



#FuturesOfEducation
LEARNING TO BECOME



UNESCO-NORRAG

“The Futures of Education in
emergencies and protracted crises”

Online Consultation

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The Futures of Education in emergencies and protracted crises

1. Introductory remarks

This initial segment of the programme featured a series of short presentations to set the stage and the context for this Education in Emergencies (EiE) futures scenarios exercise. [Moira V. Faul](#), Executive Director of NORRAG, and [Vincent Defourny](#), Director of UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office, welcomed participants and reinforced the importance of EiE to education and other development and humanitarian actors in Geneva and worldwide. Next, [Marie Brüning](#), Education Advisor of the Swiss Development Cooperation Department gave a call to action to increase financing for education that puts Human Rights at the centre of achieving the SDGs, and in particular for children affected by conflicts who need protection and consideration of their health and wellbeing. Kerstin Holst, Chief (Desk for Education in Emergencies, UNESCO) gave a brief reflection on the evolution of EiE, recognizing the importance of the transition from a purely humanitarian response towards the humanitarian-development nexus and underlining the need for collaboration due to limited access to education funding. She highlighted the contribution of Education Cannot Wait and NORRAG's 2019 conference on data and evidence in EiE, and highlighted that the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) is establishing a platform that centres Ministries of Education in the management of country-based data.

Our final speaker, [Noah W. Sobe](#), Senior Project Officer for [UNESCO Futures of Education \(FoE\) initiative](#) and Professor at Loyola University, Chicago gave a brief overview of the FoE initiative. This multiyear UNESCO project has the objective of reimagining how knowledge can reshape the future of humanity and the planet. The initiative can be traced back to the Faure Report (1972) "[learning to be: the world of education today and tomorrow](#)" to this latest edition of this process: an independent International Commission chaired by the President of Ethiopia developing a global report on the Futures of Education to be released by 2021. The Commission is highly reliant on knowledge from education experts therefore this online consultation will serve as a useful source when developing their report. The initiative is futures in the plural for two reasons: first, as a pragmatic reflection of the fact that there will be multiple futures of education, and secondly, as a representation of the diversity and inclusivity needed to shape the futures of education. After this introduction, Noah explained the purpose and objectives of the three different scenarios to be discussed in three breakout sessions under the Chatham House Rule. The breakout sessions were moderated by our partners from Education Cannot Wait (Graham Lang), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) (Filipa Schmitz Guinote), INEE (Kate Moriarty), with support from Save the Children (Anthony Nolan).

2. Scenarios discussed

2.1. Scenario 1 *Overlapping emergencies: increased frequency, severity and complexity*

We live on a rapidly changing planet. As global warming continues towards 1.5C, and potentially 2C, it is projected that climate-risks to health, food security, water and human security will increase. The most disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, particularly some indigenous people, local communities dependent on agricultural or coastal livelihoods, dryland areas and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are at a disproportionately higher risk of the adverse consequences. There is the potential for the emergence of overlapping and increasingly complex emergencies where climate change, amongst other trends and drivers such as increasing urbanization, overlap with existing and intersecting emergencies and vulnerabilities.

In the year 2035, let's imagine that climate destruction, worsening economic insecurity and the persistent recurrence of global health pandemics mean that the vast majority of emergencies are overlapping crises. Human migration due to climate change means that millions of people are on the move each year. Education in Emergencies, as a field, must adapt to fluid and rapidly changing contexts of increasingly severe, overlapping crises where armed conflict and violence intersect with health crises, famine, and a dramatic increase in areas of the planet that are no longer suitable for human habitation due to rising sea levels or rising temperatures. All sectors are working in a new reality of a massive need for climate adaptation – what does this mean for education specifically?

