EDUCATING CHILDREN IN EMERGENCY SETTINGS: AN UNEXPECTED LIFELINE

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"Education is simply the soul of a society
as it passes from one generation to another."
G.K.Chesterton

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Providing educational services for children is a vital intervention during emergencies, chronic crises, and early phases of reconstruction. The spectrum of activities within the sector of Education in Emergencies are wide ranging and include non-formal education, basic literacy and numeracy, cultural activities and creative expressive outlets, sports and recreation, health education, life skills, peace education, teacher training, support to Community Education Committees, youth leadership, civic development, school rehabilitation, vocational training, and capacity building for host governments.

The primary mandate of relief organizations is often limited to assistance programs that are categorized as lifesaving in scope. These initial activities typically involve the direct provision of food, shelter, water, and other essential services. Physical survival is regarded as a humanitarian imperative and all other concerns are relegated to a subordinate status. The implication is that if precious resources were diverted to less immediate realities, somehow people would be allowed to die.

Yet in the majority of today's protracted refugee situations, people are not dying at unusually high rates. Despite the folklore of our work, these crises are more often ***not*** life or death situations. Rather, the predominant experience of refugees is a hopeless and purposeless existence.

> *"Improved children survival rates are not very meaningful if children reach their fifth birthdays but are doomed to lives of misery."* (1)

The stark reality is that the average length of refugee displacement globally is 17 years in duration. (2) It is not uncommon to find a generation of children raised without any access to education among the world's refugee "warehouses". We must shift our obsession from how people are dying to how people are living.

The perverse humiliation of war

According to the World Health Organization, the 20th century was the most violent period in human history. (3) Unrestrained fighting, ethnic violence, and political oppression still ravage over thirty countries around the world. Contemporary warfare, especially since the end of the Cold War, is a particularly brutal conflagration of terror tactics in which insurgents, mercenaries, and non-professional armies – ignorant of or un-chastened by the Geneva Conventions and the rules of war – routinely deny the most basic human rights of civilians caught in the fighting.

Torture, child conscription, mutilation, rape, forced labor, and deliberate starvation are among the arsenal of terrorizing strategies of ruthless fighters. Militias, rebel groups, and malign regimes use violent deportation and forced migration of citizen populations as a deliberate military strategy.

The antecedents to a life in exile in contemporary conflict often disrupt the integrity of family units. Families are split up as parents seek safety in other countries, join fighting forces, or search for work to support their children. The incapacitating debt that uprooted families incur in some conflict-prone

countries like Afghanistan has led to children being used for collateral on loans, girls being sold to feed their families, boys being bonded to merchants, girls being married at very young ages, and children resorting to sexual bartering or "survival sex."

The effects of conflict on children go beyond physical consequences to include psychological as well as social repercussions:

> *"Not only are large numbers of children killed and injured, but countless others grow up deprived of their material and emotional needs, including the structures that give meaning to social and cultural life. The entire fabric of their societies – their homes, schools, health systems, and religious institutions – are torn to pieces."* (4)

Under the current assumptions and paternalistic attitudes that influence the tradition of aid delivery, educational interventions for children and youth are treated as a lower-tier priority. Education in Emergencies is only just beginning to achieve some stature among the spectrum of vital relief interventions.

Children comprise an especially vulnerable group of war-affected populations due to their dependence on adults and on their communities for survival:

> *"Conflict and displacement can present particular threats, such as separation from family, abduction, or recruitment by fighting forces, or exposure to targeted violence or landmines. At the same time, pre-existing threats, such as sexual or gender-based violence, labor exploitation, or malnutrition and disease, may increase."* (5)

The urgent priorities for life-saving assistance distract us - understandably but regrettably - away from the medium to long-term restoration of livelihoods, economic development, education, and psychosocial well-being. Although only an infinitesimal fraction of refugee crises are short-term, temporary and makeshift interventions with relatively short planning horizons are the rule.

