

## EMERGENCY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN<sup>1</sup>

by Marc Sommers<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*This report builds from the premise that the first line of emergency educators during a humanitarian crisis is not international education experts but members of forced migrant communities. Drawing primarily from field research in Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania and internally displaced communities in Colombia in 1998, and secondarily from field research in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leonean refugee camps in 1997 and Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania in 1994, the report argues that, before international educators either visit a humanitarian emergency site or import assistance there, many refugee and displaced communities are already educating their children themselves.*

*The central focus of “Emergency Education for Children” is primary school-level education activities taking place during humanitarian emergencies. Analysis emerges from interviews with refugee and displaced educators, parents and children, local government officials, and key members of the international humanitarian community that directly impacts emergency education activities.*

*The report describes refugee and displaced community schools generally and contrasts them with the United Nations-generated “school kits” that have been implemented in some emergency settings. It also considers why more boys than girls receive formal education during emergencies. The report reviews and examines a number of constraints to emergency education, but two in particular: limited government support for educating internally displaced children in Colombia, and the reluctance of some international humanitarian funders to support educational activities during emergencies. The report concludes with a series of recommendations aimed at bridging gaps between emergency educators in forced migrant communities and those in international humanitarian communities.*

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## **PROLOGUE: PARALLEL WORLDS**

When a massive humanitarian disaster hits, international humanitarian relief agencies descend. Huge numbers of people on the run and in immediate need of food, water, shelter and protection call for an immediate response.

When agency and local government officials first meet people in desperate need, they begin to develop relationships with them. Interactions are generally awkward as the two waves of activity and intent converge. But mostly there's work to be done. For humanitarian officials, there's food and plastic sheeting to distribute, water to sanitize, and emergency medical services to set up. Assessments must be made, funding sought, and transport arranged. A system of coordination is devised. Protection concerns have to be worked out with local government officials. Soon, tasks like registering refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs), handing out donated clothes and blankets, and taking precautions against epidemics are carried out. For all officials involved, time is at a premium, and issues of management and logistics dominate. Refugees or IDPs become "recipients," "beneficiaries," or an "affected population" in a hurry.

The view from the other side is different. The people who have fled their homes are cold, hungry and fatigued. But they are also still haunted by the extreme panic, fear, and desperation that overwhelmed them and forced them to run away. If they left because of war, they may have witnessed or even facilitated some killings. In the panic to evacuate, surprising acts of heroism or cowardice may have suddenly occurred. For reasons they may not understand, people may try to save a neighbor or abandon a child they cannot carry. The collective rush to evacuate a country draws masses of people together in new ways, and the search for sanctuary becomes a voyage, where the past may seem soiled and lost and the future terrifyingly uncertain.

People emerging from horror are often shell-shocked, bewildered, passive, and profoundly traumatized. To outsiders, they may seem like sleepwalkers: one humanitarian official working with some of the quarter million Rwandans entering Tanzania one day in April 1994 said they were virtually silent for the first few days. Very soon they assume a new role: instead of working for a living, they become passive recipients of aid, lining up for food and water, plastic sheets for houses, and anything else that the new humanitarian officials hand out.

Dealing with the elemental issues of survival, a refugee's previous life as a farmer, civil servant, shopkeeper, teacher, or student seems irrelevant. There are immediate needs to tend to, and new kinds of power relationships are established. Refugees or IDPs spend a great deal of time trying to understand the new foreign givers of help who dominate their world. Within the new community of refugees or IDPs, a new kind of world begins to emerge, and it is very separate from the parallel development of an international humanitarian community nearby. It is on the gap between these two parallel worlds that the following discussion of emergency education will focus.

## **INTRODUCTION: THE NEED TO EDUCATE**

One of the most overlooked aspects of refugee and internally displaced populations is their demographic composition. In virtually every case, the majority of refugee and IDP groups are children. But since humanitarian assistance for children is usually minimal, and targeted at specific groups like infants at risk, most children become, in programmatic terms, invisible. This lack of recognition has the additional effect of limiting knowledge about children's problems, leaving many providers with stereotypes about the children in their midst: adolescent girls as victims, adolescent boys as dangerous, and younger children as cheerful and resourceful.

