices of students, displaced learners, teachers, parents, school leaders, local communities, and civil society organizations who generously contributed their time and shared their lived experiences of education under crisis conditions.

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# FOREWORD

**Despite its vital role, education remains one of the most underfunded sectors in humanitarian responses, even as the number and complexity of crises continue to grow worldwide. Millions of people affected by conflict, displacement, climate-related disasters, and protracted emergencies continue to be denied their right to education - and with it access to protection, stability, dignity, and hope.**

As our movement, with members and partners, has long maintained, education is not only a fundamental human right but also a life-saving intervention: it helps safeguard children and youth from violence and exploitation, supports their wellbeing, and enables individuals and communities to recover, rebuild, and look to the future.

It is within this context that the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) undertook this multi-country research initiative in Africa, in partnership with our national education coalitions in Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan. Rather than producing another overview of global trends, this study seeks to amplify the experiences, perspectives, and proposals of those living and working at the heart of these crises. Through locally led qualitative research, it brings together the voices of learners, teachers, parents, civil society organisations, community leaders, humanitarian actors, and public authorities, offering a richer understanding of both the challenges they face and the solutions they are already building.

Across the seven countries, the findings reveal that emergencies are rarely isolated events. Armed conflict, climate shocks, displacement, poverty, gender inequality, and weak public systems often overlap, creating complex barriers to education that no single intervention can address. At the same time, the research demonstrates

the extraordinary resilience of affected communities. Teachers continue working under immense pressure, families strive to keep children learning despite insecurity, and local organisations develop innovative responses adapted to their realities.

This study also reinforces two priorities that have become central to GCE's work on Education in Emergencies. First, the need for sustained and equitable financing that recognises education as a lifesaving and rights-based intervention, rather than an optional component of humanitarian response. Second, the need to advance genuine localisation by ensuring that national and local actors - those who are first to respond and remain long after international attention shifts elsewhere - have the resources, recognition, and decision-making power necessary to lead. Stronger public education systems, informed by community knowledge and supported through meaningful partnerships, remain our best pathway towards resilience and lasting recovery.

We hope this report will serve not only as a source of evidence, but also as a call to action. The testimonies and recommendations presented here invite governments, donors, humanitarian agencies, and civil society to listen more closely to the communities most affected by crises and to translate international commitments into concrete action. Above all, they remind us that the right to education does not disappear in times of emergency, it becomes even more urgent.

**Grant Kasowanjete**  
GCE Global Coordinator



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**This study examines how education systems in seven countries – Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan – are responding to the combined pressures of conflict, displacement, climate shocks, and longstanding structural inequities. Coordinated by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and led at the country level by National Education Coalitions (NECs), the research integrates community voices, school-level realities, and national policy analysis, alongside global evidence from the Education in Emergencies (EiE) literature.**

**Across all seven contexts, the findings point overwhelmingly to one conclusion: education systems are not prepared for the scale or nature of the crises they face, and continuity of learning is being sustained primarily by teachers, families, and local communities – not by formal systems.**

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## CRISES ARE INTENSIFYING EDUCATIONAL EXCLUSION

Children and young people across the seven countries face multiple, compounding barriers to schooling:

- » Conflict, displacement, and insecurity disrupt school operations, destroy infrastructure, and create fear around school attendance.
- » Climate-related disasters – severe flooding in South Sudan and Chad, cyclones in Mozambique – repeatedly wipe out educational infrastructure and force temporary relocations. Somalia further illustrates how conflict and climate-related shocks interact to produce repeated displacement, prolonged interruptions to schooling, and cumulative learning loss.
- » Household poverty and loss of livelihoods undermine families' ability to support school participation. In South Sudan, indirect costs – uniforms, examination fees, learning materials – remain significant barriers even where primary education is formally free.
- » Girls, learners with disabilities, and displaced children face especially high barriers. In South Sudan, refugee girls transitioning from Arabic-medium instruction face compounding challenges of language, safety, and early marriage pressures.





Research photo from Chad

## TEACHERS AND COMMUNITIES ARE THE FRONTLINE OF EDUCATIONAL CONTINUITY

Across all countries, teachers and community actors – parents, local leaders, volunteer educators, civil society organizations – are sustaining schooling in the absence of adequate state response. In Somalia, teachers routinely assume multiple roles beyond instruction, providing psychosocial support, adapting learning despite severe resource constraints, and sustaining education continuity even while lacking adequate training, remuneration, and institutional support. In South Sudan, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) have effectively become the primary governance structures in the absence of consistent state presence.

As one PTA representative stated:

*It is the PTA and SMC that have become the government now. We have forgotten if there is any. No salaries, no books, no food.”*

- PTA representative, Wedwiel Refugee Camp, South Sudan

## NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS EXIST BUT ARE WEAKLY IMPLEMENTED

All countries have endorsed global commitments such as SDG4, the Safe Schools Declaration, and inclusive education strategies, but implementation is limited. In Somalia, participants described that national Education in Emergencies policies are broadly aligned with international frameworks, but implementation remains limited by the lack of funding, with the gap widest in rural and conflict-affected areas. In Mozambique, only one teacher across multiple sites who was interviewed had ever received EiE training, despite formal coordination structures on paper.

In Nigeria, parents in the Northeast reported they had “never seen” any safety improvements despite years of Safe Schools advocacy. In South Sudan, government officials themselves acknowledged the gap:

*Dissemination is limited... implementation is a challenge.*

- Government official, Ministry of General Education and Instruction, South Sudan



## LOCALLY INFORMED STRATEGIES ARE WIDESPREAD BUT UNDER-RECOGNIZED

Teachers, schools, and communities have developed practical strategies to keep learning going during crisis: informal assessments to place undocumented learners, flexible scheduling, community-made learning spaces, parent escort networks in Burkina Faso and Nigeria, mobile and rotational learning in Chad's flood-prone districts, third-shift schooling in Mozambique, and community-organized language-bridging in South Sudan for Arabic-speaking refugee learners entering an English-medium system. Somalia further demonstrates how communities sustain education through locally led initiatives such as temporary learning spaces, accelerated education programmes, community-built classrooms, women's groups as education advocates, peer learning networks, and community mobiliser-led learner tracking, despite limited institutional support.

## GLOBAL EVIDENCE REINFORCES THE CROSS-COUNTRY FINDINGS

The Global Literature Review confirms that the issues observed across the seven countries reflect broader international EiE trends: teachers are overstretched and central to system resilience; psychosocial support is insufficient but essential; crises disproportionately affect girls, displaced children, and learners with disabilities; EiE is chronically underfunded; data systems are not crisis-sensitive; localization remains rhetorical; and flexible learning models are effective but rarely systematized.

## CORE POLICY AND ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

1

**Invest in teachers through training, wellbeing support, safe working conditions and salaries, and deployment models suited to crisis contexts.**

2

**Strengthen community participation and localization, recognizing community-led initiatives as essential system assets.**

3

**Institutionalize flexible learning pathways, including language-transition programmes for refugee and returnee learners.**

4

**Improve school safety and protection mechanisms, ensuring that Safe Schools commitments translate into real practice.**

5

**Reform data systems to capture displacement, disability, and school safety indicators.**

6

**Expand multi-year, crisis-sensitive financing, bridging humanitarian-development divides.**

7

**Ensure disability inclusion and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) leadership across EiE planning, implementation, and monitoring.**



Observing an outdoor classroom in Chad



# ACRONYMS

|               |                                                             |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AEP</b>    | Accelerated Education Program                               |
| <b>CBE</b>    | Community-Based Education                                   |
| <b>CSO</b>    | Civil Society Organization                                  |
| <b>CVA</b>    | Cash and Voucher Assistance                                 |
| <b>DRC</b>    | Democratic Republic of the Congo                            |
| <b>DRR</b>    | Disaster Risk Reduction                                     |
| <b>ECW</b>    | Education Cannot Wait                                       |
| <b>EiE</b>    | Education in Emergencies                                    |
| <b>EMIS</b>   | Education Management Information System                     |
| <b>FGD</b>    | Focus Group Discussion                                      |
| <b>GBV</b>    | Gender-Based Violence                                       |
| <b>GCE</b>    | Global Campaign for Education                               |
| <b>GCPEA</b>  | Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack           |
| <b>GESI</b>   | Gender Equality and Social Inclusion                        |
| <b>GLR</b>    | Global Literature Review                                    |
| <b>HDP</b>    | Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus                        |
| <b>IDP</b>    | Internally Displaced Person                                 |
| <b>INEE</b>   | Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies           |
| <b>KII</b>    | Key Informant Interview                                     |
| <b>MHPSS</b>  | Mental Health and Psychosocial Support                      |
| <b>MoGEI</b>  | Ministry of General Education and Instruction (South Sudan) |
| <b>NEC</b>    | National Education Coalition                                |
| <b>NGO</b>    | Non-Governmental Organization                               |
| <b>OPD</b>    | Organization of Persons with Disabilities                   |
| <b>PSS</b>    | Psychosocial Support                                        |
| <b>PTA</b>    | Parent Teacher Association                                  |
| <b>SDG</b>    | Sustainable Development Goal                                |
| <b>SMC</b>    | School Management Committee                                 |
| <b>SSD</b>    | Safe Schools Declaration                                    |
| <b>UNICEF</b> | United Nations Children's Fund                              |
| <b>UNHCR</b>  | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees               |



Research photos from Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)





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# 1. INTRODUCTION



Education systems across sub-Saharan Africa operate against a backdrop of overlapping crises that continually erode the foundations of access, inclusion, and learning. The seven countries examined in this synthesis – Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan – are diverse in their political histories, geographic characteristics, and forms of instability. Yet across these contexts, communities experience remarkable similarities in how conflict, displacement, and climate-related disasters disrupt education. The national case studies completed by NECs reveal that, despite contextual differences, the underlying structures of exclusion, fragility, and systemic neglect follow a strikingly parallel pattern. This introduction situates the seven national reports within the broader regional crisis landscape and outlines the purpose and analytical framework guiding the study.

## 1.1. REGIONAL CRISIS LANDSCAPE AND EDUCATION DISRUPTIONS

**In recent years, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and the DRC have become emblematic of the intensification of armed conflict in the Sahel and Great Lakes regions. Communities in these countries are confronted daily with the consequences of violence, including armed attacks on villages, abductions, targeted killings, and the militarization of public spaces, including schools.**

In Burkina Faso, the NEC report describes how communities have endured one of the world's fastest-growing internal displacement crises, with approximately 1.9 million internally displaced persons, the majority of whom are children. Many families have been displaced multiple times, fleeing successive waves of violence while watching their educational infrastructure collapse around them. Schools in affected areas have been forced to close entirely, leaving thousands of learners without access to instruction for prolonged periods.

Nigeria's case presents a similarly dire picture. In the Northeast, particularly in Borno and Yobe States, families have lived for more than a decade under the threat of armed attacks on schools, targeted violence against teachers, and the abduction of students. The fear this engenders permeates every aspect of daily life. Parents express anxiety about sending children to school; teachers report living under constant threat; and school attendance fluctuates in direct response to the ebb and flow of insecurity. The Nigeria report makes clear that the psychological impact of this prolonged insecurity is significant. Children describe being afraid not only during their commute but also while sitting in the classroom, alert to the possibility of an imminent attack.

The DRC reflects another dimension of protracted crisis: the sheer scale and duration of displacement. With millions of people forced from their homes due to conflict among armed groups, whole communities relocate into new districts where already fragile education systems are overwhelmed. In one striking example from the national report, a school designed to accommodate several hundred learners received more than 5,700 displaced students in a matter of weeks,





Research photo from Chad



pushing class sizes to extraordinary levels and forcing the school to adopt multi-shift instruction under extremely constrained conditions. Such accounts illustrate not only the magnitude of displacement but also the impossibility of schools maintaining basic quality standards under such pressure.

While conflict is the primary driver of disruption in the Sahel and Great Lakes regions, Mozambique's national report underscores the devastating role of climate change in shaping educational instability. The country has endured repeated cyclones, floods, and droughts, resulting in massive displacement and the destruction of schools. In many coastal areas, communities are still recovering from Cyclones Idai, Kenneth, and Chido, only to face new floods and storms that dismantle hard-won progress. The cyclical nature of these disasters creates a permanent state of precarity: classrooms are rebuilt only to be destroyed again, families relocate multiple times, and teachers struggle to maintain continuity of learning in an environment where the school calendar is regularly interrupted.

Chad's report highlights similar patterns of climate vulnerability. Seasonal floods displace entire neighborhoods, destroy school structures, and interrupt schooling for months at a time. These climatic events intersect with pre-existing poverty and infrastructural weakness, further limiting educational access. Adré, a border region in eastern Chad, has additionally become a major reception site for Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict, layering displacement dynamics on top of climate vulnerability.

Somalia presents another dimension of protracted crisis, where armed conflict, political fragility, and recurrent climate shocks interact to create a continuous state of educational disruption. More than three decades of insecurity, combined with cyclical droughts and repeated flooding along the Shabelle River, have displaced communities, damaged school infrastructure, and interrupted learning on a recurring basis. In areas such as Beledweyne, education systems have little opportunity to recover between successive emergencies, leaving schools, teachers, and learners to navigate overlapping crises that reinforce one another. This convergence of conflict, displacement, and climate-related disasters illustrates how educational exclusion becomes increasingly entrenched in contexts of prolonged humanitarian crisis.

South Sudan's education system operates within what the Education Research in Conflict and Protracted Crisis (ERICC) initiative characterizes as a "polycrisis" – where conflict, displacement, environmental stressors, and weak institutional capacity interact and reinforce one another. According to UNICEF, more than 2.8 million children are currently out of school. Education Cluster data indicate that at least 422 schools have been closed due to flooding alone. During the 2013 and 2016 conflicts, schools were occupied by armed actors, contributing to the dropout of an estimated 400,000 children across three states. As one youth participant in Wedwiel described:

***When the floods come, we stop learning because the classrooms are full of families who have nowhere else to stay.***



South Sudan's situation is both distinctive – with its refugee-hosting dynamics, language-of-instruction transitions, and inter-community tensions – and emblematic of the convergence of crisis drivers affecting the other five countries.

Together, these national cases illustrate a broader trend documented in the global literature: countries facing recurrent crises – whether conflict, climate, or both – experience prolonged educational disruption, deepening inequality, and threatening the long-term prospects of an entire generation. The seven contexts exemplify the convergence of crisis drivers that shape EiE realities across the continent, demonstrating that education systems are increasingly required to respond not to isolated emergencies, but to overlapping and mutually reinforcing crises that demand more resilient, inclusive, and crisis-sensitive approaches

## 1.2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

**The study was designed to address precisely these overlapping and persistent challenges. Its core aim is to generate community-grounded evidence that strengthens national, regional, and global advocacy for the right to education in emergency contexts. In each of the seven countries, NECs led qualitative fieldwork that centered on the lived experiences of students, parents, teachers, school leaders, community members, and civil society actors. The purpose of the study extends beyond documentation; it seeks to elevate community voices into policy spaces that often remain disconnected from grassroots realities.**

The study's scope encompasses a range of overlapping crisis contexts, including violent conflict, forced displacement, climate-induced disasters, chronic systemic fragility, and – in the South Sudan case – the specific dynamics of refugee-hosting environments where displaced populations, returnees, and host communities coexist under significant resource strain. By examining how communities navigate educational disruption, how national systems respond, and what local strategies emerge during crises, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of EiE. The synthesis report consolidates these findings, offering a cross-country narrative that also situates national experiences within global EiE debates.

Importantly, the study positions NECs not only as data collectors but as key actors in national accountability ecosystems. Their role is central to bridging the gap between evidence and policy: strengthening advocacy for inclusion, EiE financing, Safe Schools implementation, and the integration of crisis-affected learners into national sector planning.

## 1.3. THE FIVE RESEARCH QUESTIONS GUIDING THE SYNTHESIS

**The study is organized around five research questions that guide both national and cross-country analysis. These questions reflect core EiE concerns articulated in global frameworks such as the INEE Minimum Standards, the Safe Schools Declaration, and SDG 4 commitments.**

1

How do communities affected by conflict, displacement, and disaster experience and navigate barriers to accessing inclusive, quality education?

2

To what extent do national policies and education system responses address the rights and needs of crisis-affected learners, particularly marginalized groups such as girls, displaced children, and learners with disabilities?

3

What roles do teachers, parents, students, and civil society organizations play in responding to education disruptions, and how are their voices included (or excluded) in education planning and decision-making?

4

What locally informed strategies, innovations, or practices have emerged to sustain learning and protect the right to education during emergencies?

5

How can grassroots perspectives and evidence inform more equitable, inclusive, and accountable education in emergency policies at national, regional, and global levels?



These questions create a coherent analytical framework that enables comparisons across contexts while respecting the specificity of each national case.



## 1.4. CONTRIBUTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE SYNTHESIS REPORT

**This synthesis report builds on the seven national studies by offering a cross-country analysis that identifies common patterns, contextual differences, and systemic successes and failures.**

The value of synthesis lies in tracing themes that are not visible in individual cases alone; patterns such as the chronic implementation gap between national EiE policies and what schools actually experience, the centrality of teachers as the *de facto* frontline of crisis response, and the recurring exclusion of displaced learners and children with disabilities from national data systems.

In integrating national evidence with the global literature review, the report also situates the seven countries within larger EiE trends such as the global shortage of psychosocial support in schools, the underfunding of EiE in humanitarian appeals, and the widespread challenges of aligning displacement realities with national education systems.



The remainder of the report is organized into methodological detail (Section 2), thematic analysis of community experiences and system responses (Sections 3–5), an examination of local strategies (Section 6), policy and advocacy implications (Section 7), a consolidated findings and recommendations chapter (Section 8), and a comparison with global EiE evidence (Section 9). It concludes with a synthesis of key findings aimed at governments, NECs, donors, and international actors (Section 10).



Research Assistants Interaction with teachers and students during class lessons, Nigeria.



Revamped School borehole and water storage tanks, Nigeria



## 2. METHODOLOGY



The methodology for the GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study reflects the complexity of conducting research in crisis-affected environments while upholding rigorous ethical and participatory standards. This section describes the qualitative research design, data collection tools, sampling strategies, analytical procedures, integration of gender and social inclusion, ethical safeguards, and limitations encountered across the seven national case studies. The approach was grounded in the belief – central to both GCE’s mandate and the global EiE literature – that communities most affected by crises must be the primary voices shaping evidence and policy. The methodology therefore places local experience at the center while applying a harmonized cross-country framework that enables consistent comparison.

Photo: Lindsay Mgbor/DFID / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/14214150@N02/12345095983>

### 2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

**The study adopted a qualitative, participatory research design implemented by the seven National Education Coalitions (NECs) with support from Fora Education and the GCE Secretariat. Participatory engagement was essential not only because communities have intimate knowledge of the barriers they face, but also because traditional education data systems in emergency contexts often exclude or obscure the experiences of internally displaced persons, out-of-school children, and marginalized groups.**

Qualitative methods enabled the researchers to access perspectives that national surveys or EMIS systems typically overlook, a challenge highlighted in the global literature review’s critique of the limited availability of crisis-sensitive data systems.

Although crises varied – from armed conflict in Burkina Faso, DRC, and Nigeria, to climate-driven displacement in Mozambique and Chad, and a mixed conflict-displacement-climate polycrisis in South Sudan and Somalia – the research design was standardized across countries. This uniformity ensured that data from diverse contexts could be analyzed using the same conceptual framework and research questions. At the same time, each NEC was given space to introduce contextual adaptations. For example, Mozambique’s team adjusted interview sequences to account for flooded access roads and school closures; DRC’s team conducted several interviews outdoors due to overcrowded temporary school structures; the South Sudan team shifted fieldwork from September to December 2025 due to school closures and logistical constraints following seasonal flooding; and Somalia’s research team adapted community-entry protocols, interview settings, and safeguarding procedures to operate safely in areas affected simultaneously by insecurity, recurrent flooding, and population displacement.



## 2.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The study relied on four principal data collection methods: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), site observations, and policy/document analysis.



All interviews and FGD protocols were drawn from standardized tools agreed upon by all NECs at the start of the project, which provided question sets for students, parents, teachers, school leaders, local NGOs/CSOs, INGOs, and local or national government authorities. These tools were translated, adapted, and piloted in each country to ensure cultural and linguistic relevance. The protocols are included as Appendices A through K of this report.

Across countries, these tools were adapted to local realities while maintaining a common analytical structure. In Somalia, for example, interviews were conducted by Somali-speaking researchers with established community relationships, using community-based entry protocols, informal interview settings suited to low-literacy participants, and additional safeguarding measures to accommodate active insecurity and recurrent displacement.