> *"Emergencies are internationally interpreted as occasions for swift action, not as opportunities for critical reflection."* (6)

Humanitarian aid is one of the few disciplines where one can actually be criticized for being too focused on long-term outcomes. The crucial intervention of Education in Emergencies struggles for legitimacy among the purveyors of this line of thinking. The current orthodoxy suffers from a hierarchy of assumptions and informal triage that subordinates anything but physical survival.

More than 77 million school-aged children around the world are not in school. Even more astounding is an additional 150 million children who have been forced to drop out of school after less than four years of education due to the pressures of their families' poverty. (7) The world's pledge for universal primary education by the year 2015 is an empty promise.

This problem is even more acute in war-torn countries. According to the Institute of Development Studies, over half of the children and youth who have not completed primary school around the world live in countries affected by armed conflict. Among the many millions of refugee children and adolescents in the world, over one-third are out of school with no hopes of ever seeing the inside of a classroom. (8)

The impact is even greater on girls. There are more girls around the world who don't attend school than there are girls in all of North America and Europe. (9) In rural Africa, only about 30 percent of girls finish primary school. (10) Yet for refugee children – both boys and girls – only 6 percent are enrolled in

secondary education, with even lower numbers among internally displaced children. (11) "*When children's lives are disrupted by conflict, emergency education becomes a protector and a healer.*" (12)

But people are dying

High profile crises are an irresistible call to action for the disaster relief industry. "It's an emergency" becomes the mantra as we readily focus our efforts on the transitory emergency needs of populations in distress. We are compelled by the impression that "people are dying" and the notion that "we have no time."

There is abundant empirical evidence that a long-term view of disaster assistance from the outset results in more effective short and long-term outcomes. Yet we continue to react to each new situation as an emergency, invoking the same tired and beleaguered rhetoric: "Can't you see we're saving lives?"

Physical survival is the *sine qua non* of our work, even when survival in not at stake. Some of the highest-profile crises of the last decade – Bosnia, East Timor, and Kosovo, for example – did not consistently achieve the mortality threshold that qualifies as a complex humanitarian emergency, i.e., one death per 10,000 people per day.

Crude mortality rates have become the absolute index of human suffering. The jargon and ritualized traditions of emergency assistance reinforce the myth of incontestably essential survival interventions. In "Questioning the Solution," the authors admit that, "*clearly, no death statistics entirely reflect the health or quality of life of survivors.*" (13)

Mortality rates, like the canary in the coalmine, are a trailing indicator – the equivalent of evaluating the public health of a community merely through post-mortem examination and autopsies. Yet mortality rates have become the non-negotiable rationale for all that we do. It is the humanitarian bottom line.

The urgent, critical, and sometimes rash ethos of emergency assistance has been encoded into the humanitarian culture and vernacular. We too readily invoke the emergency alibi in the presence of dire circumstances as an excuse for providing only the most basic and rudimentary care in the name of saving lives.

As populations recoil from frightening abuses and grotesque traumatic experiences, aid projects do little to provide an alternative or even temporary reprieve from their bleak and dreary life in exile. The tedious regimen of camp life offers few distractions from the haunting recollections of their suffering and loss. Large-scale, broad-sector approaches to emergency relief merely emphasize material and physical needs.

> *"We thank you for helping us, giving us food, shelter, medicines, but the best that you have done for us was to give our children education. Food and other things we will finish but education will always be there wherever we go."* (father and refugee from Ethiopia, 2003) (14)

A critical gulf remains unbridged as the complicated emotional needs of people who have survived a brutal and confusing war are overlooked. In the remote central highlands of Afghanistan in the winter of 2001, the World Health Organization reported that "*one of the most prevalent reasons patients visit the health center is fear… the greatest health problem facing the people… is psychological distress.*" (15) This report was from Hazarajat, the center of Afghanistan's famine-prone hunger belt. "Many [women and girls] suffer the humiliation of having to beg, yet are punished for roaming the streets without male accompaniment."