Refugee and displaced parents know better. Once they see immediate issues of survival being addressed, they focus their concerns on their children or, in the case of child household heads, younger siblings. Trauma may have produced strange new behavior patterns, and their new lives may present new perils. Girls may be threatened with rape and boys with recruitment into gangs. Adolescents may get pregnant or married at a very early age. The lives of children, in short, start to fall apart very quickly, and parents are usually unprepared or unable to directly address the range of problems that suddenly surface. Those community members who can may begin to reconstruct their old lives in their new situation. Teachers organize education programs. At the same time, refugee and displaced adults may organize to address the general lack of structure and stimulation, and the sheer boredom, in their children's lives.

For refugee and displaced children, boredom and absence of education is a dangerous combination. It produces unstructured days where traumatizing memories linger, fears thrive, and violence is always possible. One method that refugees employ to address these problems is to start schools. Recruiting educators in their midst, refugee and displaced communities often organize makeshift schools for educating their children, often with little or no assistance from local or international agencies.

Drawing on three field assessment missions for the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, this paper will examine the phenomenon of refugee and displaced communities creating schools for their children and some of the ways that international and local agencies support their initiatives, the school kit approach in particular. It will also consider why donors, humanitarian assistance providers, and local governments may hesitate to support (formal) education initiatives or develop refugee or IDP schools, and will argue that they should, because education during emergencies is a lifesaving strategy as well as a right that refugee and displaced children are entitled to.

## **EDUCATION FOR ALL?**

Education is a right of all children, but it is a right that, more often than not, refugee and displaced families secure on their own or do not secure at all. This right is highlighted in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Article 28 of this Convention proclaims education as a basic right, and one that should be "free and compulsory" as a matter of urgent priority. It further argues for the promotion of "international cooperation in matters of education" (Article 28); a "holistic approach to child development" which incorporates, among other things, "the national values of the country in which children are living [and] the country from which they may originate" (Article 29); and for "the treatment, recovery and social reintegration of children who are victims of conflict" (Article 39), something that organized education can directly address.<sup>3</sup>

When educating children is envisaged as a goal, the specific needs and rights of refugee and displaced children may be subordinated. The significance of educating children generally has been cited widely, most notably by the Education for All (EFA) Declaration at the Jomtien (Thailand) Conference in March 1990. This declaration called for "providing equitable access to good quality education, up to a specified level, in order to ensure certain minimum learning achievements for all."<sup>4</sup> In a subsequent United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) document on basic education developments in Eastern and Southern Africa following the Jomtien Conference, much is made of "linking education and development,"<sup>5</sup> but little of the education process during or immediately following wars is discussed. This omission may seem curious, but it is actually part of a larger challenge confronting international agencies to understand and address connections between periods of "relief" and "development."

These and other important documents in support of education for children impacted by war— notably "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children," a United Nations (UN) study led by Graça Machel;<sup>6</sup> Principle 23 in the UN's "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement"; and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) "Guidelines on the Protection and Care for Refugee Children"<sup>7</sup>—have inspired support from some funding sources. There are many other important documents on need and emergency education successes as well, such as UNICEF's "Education in Emergencies: A Basic Right...A Development Necessity"<sup>8</sup> and the joint UNESCO-

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Jo Boyden with Paul Ryder, *The Provision of Education to Children Affected by Armed Conflict* (Oxford: n.p., June 1996).

<sup>4</sup> C. Wright and R. Govinda, ed., *Three Years After Jomtien: EFA in the Eastern and Southern Africa Region*. Report on a Seminar on 'Education for All: Three years after Jomtien,' organized in Kampala, Uganda, from 21 to 23 September 1993 (Paris: UNESCO, International Institute for Educational Planning, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Graça Machel, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. Report of the Expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Machel, submitted pursuant to the resolution adopted by the General Assembly A/RES/48/157 to the Fifty-first Session of the United Nations General Assembly (Advance Copy), 1996.

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care* (Geneva: UNHCR, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, *Education in Emergencies: A Basic Right...A Development Necessity* (New York: UNICEF Education Cluster, n.d.)