1

### Key Informant Interviews

provided insight into how educational disruptions were managed at multiple system levels. Teachers described experiences of working unpaid, teaching under threat, or improvising learning materials when textbooks were unavailable. School leaders explained how they navigated sudden influxes of displaced learners—for example, in one DRC school where thousands of newly displaced children arrived with no documentation, and in South Sudan's Wedwiel, where a single school absorbed 858 new arrivals in a compressed period. Local NGO personnel shared perspectives on coordination challenges and the limitations of humanitarian funding cycles.

2

### Focus Group Discussions

with youth and parents captured the emotional and social dimensions of navigating crises. Students recounted traumatic journeys to school, fears of attack, and hopes for continuity of learning. Parents described difficult choices regarding household labor, safety, and girls' attendance. The participatory nature of FGDs allowed communities to articulate collective challenges and shared coping strategies. In South Sudan, FGDs were conducted with Arabic-speaking Sudanese refugees, South Sudanese returnees, and host community members, capturing the distinct and overlapping experiences of each group.

3

### Site observations

offered crucial contextual detail. Research teams documented the physical condition of learning environments, including overcrowded classrooms, flood-damaged buildings, makeshift shelters used as temporary schools, a lack of WASH facilities, and inaccessible infrastructure for children with disabilities. Observations reinforced narrative data; for example, Mozambique's third-shift schools, operating from early morning to evening, revealed the visible strain placed on teachers and administrators managing unending cycles of instruction. In South Sudan's Wedwiel, observations confirmed reports of absent learners with visible disabilities in classrooms and the absence of designated safe spaces within schools.

4

### Finally, policy and document reviews

helped assess the alignment between national EiE frameworks and on-the-ground realities. This comparison between written policy and lived experience became a recurrent theme in the analysis, reaffirming what the literature identifies as a persistent "implementation gap" across African EiE systems.





Research photos from Chad

## 2.3. SAMPLING AND RESEARCH SITES

Given the nature of education in emergency contexts, the study used purposive sampling rather than random selection. NECs identified regions most acutely affected by crisis: conflict-affected zones, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, host communities receiving displaced populations, or areas affected by severe climatic events. Within these regions, researchers sought participants who could speak to the varied experiences of students, teachers, families, and local institutions.

Research sites across the seven countries included:

- » Burkina Faso: Kaya municipality, Koulché region – armed conflict and displacement
- » Chad: Guilmey, Kalambari, and Adré – border region hosting Sudanese refugees, flood-prone
- » DRC: North Kivu and Tanganyika – active conflict and mass displacement
- » Mozambique: Pemba (Cabo Delgado) and Boane (Maputo Province) – cyclone and flood-affected areas
- » Nigeria: Benue and Borno States – conflict and Boko Haram-affected areas
- » Somalia: Beledweyne, the capital of the Hiran Region in Hirshabelle State - cyclical Shabelle River flooding, acute droughts, and Al-Shabaab-related insecurity
- » South Sudan: Weddiel Refugee Camp, Northern Bahr el Ghazal – mixed refugee/returnee/host community, flood-prone

The Inception Report provided a sampling framework targeting approximately 22 participants per country across 12 KIs/FGDs, plus one observational site per school or learning center. Although this target was broadly met, adaptations were necessary. In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, insecurity restricted movement to certain villages. In Chad and Mozambique, flood conditions delayed or prevented access to several communities. In some locations – such as DRC's overcrowded host communities – researchers encountered far more potential participants than expected, and selection had to focus on balancing gender, age, displacement status, and roles. In South Sudan, insecurity along the Mangala Highway prevented access to some planned sites in Central Equatoria, narrowing fieldwork to Weddiel in Northern Bahr el Ghazal.

Prioritizing inclusion was central. NECs made deliberate efforts to include girls, learners with disabilities, displaced youth, and marginalized linguistic groups. Gender-matched facilitators were used where possible, particularly for FGDs with adolescent girls, who often shared experiences of harassment or school-related GBV. Where disability-related barriers emerged, such as inaccessible venues or a lack of sign language support, researchers adapted locations or formats to enable participation. These adaptations reinforced the study's commitment to inclusive practice not as an abstract principle, but as a practical necessity in crisis environments.



Figure 1. Countries of Study



## 2.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis followed a two-stage process. First, NEC teams conducted initial coding using a shared analytical framework aligned with the five research questions. Interviews and FGDs were transcribed, translated where necessary, anonymized, and systematically coded. In some countries, qualitative software was used; in others, matrix-based manual coding procedures were adopted due to technological constraints.

The second stage involved cross-country synthesis led by the global consultant. This process involved reviewing coded data for consistency, triangulating findings across countries, and generating thematic patterns that reflected both shared regional dynamics and context-specific nuances.

The global literature review served as a reference point, anchoring national findings within broader evidence on conflict-related schooling disruptions, displacement, psychosocial needs, teacher challenges, and systemic policy failures.



This iterative analytical process ensured strong explanatory coherence across the national cases while preserving the specificity of each context.



Research photo from Chad



## 2.5. GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)

**GESI considerations were woven throughout the research design, data collection, and analysis. The methodological commitment to inclusion mirrored the global literature's emphasis on the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by girls, learners with disabilities, and displaced children during emergencies. NECs were instructed to ensure diversity in participant selection, adapt tools for accessibility, and approach sensitive topics such as GBV, discrimination, and trauma with care.**

Across all seven countries, NECs made deliberate efforts to achieve gender balance in participant selection. In Burkina Faso, Chad, the DRC, Mozambique, Nigeria, and South Sudan, FGDs were structured to include adolescent girls and women alongside boys and men, with gender-matched facilitators used where culturally appropriate. In South Sudan, this commitment was operationalized at the Wedwiel site by ensuring that three of six youth FGD participants were girls, three of six parents were women, and one of three teachers was female. Arabic-speaking Sudanese participants were included with translator support to ensure inclusive participation. This was particularly important given that the Wedwiel context hosts distinct ethnolinguistic groups whose educational experiences differ along both gender and language lines.

Researchers received training on trauma-informed interviewing, safeguarding, and ethical engagement. In practice, this meant recognizing when participants were uncomfortable, modifying question phrasing, pausing discussions, or offering follow-up support referrals. The research teams also documented instances in which environmental or institutional barriers prevented equitable participation, treating these not merely as methodological obstacles but as substantive data points that illuminated broader patterns of exclusion.

## 2.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

**Ethical safeguards were a central component of the research design. Informed consent – written or verbal, depending on literacy and cultural appropriateness – was obtained from all participants. Confidentiality was strictly maintained; quotations used in reports were anonymized, and no identifiable information was stored beyond what was required for the study.**

Do-No-Harm principles guided all decisions around site selection, questioning, and facilitation. NECs refrained from entering areas experiencing active conflict, and interviews were suspended when security alerts were issued. Trauma-sensitive approaches were especially important when interviewing youth who had experienced displacement, violence, or loss. The ethical protocols outlined in the Inception Report – including safeguarding pathways, incident documentation, and referral procedures – were followed rigorously.

Across all seven countries, authorization was secured from relevant national and sub-national authorities prior to fieldwork. NECs worked through ministries of education, district education offices, and, where applicable, local councils and traditional leaders to obtain the necessary permissions. In South Sudan, this multi-tier process involved authorization from the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) and from state ministries in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Central Equatoria, reflecting the governance realities of working in refugee-hosting environments where multiple jurisdictions overlap.

Ethical procedures were adapted to different operational contexts. In Somalia, for example, researchers relied on trusted community-entry mechanisms, flexible interview locations, and enhanced safeguarding protocols to minimise risks associated with insecurity while ensuring informed participation and confidentiality.



## 2.7. LIMITATIONS

**Conducting research in emergency contexts presents inherent limitations. In several countries, heightened insecurity restricted travel and limited participation from remote districts. Seasonal flooding in Chad, Mozambique, and South Sudan hindered access to schools, resulting in fewer site observations in the most affected areas.**

In South Sudan, delays in the transfer of research funds postponed fieldwork, and insecurity along the Mangala Highway prevented access to some planned sites. Language barriers required translation, which may have influenced the nuance of participant statements. In some contexts, government officials were difficult to reach or unavailable due to competing crisis management responsibilities.

Fieldwork across the seven countries was shaped by operational constraints typical of humanitarian settings, including insecurity, seasonal flooding, population displacement, and limited physical access. In Somalia, dynamic security conditions required flexible scheduling and adaptive community-entry strategies, while maintaining methodological consistency with the wider study.

Additionally, national EMIS systems often lacked up-to-date or disaggregated EiE data, making it challenging to triangulate specific claims. In South Sudan, the absence of the 2023 Annual Education Census was itself a limitation and a substantive finding. However, these limitations are themselves indicative of the conditions in which EiE must function: fragmented data systems, access challenges, and unstable environments reflect the very fragilities the study seeks to document.

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# 3. COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES AND BARRIERS TO EDUCATION



Community perspectives across Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan reveal that education disruptions in emergencies are rarely isolated events; instead, they form part of a broader pattern of cumulative adversity. Families, learners, teachers, and civil society consistently describe their educational environments as unstable, unsafe, and chronically under-resourced. Though the crises differ, the lived realities share significant similarities: the school is no longer a predictable or protected space, and structural and immediate pressures have eroded the conditions needed for meaningful learning.

Photo: UNHCR / H. Caux / January 2014 / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/101268966@N04/12304549005>



Sanitation facilities at a school in Kaya, Burkina Faso



## 3.1. OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION DISRUPTIONS

In conflict-affected areas of Burkina Faso and Nigeria, the most visible indicator of educational disruption is the closure or abandonment of schools. Entire communities have had to flee repeated attacks, leaving behind classrooms that become targets or are commandeered by armed groups. Burkina Faso's national report documents how over 1.9 million internally displaced persons – most of them children – have fled violence, forcing schools to shut down and leaving vast areas without functioning education services. Parents describe

how the simple act of walking to school has become a matter of life and death.

Nigeria's report echoes this reality. Communities recount the aftermath of school attacks, abductions, and threats against teachers. Even in districts where schools remain physically intact, fear itself has become a barrier: some households keep children home on days when rumors circulate about possible attacks. Teachers describe entering classrooms with the awareness that they may be targeted, and students recall being taught evacuation strategies as part of their daily routine.

In the DRC, educational disruption unfolds on an even more massive scale. Regions in Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu host millions of displaced children. Schools in receiving communities face extraordinary overcrowding: one school mentioned in the report received 5,720 newly displaced learners into six classrooms, effectively collapsing any semblance of structured learning. The school day devolves into managing numbers rather than delivering lessons.





Climate-induced disruptions in Mozambique, Somalia, and Chad follow their own rhythm of crisis and temporary recovery. Mozambique's coastal districts report that classrooms are routinely destroyed by cyclones, only to be rebuilt and destroyed again within two to three years. In some communities, schools operate out of tents, churches, or palm-frond structures that collapse in high winds. Chad's seasonal flooding submerges classrooms entirely; parents and teachers describe wading through waist-high water to salvage chairs and chalkboards. Somalia shows how climate hazards compound existing insecurity. In Beledweyne, recurrent flooding damages schools, displaces families, and interrupts learning, while ongoing insecurity simultaneously limits humanitarian access and weakens recovery efforts, resulting in repeated cycles of educational disruption.

South Sudan's disruptions combine elements observed in each of the other contexts. Conflict-driven school occupation, climate-driven infrastructure loss, and chronic under-resourcing all operate simultaneously. Education Cluster data indicate that at least 422 schools have been closed due to flooding alone, and conflict-related school occupation during the 2013 and 2016 hostilities contributed to the dropout of an estimated 400,000 children across three states.

The headteacher of Salvation Primary School, Wedviel, confirmed that during flood periods, temporary structures are routinely "interrupted by the wind," leaving learners without physical spaces. A government official reported that in some communities "there is no dry land... people live in motorboats," making classroom access impossible for extended periods. A youth participant in Wedviel summarized the cyclical disruption simply:

*When the floods come, we stop learning because the classrooms are full of families who have nowhere else to stay.*

Across several contexts, interruptions were not isolated events but repeated experiences that accumulated over time. Somalia's findings highlight how successive emergencies generate cumulative learning loss, with students returning after each disruption further behind academically and at greater risk of permanent disengagement. Similar patterns emerged in other countries affected by prolonged displacement and repeated school closures.



Research photos from Chad





Koum-Lakre school in Kaya, Burkina Faso. The country has endured five years of conflict with militias. Photograph: Olympia de Maismont/AFP/Getty Images



## CASE STUDY I: DISPLACEMENT AND SEVERE OVERCROWDING IN KAYA, BURKINA FASO

The commune of Kaya in Burkina Faso has become a major reception area for internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing conflict. Schools in host communities face extreme conditions due to the sudden influx of displaced learners. As the Head of the Basic Education District (CCEB) of Kaya I explained, the closure of rural schools in conflict zones resulted in “the massification of the workforce in the fallback areas,” placing enormous pressure on school infrastructure, furniture, and teacher capacity.

A site visit confirmed that one classroom held 84 students, creating “overcrowding on the table-benches” and severely limiting the ability of teachers to manage instruction. Another teacher, Z.S.K., reported teaching 154 learners in a CPI class, stating:

**It’s not easy to manage such a large number... There are 6 or 7 students per table.**



For IDP students, the challenges extend beyond overcrowding. One displaced girl, S.A.F., described being out of school for three years before an NGO intervened to enroll her and pay the necessary fees. Teachers observed that many displaced girls return to school “advanced in age,” placed in classes with much younger children. This mismatch leads to “embarrassment,” discouragement, and, in some cases, dropout. The Kaya case is emblematic of the displacement-driven overcrowding observed across all countries in the study – and illustrates why age-flexible placement, discussed in Section 6, has become one of the most vital community-led strategies.

**Across the seven countries, these disruptions fundamentally reshape schooling patterns. Many children attend intermittently, switching between schools as families move, or losing months – even years – of education between crises.**

## 3.2. CONFLICT- AND DISPLACEMENT-RELATED BARRIERS

Conflict and displacement alter nearly every aspect of learners’ daily lives. In Burkina Faso, parents consistently describe fear as the overriding factor influencing schooling decisions. Many no longer allow children to travel alone; some keep girls home entirely due to risks

of harassment, abduction, or gender-based violence.

Students recount walking long distances to host-community schools after their home villages were emptied by violence. The journey itself becomes strenuous and dangerous, especially when it involves crossing unmonitored areas or passing military checkpoints.



Somalia reinforces these patterns while illustrating how conflict-related insecurity and climate-related displacement frequently overlap. In Beledweyne, participants described repeated cycles of flooding, insecurity, and displacement that interrupted schooling multiple times, forcing children to move between communities and making educational continuity increasingly difficult. Rather than experiencing a single emergency, many learners faced recurring disruptions that accumulated over time and increased their risk of permanent exclusion from education.

Nigeria's report emphasizes the psychological toll of conflict. Children describe hearing gunfire during lessons, witnessing violent incidents on their commute, or living with the memory of past attacks. For many families, safety supersedes all other educational considerations.

In the DRC, displacement generates a different set of barriers. Newly arrived learners often lack documentation or proof of previous schooling. Families flee with little more than what they can carry; exercise books, uniforms, and certificates are usually lost. One school administrator explained that many displaced children “arrive traumatized and empty-handed,” and schools must improvise placement decisions without records. The resulting mismatch between age and grade level leads to overcrowding in lower grades and discourages continuation for overage learners.

Mozambique's displaced families face mobility-driven challenges. After a cyclone destroys their village, they move from district to district seeking shelter, causing children to transfer schools repeatedly. Teachers note that some learners have switched schools more than four times in a single calendar year. This instability fractures learning progress, weakens peer relationships, and causes many children to disengage entirely.

In South Sudan, displacement operates across multiple registers simultaneously. A staff member from a local organization noted that in Eastern Equatoria, “schools have not opened fully because of the insecurity.” Youth and parents described school access in Wedwiel as unstable and cyclical, shaped by seasonal flooding, displacement pressures, and fragile infrastructure. Displacement dynamics are particularly complex in this setting: Sudanese refugees, South Sudanese returnees from Sudan, and host community members coexist within and

around the camp, and inter-community tensions linked to perceived unequal aid distribution affected school safety. Youth interviewees described recurrent fights between host and refugee learners, with one noting that such conflict “cannot even get us to come to school” safely. Teachers described needing to mediate these tensions while simultaneously managing their own emotional strain. As one teacher reflected:

*When teaching I always [remember] what is happening in Sudan... I fear sometimes, even I [get] confused sometimes. Students' minds are just thinking about the crisis.*



Language barriers compound the displacement burden. Youth interviewees explained that when teachers write in English, they “cannot even understand...unless [it is] translated in Arabic.” This structural language mismatch – Arabic-medium learning backgrounds encountering an English-medium national system – is a distinctive feature of the South Sudan case and illustrates how displacement produces compounding barriers that go beyond access alone.

### 3.3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

Economic hardship is a universal barrier across all seven countries. In every national report, families stressed that even when schooling is nominally free, hidden costs such as transport, uniforms, examination fees, and notebooks place it out of reach. Displacement exacerbates this: families lose livelihoods, agricultural land, and community support networks. Parents in Nigeria and Burkina Faso describe choosing between buying food and sending a child to school. In Chad and Mozambique, children engage in seasonal agricultural labor or fishing to support household survival, leading to irregular attendance.

In Somalia, repeated crises gradually erode household coping capacities. Participants consistently described poverty as the mechanism through which conflict, displacement, and climate-related disasters translate into school dropout, irregular attendance, and prolonged educational disruption. With successive emergencies, families face increasingly difficult decisions between



meeting immediate survival needs and sustaining children's education. As a participant in the Parent's group described:

*The crisis has mainly affected my child through financial hardship. I struggle to afford school supplies, which limits my ability to participate in class fully.*

In South Sudan, although primary education is formally free under the General Education Act 2012, indirect costs remain a powerful barrier. A parent participant in Wedwiel explained:

*Even if school is free, we still need money for uniforms and other requirements. When there is no income, we must choose which child to support.*

Food insecurity emerged as an additional recurrent constraint in South Sudan. A refugee teacher in Wedwiel reported:

*The food provided is not enough whether at school or at home. Children leave home expecting to eat at school, but sometimes there is little or nothing. Without food, children will not learn anything.*

Older children and adolescents often entered informal labor to support household survival. One parent stated:

*Our children, especially the big ones, have joined the market to fend for their families and themselves.*

Transition to secondary school is a particular flashpoint: secondary schools are located in town, requiring transport costs that many displaced families cannot afford. As a result, progression beyond the primary level is constrained not by enrollment refusal but by geographic and financial barriers – a pattern observed in multiple other study countries. In Somalia, in a similar

pattern, adolescents frequently left school to contribute to household income after repeated displacement or livelihood losses. As a participant in the youth focus group described:

*During the crisis, I completely stopped learning. At first, I tried to continue, but eventually, I had to focus on working to support my family.*

Systemic deficiencies compound these barriers. Classrooms with 100–180 students, a chronic shortage of textbooks, a lack of sanitation facilities, and insufficient numbers of trained teachers were reported in every country. In the DRC, multiple students described sitting outside windows or standing at the back of the classroom due to a lack of space. In Mozambique, many classrooms lacked roofs or doors, leaving students exposed to heat, rain, and wind. In South Sudan's Wedwiel, one school reported enrollment expanding from 529 to 1,387 learners while operating with only eight primary classrooms. Children with disabilities encounter even greater obstacles, as most schools are physically inaccessible and teachers lack training in inclusive education.



These structural shortcomings align with global evidence showing that fragility, underfunding, and weak education systems intensify the negative effects of crises, especially in low-income countries.



Research photo from Chad



### 3.4. PSYCHOSOCIAL AND PROTECTION CONCERNS

**The psychosocial consequences of crisis emerge vividly in all seven reports. Children describe nightmares, anxiety, fear of recurrence, and difficulty concentrating in class. Teachers report burnout and emotional exhaustion from managing their own trauma while supporting traumatized students.**

In Burkina Faso, many learners express difficulty sleeping after witnessing violence or displacement. Nigerian teachers note that some students startle easily at loud noises or become withdrawn during lessons. In the DRC, parents recount children experiencing night terrors or reenacting traumatic events when playing with peers. In Somalia, participants have also described how learners experienced persistent anxiety, fear, and emotional exhaustion as successive crises disrupted schooling, family life, and social support networks, highlighting the long-term consequences of living through overlapping emergencies.