In The Selfish Altruist, Tony Vaux states:

> *"Aid that simply provides calories for the stomach and water for the throat is a reduction of people to things…Concern for the person entails concern for the whole being, including a person's state of mind, sense of loss and the devaluation of life…. It is concern for every aspect of a person including their loss of relatives and way of life, their disability, their love of children, their past and their future."* (16)

The monotonous, boring, and uneventful experience of living in a refugee camp is particularly toxic for a child's psychological development. A child's developing mind requires structure, routines, and stimulation for healthy development and the prospect of normality.

Yet in aid work, physiology consistently trumps psychology. The tools of the trade are trucks, warehouses, and sophisticated communication gear. Some relief workers have cynically referred to the habitual commodity-driven aid culture as "truck and chuck" programs administered by "boys with toys". Refugees are treated like cattle where feeding, watering, and population-based interventions are prioritized for the herd.

The field of humanitarian assistance is compartmentalized in such a way that our attention is focused on immediate lifesaving measures and readily quantifiable indices like morbidity and mortality rates.

Tyranny of the urgent

Aid workers' strategies for coping with human suffering, coupled with the short attention spans of the public and donors alike, drive the development of this short-term thinking. Who can resist the allure of dramatic, immediately tangible, and quick-impact emergency interventions? The emotional pressure borne by aid workers in the face of staggering human suffering is considerable. The cries for help are shrill, and relief workers have an insatiable personal commitment to alleviate human suffering. Yet invoking this life or death hierarchy seems to run counter to our dedication of providing refugees with what is truly the most appropriate intervention.

Economic development, education, and personal dignity are dismissed because "lives must be saved." Longer-term considerations are somehow seen at odds with the frontiersman spirit of disaster relief. This neglects the harsh reality of life in exile: population displacements due to political upheaval and conflict can last for decades.

On the occasions that we are scrutinized for shoddy craftsmanship, we rebuff outsiders. They do not bear witness to the struggles of relief work, and thus have no right to critique those of us who do. As observed in one study of aid workers in crises, "the *'if you haven't been there, then you cannot understand'* attitude, if unchecked, can reinforce... a fearful, self-referring isolation which puts its members beyond criticism, and their work above analysis." (17)

At times we conspire in this drama through the emotional appeal of our public messages. The portrayal of suffering is presented as short-term, acute crises that are amenable to financial pledges and the charity of Western do-gooders. This perpetuates the action-oriented, anti-intellectual culture of emergency work. Instead of investing in the underlying vulnerabilities of a situation, we focus on shortsighted relief strategies that can, inadvertently, do more harm than good. (18)

In this culture of urgency it is no wonder that Education in Emergencies had to clamor for a legitimate place as a stand-alone cluster along side Health, Nutrition, Water & Sanitation, and other components of

relief work within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Cluster Approach. Yet this is the most significant reform of the humanitarian system in over 30 years.

By reacting to each new crisis as an emergency, we miss the opportunity for external aid to be catalytic and exponential in rebuilding refugees' lives and livelihoods. This does not have to be the case. By recognizing Education in Emergencies as one of the pillars of humanitarian assistance and respecting the codification of Minimum Standards by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (19) as the professional culmination of our guild, we take the first step toward minimizing the urge to react reflexively with short sighted imperatives.

Ask them what they need

In our more fallible moments, the craftsmanship of aid work has been criticized for conforming to three misguided presumptions: "*all aid is good, one size fits all, and we know what's best"*. This overreaction of paternalism by charities to people in distress seems to imply that the recipients lack adaptive, innovative, and competent survival instincts.

Despite the overwhelming reality of capability and competence among war-affected communities, some relief programs have been described as, "*the last bastion of the ultra-paternalistic approach to aid and development. It is hard to think of another area where the blinkered nonsense of the 'we know what is best for them' approach survives so unchallenged.*" (20)

This assumption defies the reality that almost all communities affected by disaster and war organize quickly during a crisis, readily identify representative leadership, invoke indigenous altruism and their own legacies of extending help to their community, and can readily delineate clear needs of what they require to recover.

