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Education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises P8\_TA-PROV(2015)0418 B8-1240/2015

► European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2015 on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises (2015/2977(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989 and the Optional Protocols thereto on the involvement of children in armed conflict of May 2000, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography of January 2002, and on a communications procedure of December 2011,
- having regard to the UN Principles and Guidelines on Children associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles) of February 2007,
- having regard to General Comment No 14 (2013) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration,
- having regard to the UN action plan entitled ‘A World Fit for Children’,
- having regard to Article 208 of the Lisbon Treaty establishing the principle of Policy Coherence for Development, requiring that the objectives of development cooperation be taken into account in policies that are likely to affect developing countries,
- having regard to the Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission: ‘The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid’, of 30 January 2008,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 February 2008 entitled ‘A special place for children in EU external action’ (COM(2008)0055),
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict (updated in

2008),

- having regard to Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast),
- having regard to the Nobel Peace Prize received on 10 December 2012 by the European Union and the subsequent reception of the prize money committed to the EU Children of Peace initiative,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 64/290 of 9 July 2010 on the right to education in emergency situations and to the relevant guidelines, including those by UNICEF and UNESCO,
- having regard to the ‘The Dakar Framework for Action’ adopted by the World Education Forum of 26-28 April 2000 and to the UN Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000,
- having regard to the ‘Incheon Declaration. Education 2030’ adopted by the World Education Forum of 19-22 May 2015,
- having regard to the ‘Oslo Declaration’ adopted at the Oslo Summit on Education for Development of 6-7 July 2015,
- having regard to the Oral Question to the Commission on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises (O-000147/2015 – B8-1108/2015),
- having regard to Rules 128(5) and 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas according to UN estimates one billion children live in conflict-affected areas, of whom 250 million are under the age of five and are denied their fundamental right to education; whereas an estimated 65 million children aged 3 to 15 are most affected by emergencies and protracted crises, with the risk of disruption to their education, and approximately 37 million children of primary and lower secondary age are out of school in crisis-affected countries; whereas around half of the world’s out-of-school children live in conflict-affected areas; whereas 87 % of out-of-school children in the Arab States are affected by conflict, and an estimated 175 million children are likely to be affected by natural disasters every year; whereas certain groups, such as poor children, girls and children with disabilities, see their already low prospects decline even further in conflict-affected areas or fragile contexts;

B. whereas almost 10 million children are refugees and an estimated 19 million

children around the globe have been displaced in their country as a result of conflict;

C. whereas every child is first and foremost a child whose rights should be respected without discrimination, regardless of their or their parents' ethnic origin, nationality or social, migration or residence status;

D. whereas education is a fundamental human right and the right of every child; whereas education is vital in order to be able to enjoy in full all other social, economic, cultural and political rights;

E. whereas education forms the basis of responsible citizenship, can transform a society and contribute to social, economic, political and gender equality and is vital to the emancipation of girls and women socially, culturally and professionally and the prevention of violence against women and girls;

F. whereas education is essential for the integration and improvement of living conditions of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs;

G. whereas free primary schooling for all children is a fundamental right which governments pledged to respect under the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; whereas the target for 2015 is to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling; whereas despite some progress in the developing world, this goal is far from being achieved;

H. whereas the Dakar Framework and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have mobilised the international community in favour of universal access to primary education, gender equality and quality education, yet none of these goals will be met by the target date of 2015;

I. whereas in at least 30 countries globally there are attacks on education by state security forces and non-state armed groups; whereas protecting schools from attack and military use by state and non-state armed groups is in line with the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;

J. whereas children, adolescents and young people face increasing threats and are disproportionately affected, especially in fragile states; whereas out-of-school children and adolescents face a higher risk of early marriage and pregnancy, recruitment into armed forces or groups, being trafficked and labour exploitation; whereas in war zones humanitarian aid is often the only way children are able to continue their studies and improve their future prospects, which in turn helps to protect them from abuse and exploitation;

K. whereas the provision of quality education in emergencies does not form part of

every humanitarian response, is focused predominantly on primary education and is still viewed as secondary to the provision of food, water, medical assistance and shelter, and whereas, as a result, children affected by conflict or natural disasters miss out on education;

L. whereas humanitarian aid for education is low, and more generous development aid arrives late or not at all; whereas delivery systems are poorly coordinated, with high transaction costs, and there is a lack of partners with adequate response capacities;

M. whereas quality in refugee education programming tends to be low, with pupil-teacher ratio averages at 70:1 and a high proportion of unqualified teachers;

N. whereas the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and associated targets set out a holistic, ambitious new agenda for education to be achieved by 2030;

O. whereas universal access to high-quality public education, not only basic education but also – and with equal importance – secondary and higher education, is key to overcoming inequalities and achieving the SDGs;

P. whereas the EU will invest EUR 4,7 billion in education in developing countries in 2014-2020, an increase on the EUR 4,4 billion invested in 2007-2013;

Q. whereas the Incheon Declaration notes with concern that conflicts, natural disasters and other crises continue to disrupt education and development, commits to developing ‘more inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems’ and highlights the need for education ‘to be delivered in safe, supportive and secure learning environments free from violence’;