Protection concerns also shape attendance. Girls face heightened risks of sexual harassment, exploitation, and early marriage during displacement. In Chad, community members describe early marriage as an increasing coping mechanism for impoverished families. In Mozambique, temporary shelters lack privacy, exposing adolescent girls to additional vulnerability.

In South Sudan, a staff member from an international organization described beneficiaries who “had experiences of trauma... seen difficult things... people dying and people being abused” during successive conflicts. Youth accounts similarly highlighted emotional strain tied to exposure to violence, displacement, and peer conflict, reporting experiences of “gunshots,” “dead bodies,” and safety fears associated with fighting between groups on the road to school. Protection concerns shape attendance particularly for girls.

A female teacher reported:

*Some girls feel unsafe or unsupported. We have one who stopped coming [to school] because she did not feel comfortable.*



Shared sanitation facilities and the absence of designated safe spaces for sensitive discussions were reported as significant barriers.

Psychosocial needs remain largely unmet across all seven countries due to the absence of trained counselors, overstretched teachers, and limited support capacity. In Wedwiel specifically, the headteacher acknowledged that only “six teachers” had received psychosocial support training through a partner organization – an almost nominal coverage rate given the scale of need at a school of 1,387 learners. Similar experiences emerged in Somalia, where teachers described themselves as providing emotional support and protection alongside their educational responsibilities, despite having received little or no formal training in psychosocial support.



This mirrors the pattern observed in all countries, where the provision of psychosocial support depends on the chance presence of an NGO partner rather than on the education system itself. This gap aligns with broader literature findings, which identify psychosocial support as one of the most chronically under-resourced components of EiE.



FGD With Parent Respondents from New Marte Communities, Nigeria.





## CASE STUDY 2: A SIX-CLASSROOM SCHOOL HOSTING 5,720 CHILDREN: THE BULENGO EXAMPLE (DRC)



The Bulengo School in Goma, located in an IDP site in North Kivu, provides one of the most striking examples of crisis-induced educational pressure in the DRC. Due to large-scale displacement, the school – initially designed for fewer than 300 students and equipped with six classrooms – was suddenly required to host 21 displaced schools, receiving 5,720 children, including 3,208 girls and 2,312 boys.

To cope with this unprecedented influx, staffing expanded from six teachers to 126, with educators using the same limited number of classrooms in alternating shifts throughout the day. This massive pressure on space and teaching personnel created overcrowded conditions, with classrooms exceeding their intended capacity many times over.

The report states plainly that “massive displacements... lead to an increase in the number of students in the schools in the reception areas, making learning difficult due to the overcrowding.” Bulengo School represents an extreme but illustrative case of how displacement increasingly pushes education systems into crisis. The case also parallels the Wedwiel experience in South Sudan, where one school similarly absorbed a near-tripling of enrollment without a corresponding increase in classrooms or government-employed staff – suggesting that the pattern of displacement-driven system collapse is regional rather than context-specific.

### 3.5. INTERSECTING BARRIERS FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

**Girls, children with disabilities, and displaced learners face multiple overlapping forms of exclusion across all seven countries.**

For girls, safety concerns, domestic responsibilities, menstruation-related challenges, and early marriage frequently hinder attendance. Reports from Mozambique and Burkina Faso highlight how the absence of separate latrines and menstrual hygiene facilities leads to girls staying home during menstruation. Nigerian parents describe shielding girls from long commutes due to harassment risks. In South Sudan, female youth participants reported increased domestic responsibilities during flooding and displacement periods (“When there is flooding, we help more at home, so sometimes we miss school”). The headteacher of Salvation Primary School noted that “girls... have been married earlier,” contributing to dropout. Girls from Islamic backgrounds among the Sudanese refugee population faced additional challenges related to mixed-gender classroom settings and language barriers. In Somalia, participants have also highlighted how displacement, household poverty, insecurity, and increased domestic responsibilities

combined to reduce girls' educational participation. In addition to that, the harmful norms are still a barrier to overcome, as a parent described:

*Girls face the most challenges, as families may prioritise boys' education, and girls are often expected to help more at home, limiting their study time.*



**For children with disabilities,** the barriers are even more pronounced. Most schools lack ramps, handrails, accessible toilets, or learning materials for students with visual or hearing impairments. Teachers admit struggling to support learners with disabilities without training. Families often keep children with disabilities home because the school environment is physically inaccessible or socially unwelcoming. In South Sudan, site observation at Wedwiel confirmed that no child with a visible disability was present in the classrooms visited. Participants noted that children who are “blind” or “lame” face physical access barriers. One school leader reported that a child with a physical disability had stopped attending after a donated wheelchair became unusable due to mechanical failure – a concrete illustration of how inclusion depends on sustained, not one-off, provision.



In Somalia, disability inclusion was described as the most significant policy gap. Participants pointed to inaccessible school infrastructure, limited specialised learning materials, shortages of trained teachers, and the absence of systematic identification and support mechanisms. These barriers were further intensified by displacement and poverty.

**Displaced learners** face unique challenges related to documentation, language barriers, and placement. In multilingual contexts like the DRC and Mozambique, displaced learners often struggle with the language of instruction. In Nigeria, displaced children from rural areas may not be familiar with English-based curricula. Many have missed years of schooling and are deemed “too old” for age-appropriate grades. In South Sudan, Sudanese refugee youth reported: “The system here is different from where we studied before, and it takes time to adjust.” Language barriers were particularly acute where instruction is in English while many refugee learners are Arabic-speaking – a structural mismatch requiring active transitional support that national systems have not provided.



In Somalia, displacement was associated not only with interrupted schooling but also with repeated educational transitions. Learners frequently moved between communities, lost documentation, entered unfamiliar school environments, and struggled to reconnect with learning after prolonged absences. Teachers reported challenges in supporting students with widely differing learning levels within already overcrowded classrooms, demonstrating how repeated displacement can deepen existing educational inequalities.

These intersecting barriers intensify one another, creating cycles of exclusion that are difficult to break without systemic intervention.



Research photos from Somalia



# 4. NATIONAL POLICIES AND EDUCATION SYSTEM RESPONSES



While the previous section described how communities experience the breakdown of educational provision during crisis, this section analyzes the extent to which national policy frameworks and education systems in Burkina Faso, Chad, DRC, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan respond to the needs of crisis-affected learners. Across every context, policy ambition is not matched by operational capacity. Ministries of Education articulate commitments to inclusive education, child protection, and education continuity, but schools remain largely unsupported in translating those commitments into practice. The result is a persistent gap between the written policy landscape and learners' lived experience; a pattern widely noted in the global literature on EiE.

Photo: School Environment



## 4.1. POLICY AND FRAMEWORK MAPPING

Each country in this study has formally endorsed frameworks that commit them to protecting education during emergencies. These include international political commitments such as SDG 4 and the Safe Schools Declaration, as well as various national-level policies for inclusive education and disaster risk management. On paper, these frameworks demonstrate a clear understanding of the need to prioritize education even during a crisis.

Mozambique offers one of the most explicit policy commitments to EiE. The national report describes a formal Education in Emergency Coordination Mechanism intended to guide school-level preparedness, mitigation, and response. Mozambique's Ministry of Education has also endorsed disaster risk reduction policies that align with humanitarian principles. However – and this becomes a recurring theme across all seven countries – these commitments remain aspirational, with little evidence of operational structures in crisis-affected schools.

Nigeria has a well-developed Safe Schools Initiative and has integrated crisis-sensitive planning into certain state-level policies, particularly in the Northeast. However, field evidence shows that most schools do not benefit from these policies: they lack perimeter fencing, emergency drills, communication systems, or protective presence. Despite Nigeria's policy commitments, implementation remains inconsistent and underfunded.

Burkina Faso and Chad have established strategies for the education of internally displaced learners and disaster-affected communities, but coordination between ministries – particularly Education, Interior, and Social Affairs – is weak. Burkina Faso's policy landscape includes provisions for relocating displaced learners and providing school kits, but fieldwork revealed that these provisions often do not materialize in practice.

DRC similarly has policies supporting the integration of displaced learners and inclusive education, yet implementation is highly dependent on NGO presence. Schools frequently rely on humanitarian organizations for rebuilding classrooms, providing school materials, or supporting displaced students, indicating that the state's commitments lack operational backing.



South Sudan has a notably robust formal policy framework relative to its implementation capacity. The General Education Sector Plan (GESP) 2023–2027 outlines commitments to equitable access, improved quality, teacher development, and strengthened system resilience, with particular emphasis on girls and marginalized groups. The plan aligns with international frameworks including the Global Compact on Refugees and SDG 4. The General Education Act (2012) provides the legal basis for free and compulsory primary education without discrimination. The Inclusive Education Policy (2020) affirms the right of children with disabilities and marginalized groups to participate fully in education, and the Alternative Education System (AES) Policy provides for flexible pathways for overage learners, pastoralist communities, IDPs, and returnees. In refugee-hosting contexts, MoGEI has committed to integrating refugee learners into the national Education Management Information System (EMIS) and aligning curriculum delivery with national standards. With support from development partners, the ministry has also developed preparedness and climate resilience guidelines intended to strengthen the system's response to emergencies. On paper, these frameworks demonstrate a clear policy intention to institutionalize EiE within national planning.



The overall mapping across all seven countries indicates a consistent regional pattern: policy adoption without operationalization, a dynamic the global literature identifies as one of the most significant structural weaknesses in EiE systems worldwide.

## 4.2. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND SYSTEMIC GAPS

**Even where policies exist, their reach into classrooms is extremely limited. Across all seven countries, schools rarely experience the protections or resources promised by national frameworks.**

In Mozambique, the discrepancy between policy and practice is stark. While the Ministry of Education describes robust coordination structures for emergency preparedness, none of the schools visited by the NEC team had functioning emergency committees. Teachers and school leaders reported that they had never

been trained in emergency response or evacuation procedures. Indeed, the national report notes that among dozens of teachers interviewed, only one teacher had ever received EiE training. This suggests that policy frameworks operate almost entirely at the central level, with little trickle-down to the schools most exposed to crisis.

Somalia reinforces this same finding: implementation remains the principal challenge rather than policy formulation itself. Stakeholders described a significant gap between national commitments and the realities experienced by schools and communities, particularly in areas affected by conflict, displacement, and climate-related disasters. Limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination, and dependence on externally funded humanitarian responses constrained the consistent delivery of education services. Implementation capacity varied considerably between more accessible areas and locations affected by insecurity or recurrent flooding. In addition to that, participants observed that many education initiatives expanded during humanitarian responses but became difficult to sustain once external funding ended.

In Nigeria, the Safe Schools Declaration is well recognized, yet field data indicate uneven implementation. Schools lack secure infrastructure, functional locks, boundary walls, or emergency planning. Teachers and students are aware of the policy's existence, but not of concrete practices associated with it. Parents interviewed in the national report indicated they had “never seen” any safety improvements despite years of advocacy in the region.

In Burkina Faso, policy gaps reflect the broader governance crisis provoked by conflict. The national education system is overstretched and, in many regions, effectively nonfunctional. Although policies require local education offices to relocate displaced learners into host schools and provide school materials, families reported that these provisions rarely arrive. Teachers described feeling abandoned by the system, forced to improvise responses in the absence of state support.

The experience in DRC further highlights the disconnect between policy intent and implementation. Schools depend heavily on NGO partners for nearly every aspect of EiE, from constructing temporary classrooms to



providing school meals to delivering psychosocial support. Local officials acknowledge that government structures lack the resources to implement existing policies, which leaves schools vulnerable when humanitarian funding shifts or declines.

South Sudan provides perhaps the most direct acknowledgment of the implementation gap within the study. Despite strong paper commitments, interviews with government officials triangulated with community-level evidence indicated a wide gulf between frameworks and practice. A staff member from an international organization noted: *“For a policy to be effective, it must be implemented.”* One MoGEI official conceded: *“We have never done any [thing] to do with emergency”* within curriculum structures, adding: *“I don’t think there’s any policy”* on education in emergencies. Another government official acknowledged the existence of EiE-related policies but noted: *“Dissemination is limited... implementation is a challenge.”* Both officials described monitoring and evaluation as the weakest ministerial function: *“monitoring... is the weakest part in the ministry.”*

At the grassroots level, teachers, PTA members, and learners in Wedwiel reported limited awareness of EiE policies. None of the community stakeholders interviewed could identify specific EiE strategies guiding school-level responses to flooding, displacement, or insecurity. This indicates weaknesses in vertical policy dissemination from the national to state and local levels. Teachers reported receiving minimal or outdated training, with the last major professional development session having occurred several years prior (in 2016, according to the Wedwiel headteacher). As a result, the implementation of inclusive and protective measures remains inconsistent and largely dependent on humanitarian partners rather than institutional systems.



These examples illustrate a systemic challenge shared across the seven countries: policies may be well-formulated, but education systems lack the coordination, sustainable financing, and capacity to implement them — a pattern consistently identified in global studies of EiE.

### 4.3. POLICIES FOR INCLUSION: DISABILITY, GENDER, AND DISPLACEMENT

**All seven countries have policies promoting inclusive education, gender equity, and the rights of displaced learners. However, crisis realities expose the limitations of these policy commitments.**

Children with disabilities remain largely invisible within EiE frameworks. National EMIS systems do not consistently collect disability-disaggregated data, and few crisis response plans include provisions for assistive devices, accessible facilities, or specialized teacher training. In Mozambique and Chad, displacement shelters and temporary learning spaces are extremely difficult for learners with mobility impairments to navigate. Teachers report lacking the skills to adapt instruction for learners with disabilities, despite national commitments to inclusive pedagogy. In South Sudan, the Inclusive Education Policy (2020) affirms the right of children with disabilities to participate fully, yet site observation in Wedwiel confirmed the policy’s weak implementation: no children with visible disabilities were observed in the classrooms visited, and participants described structural barriers that keep children with disabilities at home. The same was documented in Somalia, where disability inclusion remains one of the weakest dimensions of Education in Emergencies policy implementation. While inclusive education is recognised in national policy frameworks, participants reported limited specialised resources, inaccessible infrastructure, insufficient teacher preparation, and weak mechanisms for identifying and supporting learners with disabilities during emergencies.

Gender policies exist in all seven countries, but field evidence indicates they are not effectively enforced. Girls face multiple barriers — early marriage, domestic labor, safety concerns, and menstrual hygiene challenges — that are rarely addressed in emergency plans. The Burkina Faso and Mozambique national reports highlight how the absence of separate latrines or menstrual hygiene facilities leads to recurring absenteeism among older girls. None of the visited schools in any country had implemented GBV prevention measures aligned with national gender policies. In South Sudan, the absence of separate sanitation facilities for girls in Wedwiel was directly linked by teachers to dropout among adolescent girls. In Somalia, participants recognised progress in



promoting girls' education through the efforts of civil society organisations and humanitarian partners. However, persistent insecurity, poverty, displacement, and gender-based protection risks continued to limit the practical realisation of these commitments.

Protection and inclusion of displaced learners is similarly inconsistent. In the DRC and Nigeria, displaced learners frequently lack documentation, yet no streamlined policy mechanism exists to recognize prior learning or ease grade placement transitions. Mozambique teachers described improvising placement decisions on a case-by-case basis because no formal guidance was provided. In South Sudan, although MoGEI has formally committed to integrating refugee learners into the EMIS and aligning curriculum delivery, community respondents reported that Arabic learning materials produced centrally had not reached Wedwiel schools. This illustrates implementation bottlenecks in distribution systems that undermine the policy commitment to inclusive refugee education.

Across all seven countries, policies for inclusion exist in principle but are ineffective in practice.

## 4.4. SYSTEM-LEVEL RESILIENCE, DATA, AND CAPACITY

**System resilience – the ability of national education systems to plan for, withstand, and respond to crises – is limited across all seven countries. The study identifies four recurrent system-level weaknesses:**

### Weak EMIS Systems

Most countries lack crisis-sensitive data. EMIS rarely captures displaced learners, children in temporary shelters, or out-of-school populations. As the Literature Review emphasizes, the absence of disaggregated EiE data undermines policy planning and resource allocation. South Sudan provides a striking illustration: the Annual Education Census (AEC) was not conducted in 2023 due to funding shortages, creating a national data gap that directly affects planning and resource allocation. MoGEI officials confirmed that AEC and EMIS operations depend heavily on donor support.

### Teacher Workforce Fragility.

Teachers in all seven countries reported working without pay or with significant salary delays. Host-community

schools rely on volunteer teachers or community-paid workers. Teacher allocation does not adapt to sudden population shifts. In Burkina Faso, conflict-driven displacement has left entire districts without state-paid teachers, with communities raising small stipends to retain instructors who continue to report to work despite insecurity. In the DRC, community-paid teachers constitute a significant proportion of the teaching force in displacement-affected schools, where massive influxes of learners have outpaced government deployment. In Mozambique, recurring cyclones have left teachers personally responsible for salvaging materials and rebuilding learning spaces, with only one teacher among multiple sites interviewed having ever received EiE training. In Somalia, opportunities for teacher professional development remained fragmented and frequently dependent on humanitarian programmes. Participants noted that crisis-affected teachers often assumed expanded responsibilities, including psychosocial support and learner protection, without receiving preparation. In South Sudan, the majority of teachers interviewed in Wedwiel reported operating as volunteers or under short-term humanitarian incentive arrangements, with limited integration into government payroll. As one teacher explained:

*Most of the teachers in this school are volunteers, with just a few on the government payroll.*



### Inadequate Contingency Planning.

School-level emergency preparedness is almost nonexistent. No country had robust evacuation plans, early warning systems, or safe-shelter protocols in place. In South Sudan, preparedness plans exist at the ministry level but do not reach frontline educators.

### Lack of Emergency Financing Mechanisms.

Education budgets do not include flexible funds for crisis response. Schools depend heavily on NGOs for temporary classrooms, supplies, and psychosocial support. Budgetary prioritization challenges constrain domestic investment in education across the seven countries: significant South Sudanese national expenditure on security since 2013, sustained counter-insurgency costs in Nigeria's Northeast, and rising



security spending in Burkina Faso linked to the conflict in the Sahel all compete with education financing. In the DRC, education systems depend on humanitarian funding for many core functions, while Mozambique's recurrent post-cyclone reconstruction needs absorb education-relevant resources that might otherwise be available for preparedness. Without predictable and adequate financing, resilience-building efforts remain reactive rather than preventive.

These weaknesses demonstrate structural fragility that predates the current crises but has been amplified by them.

## 4.5. GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION

Governance arrangements for EiE vary widely, but all seven countries face coordination challenges. While Mozambique and Nigeria have formal EiE or Safe Schools coordination bodies, these do not consistently include civil society actors or local communities. In Burkina Faso and Chad, overlapping mandates between humanitarian and government actors create confusion around responsibilities. The DRC depends heavily on NGO coordination, which can lead to fragmentation and inconsistent service provision, including duplication of efforts.

In Somalia, participants acknowledged improvements through Education Cluster coordination and collaborative planning mechanisms, but also emphasized the need

to strengthen local participation, clarify institutional responsibilities, and increase the leadership of community actors in education decision-making.

In South Sudan, the Education Act (2012) assigns MoGEI responsibility for policy development, curriculum standards, teacher management, and inspection. Coordination with humanitarian actors occurs through the Education Cluster system and engagement with civil society platforms such as the National Education Coalition. However, respondents in Weddell reported minimal direct engagement with state or national authorities regarding EiE policy guidance. While horizontal coordination between schools and humanitarian actors appears operational, vertical integration with state structures remains limited. This mirrors the broader pattern across the six countries in which humanitarian and government systems function along parallel, rather than integrated, tracks.

NECs in all countries play important advocacy roles but often lack access to policymaking spaces or formal mechanisms to influence EiE planning. Schools rarely receive clear guidance from district education offices, reflecting a gap between centralized EiE discussions and decentralized implementation.



Overall, governance structures lack the integration needed to operationalize a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach, a key recommendation in the global literature and a central theme of Section 7.



Research photos from Somalia



# 5. ROLE OF TEACHERS, COMMUNITIES, AND CIVIL SOCIETY



Across the seven national contexts, the research reveals a consistent pattern: teachers, families, and civil society organizations bear the burden of sustaining education in emergencies, often with minimal support from the state. While policies exist on paper, the daily realities of crisis-affected communities demonstrate that these local actors are the true backbone of educational continuity. Their efforts go far beyond delivering lessons; they safeguard children's wellbeing, maintain school structures, negotiate with authorities, and advocate for the right to education under extraordinary circumstances. This section explores their roles in depth, situating local experiences within the broader thematic concerns of community resilience and localization highlighted in the global literature.