The presumption that underlies the traditional "needs assessment" is that people are "needy." Rather than presuming that refugees and displaced people are passive, helpless, and needy, practitioners of aid should conduct *capacities assessments*. The assessment of a population should include the community's capabilities, assets, and ambitions as part of the evaluation. Aid workers should strive to deliberately involve refugees through the entire planning cycle of a program.

In the conclusions of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action Annual Review 2002, participation and capacity building were still found to be problematic:

> *"Facilitating community participation in planning and decision-making continues to be problematic, no examples of systematic good practice were found in this year's reports.... The evaluation team found very little evidence of beneficiary participation in the assessment and programme design phases… beneficiary participation was largely limited to the 'we provide the materials, you do the work' approach."* (21)

It appears that despite our devotion and focus on assisting populations in extremis, we are insincere when it comes to asking their opinion and respecting their response. This oversight is brought to light in the countless assessments of displaced populations where refugee leaders specifically identify education and schooling as a priority need for their communities.

Within the maelstrom of destruction and deprivation, refugees instinctively develop their own strategies for their families to survive. Unexpectedly the lifeline they often reach for is education. Some refugees have even traded food in order to afford schooling. Atuu Waonaje was fifteen years old when he grabbed his younger brother by the hand and fled the Democratic Republic. Waonaje recalls, "To pay for

school I had to sell some of the food we received from the World Food Program, even though it wasn't enough to survive." (22)

The outside observer might be struck by the apparent contradiction: humanitarianism's hierarchy, comprised of experts and professional aid workers from wealthy nations, develops policies and approaches that guarantee survival of the body while aid recipients struggle to preserve their minds and the souls of their societies. In Atuu Waonaje's case, he knew the value of education. Eventually Waonaje learned and then taught English. While in secondary school himself, he founded the Center for Youth Development and Adult Education. The internationally recognized Center now has forty-four teachers and conducts classes and workshops in subjects ranging from social issues and health education to occupational skills and basic literacy.

To any experienced aid practitioner it comes as no surprise that education and schooling dominate the conversation when establishing a presence in a camp or settlement. Education is so vital to communities that even during high-profile emergencies, recipients often identify support for schooling as the priority intervention. In many cases the demand by refugee leaders for children's education can exceed requests for food, water, medicine, and even shelter.

During the famine in Afghanistan in the winter of 2001-2002, when village leaders' requests for education were denied by Western aid groups, whose agenda favored food supply and other commodity distributions, community leaders then requested that teachers be categorized as the "most vulnerable" for the priority rationing of food parcels. Education was so important to them that they wanted to make sure that teachers didn't leave their communities in search for food, wage labor, or other means of sustenance.

In most countries, school teachers are respected as authorities and they are often sought out as highly regarded sources for advice in their communities. In Afghanistan, when asked what they want to be when they grow up, most children readily respond that they would like to be a teacher, a doctor, or an engineer. An educated person occupies a high place in the totem of most societies, not just in Afghanistan's social hierarchy.

> The instinct for people to enshrine education as a community priority is also a notable feature among Chechen displaced families. Many Chechens had abruptly fled their homes in the early summer of 1999 when most children had only sandals on their feet. With the harsh winter approaching, the International Rescue Committee distributed a large consignment of children's boots in several displaced camps.
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> During a follow-up visit to the camps when snow was on the ground, the IRC staff were perturbed to find children still barefoot or wearing sandals. The families readily produced the children's boots for inspection, but when asked why the boots were still in their original wrappers, the children explained that they were saving their new footwear for the first day of school.

During an assessment mission in Iraq in 2003, the International Rescue Committee was exploring the feasibility of a small community grant program for displaced communities. Despite the austere and deprived circumstances that many of the displaced people found themselves in, communities consistently identified "building a school" when asked what they would do if they were awarded a $5,000 rehabilitation grant.

In May of 2000 during a survey of displaced camps in Maluku Islands, an archipelago in Indonesia, leaders of the displaced centers repeatedly requested "schools for our children" as the primary need in their community. Despite the lack of clinics, latrines, wells, and other relief commodities – the traditional preoccupation of aid workers – communities identified education as their number one priority.