2.2. Scenario 2 *Localization to decolonization: reordering programme delivery*

A recent statement by the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR), a movement of civil society organizations from the Global South, points out that despite an apparent need to shift to local and national organizations since the closing of most international borders due to COVID-19, the level of funding for national and local NGOs remains at a mere 0.1% of total EiE funding. This is worrying and problematic given commitments to the localization of humanitarian responses. Simultaneously, we are now in a unique moment of public awareness and awakening to the racial injustice faced by black and ethnic minority people across the globe. Many communities are demanding reform and reconciliation that addresses the legacy of colonization, including in international aid. These demands have strong implications for education. Education in emergencies is often critiqued for global policy travel, add-education-and-stir approaches, and the flattening of indigenous experience and non-formal forms of education. What does a decolonized and localized education in emergencies landscape look like?

In the year 2030, let's imagine that EiE has adopted a profound commitment to decolonization. Funding to national and local NGOs constitutes 50% of EiE expenditures, however localization is much more than a technocratic strategy and has reshaped the work of all involved in the EiE field.

2.3. Scenario 3 *Reshaping financing: radical transformation*

Education only receives around 4% of all humanitarian aid funding despite the importance attributed to education by crisis-affected populations. Funding limitations have a significant impact on the scale and nature of education in emergencies. In the short-term, education budgets of middle and low-income countries are going to take a serious hit due to COVID-19. International aid will not be enough to respond to this gap, so what will finance for education in emergencies look like in 25-30 years? There have been suggestions that the future of sustainable financing for education lies in more effective national taxation. Arguments have also been presented that we should expect an increasingly prominent and powerful role for private sector financing.

In the year 2040, let's imagine a radically transformed EiE financing landscape where concerted efforts between national government, UN entities, the private sector and philanthropy mean that education now receives 20% of all humanitarian aid funding (which has also grown overall). Resource scarcity has become less of a limiting factor, with increases in funding accompanied by an expanded emphasis on transparency, accountability and evidence-based practice.

Each breakout group reflected on:

- What EiE would look like in one of these scenarios
- Which actors and factors would be significant, and what risks and benefits might be associated with each
- What actions could be taken to prepare for this possibility

3. What will EiE look like in these scenarios?

Overlapping emergencies are the norm in 2035, exacerbating global and local inequalities and poverty, alongside the crises of climate-related migration, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. In 2035, tremendous progress in education has been made, particularly through the successful resolution and implementation of tax reforms, the redistribution of sustainable responses to resolve global challenges, and governments' receptiveness to integrate refugees and IDPs into their national school systems. Financing EiE is integrated into national education funding in national budgets, for planning, infrastructure and curricula. While these will represent positive progress, there is a continuing need to better position EiE within the overall framework of interlinked issue areas (such as climate change or health).¹

In futures that respect localized solutions to local and global challenges, education is more adapted to what is needed locally. Localization is pursued down to the school level, enabling a systemic shift in the role of school management and leadership, and in the valuing of diverse knowledge and skills. As a result of positive negotiation and peacebuilding, language use and curricula no longer reinforce conflict. What localization is and looks like is necessarily differentiated. Therefore, questions of power still need to be addressed: whose local solution is legitimate? While there is agreement on the need for community-centered and less international solutions, debate continues as to what counts as "local"; how local solutions are constructed; and who decides what is legitimate. Localization brings about a strengthened role for national governments and actors in education and in the coordination of other actors in education. This may be problematic if these power structures exacerbate emergencies. Instead of technocratic skills, now we see the democratization of knowledge, evidence and research; defining what counts as evidence and knowledge in more localized terms. More capacity building "up" to the global level would be required in these new approaches.

