

## »» Education in the context of conflict situations – How we can avoid a "lost generation"

No 22, 16 November 2017



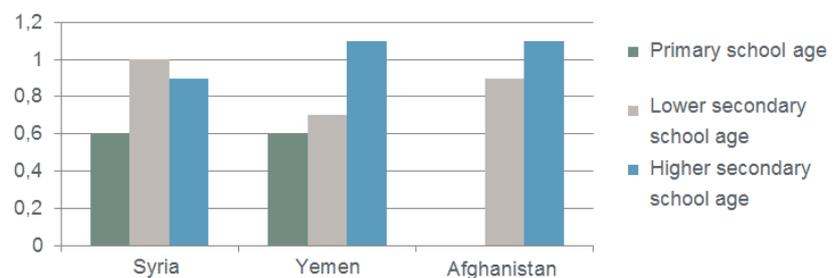
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In 2016, there were 226 violent domestic or international conflicts around the world and over 65 million refugees. Often, children and young people are among the groups that suffer the most severe and longest term effects from conflicts: in addition to suffering physical and mental trauma, children's future prospects also suffer from their inability to attend school, in particular.

### Reasons for a lack of education and its consequences in the context of crisis situations

Schools are often destroyed or repurposed during violent conflicts; teachers are forced to perform military service or are pursued as local representatives of the government. Many children and young people of compulsory school age are refugees (in some instances, without adults to accompany them). Neither the crisis regions nor the refugees' target countries are equipped to provide adequate specialist and psychological support for the children affected. Around 13 million girls and boys around the world are currently unable to attend school as a result of ongoing violent conflicts. The situation in the Middle East is especially critical: in this region alone, almost seven million children are unable to go to school or have never even attended school due to violent conflicts (see Graph 1). The international community is concerned that a generation of children who have never or only briefly attended school is growing up in many of these crisis regions (known as the lost generation). They may lack much of the knowledge needed to rebuild their country and ensure long-term stability after the war. In the countries receiving refugees, the often already weak education systems are put under additional strain from the high number of child refugees – a situation which also has a detrimental effect on the local children in these

Graph 1: Number of children (in millions) who did not attend school in 2016



UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2016): Data Centre Montreal, [www.uis.unesco.org](http://www.uis.unesco.org).

countries. Their own lack of education also intensifies as a result.

Poor access to education has an adverse effect on a person's prospects of finding a job and a secure flow of income. For the economies of the countries affected, this means a huge loss of human resources. In addition to ensuring future prospects, education is also an important factor in providing mental stability in an instable and often dangerous environment.

### Approaches for international development cooperation and humanitarian aid

To avoid the emergence of a lost generation, the initial goal is improve temporary access to education. Key approaches in this area include:

- *reinforcing residual or existing state educational resources* (teachers, transport, classrooms, etc.);
- *where no state structures are in place (e.g. in refugee camps): supporting non-governmental organisations that are active in the education sector* (expanding need-based education services, such as informal education and psycho-social support for children, temporarily co-funding teachers' salaries);
- *acting in a manner that is sensitive to the possibility of conflict*: paying equal

consideration to the needs of refugees and children in neighbouring countries to avoid social tensions between the two groups (the "do no harm" approach);

- *creating modular solutions*: short, stand-alone course units provide an opportunity to bridge gaps in education (e.g. caused by migration), particularly in primary education;
- *promoting practical, vocational education*: focus on short-term training courses and practical skills instead of long-term vocational training programmes.

### Education – An opportunity to avoid violent conflicts

Education is a human right which also applies in environments shaped by violent conflicts. In fragile states, early investment in primary education can be especially rewarding as education has a significant impact on cognitive ability: educated people are more tolerant of others, live healthier and more risk-aware lifestyles and are more likely to be able to improve their standard of living and make their own way out of poverty. Education can therefore reduce potential for escalation and generate long-term prospects for the future. ■

#### Literature:

[Klingholz, R.; Kaps, A. \(2017\): Preventing a lost generation – The role of education in crisis situations. In: KfW – Materials on Development Financing](#)