Several relief agencies in West Africa have a longstanding tradition of educational support in displaced and refugee camps throughout the region. In many of these settings, the work of international aid groups has been to merely augment the efforts that were already initiated by displaced communities on their own. In several camps, community members had efficiently formed Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). The PTAs identified abandoned buildings and quickly established makeshift schools. These PTAs approached relief organizations for support such as desks and chairs, school supplies, books, teacher stipends, and roofing material. The school system arose spontaneously among the displaced communities, and volunteer teachers were quickly identified among the camp's population.

Sometimes following a large-scale bulk distribution of commodities in refugee camps, it is not surprising to find that recipients immediately sell or trade their cooking pots, itchy wool blankets, and flimsy shelter material to barter for school supplies. For sure in West Africa no one is at risk of adverse climate exposure but the dreary and hopeless camp settings imperil children who are raised with no sense of hope, optimism, or prospects of a better future.

Who are we helping?

In contemplating priorities of intervention within the spectrum of aid projects, it is crucial to scrutinize the age-demographic of the populations that we serve. In most of the developing world, in particular sub-Saharan Africa, as much as half the population is under the age of 18. This peculiar skewing of age and the significant prevalence of youth is even more pronounced in forcefully migrated populations. Many adults - men in particular - have been killed, joined fighting forces, or have been forced to separate from their families to seek wage labor or personal safety. A refugee camp is a young place; it is overwhelming populated by children. We cannot afford to let this reality elude us in the design of relief programs. That is an inexcusable oversight.

Assumptions, traditions, and ill-informed mindsets undermine the vital position that Education in Emergencies should occupy within the relief guild. Although our profession has become enamored with "evidence-based" interventions, we often miss the very intervention that our beneficiaries are requesting. This has led to a misdiagnosis of their condition and a misinterpretation of the remedies.

A woman who had fled Darfur into Chad in 2004 offered an elegant observation on the importance of schooling in her society. She remarked:

> *"We had to leave behind all of our possessions. The only thing we could bring with us is what we have in our heads, what we have been taught – our education. Education is the only thing that cannot be taken from us."* (11)

Considering the precarious and protracted limbo that defines the life of a refugee, this insightful woman is instructing us that one of the most sustainable interventions we might provide is, in fact, education.

It is imperative that relief practitioners respect the appraisals by the very recipients of our services; they are not the object of our work but rather the subject. The current configuration of liability in the humanitarian enterprise is an upward accountability to the donors who provide financial support, rather than a downward accountability toward the people who are served. As a possible solution, "*Mandatory beneficiary satisfaction surveys are proposed as a means of improving monitoring systems and making programs more responsive to the needs of affected populations.*" (21)

In a provocative challenge to the relevance and quality of programs provided by the International Rescue Committee, the former CEO, Reynold Levy, challenged his staff by asking, "*If you gave refugees the money, would they buy your services?*"

Where's the evidence?

Education is a basic human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Refugee Convention and related Protocols, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement, and the Geneva Conventions.

Alan Farstrup of the International Reading Association stated in a letter that the education of women and girls is at the root of strong societies:

> *"Educated women and girls are empowered to ensure their children get the best education and medical care. They understand the value of good nutrition and lifestyles that provide physical, mental, and emotional health. Education for all citizens is one of the best defenses against the epidemics of sexual exploitation, child trafficking, child labor, and AIDS."*

In many of the bleak and hopeless refugee camps around the world, the hazards facing youth are increasingly pernicious. Boredom and the hopeless prospects for the future can hardly compete with the potential excitement of joining their peers in rebel militias.

There are as many as 300,000 child soldiers around the world functioning not only as combatants but as sentries, cooks, sex slaves, and porters. The charm of purposeful and energetic activity in an otherwise stale environment is irresistible. Girls and young women are also lured by the possibility of getting their basic needs met as well as having a sense of belonging that conscription into the multitude of female roles that an insurgency or rebellion can offer.