In 2040, the EiE landscape is radically transformed, as the financing gap and resource scarcity is no longer a concern. There is no division between EiE and education more generally; it is a continuum in which a holistic approach to education is taken. In this scenario, the emphasis is on transparency, accountability and evidence-based practices. The new funding is used to focus on preparedness rather than on emergency responses to the extent that preparedness is included in Education Sector Plans. Human rights perspectives will be even more important. Access to digital technology will be a human right, but the challenge remains to ensure that vulnerable groups have access to the new technologies available. Coordination of development and humanitarian actors is so successful that we no longer talk about the nexus. New donors and partners are also well coordinated. A new diplomatic mechanism exists for UN agencies, governments and the private sector to collaborate to design and

¹ The word "sector" was used by participants in two different ways: to designate issue areas, e.g. education sector, health sector, and also to differentiate between public, private and voluntary sectors. This report uses the phrase "issue area" for the former and "sector" for the latter.

implement innovations. However, this raises the challenge for governments to keep their ownership and for populations to be heard. New actors bring different values and priorities for what should be taught at school, therefore we face the challenge of addressing conflicting visions of what education is and should be. Despite increased funding, there remains a shortfall in capacity to deliver quality education. Moreover, if financing in education has increased then who is experiencing budget cuts? What are the educational consequences of any of the other issue areas (WASH, nutrition, health) receiving less funding? What will need to change in education delivery because of that?

4. Actors and Factors

The second question for each scenario asked participants to identify the key actors and driving factors in the futures imagined.

Key actors:

- Private sector, including education providers, technology and insurance
- National governments and EiE in ESPs
- Donors and donor relations
- Communities and affected populations
- Educational institutions

Driving factors:

- What does 'local' mean?
- Power – who decides?
- Integration of marginalized
- Future of financing
- Credentialization and legitimacy
- Languages and accessibility

4.1. *Private sector*

All three groups discussed the increased – and still increasing – role of private sector actors in education and EiE. There was optimism that private providers could be able to deliver quality education and close the education funding gap. Despite financing being available, however, there might still be challenges with lack of technical capacity to deliver quality education. Privatization might improve efficiency, and this could help meet the complex demands and challenges of education. Nevertheless, commercial companies are there to make a profit. Insurance companies may provide for a better recovery, or could prove more predatory than constructive. With an expanding private sector comes the potential reduction in governments' space to act and prioritize EiE within national Education Sector Plans (ESPs). Technology companies were considered to be critical in increasing access to technology and the internet. The increasing role of private actors in digital access will pose risks for governments in protecting human rights and in increasing digital access. Infrastructure investments that enable their profits (in electricity supply, for example) are needed, and will not necessarily come from these actors, nor for free. Private providers would need to be regulated by governments to ensure that the commercial interests of large education companies did not overwhelm access to education.

4.2. *National governments*

The overlapping emergencies and decolonizing group identified national governments as critical actors. If governments prioritize EiE, then core government functions such as budget planning and capacity building could be engaged in promoting inclusive education and curricula. Additionally, governments could establish strong coordination with local schools and communities to ensure better complementarity. The interplay and interlinkages between education and other sustainable development issues should be central to governments' approaches. Yet this coordination is challenging. Additionally, the risk remains that governments overlook, or even undermine, EiE. Furthermore, national governments may undermine the implementation of truly local solutions. There are great risks if the same government that is marginalizing groups and making them vulnerable then decides what "local" means for those populations.

4.3. *Donors*

Donors were identified as key actors by the decolonizing and financing groups. In the scenario where EiE has adopted a profound commitment to decolonization, a profound shift would be required from traditional and new donors. More private sector involvement is promoted in the hope of increasing aid. The financing group considered that the values underpinning traditional donors are shifting, with donor relations becoming more transactional. International Financing Institutions (IFIs) might currently see risk in emergencies or protracted crises, and therefore implement limiting requirements. In the futures envisaged, where education receives 20% of all humanitarian aid funding IFIs would increase aid and loans to countries. Rather than construing this as a risk, these investments in education would be seen for their huge potential to influence a country's economic development. A long-term approach to education financing is taken, providing more stability, which is rare and important in a crisis.

