Exploring Challenges and Promising Approaches for Children with Disabilities in conflict and Crisis situations

Julia McGeown, Inclusive Education Global Specialist, 01/10/18

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Challenges and Constraints in terms of EIE for children with disabilities.

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<u>Education in emergences/ protracted crises:</u>

- **Complex emergencies and protracted crises are preventing more and more children from accessing education and these emergencies often close children's opportunities for education for a lifetime.**

- **4 million school-age children who are refugees, are out of school (UNHCR 2018)**

- **A large proportion of these children are children with disabilities but there is a lack of clear data.**

- **The global estimate is that 1/3 of out of school children are children with disabilities. (Oslo Summit for Education in Development, 2015).**

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What are some of the key challenges for children with disabilities in EiE settings?

Children with disabilities are overlooked in emergency registration systems

Education in emergencies budgets are often not flexible enough to ensure accessible and disability friendly programmes.

It is assumed that making education inclusive in emergency situations demands high human and material resources.

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What is the impact of emergencies on education for children with disabilities ?

Destruction of Facilities

- Existing facilities for the education of children with disabilities such as resource rooms, inclusive schools, specialised equipment and learning materials may be destroyed during an emergency.

Loss of Devices

- Children with disabilities may lose their assistive devices in humanitarian crises and disruption in health services may prevent or delay their replacement. This often prevents participation in education.

Exclusion

- Children with disabilities who need additional support , equipment and assistive devices do not have access to this and are therefore excluded from temporary learning spaces or child friendly spaces.

Protection needs unmet

- Life-saving information and services, such as HIV/AIDS prevention, hygiene, immunization and nutrition and a protective space are therefore denied to many of these children. (unicef 2013)

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What are some of the common reasons given as to why children with disabilities cannot be included?

Parents may hide their children away due to shame or for fear of their own protection (Unicef 2007)

Children with disabilities may be bullied and/ or excluded from child friendly spaces and temporary learning spaces (WRC, 2014)

Teachers often lack capacity and skills to teach children with disabilities and might be afraid to have children with disabilities in their class (HI, 2013)

Adaptations for Inclusive education are not seen as feasible when classrooms are already overcrowded and noisy (IDDC, 2008).

Children with disabilities may be perceived as unable to participate in educational activities even though 80-90% can be educated in regular schools with minor adaptations (UNICEF, 2012)

Many schools and TLS do not have accessible facilities (e.g. classrooms, toilets, playgrounds) and routes to school are not accessible (Unicef 2015)

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Recommendations and Principles to follow…

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International Conventions and Charters

1**. The Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.**

The charter commits endorsing States, UN Agencies, civil society organisations and Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to make humanitarian action inclusive.

2. **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** was adopted in 2006 and so far 161 states have signed and 177 have ratified the convention, with 92 have signed and ratified the optional protocol.

Article 24 relates to the right of all children to an inclusive education, including children with disabilities, and children who are refugees or internally displaced.

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Process related recommendations:

- Collect information on the barriers faced by children with disabilities and their caregivers to access education facilities and information.

- Incorporate issues related to children with disabilities' educational needs into mainstream humanitarian needs assessments (e.g. Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA), Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) and Education in emergencies data collection).

- Include children with disabilities as a specific category of people to be reached in education country/cluster/agency response plans

- Include disabled peoples' organisations alongside the usual stakeholders, to ensure that there is disability inclusive programming within education in emergencies.

- Use the INEE Minimum Standards for Education to ensure genuine learning outcomes and on improved wellbeing for all children, including children with disabilities.

- Use the ADCAP education chapter for simplified guidelines to use in the field.

Budget related recommendations:

- '**Build back better**' so that school buildings are built according to universal design principles (construction guidelines and building standards should be revised) and learning materials, tests and exams are provided in accessible formats.

- Ensure that all funding provided to education in emergencies, and funding that is allocated as part of **mainstream funding** platforms such as " education cannot wait", focusses on the most marginalised children **including children with disabilities**.

- Set aside **budget line for assistive products** and training humanitarian actors involved in education.

- Include educational needs of boys and girls with disabilities and the **barriers to accessing aid** in humanitarian reporting in relation to budgets spent.

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How practical is it to put these recommendations into action?

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Some examples of standards…

- **ADCAP's standards**:

  e.g. Map mechanisms for decision-making about education, such as community education committees, parent-teacher associations, school management committees, the Education Cluster, and other coordination mechanisms.

- **INEE**: The INEE Minimum Standards are the foundational tool used by the Education Cluster to provide a framework to ensure quality education response.

- **Education minimum standard 1** :

  e.g. "*Coordination mechanisms for education are in place and support stakeholders working to ensure access to and continuity of quality (inclusive) education*"

MAP OF HI IE PROJECTS: 2 CASE studies from conflict contexts are now highlighted…

North Africa

- Morocco
- Algeria
- Tunisia

West Africa

- Mali
- Niger
- Senegal
- Guinea-Bissau
- Sierra Leone
- Liberia
- Togo
- Benin
- Burkina Faso