In a situation of refuge, emergency education programs have demonstrated a measurable decrease in the number of minors conscripted into fighting forces in conflict settings. In November 1998, the Oslo/Hadeland conference on child protection claimed that:

> *"Experience shows that education has a preventive effect on recruitment, abduction, and gender based violence, and thereby serves as an important protection tool."* (23)

Adolescence is "*a time of vulnerability with the uncertainties and turbulence of physical, mental, and emotional development*" and accounts for the susceptibility to recruitment in fighting forces. (24) We are forced to accept the difficult truth that many children join armed groups voluntarily rather than through force by abduction or coercion. Together, violence, poverty, and lack of educational opportunity play a pivotal role in seducing youth to join belligerents in a war to which they are in fact victims.

The lure of structure, purpose, and a vague promise of future prosperity are substantial incentives to abandon the dreary life in a refugee camp. When Socrates was given a choice - death or exile - he chose death because he knew that 'a refugee dies many deaths' and he drank the Hemlock potion that he considered a desirable alternative to the interminable existence of being cast away.

The paucity of options available to refugee youth who have lost their country, family integrity, and future orientation can make illicit activities and other alternatives such as a criminal lifestyle more tempting. Here again, education can be both preventive and remedial. Victor Hugo is quoted as saying "*He who opens a school door, closes a prison.*"

The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted that if you "*educate the women in a society and there will be no need to build prisons.*" In the Bahai faith, there is a maxim that contends that "*if you have money to educate only one child, you educate the girl child.*" In the United States, the single most predictive factor leading to criminality is low maternal education. (25) There are more African-American men in prison at this time in the United States than there are in college. (26)

Education is a key determinant of income. Each single year of a girl's primary education correlates with a 10 to 20% increase in a woman's wages later in life. (7) This contributes a dramatic illustration of the potential of educational remedies for global poverty. Yet almost two-thirds of children excluded from primary school are girls. (9) Not only do educational opportunities increase the earnings of individual women but education also increases women's participation in their country's labor force.

Education is essential for the development of competitive economies and it is also indispensable in the formation of democratic societies. Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, stated (9):

> *"There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls. If we are to succeed in our efforts to build a more healthy, peaceful, and equitable world, the classrooms of the world have to be full of girls as well as boys."*

An educated and well-informed population is the raw ingredient for civic engagement, good governance, and the dynamic exchange between society and its leaders in a thriving democracy. This is a crucial component for many of the world's most fragile states.

> *"Investment in education has a positive impact on social reform and transformational processes. There is a significant correlation between higher rates of school enrollment and a lower risk of recurrence of civil war."*(27)

Can education save lives?

In trying to assert its relevance among the hierarchy of relief interventions, some emergency education practitioners have maintained that although "education might not save lives, education does save minds." This doesn't go far enough.

Education is much more vital than that. Each year of a girl's schooling results in a 5 to 10% reduction in infant death. Education results in fewer and healthier children. In David Werner's "Questioning the Solution," he noted that:

> *"Maternal education is clearly associated with children's mortality, in that a child's probability of dying is inversely related to the mother's years of schooling. Maternal education in one of the strongest socioeconomic factors associated with children's survival."* (13)

A revealing report issued by the International Save the Children Alliance observes that reaching maturity without basic literacy skills and rudimentary hygiene awareness "can lead to a life of grueling work and an early death."

> *"Babies born to mothers with no education are twice as likely to die as those born to mothers with three years or more of primary education."* (8)

A useful aphorism of global public health observes that there is no such thing as a "tropical disease"; there are only diseases of poverty and ignorance. One of the most important health interventions in a refugee camp does not take place at the desk of a health care provider but rather in the waiting room of the clinic. Many health centers and clinics organized by international aid groups exploit the captive audience of the waiting area for "health education animators" to impart lively lessons on healthy behavior like hand-washing, clean water handling, sanitation, and other crucial lifesaving lessons.