4.4. *Communities and local organizations*

Seeing communities as recipients and not initiators is a thing of the past. Communities, schools and local actors are recognized as change makers and are funded, strengthened and equipped with tools they need. This shift towards localization centres local communities in assessing the needs of their communities, developing an EiE response plan and therefore ownership of that plan, and determining the credentials required for implementing that plan (these may not be the same as those defined by international actors). Community-centered school management is localized down to the school level. NGOs and governments work in partnership not as antagonists. However, this may put an additional burden on already overburdened local actors, and community plans may ostracize already marginalized populations. Sensitization of individuals allows them to understand the risks and complexities of the lives of marginalized groups.

4.5. *Educational institutions*

In the futures envisaged, educational institutions adapt to the needs and demands of overlapping emergencies, improving their readiness to meet increasingly complex challenges. For instance, in the pandemic, places of learning are responding to their learners' needs through the use of technology for distance learning. In overlapping emergencies, learners' needs can be complex and thus, educational institutions adapt and contextualize their responses. Additionally, rather than deepening marginalization, curricula and school systems will be inclusive and accessible to support the integration into the school system of refugee and IDP populations, as well as other marginalized groups.

5. What actions can we take today to prepare for these futures?

The need for comprehensive, holistic responses across several issue areas and actors was mentioned in all scenario discussions. Scenario 1 (overlapping emergencies) discussed COVID-19 example and the need for collaboration from all actors (local and international) to ensure access to education and that EiE responses are in collaboration with actors in other issue areas, such as migration (economic and climate-related), health, gender and minority issues among many others. Scenario 2 (localization and decolonization) brought up the need to strengthen the role of – and coordination between – national governments, international actors, communities, schools and local actors to facilitate EiE. Scenario 3 (Financing) indicated that the EiE and education should not be viewed separately but rather on a continuum whereby an overall holistic approach to education and the coordination of development and humanitarian actors is essential. Thus, the capacity to work across issues (rather than an education ‘silo’ mentality) is fundamental and should be enhanced. Collaboration across issue areas should be a default mentality in education and all other sustainable development issues.

In a context of overlapping emergencies in 2035, Education in Emergencies (EiE) should be understood and analyzed from a long-term development framework and not from a short-term humanitarian perspective. This means a more systemic and comprehensive approach for budget allocation, and planning for education and infrastructure. For instance, the current COVID-19 pandemic is a health and education crisis, responses to which affect the environment. This is therefore a prime example of the need for collaboration from policymakers, practitioners and researchers working in many different issue areas. The issues we face will continue to be increasingly complex, and our approach needs to be diversified, adapted and contextualized.

If we are to reach more decolonized, localized and contextualized EiE by 2030, it is critical to build capacity for locally-led research and programming, indeed reconceptualizing these beyond Western ways of knowing and doing. Communication beyond European or colonial languages skills must be taken more seriously if we are to communicate effectively with the diverse communities affected. However, this is still a challenge as many tech actors (who could support) do not prioritize the multitude of languages needed. EiE needs to advocate more for the inclusion of displaced and marginalized populations. Finally, moving away from “cut and paste” approaches in EiE requires recognizing and building on existing local and national human resources who are already leading EiE programming. In order to better prepare for this future, we should localize where and how we train EiE professionals, and provide more equitable opportunities for diverse people to work in education and EiE.

6. Key take-aways

Financing was the focus of Scenario 3 and is also considered significant in the other two groups. Financing matters in terms of incorporating EiE into the overall national budgets, planning, infrastructure, curriculum and capacity building. Funding increases alone might not necessarily translate to an increase in the delivery of quality education, therefore, capacity building would be crucial. All groups recognized the increased role of the private sector as (hopefully) a source of additional finance, even as their influence makes donor relations (traditional and new) increasingly transactional rather than systemic. Where funding is spent also matters, with calls for increased financing in communities for local solutions, and the diversification of EiE professionals and training.