Photo: Jessica Lea/DFID / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/14214150@N02/12345193184>



A group of community members in Adré, Chad

Several reported that colleagues had been threatened, abducted, or forced to flee, leaving schools chronically understaffed. Despite these risks, teachers continue to report to work, driven by personal commitment rather than system-level support.

Somalia reinforces this finding, with teachers describing how their responsibilities routinely extend far beyond classroom instruction. In addition to teaching, they provide psychosocial support, identify vulnerable learners, liaise with families, and help maintain children's sense of stability during periods of displacement, flooding, and insecurity.

In Nigeria, the emotional and psychological burden on teachers is profound. Several describe teaching while listening for sounds of approaching danger or scanning the environment for unusual movement. One teacher in the Northeast recounted conducting lessons while reassuring students that “today will be safe,” even though she could not be certain. Teachers find themselves serving as counselors, protectors, and mediators, even though few have received formal training in psychosocial support or emergency preparedness.

## 5.1. TEACHERS AS FRONTLINE RESPONDERS

**Teachers across all seven countries consistently emerge as the most critical actors sustaining education during a crisis. Their experiences reflect both the resilience and the fragility of frontline educational delivery.**

In Burkina Faso, where armed violence has emptied entire districts and displaced more than 1.9 million people, teachers describe navigating extreme insecurity. Many commute long distances through dangerous terrain, often without protective escorts.



Teachers in the DRC face a different but equally severe reality. Massive displacement leads to classrooms with 100–180 students; sometimes more. Teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the scale of need, describing long days spent trying to maintain order rather than deliver meaningful learning. One teacher described how “the children sit outside, on the floor, on each other – anywhere they can,” while she attempts to teach amidst the noise of hundreds of children crammed into a limited space.

In Mozambique, environmental destruction caused by recurring cyclones leaves teachers without stable learning spaces. They conduct lessons under trees, in partially collapsed classrooms, or in temporary structures built by NGOs. Teachers are often personally responsible for salvaging materials after storms, drying out books, and clearing debris. Only one teacher across multiple sites who was interviewed had ever received EiE training – a striking indicator of the gap between policy and practice.

In Chad, teachers in flood-prone Adré operate within a similar pattern of infrastructural precariousness, rebuilding mud-walled classrooms after seasonal floods and adapting their teaching to accommodate learners with interrupted histories of schooling.

In South Sudan, teachers at Wedwiel serve as the primary stabilizing force within a fragile and under-resourced education environment, but their employment conditions remain highly precarious. The majority of teachers interviewed reported operating as volunteers or under short-term incentive arrangements supported by humanitarian actors, with only a handful on the government payroll. Teachers also reported assuming psychosocial and conflict-mitigation roles within the school environment. Although limited training on psychosocial support had been provided to a small number of staff, respondents expressed concerns about adequacy and scale. One teacher stated: *“Apart from the number being small, there are chances that they have not captured the content very well, and they need constant training.”* Language of instruction emerged as a further structural concern. A female upper-primary learner reported: *“I do not know English because our teachers speak to us most of the time in Dinka.”* The headteacher confirmed the need for updated training, explaining: *“The last training we had was in 2016.”* Together, these accounts indicate that teachers are effectively functioning as emergency responders, but their ability to sustain quality and inclusive learning is structurally constrained.



### CASE STUDY 3: TEACHING IN OVERCROWDED CLASSROOMS AFTER CYCLONE CHIDO (MOZAMBIQUE)

In Pemba, Mozambique, Cyclone Chido caused severe damage to Maringanha Primary School, including the destruction of three classrooms. The school principal described the precarious infrastructure:

**The first concern is that situation of the classrooms... They will be destroyed.**



With classrooms lost, the remaining learning spaces became severely overcrowded. One teacher reported that a reorganized classroom contained 108 students, simply stating, “Very difficult.” The lack of school furniture forced many children to sit on the floor during lessons.

These conditions reflect how climate-related emergencies produce a cascading set of barriers: not only physical destruction, but also compromised safety, overcrowding, and loss of instructional quality. The Cyclone Chido example parallels the pattern documented in the DRC’s Bulengo case and in South Sudan’s Wedwiel: a rapid increase in enrollment or demand occurring simultaneously with infrastructure loss, absorbed almost entirely by teachers working without corresponding additional support.

**Across all contexts, teachers express profound exhaustion. Many feel abandoned by the system. Their resilience is remarkable, but it is also precarious: made possible only through personal sacrifice, community solidarity, and a sense of responsibility that is not matched by adequate working conditions or professional development. The global literature recognizes this precariousness, arguing that teachers are “first responders without the tools of first response” in most emergencies.**



## 5.2. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Parents, extended families, and community members play an indispensable role in sustaining education during emergencies. Their contributions are practical, material, and emotional, rooted in the belief that even in crisis, schooling is essential for children's wellbeing and future opportunities.

In all countries, communities often escort children to school to reduce the risk of abduction or harassment, particularly for girls. In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, parents sometimes accompany children for the entire commute, returning after confirming that school is safe that day.

Communities also mobilize to rebuild or stabilize school infrastructure. In Mozambique, after cyclones destroyed classrooms, parents and youth worked together to collect palm leaves, timber, and plastic sheets to erect temporary learning spaces. In Chad, families contributed labor to clean mud-filled rooms after floods receded.

Another identified community strategy is pooling financial resources to support volunteer teachers. Because governments cannot rapidly reassign or hire teachers during crises – particularly in conflict zones – local committees sometimes raise funds to provide small stipends. In the DRC and Nigeria, community-paid teachers constitute a significant proportion of the teaching force in displacement-affected schools. In Somalia, local leaders, elders, parent groups, and community organisations played important roles in facilitating access to schools, supporting communication with families, and helping schools respond to evolving local needs.

However, community participation is largely informal, mainly improvised, and unfunded. While global commitments emphasize community engagement and accountability to affected populations, local communities often bear responsibilities that should rest with state systems. The mismatch between expectations and resources places significant strain on already vulnerable households.

Formal school management committees (SMCs) exist in all countries, but NECs consistently found that they had become inactive or ineffective in many emergency settings. Many committees lack training, legal authority, or integration into EiE planning. At the same time, informal community action remains robust, suggesting that local capacity exists but is insufficiently recognized or supported by national authorities.

South Sudan provides the clearest illustration in the study of what happens when community governance structures assume quasi-governmental roles. PTAs and SMCs in Wedwiel have become essential mechanisms for sustaining educational continuity amid crisis. Their role becomes especially pronounced in contexts where displacement-driven demographic shifts and unequal resource access generate tensions between host and refugee learners. As one participant explained: *“When fighting happened over resources between refugee learners and the host community, it is the SMC and PTA that were asked to address the issue.”* But this active role is not matched by institutional support. The Case Study below captures the dynamic.





## CASE STUDY 4: “THE PTA AND SMC HAVE BECOME THE GOVERNMENT NOW” – WEDWIEL, SOUTH SUDAN

In Wedwiel Refugee Camp, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) have taken on responsibilities that, in a functioning education system, would rest with the state. They mediate disputes between refugee and host community learners, coordinate teacher support, maintain school facilities, and address shortages of teaching and learning materials.

Multiple respondents described these bodies as the first line of response in the absence of state presence. One PTA representative articulated this substitution dynamic in stark terms:

**It is the PTA and SMC that have become the government now.**

**We have forgotten if there is any. No salaries, no books, no food.**



This statement captures both the extraordinary agency of community governance structures under crisis and the depth of the accountability vacuum they are filling. Community members mobilize informally – contributing to teacher support, school maintenance, and addressing material shortages – to keep schools functional despite systemic underinvestment. These substitution dynamics suggest that, in practice, community governance bodies are performing quasi-governmental functions without corresponding authority, budget, or formal recognition. The Wedwiel experience mirrors patterns observed across all seven countries, where local community mobilization is extensive but structurally unsupported.

A further limitation identified in the South Sudan interviews concerns the exclusion of students from governance processes. Although youth reported some engagement through informal structures such as school clubs, they noted the absence of mechanisms enabling meaningful participation in decision-making. One student articulated this clearly:

**No one asks us how we want to be educated.**



This student-voice gap is not unique to South Sudan; across the seven countries, learners were the participants least commonly represented in formal governance structures.

### 5.3. CIVIL SOCIETY AND LOCAL NGO ROLES

**Civil society organizations (CSOs), including NECs and NEC members, local NGOs, and community-based groups, play central roles in crisis-affected education sectors. In many cases, they serve as the primary providers of EiE services, stepping in where state systems have been weakened or overwhelmed.**

Across all seven countries, CSOs contributed to:

- » construction of temporary classrooms (DRC, Mozambique, South Sudan),
- » distribution of school supplies (Burkina Faso, Chad, South Sudan),
- » provision of psychosocial support (Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan),
- » teacher support and training on inclusive education (Mozambique, Somalia),

- » child protection messaging (Nigeria, Mozambique),
- » teacher incentives and school feeding (South Sudan).

In Mozambique, NGOs provided essential learning materials after repeated floods, enabling displaced children to return to school. In DRC, CSOs helped schools manage the influx of thousands of displaced learners, coordinating classroom extensions and basic supplies. In Nigeria, civil society-led Safe Schools advocacy has been pivotal in pushing the agenda forward nationally, even as implementation gaps persist.

In South Sudan's Wedwiel, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) supports a small number of teachers through monthly incentive payments, and other humanitarian actors have provided dignity kits, bicycles, and school feeding support. However, in South Sudan and elsewhere, respondents raised concerns about perceived disparities in resource distribution between refugee and host community learners. Such perceptions



require mediation by school leadership and PTAs and, in some instances, contribute to tensions affecting learner safety. These findings underscore the importance of conflict-sensitive programming and coordinated needs assessments within mixed-displacement contexts.

The role of CSOs is further constrained by short-term humanitarian funding cycles, which limit the sustainability of their interventions. Local organizations often lack predictable financing and institutional support, despite being deeply rooted in communities. Coordination between CSOs and the government is often fragmented; NECs across countries reported inconsistent involvement in formal education sector planning.

The global literature stresses the critical importance of localization, ensuring that local actors lead and shape EiE responses. Yet findings across all six countries show that local civil society is central in practice but peripheral in decision-making. While CSOs, parent associations, and community groups play a critical role in sustaining education during crises, their contributions largely occur outside formal governance structures. Across the country reports, civil society engagement is described as reactive, project-based, or informal, with limited evidence of consistent inclusion in national EiE coordination mechanisms, education sector planning, or resource allocation processes.

As a result, civil society actors remain isolated from broader system-level processes rather than integrated within a whole-system approach. Their work fills immediate gaps but is rarely institutionalized, scaled, or linked to long-term policy and financing decisions. This disconnect reinforces a pattern in which local actors shoulder frontline responsibilities during emergencies while remaining marginal to the decisions that shape preparedness, response, and recovery.



Research photo from Chad



## 5.4. BARRIERS TO LOCALIZATION AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

**Despite the indispensable contributions of teachers, communities, and CSOs, several systemic barriers hinder the localization of EiE efforts.**

One major barrier is power asymmetry between international and local actors. International NGOs often control resources and strategic decisions, while local organizations implement activities without comparable influence or recognition. NECs in multiple countries reported difficulties accessing sector coordination mechanisms or influencing national EiE planning, despite their on-the-ground expertise. The South Sudan case illustrates this pattern vividly: humanitarian actors were reported as the primary providers of teaching materials, teacher stipends, and school feeding, while state structures retained formal authority but lacked operational capacity – leaving local civil society to implement within a structure over which they had limited strategic influence.

In Somalia, participants described an important participation gap. Although local organisations, teachers, and communities were central to implementing education responses, they reported having limited opportunities to shape programme priorities, influence funding decisions, or participate meaningfully in policy development. This disconnect between operational responsibility and decision-making authority mirrors findings across the other participating countries.

Another barrier is bureaucratic fragmentation. In Chad and Burkina Faso, overlapping mandates among ministries delayed decision-making, leaving CSOs uncertain about whom to coordinate with. In the DRC, weak governance structures leave local officials without the authority or resources to collaborate effectively with civil society. In South Sudan, respondents described weak vertical communication between schools, state authorities, and national ministries, with policies intended to promote grassroots participation rarely reaching communities.

A third challenge is unpredictable or insufficient financing. Localization in practice requires sustained investment in local organizational capacity, yet most funding arrives in short-term, project-based cycles that do not allow CSOs to plan beyond immediate emergencies. In South



Sudan, volunteer teachers remain outside formal payroll mechanisms, community governance structures lack systematic capacity-building support, and monitoring and inspection mechanisms are weak or inconsistently applied at the school level. The reliance on community-driven coping strategies, while commendable, risks entrenching informal substitution rather than strengthening institutional systems. In Somalia, local organisations frequently delivered essential education, however those were funded by short-term humanitarian funding defined by external project cycles, which is not sustainable.

Finally, cultural and gender norms can limit participation. Women's voices are often underrepresented in community committees. Youth, despite being the most affected group, rarely participate in formal consultations – a point made most explicitly by the Wedwiel youth participant who noted: “No one asks us how we want to be educated.” Learners with disabilities are almost entirely excluded from decision-making structures, reflecting broader patterns of social marginalization.

**These barriers underscore the need to reimagine EiE governance in ways that elevate local leadership, formalize community roles, and provide long-term institutional support to civil society — recommendations that will be elaborated in Section 7. As the South Sudan findings make especially clear, community agency must complement, not replace, state responsibility.**



Research photo from Chad



## 6. LOCALLY INFORMED STRATEGIES AND INNOVATIONS



This section presents a synthesis of the locally led strategies documented in Burkina Faso, Chad, the DRC, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan, showing how communities cope with crises and maintain access to education despite conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. These practices also echo broader global EiE themes, including flexible learning pathways, psychosocial support, community engagement, and resilience-building.

Despite profound systemic weaknesses and chronic underinvestment in EiE, communities across the seven countries have developed a wide range of innovative, context-responsive strategies to sustain learning in crisis settings. These locally informed practices demonstrate significant resilience, creativity, and collective problem-solving. Many emerged spontaneously, driven by teachers, parents, youth, community leaders, and civil society organizations rather than by formal policy directives. They also reveal an essential reality: while governments and donors provide frameworks and intermittent resources, local actors create the most immediate strategies for protecting the right to education during emergencies.

### 6.1. ALTERNATIVE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING MODELS

One of the most visible forms of local innovation is the creation of flexible learning models designed to accommodate overcrowding, mobility, and infrastructure collapse.

#### Multi-Shift Schooling

Mozambique provides the most striking example of multi-shift arrangements. With thousands of displaced learners arriving in host communities, schools in Pemba and other districts implemented triple-shift schedules, operating from early morning to late evening.





## CASE STUDY 5: TWELVE-HOUR DAYS: TRIPLE-SHIFT TEACHING TO ACCOMMODATE DISPLACED LEARNERS (MOZAMBIQUE)

At the Eduardo Mondlane School in Pemba, Mozambique, displacement from insecurity and environmental shocks forced the implementation of a third educational shift to ensure access for 700 displaced students. Teachers reported working 12-hour days across these shifts to cover all classes. As the Mozambique report describes, some schools ran shifts from 7:00 a.m. until nearly 10:00 p.m. to manage the enormous influx.

This intense schedule increased teacher workload and reduced instructional time per class. Simultaneously, in Boane (Maputo Province), school leaders developed a “multiplication of lists” system to manage temporary relocations and redirect excess students to schools with available space. These adaptations illustrate how schools attempt to maintain continuity under extreme strain — even when such approaches are exhausting and unsustainable.

Similarly, in the DRC, schools adapted by splitting overcrowded classrooms into rotating groups. Teachers organized students into morning and afternoon cohorts, sometimes teaching the same lesson four times a day. One school's response to receiving 5,720 displaced learners (described earlier in Case Study 2) included extraordinary measures: creating makeshift partitions in large rooms, teaching children outdoors, and organizing block schedules to maximize use of limited space. In South Sudan, although formal multi-shift arrangements were less common in Wedwiel, observational data indicated overcrowding and the use of temporary learning spaces, including outdoor settings, when classroom capacity was exceeded following refugee arrivals. In Somalia, schools also adapted teaching schedules to accommodate local realities, recognising that household responsibilities, seasonal flooding, and livelihood pressures often affected students' ability to attend regular classes.

### Temporary and Community-Built Learning Spaces

Across all countries, local communities construct temporary classrooms using available materials: palm leaves, bamboo, tarpaulin sheets, repurposed churches or mosques, and market stalls. These structures are rarely durable, but they provide vital stopgaps in environments where concrete classrooms have been destroyed or overwhelmed.

In Mozambique's cyclone-affected regions, teachers and parents collaborated to build transitional classrooms immediately after storms, allowing schooling to resume even while reconstruction lagged. In Chad, community labor teams rebuilt mud-walled classrooms after flooding, repairing foundations and clearing debris with minimal tools. In Wedwiel, South Sudan, temporary learning spaces — including outdoor settings — were routinely employed when classroom capacity was exceeded by refugee arrivals; these structures are often “interrupted by the wind” during storms, according to the headteacher, leaving learners without physical spaces for extended periods. In Somalia, participants described how schools and communities adapted existing facilities and informal spaces to ensure that learning could continue despite damaged infrastructure and repeated population movements.

### Age-Flexible Placement and Informal Assessment

The displacement crisis in the DRC and Mozambique created large populations of overage learners who had missed one or more years of schooling. Teachers developed informal assessment techniques — short oral quizzes, reading checks, and math problems — to place learners in appropriate grades when official documentation was unavailable. Mozambique teachers reported relying entirely on these improvised diagnostic tools, noting that no formal government guidance existed for integrating displaced learners.

In Somalia, participants also highlighted the importance of accelerated and catch-up learning approaches for children whose education had been interrupted by repeated emergencies. These flexible pathways were viewed as essential for supporting learners returning after prolonged absences and reducing the likelihood of permanent dropout, particularly among displaced adolescents.





## CASE STUDY 6: IMPROVISED ASSESSMENT: INTEGRATING UNDOCUMENTED DISPLACED LEARNERS (MOZAMBIQUE)

The Mozambique report documents teachers' use of informal diagnostic assessments to integrate displaced learners who arrived without academic documents. Many families affected by conflict, cyclone displacement, or flooding lacked essential records such as report cards or transfer certificates.

In the absence of formal guidance or state-provided assessment tools, teachers designed informal placement checks to determine appropriate grade levels. This school-driven strategy enabled undocumented learners to access education despite administrative barriers. The practice is a clear example of bottom-up adaptation grounded in the lived realities of crisis-affected learners. The approach parallels informal assessment strategies employed in South Sudan's Wedwiel, where teachers similarly improvise placement for refugee learners arriving from Sudan without documentation – though without the structured curricular transition support needed for Arabic-to-English language shifts.

In Nigeria and Burkina Faso, where official class sizes are stretched beyond capacity, teachers sometimes create parallel informal study groups for overage youth, allowing them to learn outside formal classroom hours or in community centers.

### Mobile or Rotational Learning

Chad's pastoralist and flood-prone communities developed mobile learning structures. Teachers and youth organize rotating learning groups that meet in accessible locations depending on seasonal conditions. In some districts, tents or mats are moved between households to ensure continuity when schools become inaccessible. South Sudan's AES Policy provides a formal framework for flexible pathways suited to pastoralist communities, IDPs, and returnees, though implementation on the ground remains limited – particularly the absence of structured bridging programs for Arabic-speaking refugee learners entering the English-medium system, which one 17-year-old female learner in Wedwiel described: *"Most of us who came from Sudan are of Arabic pattern and do not understand teachers who teach in English. That has forced our parents to hire English teachers to give us private lessons."*

These adaptive models reflect the global EiE emphasis on flexible, context-sensitive learning pathways that ensure continuity in unstable environments. However, these locally led strategies should not be read as sustainable solutions in themselves, but as indicators of both unmet need and unrealized system potential. Across the study countries, community and civil society initiatives emerge in response to gaps in state provision, often under conditions of chronic under-resourcing and uncertainty. Their effectiveness demonstrates what is possible at the local level, but also underscores the limits of relying on informal or volunteer-driven responses to protracted crises. Without deliberate government action

to resource, formalize, and integrate these practices into national systems, such strategies risk remaining temporary coping mechanisms rather than contributing to durable improvements in access, quality, and protection.

## 6.2. INTEGRATION OF PSYCHOSOCIAL AND PROTECTIVE SUPPORT

Communities and teachers consistently integrate low-cost, locally grounded psychosocial support into the learning environment, despite having little formal training.