R. whereas the EU Children of Peace initiative provides around 1,5 million children in conflicts and emergencies in 26 countries with access to schools, where they can learn in a safe environment and receive psychological support;

S. whereas innovative, inclusive and holistic approaches to education in emergencies have been developed by several EU partners such as the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with a view to ensuring access to quality education for refugee children affected by ongoing conflicts; whereas this approach combines children’s short-term humanitarian and long-term development needs and includes the development of interactive self-learning materials, psycho-social support, safe learning and recreational spaces, safety and security awareness-raising and capacity-building activities;

T. whereas an estimated USD 8 billion per year is needed to provide educational support to children affected by emergencies, and whereas the domestic contributions

of affected governments leave a global finance gap of USD 4,8 billion for education in emergencies;

U. whereas an increase in development and humanitarian finance is needed to close this gap, as well as higher public spending on education by fragile states; whereas education as a share of government expenditure in fragile states has declined in recent years and remains far from the internationally recommended 20 % benchmark;

V. whereas the Oslo Declaration notes the importance of examining the global aid architecture in seeking to bridge the gap between humanitarian responses and longer-term development interventions in the field of education, and proposes setting up a new platform to this end, as well as creating a dedicated fund or new modality for education in emergencies in time for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016;

1. Stresses the importance of universal high-quality public education as a catalyst for development, which improves the prospects of other interventions in the areas of health, sanitation, disaster risk reduction, job creation, poverty reduction and economic development; highlights education's role as a powerful tool that is necessary in order to give a sense of normality, to raise awareness of rights and to help children, adolescents, and young people overcome trauma, reintegrate themselves into society in the aftermath of conflicts, and acquire the skills needed to rebuild their societies and promote peace-building and reconciliation;

2. Underlines that, over the longer term, quality education can be a critical ingredient in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies, as it can increase children's earning potential, enable them to keep their families healthier and improve their ability to break out of the poverty cycle;

3. Stresses that girls and other disadvantaged children, including disabled children, should never be discriminated against in terms of access to good education in emergency situations;

4. Emphasises the positive role education plays in children's development and well-being, and stresses the importance of ensuring uninterrupted, lifelong learning for young adolescents; believes this will also limit the possibilities for them to become involved with armed groups or engaged in extremism;

5. Recognises the progress made since the adoption of the MDGs, but deplores the fact that the targets set out will not be met in 2015; calls for the EU and its Member States to make these goals the top priority in their internal policies and their relations with third countries; stresses that these goals – especially poverty eradication, universal access to education and gender equality – will only be achieved through the development of public services that are accessible to all; welcomes the new

education agenda set out in the SDGs, and continues to stress the importance of equitable access to quality education for the most vulnerable populations;

6. Notes with concern that progress in education has been slowest or non-existent in conflict-affected countries and in fragile and conflict-affected states, and highlights the importance of strengthening the resilience of education systems in these countries and of ensuring uninterrupted learning when crises strike; stresses, therefore, the need for greater commitment on the part of the EU, the Member States and all other stakeholders involved at various levels, in order to provide instruments to ensure development and widespread education in such crisis-stricken countries;

7. Highlights the fact that millions of children have been forced to become refugees, and stresses that access to education for refugee children is of paramount importance; calls on hosting countries to ensure that refugee children are given full access to education, and to promote as far as possible their integration and inclusion in the national education systems; calls also on the humanitarian and development communities to pay more attention to the education and training of teachers from both the displaced and the host communities, and on international donors to prioritise education when responding to refugee crises, through programmes aimed at involving and psychologically supporting migrant children, as well as promoting learning of the host country's language in order to ensure a higher, more appropriate level of integration of refugee children;

8. Stresses the need to focus on secondary education and vocational training as well as on basic primary education; highlights the fact that young people aged between 12 and 20 have very limited opportunities within refugee communities, while at the same time being primarily targeted for military service and other forms of engagement in armed conflict; cites the example of Afghanistan, where, according to the World Bank, despite its huge working population, only around 30 % of people aged 15 and over are literate and where decades of war have resulted in a critical shortage of skilled labour;

9. Calls on the Member States to develop specific reception schemes for unaccompanied children and single mothers with children;

10. Reminds the Member States that the protection of children and prevention of abuse and trafficking is contingent upon their inclusion in schools and educational programmes, and that provision should be made for well-defined standards for reception, inclusion and linguistic support, as laid down in Directive 2013/33/EU;

11. Urges the Commission and the Member States to support refugee students in transit, also by cooperating with various international organisations;

12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish 'education

corridors' to ensure that students from countries in conflict, in particular Syria, Iraq and Eritrea, are accepted in universities;

13. Calls for the EU and its humanitarian agencies to systematically include education and protection of children in the whole emergency response cycle and to ensure flexible multi-year funds for protracted crises;