Not unlike Western industrialized countries, healthy behavior has a greater impact on morbidity and longevity than any pill, injection, or clinical intervention. One of the most potent remedies that we administer in our clinics in refugee camps is education, hygiene awareness, simple prevention strategies for common illnesses, and the promotion of healthy behavior.

Education in emergency settings is also a useful forum for disseminating vital survival information such as awareness of landmines and unexploded ordnance, tolerance and conflict resolution skills, and even basic rumor control.

Education and child-spacing

Many uprooted families, in order to increase the chances of survival, make the difficult decision to have increasingly more children as this becomes their only form of social welfare. The inevitable loss of children as a result of high infant mortality rates forces some families to have even more offspring.

Education offers more alternatives to girls and young women in all societies and exerts a particularly striking role in determining family size. Extending a girls' schooling has been proven to delay marriage and childbearing. (28) In most developed and developing countries, prolonging the opportunities for education decreases population growth. According to a 1995 report by the United Nations, education has a direct correlative effect on fertility levels whenever it is extended beyond seven years for girls. (28) In other words by increasing the number of years of maternal education, the number of children in a family decreases.

This correlation is even more dramatically illustrated in the United States. The highest fertility rates are among poorly educated African-American girls while African-American women with graduate degrees have the least number of children of any demographic in the United States. (29)

For many women and girls around the world, pregnancy and childbirth are life-threatening events. More than half a million girls and women die each year during pregnancy and childbirth. Ninety-nine percent of these deaths occur in developing countries. (30)

Correlations of family size with years of girls' schooling make a compelling case that education has an indirect but considerable effect on child-spacing. Among refugees and displaced people, this is a matter of life and death. Tribal peoples of the Darfur region of Sudan have an expression that attests to this: "*A woman who is pregnant has one foot in the grave.*" The routine obstetrical complications of pregnancy and childbirth in these impoverished environments can be deadly.

The State of the World's Girls 2007 by Plan International reported that (9):

> *"Worldwide, some 14 million girls and women between the ages of 15 and 19 – both married and unmarried – give birth each year. That is 40,000 every day. Pregnancy is a leading cause of death for young women aged 15 to 19 worldwide, with complications of childbirth and unsafe abortion being the major factors."*
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> *"Girls aged 15 to 19 are twice as likely to die in childbirth as those in their twenties. Girls under age 15 are five times as likely to die as those in their twenties."*

A recent UNICEF study revealed that a girl in southern Sudan has a greater probability of dying in pregnancy or childbirth than completing primary school: a girl's chances of dying from the complications of pregnancy or childbirth are about 1 in 9 in southern Sudan; her chances of completing primary school are 1 in 100.

> *"The expansion of female secondary education may be the best single policy for achieving substantial reductions in fertility."* (31)

One can only imagine the dangers in a refugee camp where the fertility rates are generally greater than in the regions from where these refugees have fled. It is estimated that as many as 25% of girls and women of reproductive age in a refugee camp are pregnant. When you consider that about 15% of all human pregnancies – among any society in the world – routinely result in obstetric complications, a simple numerical calculation can reveal the dangers that await girls with poor access to health care and little opportunity for education.

If one were to consider the impact in a settlement of 90,000 displaced people, such as Kalma camp in South Darfur, the lethality of the situation becomes obvious. Opportunities for education can reduce pregnancy rates. Controlling pregnancy rates reduces death due to obstetrical complications. From this perspective, education can be lifesaving.

Might does not make right

In spite of the overwhelming evidence that education promotes stable, functioning, and prosperous democracies, the total annual contribution for global education from the United States prior to September 11, 2001 was not even enough to build 20 American high schools. (32)

This is a particularly disturbing statistic when one considers the importance of healthy, educated, and pluralistic societies in the Middle East to the security of the West. Yet the United States has a relatively modest literacy initiative in several Middle East states and makes only token contributions to education and basic schooling in others.

