

Conflict And Education: The Impacts

In the big picture of worldwide events, wars have a lasting impact that goes way beyond just when and where the fighting happens. One of the biggest things that suffer during these [conflicts](#) is education, which is crucial for societies to move forward and for people to have better lives. We'll look closely at how conflict and [education](#) are connected to each other and explore the impacts wartorn education systems have on children, societies, and nations.



A student in a conflict area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Source: [UNICEF](#).

How is education impacted by Conflict?

Violent conflict is one of the most important development challenges facing the world today. Following the Second World War, the ([Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26](#)) ensures the right to education without [discrimination](#). Violations and neglect of these rights often occur in

humanitarian crises, especially in conflict-ridden countries. Conflicts can significantly impact education in various ways. Here are some common effects:

Displacement Of Students And Teachers

Displacement caused by conflict compels families to leave their homes, disrupting students' education due to separation from schools or challenges in attendance. In fact, as of the end of 2020, over 23.3 million children under 18 were [internally displaced](#) globally. There were nearly 13 million in primary and early secondary school age and 10.5 million aged 15 to 24.

In conflict zones, disruptions can lead to irregularities in the implementation of educational curricula, affecting the [quality of learning](#). Also, conflicts leads to the [migration](#) or displacement of teachers, resulting in a shortage of qualified educators and negative impacts on the [education system](#).

Increased Illiteracy:

Extended conflicts can contribute to an increase in [illiteracy rates](#) due to disrupted education and constrained learning opportunities. [UNICEF](#) reports that almost 30% of young individuals, totalling 59 million, aged between 15 and 24 in conflict- or disaster-affected countries, are illiterate. Niger, Chad, South Sudan, and Central African Republic are home to the highest illiteracy rates among young people with 76 per cent, 69 per cent, 68 per cent and 64 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds, respectively, unable to read or write.

Safety Concerns

Ongoing conflicts create an unsafe environment for students and teachers, making it difficult for normal educational activities to take place. Between 2020 and 2021, researchers documented over 5,000 attacks on education and instances of militaries using schools and universities. These incidents affected over 9,000 students and educators across 85 countries, resulting in an average of six occurrences per day ([Education Under Attack 2022](#)).