Localization in capacity building, research and programmes was another important theme that emerged in all 3 scenario discussions. All groups acknowledged the need for education systems to adapt to what is needed at local level and to strengthen community capacity and ownership. Experts discussing Scenario 1 mentioned inclusive education to integrate refugee children in local school systems. In Scenario 2, they discussed what “local” means for marginalized, displaced and vulnerable populations, and who gets to decide. Finally, those considering Scenario 3 stressed the need for diversification and localization in education provision, and also in the selection and training of EiE professionals. Linguistic factors must be addressed in a multilingual landscape where many language exchanges are occurring, and prove challenging for coordination. Additionally, providing equitable opportunities for people from more diverse backgrounds to be recruited into education professions, and EiE specifically, requires additional funding and recruitment drives in under-represented communities.

In the context of the needed integration of temporary humanitarian perspectives and long-term development frameworks, the groups agreed there would not be divisions between EiE and education more broadly. Scenario 1 (Overlapping emergencies) discussed this through the financial lens emphasizing that there is a need for comprehensive budget, infrastructure and financial planning and acknowledge that these overlapping emergencies would be a long-term reality and not a temporary crisis. Scenario 2 (Localization) mentioned that education curricula need to be adapted to local needs, which requires a shift in the role of school management and international leadership. Scenario 3 (Financing) stressed the overall need to take a holistic approach to education and switch from project to programme implementation towards a long-term goal.

7. Summary of evaluations

7.1. *Would you recommend the Futures of Education project to others?*

Sector in dire need of long-term thinking/planning

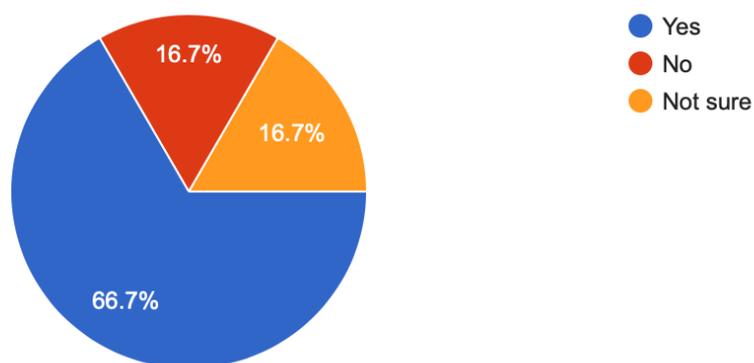
Foresight and futures is vital for education and enhances the work in the present, plus it's fun.

I cannot see how comments on these topics are going to feed into concrete political actions that will get things done.

I don't know what the outcomes of the workshop will be

A very stimulating event, with multiple perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders.

I found the quality of discussion and calibre of participants exceptionally high.



7.2. *What could we have done better?*

More voices from the Global South, less "perfect world" scenario-ing and more realistic outcomes from the discussion

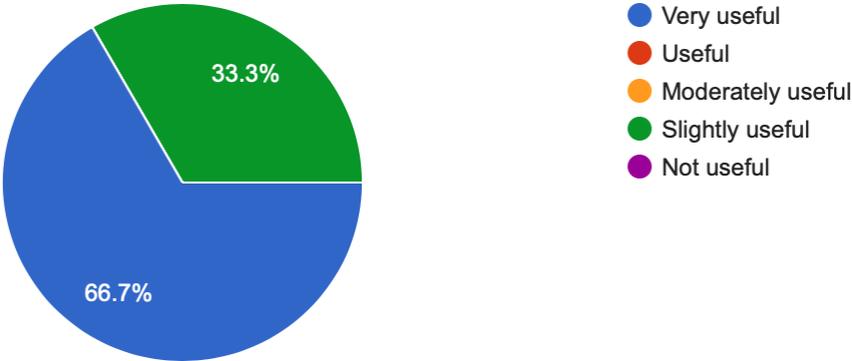
Nothing, it was very well organised and implemented

7.3. *What did we do particularly well?*

Well organised, led and high quality of participants.

Break away discussions

7.4. How useful did you find this online consultation?



7.5. Would you recommend a similar consultation to others?