The U.S. government spent more money in one minute of Cruise Missile attacks in 1998 in Afghanistan than they had contributed over the previous 10 years for educational development in that country. There hadn't been a formal education system in all of Afghanistan in over two decades. It is a cruel irony that the very first U.S. soldier killed in Afghanistan was shot by a 14-year old Afghan sniper. (33)

It should become increasingly clear that the victory against terror will not be won on the battlefield. The enemy is not terrorism; the enemy is ignorance and poverty. An effective protocol for peace must include education and development. Terrorism is a symptom of profound cultural and ideological misunderstanding. It is fear of the unknown, contempt for foreign ideas, and paranoia born of ignorance. According to Nelson Mandela, "*Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.*"

Education and intercultural awareness are critical in changing attitudes, opening people to mutual understanding, and pluralistic ideas. We can never underestimate the danger of ignorance. It is the underdeveloped and unenlightened society that nourishes intolerance and is vulnerable to radicalization and demagoguery. In this war, the pen is far mightier than the sword.

Skills for critical thinking, developed through transformative educational programs, can encourage students to question commonly held assumptions, ethnic exclusion, and malign societal norms. The uninformed and unquestioning mind is susceptible to poisoning by the twisted views of ruthless and persuasive demagogues.

The former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, stated that, "*The only way you're going to knock out this terrorism eventually is not just through force of arms but through force of ideas.*"

It costs approximately $50 to $100 a year to educate a child in a developing country. (34) When one considers the colossal expense of the war on terror, the question is not how can we fund education but rather how can we afford not to? Funding for education is not just a moral issue, it is a question of national interest and global peace and security.

"*If we are going to win this war against terrorism, we have to be willing to invest in the lives and livelihoods of the people of the developing world*" pronounced Senator Diane Feinstein in front of the 107th Congress following the events of September 11th. Yet the United States allocates only 3 percent of its development assistance to educational programming. (8)

Education in Emergencies: A Lifeline

The provision of structured routines and educational programs creates an environment where a child can reestablish a sense of normality, predictability, and purpose. Attendance in a quality educational forum not only provides opportunities for constructive engagement with peers but also creates a reality that is distinct from the traumatic losses and deprivations that led to the displacement.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee warned that "*donor priorities have moved away from funding longer-term development needs to a concentration on disaster relief. This has created a situation where humanitarian assistance is forced to focus on life saving activities and meeting immediate emergency needs.*" (35)

In order to challenge the short sighted assumptions that impede the legitimacy of Education in Emergencies among the arsenal of vital relief interventions, we must confront the institutional pressures that drive this phenomenon. In 2004, only about 1.5% of the total global humanitarian pledges went to education programs. (2)

In 2001, when only 900,000 students were enrolled in schools throughout Afghanistan, a total of $250 million was spent on education. Now in 2007, with almost 6 million students enrolled in schools in Afghanistan, there is only $80 million available for education.

Of the meager funding for global education initiatives, donors tend to apportion less funding to the countries that need it most. Official development donors allocate proportionately higher funding to middle-income countries (49 percent) than low-income countries (33 percent), and even less (18 percent) to conflict-affected countries. (8)

International financial support for educational programming should be available at the onset of a crisis. Learning environments should be secured early in a crisis that can support the physical and emotional well-being of children and adolescents uprooted by conflict or disasters. Integration and recognition of the validity of both refugee students and refugee teachers must be promoted in host countries. The *INEE's Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises, and Early Reconstruction* (19) should be the international benchmark for measuring the success of this crucial intervention for children and adolescents affected by war and disasters.

Conventional short-term funding cycles as well as lack of objective assessments of what refugees need continue to promote knee-jerk responses to crisis. To alleviate these short sighted traditions, we must work with major donors to adopt multi-year funding cycles and avoid the crisis-driven ethos that currently permeates the humanitarian culture.

Only when we examine the assumptions, attitudes, and policies of international assistance will we be able to advance a culture of critical reflection and sincere analysis within the aid community. Education in Emergencies is a lifeline for children and youth imperiled in a bleak and interminable exile. Ultimately we must be forced to ask ourselves: are we prolonging life or are we just postponing death?

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