14. Welcomes the establishment of the Bekou Trust Fund, the Madad Trust Fund and the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa as effective tools for addressing the divide between humanitarian and development funding in complex and protracted emergencies where political, economic and humanitarian issues are interlinked; calls for the EU and the Member States to include education for children as a priority in allocating resources from EU Trust Funds;

15. Acknowledges the worrying gaps in the education response to emergencies, in particular given that early engagement not only benefits affected children but can also improve the effectiveness of the broader humanitarian response; reiterates its support for keeping schools as safe spaces for children, and stresses in this context the importance of protecting education from attack; calls for the EU and its Member States to commit to supporting the principles of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework and to protecting education from attack and military use in line with the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;

16. Calls for the EU to work with partner countries, other donors, the private sector and civil society to improve educational opportunities for young people in conflict situations and other emergencies, given the crucial role that young people can play in post-conflict stability through their potentially acquired skills for rebuilding infrastructure, basic services, healthcare facilities and educational systems, at the same time reducing the risk of a young, out-of-work population causing social upheaval or slipping back into a vicious cycle of violence;

17. Praises the EU Children of Peace initiative, which seeks to fund humanitarian education projects in emergency situations, and calls on the Commission to scale up this initiative; welcomes the No Lost Generation initiative, launched by a number of donors and humanitarian and development entities, including the EU, with a view to providing access to education for millions of children in Syria and neighbouring countries;

18. Deplores the fact that despite the important role of education in emergencies this policy area received less than 2 % of all humanitarian funds in 2014; hopes therefore that, under the new programme to restructure the distribution of EU funds, funding for child education programmes, including in third countries affected by wars or



general emergencies, can be supplemented and increased;

19. Calls on all humanitarian actors, given the protracted nature of contemporary crises, to include education as an integral part of their humanitarian response and to increase their commitment to education by mobilising the education cluster in the early stages of an emergency and by ensuring that sufficient funds are dedicated to it; invites them to give particular attention to vulnerable groups such as girls, people with disabilities and the poor, to take into account displaced children and young people given refuge by host communities and to give appropriate consideration to secondary education in order not to exclude adolescents from education;

20. Welcomes the growing international attention paid to the subject of education in emergencies and in particular the announcement by the EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management of his objective of dedicating 4 % of the EU humanitarian aid budget to education for children in emergency situations by 2019;

21. Calls on the EU Member States to support the Commission's objective of increasing the share of humanitarian funds devoted to education in emergencies to 4 % of the EU humanitarian aid budget as a minimum investment for ensuring access to quality education for children in emergencies and protracted crises; calls on them also to increase the attention and funding provided to education in their own humanitarian actions, while stressing that this should not be done at the expense of other primary needs; calls for the EU to promote among relevant countries best practices in terms of preparedness and response strategies for supporting education in the event of crises and to assist in related capacity-building, e.g. through budget support programmes;

22. Stresses that new information and communication technologies (ICT) have taken on an increasingly important role in the education sector in emergency situations and can improve the work of operators in such situations, including through e-learning and e-teaching platforms;

23. Stresses that, while an increase in humanitarian funding is necessary, this will not be enough to address the financing gap; calls for the EU and other donors to increase the profile of education in development cooperation in fragile states in order to increase the resilience of national education systems; calls on the Commission and the Member States, as well as other humanitarian actors, to contribute to the reinforcement of universal public education, including secondary and higher education, as a way of coordinating emergency response programming with long-term programming for sustainable development;

24. Calls for the EU to support third-country government commitments to developing national legal frameworks for resilience, prevention and disaster and risk

management on the basis of the International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles programme and to ensuring that capacity in risk management exists across government departments, industry sectors and civil society in order to ensure the return of children to schools;

25. Stresses the importance of the private sector as a potential source of innovative financing for education, in order to bridge the potential gap between the educational services and vocational training provided and prospective job market demands; calls for new alliances and new ways of partnering with the private sector in education processes, which can constitute viable sources of innovation and technological flexibility and can take numerous forms, from the provision of building facilities and electronic devices to e-learning programmes and teacher transport and accommodation;

26. Highlights the fact that education in emergencies and fragile contexts is a concrete area in which humanitarian and development actors need to work together towards linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD); calls on the Commission to develop mechanisms to respond effectively to this in its own activities and those of its partners, and to be involved in the international platform that will create dedicated instruments for education in emergencies for the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016; supports the coordination of existing funds and the establishment of a global financing mechanism for education in emergencies;

27. Calls for the EU and its Member States to promote the issue of education for children in emergencies and protracted crises at the World Humanitarian Summit, ensuring that this theme has an adequate place in the outcome document; calls for them also to promote common standards for a learning framework and the dissemination of best practices on alternative learning modalities, such as self- and long-distance learning materials; stresses that mechanisms, tools and capacities should be developed in order to align education plans and budgets across humanitarian response, recovery/transition and development;

28. Underlines that, in light of the growing number of humanitarian crises and the highest number of displaced people since World War II, the international community should consider education to be a central element of its humanitarian response, as education is a catalyst which can make the overall response more effective and contribute also to the medium- and longer-term development of affected populations;

29. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

Last updated: 27 November 2015

Legal notice