

Building Peace and Security Through Education

Education is a critical building block for the development of an inclusive, democratic society and must be a central component of U.S. efforts to promote global security. Today, one out of every three children in conflict-affected states is not in school.ⁱ Without an education and hope for the future, the chance for long-term stability is threatened.

Children are in war, not school. In 2008, the UN estimated that more than 250,000 children remained in the ranks of armed forces or groups.ⁱⁱ

Education promotes peace and can foster the possibility of a stable future. Education nourishes peace. It can encourage conflict resolution, tolerance, human rights and citizenship. It can reduce both poverty and inequality, and lays the foundation for countries which are prosperous and well governed. Across society, every year of schooling decreases a male's chance of engaging in violent conflict by 20 percent.ⁱⁱⁱ

Schools are centers of reconciliation. Research on primary education in Rwanda shows that schools are among the major influences on identity and attitudes toward the other — both in the lead-up to conflict and in terms of reconciliation and peace-building.^{iv}

Conflict and poverty often go together. Of the world's 20 poorest countries, 16 have suffered a major civil war in the last 20 years.^v

Education helps fight poverty and spur economic growth. Education is a prerequisite for short- and long-term economic growth and stability: No country has achieved continuous and rapid economic growth without at least 40 percent of adults being able to read and write. And just one additional year of primary schooling adds approximately 10 percent to a person's wage.^{vi} Primary education allows people to plan and hope for a future in which they can provide for their families.

Education spurs democracy. People of voting age with a primary education are 1.5 times more likely to support democracy than people with no education.^{vii} Countries with higher primary schooling and a smaller gap between rates of boys' and girls' schooling tend to enjoy greater democracy, and democratic political institutions (such as power-sharing and clean elections) are more likely to exist in countries with higher literacy rates and education levels.^{viii}

Education offers an alternative to extremism. The 9/11 Commission Report stresses the link between strong U.S. leadership against extreme poverty and creating security: "America and Muslim friends can agree on respect for human dignity and opportunity. To Muslim parents, terrorists like Bin Laden have nothing to offer their children but visions of violence and death. America and its friends have a crucial advantage — we can offer these parents a vision that might give their children a better future.... That vision of the future should stress life over death: individual educational and economic opportunity."^{ix}

Building Peace

"After conflict, young people must be educated about their human rights. To attain peace and retain it is the most important thing after conflict. With education, they know that ballot must be considered instead of bullet."

Boy, >21, Sierra Leone. UNICEF e-newsletter, Young People in Conflict and Recovery: Untapped Potential. October 2005.

Schools are under attack. The number of attacks on school, students, and staff nearly tripled in Afghanistan from 2007 to 2008, up from 242 to 670.^x This instability prevents parents from sending their children to school and undermines the long-term impact of attempts to create a peaceful Afghanistan.

Long-term stability in fragile states begins with education: The Center for American Progress notes that “A close look at the many problems facing Yemen reveals that Yemen’s notoriously inadequate education system should be a primary point of focus for the United States....The Middle East is already vulnerable to extremist ideology, and its large, young, and uneducated population magnifies these vulnerabilities. The United States must create a long-term strategy that results in a capable, educated Arab population. This approach will require more than building schools and sending textbooks. Yemen, and the region, is in need of an education overhaul that must begin with training well-educated teachers.”^{xi}

Education aid for conflict-affected states remains too low. Although more than half of the world’s out of school children live in fragile and conflict-affected states, less than half of basic education funding is directed to these states.^{xii}

Fighting Back

"We, the children in Côte d'Ivoire, want the war to stop now so that all the children can go back to school," said Awa loudly and clearly into the radio and television microphones. "It's our right!"

Just 12 years of age, Awa was speaking at an event to promote the Back to School campaign in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. An estimated one million children of primary-school age had their schooling brutally interrupted by the crisis that began in September 2002. Another 250,000 children of secondary-school age were affected. When a school is 'child-friendly', children who attend the school are better protected against violence, discrimination and abuse. They are also less likely to become involved in conflicts themselves.

Awa and all too many other children affected by crises around the world need education and play to bring stability, development and fun back into their lives. And, as Awa stressed, these things are not just a benefit. They are a right.

UNICEF, Voices of Youth, Awa's Story.

ⁱ Save the Children, “The Future is Now: Education for Children in Countries Affected by Conflict,” 2010, p. 1. Available from

http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/what_we_do/rewritethefuture/resources/publications.html

ⁱⁱ UNESCO. Education Under Attack 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ Save the Children. September 2009. <http://www.savethechildren.org/newsroom/2009/rtf-threeyears.html>

^{iv} The Canadian Consortium on Human Security. Elisabeth King. *Policy Brief: The Human Security Impact of Education in Rwanda.*

^v Save the Children. Rewrite the Future. Website.

http://www.savethechildren.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=764&Itemid=446&lang=en. Accessed June 17, 2010.

^{vi} Colclough, Christopher, Geeta Kingdon and Harry Anthony Patrinos, “The Pattern of Returns to Education and its Implications,” Research Consortium on Education Outcomes and Poverty, Policy Brief 4, April 2009.

^{vii} Global Monitoring Report 2009.

^{viii} World Bank. Education and Development. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099080118171/EducationBrochure.pdf>

^{ix} What to Do? A Global Strategy.” National Commission on Terrorist Attacks on the United States. http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report_Ch12.htm

^x UNESCO. Education Under Attack 2010.

^{xi} The Center for American Progress. Schools Not Bombs: **Long-Term Stability in Yemen Begins with Fixing Education. 25 February 2010.** http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/02/yemen_education.html. Accessed June 17, 2010.

^{xii} Save the Children, “Last in Line, Last in School,” 2009, p. vi. Available from http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/what_we_do/rewritethefuture/resources/publications.html