### Teachers as Emotional Anchors

Teachers in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, the DRC, Somalia, and South Sudan reported that children frequently arrive at school emotionally distressed, unable to concentrate, fearful, or exhausted from displacement journeys. Teachers attempt to calm students, offer reassuring words, and create predictable routines. Some use informal techniques such as opening discussions with "how are you feeling today?" circles or allowing students extra time to complete tasks if they appear overwhelmed.

Generally, these efforts are intuitive rather than taught, reflecting teachers' acute awareness of students' trauma even in the absence of structured psychosocial training. The Wedwiel experience in South Sudan underscores this reality: although NRC had trained a small number of teachers in psychosocial support, only "six teachers" at a school of 1,387 learners had received this training, and teachers themselves reported carrying significant emotional burdens alongside their instructional roles.





Photo credit (Free stock.adobe.com) - African kids use a mobile phone

### Peer Support Networks

Youth FGDs across multiple countries revealed the emergence of peer solidarity networks. Displaced learners support one another through shared commutes, study groups, and emotional companionship. In Mozambique, adolescents in cyclone-affected districts described “friend groups” that gather after school to discuss fears and encourage one another to continue learning. In South Sudan, youth participants similarly described informal peer support among refugee learners navigating language challenges and inter-community tensions.

### Community Safety Mechanisms

In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, parents organized themselves into child escort groups, rotating responsibilities for walking children to and from school. In some districts, communities created informal patrols to monitor the perimeter of learning spaces. In Nigeria, local alarm systems such as whistles or mobile alerts were established to warn communities of imminent threats. In Wedwiel, community leaders, PTAs, and SMCs engaged in dialogue to address tensions between refugee and host community youth, prioritizing culturally sensitive solutions. School leadership also demonstrated flexibility in accommodating religious and cultural dress practices of refugee learners to ensure inclusion and reduce barriers to attendance.

### NGO-Delivered Psychosocial Services

While NGOs provide more formal mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programs, these remain limited in reach. DRC, Mozambique, and South Sudan all noted that psychosocial services were available only in a handful of districts or schools, leaving most schools reliant on teachers’ informal emotional support. The South Sudan case illustrates the scale mismatch starkly: training “six teachers” at a school hosting 1,387 learners demonstrates how NGO-delivered PSS, while valuable, cannot substitute for system-level integration of psychosocial support within education policy.

These local practices reinforce a major theme in EiE research: the learning environment cannot be separated from emotional and psychological wellbeing, and community-based approaches often play a central role in filling this gap.

## 6.3. USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND REMOTE LEARNING

The use of technology in EiE contexts across the seven countries is modest, constrained by low connectivity, cost barriers, and limited device access. Nevertheless, some innovative use cases emerged.

### Radio-Learning Programs

Radio remains the most accessible medium. In Nigeria and Mozambique, NGO-supported radio lessons were aired during periods of displacement or school closure. Communities frequently gathered children around a single radio or phone to listen together. Parents reported that these programs provided structure during displacement, though limitations included reception issues and lack of interaction.

In South Sudan, the Wedwiel headteacher described a radio-based learning initiative introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic: “We were given three radios for learning during COVID-19, but as you can see from the number of learners that we have, they are not enough.” The ratio of three radios to 1,387 learners captures the global digital equity challenge in concrete terms.



## Mobile Phones for Coordination

While phones are rarely used for instructional content, they are vital tools for:

- » coordinating community escort groups,
- » sharing safety alerts,
- » delivering attendance reminders, and
- » contacting teachers after displacement.

In Mozambique, teachers used messaging apps to communicate lesson updates during storm seasons when commutes were unsafe. In South Sudan, teachers indicated openness to exploring digital and mobile-based information access, but high costs of devices, connectivity, and limited digital literacy constrained scalability.

In Somalia, participants described the use of mobile phones and printed learning materials as practical strategies for maintaining educational continuity during disruptions. However, these approaches also highlighted the persistent challenges posed by limited connectivity, unequal access to digital devices, and constrained infrastructure.

## Challenges

Connectivity gaps and cost barriers severely limit the use of digital technology across all countries. Many families lack phones entirely or share a single device among several households. Electricity shortages compound the issue, especially in rural areas of the DRC, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan.

These limitations reflect global debates about digital equity, where remote learning solutions are often touted but seldom viable in low-resource EiE contexts. The pattern that emerges from the seven countries is consistent with the global evidence base: low-tech solutions such as radio demonstrate the most equitable reach, while high-tech approaches risk deepening inequality rather than reducing it.

## 6.4. CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE (CVA) AND INCENTIVES

**CVA is among the most impactful, but least scaled, forms of local support documented in the national reports.**

### School-Related Cash Assistance

In Mozambique and the DRC, small-scale CVA programs funded by NGOs helped families purchase uniforms, school supplies, transportation, or food. Parents consistently emphasized that these small amounts had a disproportionate impact on school attendance, especially for girls.

In South Sudan, cash-based interventions have contributed positively to attendance, particularly for girls. Respondents noted that GESS-supported cash transfers were associated with increased enrolment and retention of girls – evidence that targeted CVA can address the indirect cost barriers.

### Attendance Incentives

In Nigeria, stipends or food vouchers were used to encourage schooling among displaced adolescents living in high-risk areas. In Burkina Faso, NGOs provided school kits and learning materials to ease the economic burden on displaced families. In Wedwiel, South Sudan, a Payam Education Supervisor observed: *“An international organization has been giving incentives to five teachers. This has motivated those benefiting and encouraged others to remain in class with hope that they may be included next time.”* Such incentive models demonstrate potential for teacher stabilization and improved retention, but the same supervisor emphasized the importance of balanced targeting – including for boys – to mitigate potential disengagement risks. Somalia interviewees also emphasised that school feeding programmes and financial support for vulnerable households were among the most effective interventions for sustaining school attendance.

### Limitations

Government systems rarely manage CVA directly, and humanitarian programs are short-lived due to funding cycles. The lack of long-term CVA mechanisms



undermines sustainability, despite strong evidence of effectiveness. The precarious incentive arrangement described in Wedwiel (“We do not know if that will continue”) captures the fundamental sustainability problem: effective, evidence-based interventions are chronically dependent on uncertain external financing.

## 6.5. LOCAL INNOVATIONS AND CASE EXAMPLES

The national reports include numerous examples of grassroots innovation. These are summarized by country below.

### Mozambique

- » Third-shift schooling to accommodate displaced learners.
- » Teacher-built palm classrooms and rapid rebuilding after storms.
- » Community early-warning signals for flood and cyclone threats.
- » Informal placement assessments for undocumented displaced learners (see Case Study 6).

### DRC

- » Community teacher stipends to compensate unpaid teachers.
- » Rotating mega-classrooms and improvised partitions (see Case Study 2).
- » Teacher-led documentation recovery efforts for displaced students.

### Burkina Faso

- » Youth clubs that promote safety messaging and peer motivation.
- » Parent escort networks to ensure safe commutes.
- » Community construction of temporary learning centers in displacement areas.

### Chad

- » Community labor groups rehabilitating schools after floods.
- » Seasonal relocation of learning spaces to avoid submerged zones.

- » Cross-border learner absorption in refugee-hosting districts such as Adré.

### Nigeria

- » Child-protection committees that mediate conflicts and report threats.
- » Alarm systems and safety protocols developed by communities.
- » Remedial evening classes offered by volunteer teachers.

### Somalia

- » Locally organised temporary learning spaces and informal catch-up support.
- » Community-built classrooms.
- » Women's groups as education advocates.
- » Peer learning networks.
- » Community mobiliser-led learner tracking.

### South Sudan

- » Parent-organized private English lessons for Arabic-speaking refugee learners, compensating for the absence of structured bridging programs.
- » PTA/SMC mediation of refugee-host community tensions affecting school safety.
- » Culturally sensitive accommodation of religious dress practices to support refugee learner attendance.
- » Informal placement of newly arrived refugee learners without documentation.
- » GESS-supported cash transfers associated with girls' enrollment and retention.

These examples reveal that local actors innovate not by choice but by necessity, filling gaps left by under-resourced systems and fragmented national responses. The South Sudan examples confirm a pattern observed across the other five countries: local innovation is ubiquitous, impressive, and fundamentally unsustainable without state recognition and institutional backing.



# 7. POLICY AND ADVOCACY IMPLICATIONS



The evidence emerging from Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan points to a clear conclusion: education in emergencies cannot be strengthened without fundamentally rethinking how national policies are developed, financed, implemented, and monitored. Communities, teachers and civil society organizations consistently step in to fill gaps left by under-resourced or overstretched state structures. However, community agency must complement, not replace, state responsibility. This section analyzes the broader policy and advocacy implications of these themes, offering a consolidated view of how grassroots perspectives can inform national, regional, and global EiE agendas.

Photo: Laura Pannack/Oxfam / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/oxfameastafrica/7534883672/>

## 7.1. LINKING GRASSROOTS EVIDENCE TO NATIONAL POLICY

Perhaps the strongest finding across all national case studies is that communities are routinely excluded from formal decision-making, despite being the actors most affected by crises and most directly responsible for sustaining learning.

In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, parents and teachers describe policies such as the Safe Schools Declaration or national EiE frameworks as “abstract” or “distant” – concepts that exist at the central government level but rarely translate into concrete action in schools. Mozambique’s teachers were unaware of the existence of formal EiE Coordination Groups, despite these being central to the government’s stated emergency preparedness strategy. The DRC’s displaced communities report that integration guidelines exist on paper, but school leaders must improvise because no operational guidance ever reaches them.

The South Sudan findings demonstrate a similar disconnect. Findings from Wedwiel Refugee Camp demonstrate a significant gap between national education policy commitments and implementation at the community level. Refugee and returnee participants, particularly Arabic-speaking learners, emphasized challenges related to language of instruction. Although government efforts to produce Arabic learning materials had been reported at the ministry level, community respondents indicated that these resources had not reached schools within the study site. This suggests implementation bottlenecks in distribution systems and highlights the need for stronger alignment between policy commitments and operational delivery mechanisms. Limited awareness of EiE policies among teachers, parents, and community members further demonstrates weaknesses in policy dissemination. Respondents were largely unaware of existing preparedness guidelines or response mechanisms, indicating that national frameworks have not been effectively translated into operational guidance at the school and community levels.



These findings underscore a structural disconnect: national EiE policymaking is not informed by the lived experience of crisis-affected communities. This gap undermines effectiveness and legitimacy.

To address this, NECs can serve as an essential conduit. They are embedded in local civil society, understand community dynamics, and have the institutional mandate to advocate for change.

Across the seven study countries, the position of civil society within EiE governance structures varies by context and policy space. In some cases, particularly in Mozambique, Somalia, and Nigeria, civil society coalitions are engaged in EiE-related processes through Education Clusters, ministry-led coordination mechanisms, or sector dialogue forums. Within Education Clusters specifically, civil society actors are often present and active, particularly in information-sharing, implementation coordination, and community-level response. However, their participation tends to be operational rather than strategic, with limited influence over priority-setting, funding decisions, or the alignment of cluster activities with longer-term education system planning. In other contexts, including Chad, the DRC, and South Sudan, civil society participation in both Education Clusters and ministry-led EiE spaces is less consistent or more informal. Overall, while civil society is present to varying degrees across coordination platforms, local actors remain unevenly integrated into core decision-making processes that shape EiE responses.

For national EiE policy to be effective, governments must institutionalize mechanisms that bring community voices into policymaking, including:

- » structured consultations with affected populations;
- » inclusion of NECs in EiE and DRR technical groups;
- » participatory policy validation workshops;
- » feedback loops that reach school-level actors.



These measures would align national systems with global norms for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and community engagement emphasized in the literature.

## 7.2. DATA AND EVIDENCE GAPS

A second major policy implication concerns the systemic gaps in education data. Across all countries, EMIS systems either do not collect EiE-relevant indicators or do so inconsistently. Missing data include:

- » displaced learners (internal and cross-border);
- » unregistered or undocumented children;
- » children with disabilities;
- » school attacks, closures, or military occupation;
- » teacher displacement, vacancies, and volunteer workers;
- » WASH and infrastructure damage;
- » psychosocial needs.

These omissions significantly hinder crisis response. In Mozambique, school leaders reported that enrollment numbers fluctuated dramatically after displacement, but there was no mechanism for timely reporting to district authorities. In the DRC, the absence of real-time data on displaced learners forced schools to rely entirely on humanitarian actors to assess needs. Burkina Faso and Chad documented EMIS systems that could not account for schools operating in displacement camps or makeshift locations.

The South Sudan findings provide a concrete example of how funding constraints translate directly into data gaps. The Annual Education Census (AEC) was not conducted in 2023 due to funding shortages, reflecting heavy dependence on external donor financing for core data functions. The absence of updated national education data limits evidence-based planning, monitoring, and accountability within the sector. Ministry officials themselves described monitoring and evaluation as the “weakest part in the ministry.” Participants emphasized that without regular monitoring and evaluation, it is difficult to assess progress or identify gaps in service delivery, particularly in crisis-affected areas. Strengthening domestic financing for EMIS and integrating emergency-sensitive indicators into national data systems would improve planning, resource allocation, and accountability for EiE.





## CASE STUDY 7: WHEN DOCUMENTS DISAPPEAR – THE NYIRAGONGO VOLCANO ERUPTION (DRC)

The DRC report notes that the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano resulted in widespread loss of educational documentation among learners. Items lost included report cards, certificates, diplomas, birth certificates, and other materials essential for school enrollment and progression.

Combined with conflict-driven displacement, these losses disrupted the continuity of schooling. Families arriving in new locations were unable to provide proof of prior learning, complicating grade placement, assessment, and certification.

The global literature identifies similar challenges, describing how fragmented data systems impede planning, resource allocation, and accountability. The Nyiragongo case parallels the documentation challenges observed in South Sudan's Wedwiel, where Sudanese refugee arrivals frequently lack records of prior schooling – leaving teachers to improvise placement decisions through informal assessment, as discussed in Section 6.1. Both cases highlight that crisis-sensitive EMIS modules must include provisions for documenting learners when formal records are lost or inaccessible.

To respond, countries need:

- » crisis-sensitive EMIS modules that track displacement, attacks, disabilities, and school-level vulnerabilities;
- » integrated reporting between Ministries of Education and humanitarian clusters;
- » rapid assessment tools for sudden-onset crises;
- » standardized protocols for school-level data collection;
- » training for district and school staff to ensure data consistency.

**Without accurate, disaggregated data, even well-intentioned policies will fail to address the actual scale and nature of educational needs in emergency contexts.**

### 7.3. MECHANISMS FOR PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK

**One of the clearest messages from the seven national reports is that formal mechanisms for participation and accountability function only marginally in crisis-affected communities.**

In most schools visited, School Management Committees (SMCs) were inactive or non-existent. Parents expressed willingness to participate but lacked training, resources, or formal guidance. Youth said they had never been asked to contribute ideas about school safety, curriculum adaptations, or recovery strategies. Teachers, who shoulder the bulk of crisis response tasks, rarely receive structured opportunities to share their experiences with district or national officials.

The absence of feedback mechanisms leaves policies disconnected from lived realities across multiple contexts. In Nigeria, communities reported that the Safe Schools Initiative does not reflect their actual security concerns because no consultation took place at the local level. In Mozambique, none of the schools visited had

established the EiE committees envisioned in national policy, indicating a breakdown between policy design and implementation. In the DRC, teachers noted that the needs of displaced learners were not captured in formal planning because, as one teacher put it, “no one asks us what we need.”

In Chad and Burkina Faso, the disconnect manifests differently. While national policies and strategies reference community participation, the country reports provide limited evidence of structured feedback loops linking schools and communities to EiE decision-making processes. In Burkina Faso, community actors are described as compensating for systemic gaps, but without formal mechanisms to translate their priorities into policy or planning. In Chad, the absence of documented consultation processes reflects weaker institutionalized channels for feedback rather than a lack of local engagement, reinforcing the broader pattern of policies being developed and implemented with limited grounding in frontline realities.



Somalia highlights the potential and the limitations of existing participation mechanisms. Community structures, parent groups, and local civil society organisations were actively engaged in supporting education during emergencies, yet participants described limited institutional mechanisms through which their experience could influence policy decisions or programme accountability. As a local organization representative described: “The community has no role in the plan or the projects’ priorities.”

In South Sudan, school-level governance structures – particularly PTAs and SMCs – were identified as functional mechanisms for community participation. Respondents reported that these structures play a central role in decision-making, conflict resolution, and school management, often compensating for limited government presence (as described in Case Study 4). However, participants also described weak vertical communication between schools, state authorities, and national ministries. Policies intended to promote grassroots participation were perceived as rarely reaching communities, reflecting breakdowns in administrative coordination and feedback channels. This gap limits accountability and reduces opportunities for community input into education planning. Youth participation is particularly absent: “No one asks us how we want to be educated,” as one student articulated.

#### Policy implications across all seven countries include strengthening:

-  school-level committees with clear EiE mandates;
-  youth participation platforms;
-  structured teacher feedback mechanisms;
-  NEC involvement in monitoring;
-  community-led safety and protection planning.

 Feedback mechanisms must also be connected to decision-making authority, not merely consultative exercises. As the South Sudan case makes especially clear, institutionalized mechanisms for student and community voice would not only improve policy but also strengthen trust and social cohesion in mixed-displacement contexts.

## 7.4. NEXUS APPROACHES: HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE COORDINATION

All seven countries demonstrate the failure of siloed approaches to education planning. Humanitarian actors lead emergency responses, development actors focus on long-term systems strengthening, and peace/security institutions rarely intersect with education planning in meaningful ways.

#### This fragmentation is particularly harmful in:

- » Nigeria, where education and security sectors rarely coordinate operationally;
- » Mozambique, where humanitarian efforts surge after cyclones but dissolve before schools fully recover;
- » DRC, where cyclical displacement outpaces both humanitarian resources and government structures;
- » South Sudan, where heavy dependence on humanitarian actors for core education functions – teaching materials, teacher stipends, school feeding – coexists with limited government institutional ownership, creating a substitution dynamic that entrenches rather than reduces humanitarian dependence.



Research photos from Chad



The literature review also stresses the need for operationalizing nexus thinking — moving beyond theory to joint planning, pooled funding, shared assessments, and integrated monitoring systems.

To make nexus approaches real, countries need:

- 1 multi-year EiE financing that bridges humanitarian and development budgets;
- 2 formal linkages between Education Clusters and Ministries;
- 3 integrated planning across Education, Interior, Social Protection, Disaster Management, and Gender ministries;
- 4 district-level coordination platforms that include CSOs and NECs;
- 5 protection-sensitive education planning embedded within national strategies.

Without such integration, education systems will continue to respond reactively — perpetually rebuilding the same schools, retraining the same teachers, and redistributing the same limited resources after each crisis.

The South Sudan case illustrates the consequences of failing to operationalize nexus thinking: without transitioning from reactive emergency relief to proactive system strengthening, the cycle of crisis response will continue indefinitely. Similarly, Somalia provides a particularly clear illustration of why humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding approaches must be better integrated. Recurrent flooding, prolonged displacement, insecurity, and chronic underinvestment created interconnected challenges that could not be addressed through short-term humanitarian interventions alone.



Photo: Classroom in Mali. Photo: © Curt Carnemark / World Bank / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/10816734@N03/2765585037>



## 8. FINDINGS SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS



The cross-country synthesis of research from Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan reveals a complex interplay between crisis conditions, systemic weaknesses, and community resilience. This section distills the most significant findings across all national studies and integrates them with insights from the global literature. Each finding is paired with policy and advocacy recommendations that respond directly to lived realities documented in the fieldwork. Together, they articulate a coherent agenda for strengthening education in emergencies (EiE) across the region.

*Photo: Maringanha primary school lost 2 classrooms; affected by both the cyclone and the insurgency, Mozambique.*

### 8.1. KEY FINDINGS

#### **Finding 1: Crises Are Overlapping, Prolonged, and Mutually Reinforcing**

Communities across all seven countries face multiple simultaneous crises: armed conflict in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and the DRC; climate shocks in Mozambique and Chad; and widespread poverty and displacement in every context. South Sudan is emblematic of polycrisis convergence, combining protracted conflict, large-scale displacement (both refugees and returnees), recurrent flooding, and chronic under-resourcing. The effects are cumulative. In Mozambique, schools recover from one cyclone only to be destroyed by the next. In the DRC, displacement triggers further overcrowding and violence, creating cascading disruptions. In Burkina Faso, conflict compounds economic fragility, worsening gender disparities. In South Sudan, flooding repeatedly wipes out fragile infrastructure while conflict continues to generate new displacement and school occupation. Somalia presents another dimension of protracted crisis, where more than three decades of insecurity, political fragility, and recurrent climate shocks interact to create a continuous state of educational disruption.