Middle East
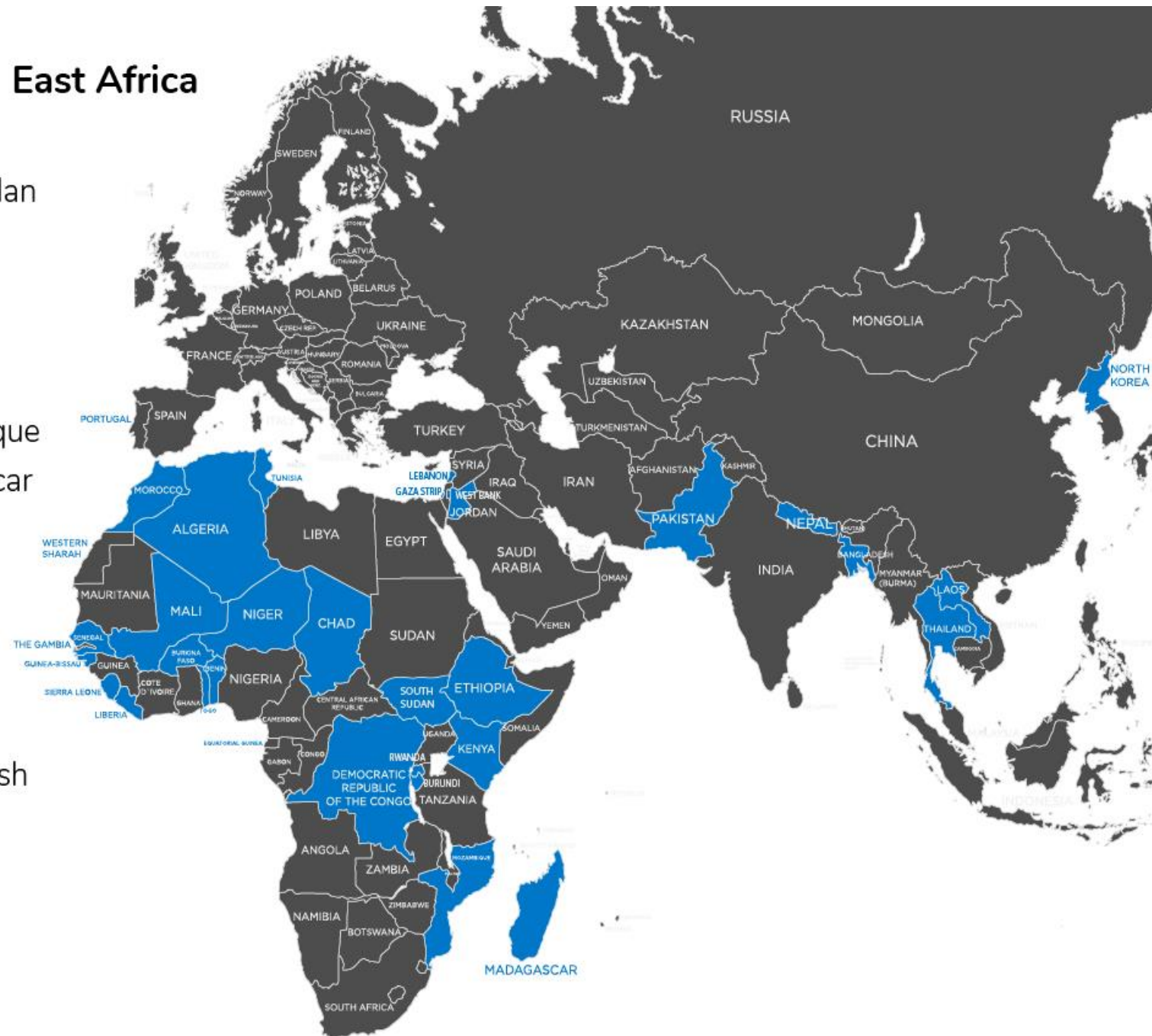
- Lebanon
- Gaza strip (Palestine)
- West Bank (Palestine)
- Jordan

Central and East Africa

- Chad
- South Sudan
- Ethiopia
- DRC
- Rwanda
- Burundi
- Mozambique
- Madagascar
- Kenya

Asia

- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Bangladesh
- DPRK
- Thailand
- Laos

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Gaza: A case study

- After the armed conflict of 2014 in the Gaza Strip, HI focussed on enhancing disability inclusion in mainstream education, through emergency and non-emergency actions.

- A barrier needs assessment was carried out to find out the main barriers preventing children with disabilities accessing education, and disseminated.

- This led to the inclusion of preparedness and response needs for children with disabilities into the cluster contingency plan, including how to identify screen and refer children who may have disabilities, the provision of assistive devices, and the basics of adapted shelters and adapted educational materials.

- The education cluster and its members used the findings during the development of the Strategic Response Plan (SRP) and Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and children with disabilities were then prioritised.

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Cox Bazaar, Bangladesh: A case study

- Schools and education systems need to be responsive to the needs of all children, including children with disabilities and this can be targeted through being an active member of the education cluster and part of curriculum work etc.

- In parallel, specific targeted approaches include support to pilot pre-schools specifically supporting children with disabilities, and training to teachers.

- More general technical and material assistance to 30 schools in both host communities and camps are also provided to ensure teaching and learning environments are inclusive.

- Work with communities and families to promote inclusive early childhood development by training parents, caregivers, teachers, and community focal points and implementing accessibility and inclusive upgrades to child friendly spaces is also part of the approach.

- However there is still a need to strongly lobby for a joint response effort to scale up these type of interventions as they are not enough to cover the whole response….

In conclusion, there are already some promising approaches, but more needs to be done to ensure that the various guidelines are fully implemented and there is true collaboration within the sector, and a focus on inclusion from the outset!

We can learn from our experiences of what works in a development setting although changes will need to be made especially in terms of co-ordination approaches and direct implementation and what works in one context often will not work elsewhere without a thorough local assessment.

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