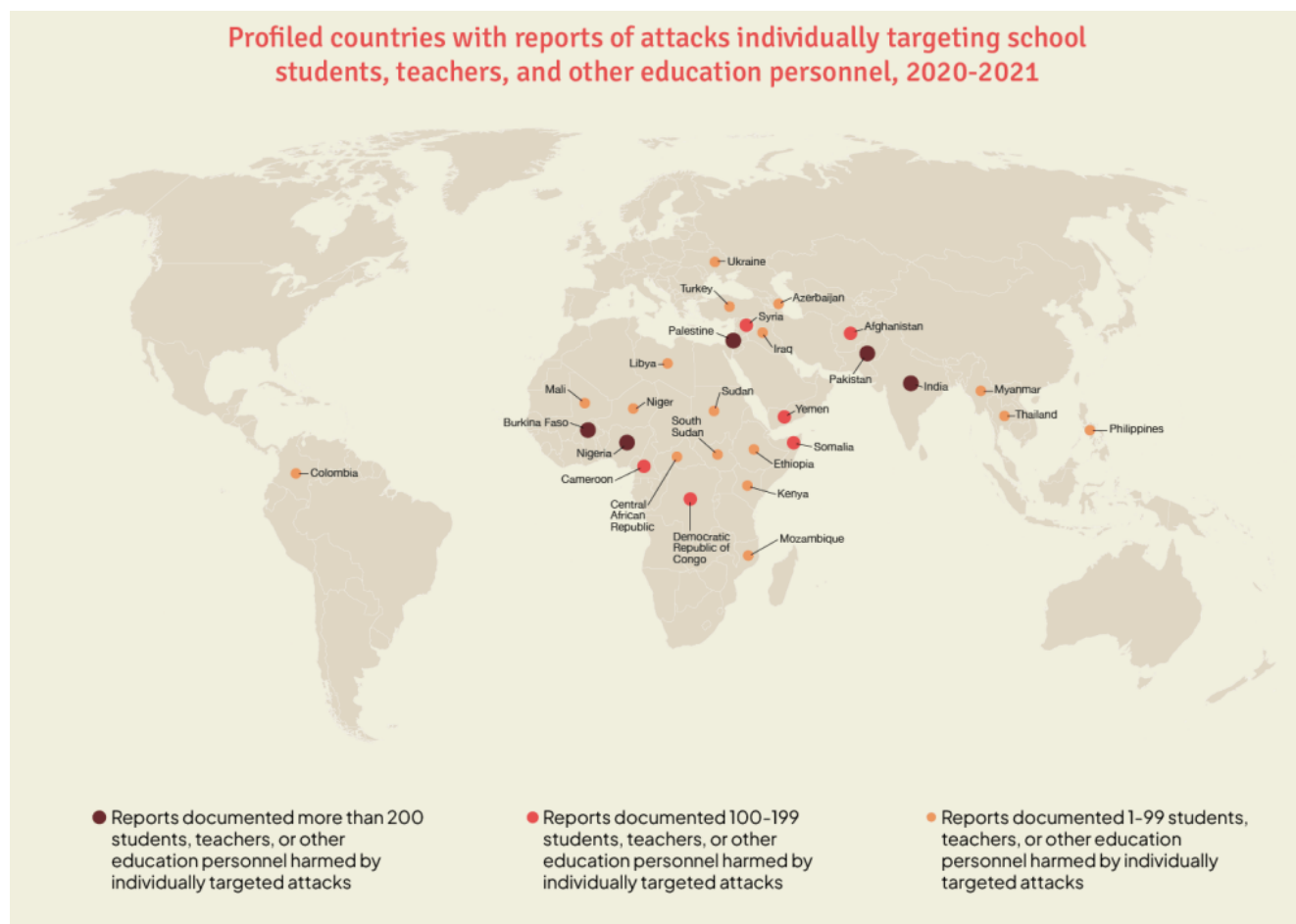
Psychological Impact

Students who are exposed to violence may experience severe [psychological](#)

[effects](#) that impair their ability to concentrate on studying. Conflict adversely impacted student's performance on exams. It can worsen the learning process by lowering the standard of the school environment. Added to that it can make the student feel psychologically distressed.

Disruption Of Access To Education

Conflicts result in the devastation of infrastructure, schools, and [educational facilities](#), posing difficulties for student access. The necessary educational infrastructure becomes susceptible to exploitation by combatant groups. Despite [international agreements](#) mandating the protection of schools, there were over 5,000 violent attacks on educational facilities between 2020 and 2021.



Profiled countries with reports of attacks individually targeting schools.

Source: [Education under attack 2022](#).

Why is it essential that we focus on

Conflict and Education?

Education serves as a catalyst for economic growth and the empowerment of individuals, fostering a healthy life and societal engagement. During conflicts, depriving communities of education can have [severe consequences](#), hindering the path to enduring and sustainable peace. Education acts as a shield for children and families, promoting psychosocial well-being, dignity, and hope. It contributes to economic growth, health, [women's empowerment](#), and community resilience. Establishing inclusive schools equips children with essential skills, preparing them to be pillars of their communities. Moreover, education mitigates the adverse impacts of humanitarian crises, including conflict, crime, and [poverty](#).

Despite the substantial benefits for children, societies, and entire nations, education is often the first service halted and the last reinstated during crises. On average, the education sector receives less than [3 percent](#) of humanitarian aid.

Conflict And Education: Avoiding lost generations

Over the past decade, [education during emergencies](#) has gained prominence in humanitarian discussions. The term broadly defined [refers to](#) the formal and non-formal education provision for children in areas of conflict or natural disasters. The cumulative impact of disrupted education in conflict zones extends to entire generations, often referred to as the ["lost generation"](#). This term captures the consequences of conflicts on young people, including disruptions in education, displacement, and limited personal and professional opportunities.

Prolonged conflicts create barriers to normal childhood experiences, hindering essential skill acquisition and education. Education during an emergency is crucial, saving lives and serving as a key element in child protection strategies. Out-of-school children face greater risks, including violence, [rape](#), and [recruitment into criminal activities](#). Education during conflicts imparts life-saving information, like self-protection from sexual abuse, landmine awareness, [hand-washing](#), and other survival skills necessary in the specific context.

Moving Forward

Addressing the impacts of conflicts on education requires taking a comprehensive and collaborative approach. Key steps include advocating for policy changes, allocating increased humanitarian aid, and funding for education in conflict zones. Added to that, involving local communities in designing initiatives, and investing in teacher training.

Also, establishing safe learning environments, providing [psychosocial support](#), and exploring innovative educational models are essential. On the other hand, we need to improve data collection and develop long-term strategies for sustained impact. Hence, implementing these steps will contribute to mitigating the adverse effects of conflicts on education, and promoting sustainable peace.

achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how they link to Conflict And Education

Conflict and its impacts on education are linked to several of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Key SDGs related to the impact of war on education include:

1. [SDG 1: No Poverty](#). Displacement and disruptions in education can contribute to cycles of poverty; particularly when children are deprived of educational opportunities.
2. [SDG 4: Quality Education](#): War often disrupts access to quality education, hindering progress toward achieving universal primary and secondary education.
3. [SDG 5: Gender Equality](#). Girls may face specific challenges in accessing education during conflict, exacerbating gender inequalities in education.
4. [SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities](#). War can deepen educational inequalities, with marginalised and vulnerable groups facing disproportionate barriers to education.
5. [SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions](#). Ensuring access to education in conflict zones is crucial for building peaceful and just

societies. Hence achieving the goal of sustaining peace.

A Thrivable Framework

At [THRIVE](#), our framework extends beyond sustainability to embrace the concept of “[thrivability](#)”. The [THRIVE Framework](#) examines issues and evaluates potential solutions that can support education and achieve sustainable peace worldwide. The THRIVE platform is scale-linked, values-based, context-based, and science-based, informed by the natural sciences. Register for our Thrivability Matters Webinar Series where we address the challenges of sustainable development. You can follow our informative blog and extensive podcast series. Also, you can [Sign up for our newsletter](#) to receive regular updates.