The literature emphasizes that overlapping crises produce “multi-dimensional exclusion,” in which learners experience loss not just of schooling but also of safety, stability, and well-being. The seven national studies substantiate this on-the-ground reality.

#### **Finding 2: Communities Experience a Severe Protection Deficit in Education**

Parents, youth, and teachers consistently describe education environments where safety is not guaranteed. School commutes are dangerous in conflict zones; displacement camps lack protective infrastructure; and overcrowded classrooms create new risks. Nigerian teachers report active shooter threats, Mozambican families describe children learning under damaged roofs that leak during storms, and South Sudanese youth describe recurrent fights between host and refugee learners that “cannot even get us to come to school” safely.

Psychosocial distress is widespread. Children recount nightmares, panic responses, and fear of recurrence. Teachers – who are often themselves displaced or traumatized – lack training to support affected learners. In Wedwiel, only six teachers at a school of 1,387



learners had received psychosocial support training. The absence of systematic MHPSS underscores what the global literature identifies as an urgent, but chronically underfunded, priority.

### **Finding 3: National Policies Exist but Are Not Implemented**

Across all contexts, there is a stark disconnect between policy and practice. Mozambique, for example, has EiE coordination structures on paper, yet none of the visited schools had operational committees. Nigeria's Safe Schools Initiative is widely recognized at the national level but rarely implemented at the school level, where protective infrastructure and emergency drills are absent. Burkina Faso and Chad similarly have ambitious policies for displaced learners, but schools receive little guidance or resources to implement them. The DRC's situation is especially acute: policy implementation is "largely dependent on NGOs" rather than the government, creating uneven access. South Sudan demonstrates perhaps the most direct acknowledgment of the implementation gap, with one government official stating: *"Dissemination is limited... implementation is a challenge,"* and another conceding: *"I don't think there's any policy"* on education in emergencies.

**This implementation gap mirrors global patterns, where policies are adopted without the necessary financing, capacity, or coordination structures to operationalize them.**

### **Finding 4: Teachers and Communities Are the First Responders**

Teachers, parents, and local leaders sustain the education system where formal institutions fall short. Teachers provide psychosocial support, mediate community tensions, improvise lessons for displaced learners, and keep schools running despite insecure working conditions (in Burkina Faso, Somalia, Nigeria, the DRC, and South Sudan).

Parents and youth escort children to school in insecure areas (Burkina Faso), rebuild classrooms after floods (Chad), provide stipends for unpaid teachers (DRC), and – in South Sudan's Wedwiel – fill the void left by absent state structures through PTAs and SMCs that have effectively become the primary education governance mechanisms at the community level.

**These efforts reflect extraordinary community resilience. However, they also highlight systemic neglect: local actors take on responsibilities that national systems are mandated to fulfill but are unable to.**

### **Finding 5: Children with Disabilities, Girls, and Displaced Learners Face Intensified Exclusion**

Across all contexts, marginalized groups experience intersecting barriers. Children with disabilities are disproportionately excluded due to inaccessible infrastructure, lack of teacher training, and absence of assistive devices (Mozambique, Somalia, Chad, South Sudan). Girls face early marriage, GBV risks, and menstruation-related absenteeism (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan). Displaced learners struggle with documentation, language barriers, and interrupted schooling histories (DRC, Somalia, Mozambique, South Sudan). Refugee girls in South Sudan face particularly compounded barriers, navigating Arabic-to-English language transitions, early marriage pressures, and inadequate gender-sensitive infrastructure simultaneously.

**The literature review emphasizes that inclusive education policies frequently fail in crisis contexts because disability, gender, and displacement are not integrated into EiE planning. The national findings strongly support this claim.**

### **Finding 6: Local Innovations Are Effective but Fragile**

Communities demonstrate impressive innovation: Mozambique's third-shift schooling, DRC's mega-classroom partitions, Burkina Faso's safety escort networks, Chad's flood-recovery labor groups, Nigeria's child protection committees, and South Sudan's community-organized English lessons for Arabic-speaking refugee learners. These strategies sustain learning under dire conditions.

Yet these innovations are voluntary, improvised, and unfunded. They depend on personal sacrifice and cannot substitute for systemic provision. The precarious NGO-funded teacher incentive arrangement in Wedwiel ("We do not know if that will continue") captures the fundamental sustainability problem. Without external support, many innovations are not sustainable and risk burnout among volunteers and teachers.



While these locally driven innovations demonstrate remarkable resilience, creativity, and commitment, they should not be viewed as substitutes for strong public education systems. Rather, they should inform and strengthen systemic approaches, with governments retaining the primary responsibility to guarantee the right to education through sustained investment, effective policies, and accountable public institutions.

### **Finding 7: Data Systems Are Not Fit for EiE Purposes**

EMIS systems across all countries lack crisis-sensitive indicators. Schools affected by displacement are invisible to national systems; children with disabilities are undercounted; and reporting on school attacks or infrastructure damage is inconsistent. South Sudan's failure to conduct the 2023 Annual Education Census due to funding shortages is a concrete illustration of how chronic underfunding translates directly into planning blindness.

**This aligns with global literature identifying poor data as a central cause of ineffective EiE planning. Without reliable data, governments cannot effectively allocate resources or plan for crises.**

### **Finding 8: Coordination Is Fragmented at All Levels**

Coordination failures manifest at multiple levels: between humanitarian actors and governments, across ministries, and between district and school systems. NECs are often excluded from EiE decision-making, despite being ideally positioned to represent community voices.

In South Sudan, this fragmentation manifests as a substitution dynamic in which humanitarian actors deliver core education functions while state structures retain nominal authority but limited capacity. This fragmentation undermines continuity of education, delays responses, and limits accountability across all seven countries.

## **8.2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1: Operationalize EiE Frameworks at School, District, and National Levels**

Governments should translate policy into practice by:

- » establishing functional school-level emergency committees;
- » delivering simplified guidelines to teachers and communities;
- » ensuring district officials conduct regular preparedness assessments;
- » addressing the specific implementation bottlenecks identified in South Sudan, such as ensuring that centrally produced materials (e.g., Arabic-language learning resources) reach the refugee-hosting schools for which they are intended.

**Capacity-building must focus on decentralization, ensuring that frontline educators — not just central administrators — understand and apply EiE policies.**

### **Recommendation 2: Strengthen and Protect the Teacher Workforce**

Teacher support must be central to EiE reforms. Ministries should:

- » provide EiE and psychosocial support training (noting that South Sudan's "last training was in 2016" for many teachers);
- » offer emergency stipends or incentives in high-risk zones;
- » ensure timely salary payments;
- » formalize the role of volunteer teachers into contract pathways, particularly in refugee-hosting contexts where humanitarian-funded incentives provide only short-term stabilization.

**Teachers cannot remain “first responders by default”; they must become “first responders by design.”**



### Recommendation 3: Invest in Crisis-Resilient and Inclusive Infrastructure

Governments and donors should prioritize:

- » accessible, permanent classroom construction;
- » climate-resilient and conflict-sensitive building standards (essential in flood-prone South Sudan, Chad, and Mozambique);
- » inclusive WASH facilities, especially for girls and children with disabilities, including the separate sanitation facilities whose absence was directly linked to girls' dropout in Wediel;
- » protective elements such as fencing, lighting, and safe commuting routes.

**Investments must be multi-year and scalable.**

### Recommendation 4: Expand Flexible Learning Pathways

Flexible, context-adapted learning models should include:

- » multi-shift schooling (with teacher rotation safeguards);
- » accelerated education programs (AEPs) for overage learners;
- » recognition of prior learning for displaced children;
- » mobile or rotating classrooms in pastoralist or flood-prone areas;
- » structured language-bridging programs for refugee and returnee learners transitioning between languages of instruction – a particular gap identified in South Sudan for Arabic-speaking refugee learners entering English-medium schools, and relevant to multilingual displacement contexts in DRC and Mozambique as well.

**These programs should be formally integrated into national systems rather than implemented ad hoc.**

### Recommendation 5: Integrate Psychosocial and Protection Systems into Education

Governments and NGOs must:

- » embed PSS routines in daily instruction;
- » establish youth peer-support clubs;
- » expand community escort networks and child protection committees;



Boane reception school, where students from affected schools were allocated to study, Mozambique.



- » train teachers in trauma-informed pedagogy at a scale commensurate with need (rather than the six-teacher coverage observed at Wedwiel's 1,387-learner school);
- » integrate conflict-sensitive approaches where inter-community tensions affect school safety (as in Wedwiel).

**Protection-sensitive education planning should be mandatory in EiE frameworks.**

### Recommendation 6: Strengthen EMIS with Crisis-Sensitive and Disability-Inclusive Data

Countries should reform EMIS to:

- » track displaced learners and temporary learning spaces;
- » monitor school safety incidents and closures;
- » include disability-disaggregated data;
- » link humanitarian and formal data systems;
- » secure domestic financing to ensure that core data functions such as the Annual Education Census are not dependent on uncertain donor support.

**Evidence is foundational to planning; without it, EiE financing and coordination cannot improve.**

### Recommendation 7: Institutionalize Community and Civil Society Participation

Governments must:

- » formally include NECs, CSOs, parents, and youth in EiE decision-making platforms;
- » provide financial and technical support for community-led initiatives;
- » strengthen SMCs and PTAs with EiE-specific mandates, training, and — critically — with the authority, budget, and formal recognition

that currently does not match the quasi-governmental roles these bodies perform in contexts like Wedwiel;

- » institutionalize student representation in governance structures, addressing the “no one asks us how we want to be educated” gap articulated by youth participants.

**Participation must be structurally embedded, not depend on individual goodwill.**

### Recommendation 8: Implement Nexus-Based EiE Financing and Coordination

Countries need integrated humanitarian–development–peace approaches, supported through:

- » pooled multi-year financing mechanisms;
- » coordinated planning between Education, Interior, Social Protection, and Disaster Management ministries;
- » district-level coordination hubs that include CSOs;
- » shared assessments and joint monitoring systems;
- » deliberate transitions from humanitarian substitution (as currently observed in Wedwiel) to institutional ownership, with clear timelines and accountability for state reintegration of core education functions.

**Only through coordinated action can systems transition from reactive crisis response to proactive resilience-building.**



Research photo from Somalia



# 9. GLOBAL LITERATURE COMPARISON: EVIDENCE, THEMES, AND IMPLICATIONS



**Global evidence provides a sobering picture of the scale and complexity of education disruption worldwide. Education Cannot Wait (ECW) estimates that 224 million children and adolescents require educational support due to crises such as armed conflict, displacement, climate disasters, and economic shocks (ECW, 2023b). These crises disproportionately affect low-income countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where protracted instability intersects with fragile education systems.**

Photo: Jessica Lea/DFID. / <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfid/112324138433/in/photostream/>

## Intersecting crises and structural vulnerability

Multiple sources in the literature emphasize that crises rarely occur in isolation. Instead, children face what NRC describes as “compounding risk environments” – simultaneously navigating displacement, poverty, trauma, and insecurity (NRC, 2018). UNESCO’s *Inclusion and Education: All Means All* report underscores how structural exclusion – gender discrimination, disability-related stigma, or linguistic marginalization – amplifies crisis impacts (UNESCO, 2020). The result is a pattern the literature calls multi-dimensional exclusion (UNESCO, 2020; Burde et al., 2016).

Children living in conflict settings face disruptions that extend beyond school closures: attacks on schools, psychological trauma, loss of caregivers, forced recruitment, or pressure to enter child labor (NRC, 2018; GCPEA, 2023). Those experiencing displacement encounter documentation barriers, language mismatches, and overcrowded temporary classrooms (UNHCR, 2019; IGAD, 2022). South Sudan’s Wedwiel context brings all of these dynamics into sharp focus: conflict-related displacement, documentation loss, overcrowding, language-of-instruction mismatches, and compounded vulnerabilities for girls and learners with disabilities.

## Specific vulnerabilities for girls and children with disabilities

Girls are routinely the first to be removed from school during crises due to household labor, early marriage pressures, or parental fear of GBV on the route to school (UNESCO, 2020). Refugee girls’ secondary enrollment sits at just 70% of boys’ (UNHCR, 2019). This pattern is reinforced in all seven study countries, with particularly acute evidence from South Sudan where refugee girls face compounded barriers of language, early marriage pressures, and inadequate gender-sensitive infrastructure.

Learners with disabilities face systemic exclusion, such as a lack of accessible schools, assistive devices, or trained teachers, as documented by INEE’s *Disability-Inclusive EiE* report (INEE, 2023).

Across the literature, these patterns are described not as temporary disruptions but as long-term developmental harms that can shape life trajectories for generations (Burde et al., 2016).



## 9.1. GLOBAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND THE PERSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION GAP

### Adoption vs. enactment

Internationally, African countries have made strong commitments to protecting education in emergencies, endorsing frameworks such as:

- » Safe Schools Declaration (GCPEA, 2023)
- » Global Compact on Refugees (UNHCR, 2018)
- » Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education (IGAD, 2022)
- » Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2015)
- » INEE Minimum Standards (2024) (INEE, 2024)

However, the literature stresses a consistent and severe implementation gap. IGAD's evaluation notes that although the Djibouti Declaration set ambitious regional goals, "progress has been uneven and slow, constrained by financing and system capacity" (IGAD, 2022). Similarly, GCPEA finds that many Sahelian governments fail to operationalize the Safe Schools Declaration at local levels due to coordination and security limitations (GCPEA, 2023).

### Financing gaps

ECW's global estimates reveal that EiE remains chronically underfunded, with less than 3% of humanitarian funding allocated to education (ECW, 2023a). Burde et al. (2016) similarly conclude that gaps in financing undermine the sustainability of effective interventions. South Sudan's funding-driven cancellation of the 2023 Annual Education Census is a concrete, national-level manifestation of this pattern.

Across the participating countries, stakeholders highlighted the limitations of fragmented, short-term humanitarian funding, which often supports parallel interventions without building lasting institutional capacity. Somalia provides a particularly clear example of how repeated conflict, displacement, and climate shocks expose the shortcomings of project-based financing, as communities repeatedly rebuild education services without sustained investment in public systems. Together, these findings reinforce global calls for predictable,

multi-year financing that strengthens national education systems, supports locally led responses, and enables governments to fulfil their responsibility to guarantee the right to education in contexts of protracted crisis.

### Weak governance and low system preparedness

The literature consistently finds that governments struggle with coordination, teacher deployment, and crisis-sensitive planning (UNICEF, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). OECD's analysis of post-COVID system resilience emphasizes the lack of institutional readiness and absence of robust crisis protocols (OECD, 2020).

This aligns directly with the EiE Africa Study's finding that Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Somalia, the DRC, and South Sudan all possess national EiE or EiE-relevant policies, but school-level actors rarely receive training, funding, or operational guidelines. South Sudan's government officials themselves described monitoring as "the weakest part in the ministry," echoing the governance gap identified globally.

## 9.2. TEACHERS AS THE CENTER OF EiE SYSTEMS: GLOBAL EVIDENCE

### Teachers as multi-role responders

Across all contexts, the literature identifies teachers as the most important determinants of continuity of learning in crises. They serve as educators, caregivers, social workers, protection monitors, and interpreters of crisis-recovery needs (INEE, 2022a). NRC's analysis of Afghanistan notes that teachers were often the only stable adults available to support children during conflict (NRC, 2018).

### Barriers facing teachers

Global studies highlight a common set of challenges teachers face:

- » Delayed or no salary (UNESCO, 2020).
- » Insecure working conditions, including attacks or threats (GCPEA, 2023).
- » Burnout, stress, and lack of mental health support (INEE, 2022a).





Research photos from Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)



- » Insufficient pre-service preparation for inclusive and crisis-responsive pedagogy (Sadeghi & Thomas, 2023).
- » Lack of professional development opportunities (INEE, 2024).

### Teacher wellbeing as a prerequisite for system resilience

The literature is unequivocal: systems cannot be strengthened if teachers are overburdened, underpaid, and unsupported. INEE's guidance note stresses that teacher wellbeing is foundational to sustainable crisis response (INEE, 2022a).

These findings align directly with teacher testimonies across all seven countries. South Sudan's evidence is particularly stark: precarious employment (volunteers and humanitarian-funded incentives rather than government payroll), psychosocial burden (teachers functioning under extreme emotional stress while teaching traumatized learners), language-of-instruction challenges (teaching English to Arabic-speaking refugee learners without curricular support), and professional development dated to 2016. This alignment indicates that the South Sudan case is not an outlier but a concentrated instance of patterns documented regionally and globally.

## 9.3. LOCALIZATION, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, AND POWER

### Global consensus on the importance of community leadership

The literature shows strong support for community-centered EiE. Parents, youth, local leaders, PTAs, women's groups, and CSOs are repeatedly shown to play essential roles in:

- » maintaining school attendance,
- » negotiating safe access,
- » rebuilding infrastructure,
- » supporting volunteer teachers, and
- » monitoring protection issues (NRC, 2018; INEE, 2023; UNICEF, 2020).

**NRC's Children in Distress report emphasizes that communities "often serve as the first line of education protection" (NRC, 2018).**

### The gap between rhetoric and practice

Menashy & Zakharia (2022) show how *power asymmetries* limit genuine local leadership: INGOs and donors hold disproportionate decision-making authority, while local actors – even those with deep expertise – are relegated to consultation roles.

UNHCR's *Accountability to Affected Populations* framework calls for community-centered planning, but findings show inconsistent implementation (UNHCR, 2018).



## OPDs and disability inclusion

The literature highlights OPDs as critical actors whose “expertise and lived experience” is essential for disability-inclusive EiE (INEE, 2023). Yet OPDs are often excluded from major planning processes.

## Alignment with the EiE Africa Study

The national reports strongly reinforce these global findings: in all seven countries, communities and NECs lead crisis response but are systematically excluded from decision-making and financing. South Sudan’s Wedwiel experience is particularly illustrative of the power asymmetry Menashy & Zakharia describe: PTAs and SMCs perform quasi-governmental functions (“It is the PTA and SMC that have become the government now”) without corresponding authority, budget, or formal recognition. This is the structural feature of EiE systems globally, not a South Sudanese anomaly.

Somalia similarly illustrates that local actors frequently assume primary responsibility for sustaining education services while remaining underrepresented in funding decisions, programme design, and policy processes. This reinforces broader global concerns that localisation has often advanced more rapidly in implementation than in the redistribution of power and decision-making.

## 9.4. ALTERNATIVE, ACCELERATED, AND FLEXIBLE EDUCATION MODELS: GLOBAL EVIDENCE

One of the most robust bodies of evidence within the global EiE literature centers on flexible learning pathways, including Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs), temporary learning centers, condensed curricula, community-based learning, and multi-shift schools. Across humanitarian contexts, such models have demonstrated the strongest outcomes for re-engaging out-of-school, displaced, or overage learners.

### Accelerated Education Programs (AEPs): What Works and Why

The literature draws heavily on global systematic reviews, particularly Burde et al. (2016), whose meta-analysis of 51 EiE interventions found that AEPs consistently improve basic literacy and numeracy for displaced and conflict-affected learners when implemented with fidelity (Burde et al., 2016). The Norwegian Refugee Council reinforces

this with field evaluations from Tanzania, South Sudan, and the DRC, demonstrating that AEP graduates often outperform peers in formal schools due to smaller class sizes, concentrated teaching, and trained AEP facilitators (NRC, 2021).

Core principles identified globally include:

- » age-appropriate placement rather than grade repetition,
- » compressed but complete curricula,
- » trained and dedicated AEP teachers,
- » clear pathways back into formal education, and
- » community engagement supporting attendance.

These principles directly mirror localized innovations observed in Mozambique and the DRC, where teachers use improvised diagnostic tools to place displaced learners of varying ages.

### Multi-shift, community-based, and mobile learning solutions

The literature finds that multi-shift schooling is an effective short-term response when IDP influx overwhelms capacity, particularly in refugee-hosting districts (UNHCR, 2019). While not a long-term substitute for infrastructure investment, multi-shift systems can support large-scale access, as seen in Sri Lanka, Jordan, Kenya, and Uganda. Mozambique’s triple-shift schools in Pemba and Boane, documented in Case Study 5, are a direct parallel.

Similarly, community-based education (CBE) has been shown to successfully reach girls and rural learners when schools are distant, unsafe, or inaccessible (Burde et al., 2016). Evaluations in Afghanistan and Nigeria show that CBE significantly increases girls’ enrollment when co-located in communities.

Mobile learning via portable tents, boat schools, or itinerant teachers is emerging in pastoralist regions (IGAD, 2022) and is highly relevant to flood-prone districts in Chad, Mozambique, and South Sudan.

### Risks when flexible models are unfunded

The literature also warns that flexible models fail when:

- » teachers are unpaid volunteers,
- » no formal reintegration pathways exist,



- » curricula are inconsistent, or
- » state ministries fail to recognize credentials.

This caution is especially relevant for the EiE Africa Study, where local innovations are widespread but lack state recognition, structure, or financing. South Sudan's community-organized English lessons for Arabic-speaking refugee learners exemplify a locally driven flexible response that global evidence supports – but which requires formalization and state investment to be sustainable. Left unfunded, such strategies risk remaining temporary coping mechanisms rather than durable solutions.

## 9.5. PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (PSS), WELLBEING, AND PROTECTION: GLOBAL EVIDENCE

Perhaps the most consistent theme emerging from global EiE research is the centrality of psychosocial wellbeing to learning.

### Trauma, stress, and the learning environment

NRC's global review *Children in Distress* (2018) documents widespread trauma symptoms among displaced children, such as nightmares, panic attacks, emotional withdrawal, and hypervigilance, directly impacting learning outcomes (NRC, 2018). UNESCO (2020) similarly stresses that psychosocial distress “undermines concentration, memory, attendance, and engagement” (UNESCO, 2020).

### MHPSS effectiveness and the need for integrated approaches

Multiple studies cited in the literature show that structured PSS interventions:

- » reduce stress and anxiety,
- » improve school attendance,
- » support teacher wellbeing, and
- » strengthen social cohesion (UNICEF, 2020; NRC, 2018).

Case studies in Bangladesh and Afghanistan provide compelling evidence that even low-cost, school-based PSS – daily check-ins, routine setting, peer groups – improve both emotional stability and learning (Haque & Shohel, 2019).

### Teacher wellbeing and protection

The literature shows that teacher stress is an urgent, under-addressed global crisis (INEE, 2022a). Teachers in conflict zones report:

- » feelings of fear and insecurity,
- » secondary trauma from students' stories,
- » burnout from overcrowded classrooms, and
- » lack of institutional support.

INEE (2024) places teacher wellbeing as a core domain of the updated Minimum Standards, emphasizing its necessity for supporting students (INEE, 2024). The South Sudan teacher who explained that “when teaching I always [remember] what is happening in Sudan... I fear sometimes, even I [get] confused sometimes” illustrates this global pattern of secondary trauma among frontline educators in crisis contexts.

### Protection risks in and around schools

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack documents a rising trend in attacks on schools, students, and teachers in the Sahel and Great Lakes regions (GCPEA, 2023). Key risks include:

- » recruitment by armed groups,
- » sexual exploitation,
- » school occupation,
- » abduction, and
- » violence on school routes.

This parallels the fear-based barriers documented in Burkina Faso, Somalia, Nigeria, the DRC, and South Sudan – where school occupation during the 2013 and 2016 conflicts, insecurity along transport routes, and violence affecting learners en route to school all reflect the same global protection deficit.



## 9.6. TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED LEARNING AND THE GLOBAL DIGITAL DIVIDE

Post-COVID, digital and radio-based remote learning have become central components of crisis education. Studies from South Africa and Kenya demonstrate that digital tools can facilitate continuity of learning when schools close due to conflict or climate shocks (Landa et al., 2021).

The GLR warns that technology often deepens inequality rather than reducing it. Key barriers include:

- » lack of devices,
- » unreliable electricity,
- » weak internet connectivity,
- » high data costs, and
- » lack of digital pedagogy training (Sadeghi & Thomas, 2023).

UNESCO (2020) stresses that digital tools benefit learners “who already have advantages” (UNESCO, 2020), leaving marginalized learners behind.

### Low-tech solutions

Radio, SMS-based coordination, and offline digital materials demonstrate the most equitable global impact. Landa et al. (2021) note that radio programs have the broadest reach in low-resource settings. This parallels the Nigeria and Mozambique experience, where radio learning played a vital role. South Sudan’s Wedwiel experience – three radios distributed to a school of 1,387 learners during COVID – exemplifies both the promise of low-tech solutions and the scale mismatch between humanitarian provision and need. Low-tech solutions demonstrate the most equitable reach in the South Sudanese context, consistent with global findings on effective approaches in low-resource EiE settings.

## 9.7. DATA, EVIDENCE, AND MONITORING: THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE

The global literature is clear: data systems are not currently fit for EiE purposes. Across the literature, EMIS systems are criticized for:

- » failing to capture displacement status,
- » omitting disability data,
- » not recording school attacks,
- » providing outdated enrollment figures, and
- » lacking disaggregation (Buckner et al., 2022).

UNHCR (2018) adds that refugee data is inconsistently collected, particularly in informal settlements.

### Humanitarian-development data fragmentation

Humanitarian actors (clusters, NGOs, UN agencies) often collect parallel datasets using different tools, metrics, and timeframes. The literature refers to this as a “fragmented evidence ecosystem” (Aguilar & Heusser, 2022).

### Need for crisis-sensitive EMIS

The OECD (2020) and UNESCO (2020) both argue that building crisis-sensitive EMIS is essential for:

- » predicting school closures,
- » allocating resources,
- » monitoring teacher mobility, and
- » tracking students through displacement.

These global insights directly reflect national findings across all seven countries, where missing data undermined planning at every step. South Sudan’s failure to conduct the 2023 Annual Education Census due to funding constraints provides a concrete illustration of the global data challenge in EiE contexts. Without reliable, disaggregated data, EiE planning remains reactive and evidence-thin. The Somalia findings also reinforce global concerns regarding the limited capacity of education information systems to capture displacement, disability, repeated disruptions, and other dimensions of vulnerability that shape educational participation during crises.



## 9.8. HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE (HDP) NEXUS AND SYSTEM RESILIENCE

Education systems in crisis settings cannot function through humanitarian responses alone. The literature agrees that multi-year, government-led, and multi-sectoral approaches are the only path to system resilience (ECW, 2023a).

### Uganda as a global model

Uganda's Education Response Plan II (2021–2025) is highlighted as a leading example of HDP nexus planning. It integrates:

- » humanitarian funding,
- » national sector planning,
- » refugee inclusion,
- » and explicit budget lines for crisis response (Uganda MoES, 2023).

### Siloed systems weaken resilience

The GLR critiques the tendency of ministries of education, interior, and social protection to operate separately, delaying response and duplicating efforts (UNICEF, 2020). These silos are precisely the barriers identified in Mozambique, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, the DRC, and South Sudan. Without transitioning from reactive emergency relief to proactive system strengthening, the cycle of crisis response will continue indefinitely, a pattern documented across multiple fragile contexts in the global EiE literature.

### What effective nexus coordination requires

The literature identifies several preconditions:

- » pooled multi-year financing,
- » shared assessments,
- » joint monitoring systems,
- » strong district-level coordination, and
- » formal participation of civil society and OPDs.

These mirror recommendations emerging from the EiE Africa Study.

## 9.9. CROSS-CUTTING IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EiE AFRICA STUDY

Across all sources in the Global Literature Review, several cross-cutting imperatives emerge that are relevant to the findings from the fieldwork in the seven countries of this study:

- » Community voice must drive policy. Communities are first responders; their lived experience must shape EiE frameworks (NRC, 2018; Menashy & Zakharia, 2022).
- » Disability-inclusive education cannot be optional. OPDs must be central to EiE design (INEE, 2023).
- » Teacher wellbeing is foundational to system resilience. Without supported teachers, no EiE intervention is sustainable (INEE, 2022a; UNESCO, 2020).
- » Flexible learning pathways must be institutionalized. AEPs, CBE, multi-shift models, and language-bridging programs are not temporary fixes (NRC, 2021; Burde et al., 2016).
- » MHPSS is necessary, not supplementary. Trauma-informed, school-based PSS supports learning recovery (NRC, 2018; UNICEF, 2020).
- » Data reform is essential for evidence-based planning. Crisis-sensitive EMIS enables targeted support (Buckner et al., 2022; UNHCR, 2018).
- » Financing must shift from short-term to multi-year. System resilience requires shared budgets and predictable funding (ECW, 2023a; Uganda MoES, 2023).
- » Localization requires structural, not rhetorical, change. CSOs and communities need real leadership roles (Menashy & Zakharia, 2022).



# 10. CONCLUSION



**The seven-country synthesis, drawing on Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan, presents a powerful and urgent picture of what education in emergencies truly looks like from the ground up. While each context is shaped by its own political histories, geographies, and crisis patterns, the collective narrative shows remarkable convergence. Communities across the African region are living through overlapping crises in which conflict, climate disasters, displacement, and systemic under-resourcing reinforce one another, creating environments where schooling is continually at risk of disruption.**

The families, students, teachers, youth, elders, and civil society organizations who contributed to this research describe education not as a stable, predictable institution but as a fragile and contested space. Children in Burkina Faso and Nigeria fear attacks on their way to school; students in the DRC struggle to learn in classrooms of more than a hundred peers; learners in Mozambique return to school after cyclones only to find the buildings destroyed again. In Chad, floodwaters wash away not only infrastructure but months of accumulated progress. In South Sudan's Wedwiel, refugee girls transitioning from Arabic-medium instruction face a compounded set of barriers – language, early marriage pressures, inadequate sanitation, and inter-community tension – while teachers themselves navigate their own trauma alongside their instructional responsibilities. In Somalia, recurrent flooding, prolonged insecurity, and repeated displacement combine to interrupt schooling time and again, forcing children to rebuild their education after each successive crisis while communities struggle to recover before the next emergency strikes. These disruptions are not isolated events, but recurring cycles that exhaust families, fragment educational trajectories, and leave long-term scars on communities and systems.

At the same time, the national case studies demonstrate extraordinary resilience. Teachers continue to teach despite unpaid salaries, overcrowded classrooms, personal trauma, and profound insecurity. Communities rebuild classrooms, escort children through insecure areas, and

pool finite resources to support volunteer teachers. In Wedwiel, PTAs and SMCs have effectively become the primary education governance structures in the absence of consistent state presence. Parents organize English lessons for refugee children entering an unfamiliar language of instruction. Civil society organizations coordinate, advocate, and innovate, often providing the only durable support structures for displaced learners. These local actors, so often underrecognized, are the backbone of education in emergency contexts.

Yet their efforts occur in a broader systemic environment characterized by limited capacity and weak policy implementation. National commitments to Education in Emergencies, disaster risk reduction, inclusive education, and safe schools exist in all seven countries. South Sudan, in particular, has a well-developed paper framework that includes the General Education Sector Plan (GESP) 2023–2027, the General Education Act (2012), the Inclusive Education Policy (2020), and the Alternative Education System Policy. However, these commitments remain largely aspirational. Policies do not translate into operational guidance for schools. Teacher training, psychosocial support, monitoring systems, and emergency planning are inconsistently applied or absent. Data systems fail to capture the realities of displacement, disability, or school-level safety, leaving ministries unable to plan effectively or equitably allocate resources. As one government official in South Sudan conceded: *“Dissemination is limited... implementation is a challenge.”*



The gap between policy and practice points to a fundamental challenge: EiE remains insufficiently integrated into national education systems. It is treated as a humanitarian concern rather than as an essential dimension of everyday education sector governance. Yet for millions of children across West, Central, and East Africa, crisis is not an exceptional condition; it is the context in which they live and learn.

This reality requires a paradigm shift. Education systems must become crisis-ready by design, not by improvisation. This shift demands multi-year, predictable and sustainable financing; cross-ministerial collaboration; strong, localized civil society participation; crisis-sensitive data systems; and teacher support that acknowledges the centrality of their roles. The evidence across the seven countries demonstrates that communities have already developed innovative solutions — multi-shift classes, temporary classrooms, protection networks, community-led psychosocial support, language-bridging initiatives — but these innovations cannot be sustained without system-level alignment and support. The precariousness captured by a Wedwiel teacher's observation —

*An international NGO is supporting five teachers by paying them 20,000 SSP per month. We do not know if that will continue.*

— is the signature feature of unsustainable humanitarian substitution operating in place of institutional ownership.

The global literature underscores the same imperative: resilient education systems are foundational to peacebuilding, social stability, and long-term development. Education protects children from recruitment into armed groups, early marriage, exploitation, and long-term economic marginalization. Yet these protective benefits can only be realized when education is free, safe, accessible, inclusive, and continuous.

The role of National Education Coalitions is especially important in bridging the gap between grassroots realities and government responsibility for strengthening national education policies. NECs bring community experiences, civil society expertise, and accountability perspectives into policy spaces that are often dominated by international agencies. As this synthesis report makes

clear, their participation is not simply desirable; it is essential. They provide the connective tissue that links learners' lived experiences to national and regional education agendas.

Going forward, the recommendations emerging from the synthesis report call for both structural and cultural shifts within education systems. Policymakers must move beyond crisis-response thinking and embrace anticipatory, system-strengthening approaches, particularly mobilizing domestic resources to finance education systems. At the same time, donors and international cooperation bodies must commit to multi-year financing to complement resources at the country level and to provide sustained support for local civil society capacity. Ministries must prioritize inclusive, crisis-sensitive planning, data reform, teacher development, and community participation. And at the heart of these efforts, the voices of learners, parents, teachers, and communities must guide decisions — addressing the gap articulated most directly by the Wedwiel student who observed: “No one asks us how we want to be educated.”

The path toward resilient and inclusive education in emergencies is challenging but attainable. The seven countries studied demonstrate resilience, determination, and innovation in the face of extraordinary adversity. With appropriate and sustainable financing, coordinated action — grounded in evidence, accountability, and community leadership — education systems can evolve to protect the rights and futures of all learners, even in the most difficult of circumstances.



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## APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

**Purpose:** To systematically observe the physical environment, instructional practices, inclusion and participation of learners, and emergency-related adaptations in education settings affected by conflict, displacement, or disaster.

### General Instructions:

- » Use this tool during a scheduled site visit to a formal or informal educational setting (school, learning center, temporary education space).
- » Observations should be non-intrusive and respectful. Inform the head teacher or focal point of your presence and the purpose of the observation.
- » Take notes discreetly and avoid disrupting class sessions or activities.
- » Focus on descriptive detail. Use quotation marks only for direct quotes heard.
- » If taking photographs, obtain permission from school leadership and follow GCE ethical protocols.

### Site Information

| Category                                                    | Description |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Country                                                     |             |
| Region / District                                           |             |
| Name of Site                                                |             |
| (Type of Site (formal school, temporary learning space, etc |             |
| (Level of Education (e.g., primary, secondary               |             |
| Date & Time of Visit                                        |             |
| (Researcher(s                                               |             |

### Physical Environment and Infrastructure

Observe the condition, safety, and accessibility of the learning environment.

- » Describe the buildings and classroom structures (permanent/temporary, damaged/repaired).
- » Is the learning space physically safe and secure? Are there visible hazards?
- » Are there any signs of conflict impact (e.g., damage, militarization, emergency shelters)?
- » What are the conditions of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities? Are toilets accessible and gender-segregated?
- » Are there designated safe spaces for girls, children with disabilities, or younger learners?

### Notes:

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### Classroom Environment and Teaching Practices

Observe one or more classroom sessions.

- » Number of students present and general gender balance.
- » Number of teachers/staff present and their interaction with students.
- » What is the teaching style (lecture, participatory, group work)?
- » Are teaching and learning materials available and in use?
- » Is the content relevant and culturally appropriate?
- » Are any lessons or messaging related to emergencies, resilience, or safety?

### Notes:

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## **Inclusion and Participation**

Look for visible markers of inclusion and participation.

- » Are girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalized learners present and participating?
- » Are learning supports (e.g., sign language, assistive devices, differentiated instruction) available?
- » Do students appear comfortable and engaged?
- » Are students free to ask questions and express themselves?
- » Are accommodations made for learners from displaced populations?

**Notes:**

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## **Response to Crisis and Adaptation Measures**

Identify evidence of how the school is adapting to emergency conditions.

- » Are there visible signs of humanitarian support (e.g., NGO logos, food programs, school kits)?
- » Has the school implemented alternative learning approaches (radio, self-study, accelerated learning)?
- » Are there posters, rules, or guidance about emergency drills, safety, or child protection?
- » Have any psychosocial or emotional support activities been observed or mentioned?
- » Is there evidence of coordination with humanitarian agencies or community groups?

**Notes:**

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## **Community Involvement**

Observe signs of community engagement and governance.

- » Are there parent groups, school committees, or community bulletin boards?
- » Are community members (e.g., mothers, elders, religious leaders) visibly involved?
- » Are local languages or culturally relevant symbols present in signage or teaching materials?
- » Are there any visible complaints or feedback mechanisms?

**Notes:**

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## **Challenges and Observations from Staff**

If possible, capture any informal discussions with staff during the visit.

- » What do teachers or administrators say about the current challenges?
- » Have they received any training or support on EiE topics?
- » Are there staff shortages or unmet needs mentioned?

**Notes:**

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## **Additional Reflections**

Use this section to document anything else that stood out or seemed significant.

- » Contradictions or tensions (e.g., strong community will but poor government support).
- » Moments of innovation or resilience.
- » Any ethical or safety issues encountered.

**Notes**

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# APPENDIX B: YOUTH FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Teenagers and young adults (ages 16–22)

**Method:** Focus Group Discussion (~6 participants)

Instructions for Facilitators:

- » Begin by welcoming participants warmly and creating a relaxed, inclusive environment.
- » Clearly explain the purpose of the discussion, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of all responses.
- » Obtain verbal informed consent, and where required, guardian consent.
- » Use simple, respectful, and age-appropriate language. Be attentive to group dynamics—encourage quieter voices to share and manage dominant ones sensitively.
- » Reassure participants there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage storytelling and real-life examples.
- » Use follow-up questions or probes to deepen discussion.

### Section 1: Introductions and Background (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Establish rapport and understand participant context.

- » Let's start by introducing ourselves: first name or nickname, age, and what you're currently doing (e.g., in school, working, at home, etc.).
- » What kind of school or learning environment are you (or were you) part of?
- » Has anyone here experienced displacement (e.g., moving because of conflict or disaster)? Only share what you're comfortable with.

### Section 2: Experiences with Education During Crisis (15–20 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand how youth experience education disruptions and what challenges they face.

- » Can you describe what school or learning has been like during the crisis (conflict, disaster, displacement)?
- » Has your school been closed or disrupted? What happened?
- » What were the biggest challenges you faced in trying to keep learning?
- » Have you seen or experienced things that made it unsafe or difficult to attend school?
- » Who do you think is most affected by these challenges. Why?

### Section 3: Coping and Support Strategies (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore how youth and communities respond to challenges.

- » Did your school or teachers try to support learning during the crisis? How?
- » Did you or your friends find other ways to keep learning (e.g., home study, radio, online, peer support)?
- » Did anyone provide support—like NGOs, the government, or community groups?

### Section 4: Youth Participation and Voice (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand if and how youth are involved in education decisions.

- » Have you ever been asked by school staff, government, or others what you think about education in your community?
- » Do you feel that youth like you are listened to when decisions are made about education?
- » Are there youth groups, clubs, or local organizations that help young people raise their voices?

### Section 5: Looking Ahead – Ideas for Change (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Capture youth recommendations for improving education in emergencies.

- » What would help young people in your community continue their education during emergencies?
- » What kind of support would you like to see from teachers, government, or NGOs?
- » If you could design your own school to work better in times of crisis, what would it look like?

### Section 6: Wrap-up (5 minutes)

**Purpose:** Thank participants and close with a reflection.

- » Is there anything else you'd like to share about your education experience?
- » What message would you like to send to leaders who make decisions about education?

**Thank participants for their time and honesty. Remind them how their stories will be used and who to contact with questions or concerns.**



# APPENDIX C: PARENTS FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Parents and caregivers of school-aged children

**Method:** Focus Group Discussion (~6 participants)

Instructions for Facilitators:

- » Begin by creating a respectful and welcoming environment. Clearly explain the purpose of the discussion and that it is voluntary and confidential.
- » Use clear and respectful language that matches the participants' everyday use. Be aware of different literacy levels and cultural norms.
- » Encourage open sharing without judgment. Create space for quieter participants to speak.
- » Use follow-up questions or probes to deepen understanding and gather specific examples.
- » If sensitive topics arise (e.g., violence, trauma), respond with empathy and follow safeguarding protocols.

### Section 1: Introductions and Background (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Establish rapport and understand participants' context.

- » Please tell us your name (or nickname), how many children you care for, and what level of school they attend (if any).
- » Have your children's schooling been affected by any crises (conflict, disaster, displacement)?
- » How long has your family been living in this area?

### Section 2: Impact of Crisis on Children's Education (15–20 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand how emergencies have affected access to education and children's learning.

- » How has the current crisis affected your children's education?
- » Were schools closed or disrupted? How did that affect your family?
- » Did any of your children stop going to school or have to change schools?
- » Which children do you think face the most difficulties (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, displaced children)? Why?

### Section 3: Coping Strategies and Support (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore how families and communities adapt and what support is available.

- » What did you or your family do to help your children continue learning during the crisis?
- » Were there any programs, organizations, or people who supported your children's education?

- » Did your children's school or teachers do anything to help them continue learning during closures or disruptions?
- » Were there any special challenges for girls, children with disabilities, or younger children?

### Section 4: Interaction with Schools and Authorities (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand relationships with education providers and systems.

- » Were you informed or consulted about your child's schooling during the crisis?
- » Have you been able to talk to school staff or authorities about your concerns or suggestions?
- » Were any community groups, religious organizations, or parent groups involved in helping to keep education going?

### Section 5: Recommendations and Hopes for the Future (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Capture parents' recommendations and vision for better education in emergencies.

- » What would make it easier for children to stay in school or keep learning during emergencies?
- » What kind of support do you think families need—from government, schools, or NGOs?
- » If you could change one thing to improve education for children in your community during emergencies, what would it be?
- » What would a better, safer school look like for your children?

### Section 6: Wrap-up (5 minutes)

**Purpose:** Close respectfully and give participants the chance to add final thoughts.

- » Is there anything else you would like to say about your children's education?
- » What message would you want to send to leaders or decision-makers?

**Thank the participants sincerely for their time and contributions. Reassure them that their voices are important and will be used to improve education policy and advocacy.**



# APPENDIX D: TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Primary or secondary school teachers (formal or informal education)

**Method:** One-on-one semi-structured interview (30–45 minutes)

Instructions for Interviewers:

- » Begin with a friendly introduction and obtain informed consent, explaining the purpose of the interview, the voluntary nature of participation, and confidentiality measures.
- » Use language that aligns with the teacher's context and comfort level. Avoid technical jargon.
- » Encourage reflection and use probing questions to explore detailed examples.
- » Maintain a respectful and neutral stance, particularly when discussing government or employer actions.

### Section 1: Background Information (5 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the teacher's role and context.

- » Please tell me about your teaching role: what grade(s) and subjects you teach, and how long you've been at this school.
- » Is this a formal government school, community school, or another type of learning space?
- » Has your school or teaching assignment been affected by a crisis (e.g., conflict, displacement, natural disaster)? How?

### Section 2: Impact of the Emergency on Education (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand how the emergency has disrupted teaching and learning.

- » What has been the impact of the crisis on students' ability to attend school and continue learning?
- » What changes have you noticed in student attendance, motivation, or emotional wellbeing?
- » Are certain students (e.g., girls, children with disabilities, displaced children) more affected than others? How?
- » Have you personally faced challenges in continuing to teach during the crisis?

### Section 3: Teaching Conditions and School Response (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore how teachers and schools are adapting to the crisis.

- » How has your school or community tried to keep education going during this time?
- » Have you received any support, training, or guidance on how to teach during emergencies?

- » Have any alternative forms of learning been used (e.g., radio, home learning, temporary classrooms)?
- » What support, if any, have you received from government, NGOs, or community groups?

### Section 4: Inclusion and Support for Vulnerable Students (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand how inclusive practices are maintained or disrupted.

- » Are there students with disabilities or special needs in your classroom? How are they supported?
- » Are girls attending and participating equally? What challenges do they face?
- » Do you feel equipped to support the emotional or psychosocial needs of students affected by trauma?

### Section 5: Participation and Policy Awareness (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Assess awareness of EiE policies and teacher participation in decision-making.

- » Are you aware of any policies or guidelines that support education during emergencies?
- » Has your school been part of any government or NGO-led education response plans?
- » Have teachers been consulted or asked to provide input into how to improve education during crises?

### Section 6: Recommendations (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Gather teacher perspectives on solutions and advocacy priorities.

- » What would help you do your job better during emergencies?
- » What support do students need most to succeed in these difficult times?
- » If you could make one change to improve education in emergencies, what would it be?

### Section 7: Closing

**Purpose:** Thank and invite final thoughts.

- » Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience as a teacher during this crisis?
- » What message would you like to give to policymakers or education leaders?

**Thank the participant warmly. Reassure them their voice is important and will help strengthen education systems in crisis-affected communities.**



# APPENDIX E: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Headteachers, principals, school directors, or education coordinators (formal or informal settings)

**Method:** One-on-one semi-structured interview (30–45 minutes)

Instructions for Interviewers:

- » Begin by introducing yourself and the purpose of the study. Obtain informed consent.
- » Emphasize confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation.
- » Use respectful, context-appropriate language. Educational leaders may offer policy insights as well as local-level implementation perspectives.
- » Encourage examples and reflection on institutional challenges and responses.

### Section 1: Background and School Context (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the role and institutional setting of the respondent.

- » Can you tell me about your role and responsibilities as the leader of this school or learning space?
- » How long have you served in this position, and what type of school or setting is this (government, private, community-run, temporary learning space)?
- » How has this school or learning space been affected by the ongoing crisis (e.g., conflict, displacement, disaster)?

### Section 2: Impact of Crisis on School Operations (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore how the crisis has disrupted operations, teaching, and learning.

- » What were the major disruptions to your school's operations during the crisis?
- » How have student enrollment, attendance, or dropout rates changed?
- » Which groups of learners have been most affected (e.g., girls, displaced children, children with disabilities)? Why?
- » What impact has the crisis had on your teachers and staff's morale, safety, and teaching capacity?

### Section 3: Leadership Response and Adaptation (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand local leadership actions to sustain education.

- » What actions did your school take to support students and continue education during the crisis?
- » Were there any efforts to deliver alternative or

remote learning (e.g., radio, take-home materials)?

- » How did you communicate with parents and the community during the crisis?
- » Did you receive any support from the government, NGOs, or humanitarian agencies? Was it helpful?

### Section 4: Inclusion and Student Wellbeing (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Assess how inclusive and protective education has been during the emergency.

- » How does your school support the inclusion of marginalized learners, such as children with disabilities, displaced children, or those affected by trauma?
- » Were any special programs, accommodations, or resources provided for these learners?
- » How do you monitor or address the emotional wellbeing and safety of students?

### Section 5: Engagement, Accountability, and Policy (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the leader's role in local education governance and policy awareness.

- » Have you been consulted or included in any planning processes related to emergency education response?
- » Are you aware of any national or local policies or guidelines on education in emergencies?
- » Do you feel that policies are being implemented in a way that helps your school? Why or why not?

### Section 6: Recommendations (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Gather leadership perspectives on system improvement and advocacy.

- » What would make your job easier in ensuring learning continues during emergencies?
- » What are the most urgent needs your school faces in this context?
- » What should governments or donors prioritize to support schools like yours in times of crisis?
- » If you could share one message with national education leaders or international agencies, what would it be?

### Section 7: Closing

**Purpose:** End respectfully and capture any final insights.

- » Is there anything else you'd like to share about your school's experience during the crisis or your role as a leader?

**Thank the participant warmly. Reassure them their voice is important and will help strengthen education systems in crisis-affected communities.**



# APPENDIX F: LOCAL NGO/CSO INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Staff or leaders from local NGOs, CSOs, or community-based organizations involved in education, child protection, disability inclusion, or humanitarian response

**Method:** One-on-one semi-structured interview (30–45 minutes)

Instructions for Interviewers:

- » Begin with introductions, explain the study purpose, and obtain informed consent.
- » Emphasize that the interview is voluntary, responses are confidential, and participants may skip questions at any time.
- » Use language appropriate to the local context and sector.
- » Encourage specific examples of work, collaboration, and challenges in the education in emergencies (EiE) context.

### Section 1: Organizational Background and Role (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the organization's focus and community engagement.

Please tell me about your organization: its mission, who it serves, and how long it has worked in this area.

What is your role within the organization?

What types of activities or programs do you implement related to education, children, or emergencies?

How has your organization been involved in supporting education during the current crisis?

### Section 2: Education Access and Community Needs (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Capture the organization's perspective on barriers to education and community experiences.

- » What are the main barriers that children and families in this area face when trying to access education during emergencies?
- » Are certain groups more affected than others (e.g., girls, displaced families, children with disabilities)? How?
- » How have local schools, teachers, or education authorities responded to the needs of crisis-affected learners?
- » What role has your organization played in addressing these challenges?

### Section 3: Support, Adaptation, and Local Innovations (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore strategies used by local actors to sustain learning and protect the right to education.

- » Has your organization supported alternative education approaches (e.g., informal learning spaces, psychosocial support, learning kits)?
- » Have you collaborated with schools, local authorities, or humanitarian agencies to support education?
- » What adaptations or innovations have emerged at the local level to keep children learning?
- » What has worked well, and what has been difficult?

### Section 4: Advocacy and Policy Engagement (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand CSO engagement with policy processes and accountability.

- » Has your organization engaged with education authorities, national coalitions, or government bodies on education in emergencies?
- » Are you aware of any national policies or frameworks (e.g., Safe Schools Declaration) related to education in emergencies?
- » Do you feel that grassroots voices like yours are included in education decision-making or policy processes?

### Section 5: Recommendations and Reflections (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Gather actionable recommendations for policy, advocacy, and support.

- » What are the most urgent needs for learners and educators in this community?
- » What kind of support is most needed from government, donors, or INGOs?
- » What would a better education system look like in your context, especially during crises?
- » If you could share one recommendation with national or global education leaders, what would it be?

### Section 6: Closing

**Purpose:** Wrap up respectfully and invite final thoughts.

- » Is there anything else you'd like to share about your organization's work or the education challenges in this area?

**Thank the participant warmly. Reassure them their voice is important and will help strengthen education systems in crisis-affected communities.**



# APPENDIX G: INTERNATIONAL NGO INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Staff from international NGOs (education program managers, EiE specialists, country directors, etc.)

**Method:** One-on-one semi-structured interview (30–45 minutes)

Instructions for Interviewers:

- » Start with a professional introduction, explaining the study's purpose and the voluntary, confidential nature of participation.
- » Use terminology appropriate for INGO professionals but avoid excessive jargon.
- » Encourage strategic, programmatic, and systems-level reflections while also asking for field-level examples where possible.
- » Clarify that this is not an audit or evaluation—insights are to strengthen collective understanding and advocacy.

### Section 1: Organizational Role and Program Overview (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the INGO's role in the education in emergencies (EiE) landscape.

- » Please tell me about your organization's work in this country and your role.
- » What education-related programs are currently being implemented—especially in emergency-affected regions?
- » How long has your organization been working on EiE in this context, and what are your geographic or thematic priorities?

### Section 2: Crisis Impact and Education Response (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the nature of the crisis and how it has shaped education programming.

- » How has the ongoing crisis (conflict, displacement, disaster) affected education access, quality, and equity?
- » Which groups are most at risk of being excluded from education, and why (e.g., displaced learners, girls, children with disabilities)?
- » What specific interventions or strategies has your organization used to address these challenges?
- » How has your organization adapted to operational constraints such as access restrictions, staffing, or infrastructure damage?

### Section 3: Coordination and System Engagement (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore collaboration with government, local actors, and humanitarian systems.

- » How does your organization coordinate with the Ministry of Education, Education Clusters, or Local Education Groups?
- » Have you collaborated with local NGOs or civil society organizations? In what ways?
- » How do you ensure that your education programming aligns with national priorities or policies?
- » Have you participated in any joint needs assessments, sector reviews, or policy dialogue related to EiE?

### Section 4: Inclusion, Safeguarding, and Localized Practice (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand how INGOs address inclusion and local capacity.

- » How does your organization incorporate gender, disability, and protection considerations into EiE programming?
- » Are there mechanisms for community feedback and local stakeholder participation?
- » How are local staff and partners supported or trained to lead and sustain these efforts?

### Section 5: Policy Gaps and Recommendations (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Gather high-level recommendations and reflections on policy, funding, and accountability.

- » Are existing national or regional EiE policies and frameworks sufficient? Where are the gaps?
- » What are the biggest barriers to delivering quality, inclusive education during emergencies in this context?
- » What policy, funding, or coordination changes would improve the education response?
- » What lessons from your work here could inform global EiE advocacy or reform?

### Section 6: Closing

**Purpose:** Invite final insights and thank the participant.

- » Is there anything else you'd like to share about the challenges or opportunities for EiE in this country?

**Thank the participant warmly. Reassure them their voice is important and will help strengthen education systems in crisis-affected communities.**



# APPENDIX H: GOVERNMENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

**Target group:** Education officials at district, regional, or national level (e.g., Ministry of Education, Department of Disaster Risk Reduction, Social Services)

**Method:** One-on-one semi-structured interview (30–45 minutes)

Instructions for Interviewers:

- » Introduce the study clearly and professionally. Emphasize that the interview is for research and advocacy purposes—not an evaluation or audit.
- » Explain that insights will be anonymized and that participation is voluntary.
- » Use formal, policy-relevant language but allow room for grounded, practical examples from the field.
- » Be attentive to political sensitivity—maintain a respectful and neutral tone throughout.

### Section 1: Role and Responsibilities (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Understand the official's role and scope of influence.

- » Can you describe your role and responsibilities within your department or ministry?
- » How is your office involved in planning, coordinating, or responding to education needs during emergencies (e.g., conflict, disaster, displacement)?
- » What is your understanding of the current crisis context and how it affects learners in your region/ country?

### Section 2: Education System Response (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore how the government has responded to education disruptions.

- » What actions has your department or ministry taken to ensure continued access to education during emergencies?
- » Were there any specific programs, policies, or emergency measures put in place (e.g., alternative learning, teacher redeployment, safe schools)?
- » Which groups of learners were prioritized (e.g., displaced children, girls, learners with disabilities)?
- » What challenges have you faced in implementing education services in affected areas?

### Section 3: Policy and Planning Frameworks (10–15 minutes)

**Purpose:** Assess the strength and relevance of EiE policy instruments.

- » Are there any official policies, contingency plans, or frameworks guiding education in emergencies in your country?
- » Has your country endorsed any global frameworks (e.g., Safe Schools Declaration, INEE Minimum

Standards)?

- » How are these policies being implemented in practice, especially at local levels?
- » Do you feel current policy frameworks are adequate? Why or why not?

### Section 4: Partnerships, Coordination, and Accountability (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Explore collaboration with other actors and mechanisms for community engagement.

- » How does your ministry/department coordinate with humanitarian actors, NGOs, and civil society on education in emergencies?
- » Are district or school leaders empowered to make local decisions in response to crises?
- » How are parents, teachers, or youth included in decision-making or consulted during crises?
- » Are there monitoring or feedback mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability?

### Section 5: Reflections and Recommendations (5–10 minutes)

**Purpose:** Gather strategic insights and recommendations.

- » From your perspective, what are the most urgent needs in education for crisis-affected learners?
- » What support (technical, financial, or logistical) would strengthen your ability to respond to emergencies?
- » What one change, at the policy or system level, would make the biggest impact in improving EiE in your country?
- » Are there any lessons from your experience that should inform regional or global policy?

### Section 6: Closing

**Purpose:** End respectfully and capture any final insights.

- » Is there anything else you'd like to share about your department's role, challenges, or achievements in this area?

**Thank the participant warmly. Reassure them their voice is important and will help strengthen education systems in crisis-affected communities.**



# APPENDIX I: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

## GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

### Conducted in collaboration with National Education Coalitions (NECs)

#### Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study about education in times of emergency: such as during conflict, natural disaster, or displacement. This study is being conducted by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and local partners to understand how learners, families, teachers, and communities experience and respond to disruptions in education.

Your participation will help inform policies and advocacy efforts to improve access to inclusive, safe, and quality education for all learners, even in the most difficult circumstances.

#### What Participation Involves

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to join an interview or focus group discussion. The session will last approximately [30–60 minutes]. With your permission:

- » We will take notes during the discussion.
- » We may audio-record the conversation to ensure accuracy.

Recordings will be used only for transcription and analysis, and will be deleted once the research is complete. You will not be personally identified in any report or publication.

#### Voluntary Participation and Your Rights

- » Your participation is completely voluntary. You can decline to answer any question.
- » You may stop the interview or discussion at any time, for any reason, without penalty.
- » You may request not to be recorded or may choose to speak off-record.

#### Confidentiality and Data Protection

- » Your responses will be kept confidential. We will not collect your full name or personal details unless you give specific permission.
- » Any quotes used in reports will be anonymized (e.g., “Teacher, South Sudan” or “Youth participant, Burkina Faso”).
- » Data will be stored securely by the research team and only accessible to authorized personnel.
- » All information will be used for research and advocacy purposes only.

#### Potential Risks and Benefits

There are no direct financial benefits to participating. However, your views will help influence how education in emergencies is supported and improved in your country and globally.

We will avoid sensitive questions and aim to make this experience safe and respectful. If anything makes you uncomfortable, you do not have to respond.

#### Consent

Please indicate your preferences by checking the boxes below:

- |                          |                                                                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I understand the purpose of the research and agree to participate.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I give permission for this session to be audio-recorded.                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I give permission for the researchers to take notes during the session. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I understand that my identity will remain confidential.                 |

If participating in a group, I understand that researchers cannot guarantee that other participants will keep what is said private.

#### Participant Signature or Verbal Consent:

(Or verbal “yes” recorded by researcher; if literacy or formality is a concern)

Date:

Researcher Name:

Location:



## APPENDIX J: CONSENT FORM FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

### GCE Education in Emergencies (EiE) Africa Study

Conducted in collaboration with National Education Coalitions (NECs)

#### Purpose of Photograph Consent

As part of this study, photographs may be taken during observation visits, interviews, and focus group discussions to help document learning environments, community participation, and education-related activities. These images may be used in research reports, presentations, advocacy materials, and publications produced by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and its partners.

**Your participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to be photographed or to request that your image not be used.**

#### How Photographs Will Be Used

- » • Photographs will only be used for educational, research, and advocacy purposes related to this study.
- » • Images will be stored securely and only accessible to authorized research and communications teams.
- » • We will not publish your name or any personally identifying information without your explicit additional consent.

#### Your Rights

- » • You can decline to be photographed.
- » • You can withdraw your consent at any time by informing the research team.
- » • You can ask to review photos that include you before they are used.

#### Consent Options

Please indicate your preferences by checking the boxes below:

- |                          |                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I understand the purpose of the photographs and agree to be photographed.                                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I agree that my photograph may be used in GCE research reports, presentations, and advocacy materials.                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I understand that my name will not be published, and my identity will be protected unless I provide separate permission.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | If participating in a group, I understand that researchers cannot guarantee that other participants or bystanders will not share images. |

#### Participant Signature or Verbal Consent:

(Or verbal “yes” recorded by researcher, if literacy or formality is a concern)

Date:

Researcher Name:

Location:



## APPENDIX K: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER TEMPLATE

**Subject: Request for Permission to Conduct a Research Visit on Education in Emergencies**

**Dear [Recipient's Name],**

I hope this message finds you well.

On behalf of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), I am writing to request permission to conduct a research visit to [name of school or community/region] as part of a multi-country study on Education in Emergencies (EiE). This study is being implemented in close collaboration with [Name of National Education Coalition (NEC)], which serves as our national partner.

The objective of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how communities affected by conflict, disaster, or displacement experience and respond to disruptions in education. The research will explore the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and education officials, aiming to inform policies and practices that strengthen inclusive, safe, and high-quality education during emergencies.

We are kindly requesting permission to:

- » • Visit [name and location of site(s)] between [proposed dates],
- » • Conduct non-intrusive school observations,
- » • Hold voluntary interviews and focus group discussions with community members, teachers, and local officials, and
- » • Work in coordination with school leadership and local authorities to ensure safety, transparency, and minimal disruption to school activities.

All research will follow GCE's ethical standards and data protection protocols. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained from all individuals involved. Findings will be anonymized and shared with relevant stakeholders through policy briefs and national advocacy materials.

We greatly value your support in facilitating this critical initiative and would be grateful for your endorsement and guidance. Please do not hesitate to contact me or our national research team at [insert NEC contact] should you require additional information or clarification.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to the opportunity to work together to advance education in crisis-affected communities.

Warm regards,

**[Your Full Name]**

GCE Consultant – Education in Emergencies Africa Study

| GCE EiE Africa Study | |





In partnership with