UNICEF-UNHCR discussion document entitled “Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies” by Aguilar and Retamal.<sup>9</sup>

Yet despite such calls for support, aid for emergency education reaches, at best, only 30 percent of refugee children, and this support is often subject to “extremely disruptive short-term emergency funding arrangements.”<sup>10</sup> The percentage is much lower in war zones, in part because schools are military targets in most of the world’s civil conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

## FIELD RESULTS

### Methods

The field research was aimed mainly at understanding the perspectives and actions of forcibly displaced populations in support of education generally, and primary level education in particular. What kind of education do such communities value for their children, and how do they seek to attain it? The research also aimed to contrast their perceptions and actions with those embraced by members of the international humanitarian community. Field inquiry sought to gauge responses from refugees and international community members about the United Nations’ Teacher Emergency Package (TEP), or School-in-a-Box, in addition to community-generated approaches to providing primary education during emergencies. The research also sought to understand constraints on primary level emergency education at two levels: factors preventing refugee or displaced children from attending school; and factors within the international humanitarian community that limit the implementation of emergency education programs, including why some of the international community barriers to supporting emergency education appear to have been created by the providers themselves.

This research is based primarily on field visits to Burundian refugee camps in Ngara District, Tanzania in February 1998 and to Colombia in December 1998. In both places, efforts were made to interview refugee parents, primary school-aged children, teachers, and community leaders, as well as, where possible, local and international NGO agency and host government officials responsible for primary school-aged children. Secondary field research in Ngara in the fall of 1994 and Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leonean refugee camps in Guinea’s Forest Region in March and April 1997 is also used.

Interviews were also carried out with emergency education professionals in Nairobi (UNESCO’s Programme for Education for Emergencies and Reconstruction [PEER], and UNICEF), Geneva (UNHCR), and New York (International Rescue Committee [IRC]). Also interviewed were officials from two other major humanitarian donor agencies—the Offices of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Transition Initiatives (OTI) of the U.S. Agency for International

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<sup>9</sup> Pilar Aguilar and Gonzalo Retamal, *Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies: A Discussion Document* (Geneva: International Bureau of Education, 1998.)

<sup>10</sup> Boyden and Ryder, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Graça Machel Report.

Development (USAID), as well as the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), in Washington, and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), in Brussels.

### **Context: A Snapshot of Education During Emergencies**

Refugee camps are probably the most common site for internationally supported emergency education responses, and it is not difficult to understand why. Unlike refugees who spontaneously settle in host populations, refugee camps are organized in confined spaces and separated from other populations. When compared to the dispersed and unstable circumstances facing many internally displaced populations, refugee camp populations are relatively safe and stable, and the population is relatively accessible.

Potential institutional assets are present as well. The international agency that carries the mandate for protecting and assisting refugees is UNHCR, and it holds the reins to activity coordination as well. And even though "UNHCR officials admit that when funding is tight, education is often one of the first programs to be cut,"<sup>12</sup> the provision of education usually falls under the responsibility of UNHCR's local Community Services Officer, and project implementation is at least a possibility.

When project implementation does take place, there is also the fact that, unlike most displaced populations, refugees fall into a sort of educational netherworld between their home and host countries. Debates over whether primary school students should receive the curriculum of the host nation or their home country may take place (as with Burundian refugees in Tanzania), or a hybrid curriculum may be developed (as with Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea). In any case, rules must be established, which makes refugee camps ripe for educational experimentation. Several small educational projects generated from international sources may take place simultaneously in the same refugee camp, on issues such as health, conservation, or conflict resolution.

Regardless of the fact that less than a third of all refugee schools receive outside support, soon after refugee camps are formed, refugee-generated education activities arise. A leading education officer with UNHCR assumes as much: "In every situation where UNHCR is present, the refugees or IDPs are organizing schools."

Field research for this report supports this assertion. Fieldwork in Ngara District in 1994, for example, found that in the months when an unprecedentedly large emergency education program was being developed (see below), Rwandan refugees were already organizing children in a variety

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<sup>12</sup> Foster, Annie, *From Emergency to Empowerment: The Role of Education in Refugee Communities* (Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1995), 20.

of schools. They organized religious schools for Muslims and various Christian denominations. They organized their own Swahili language classes. This was a controversial initiative, because Tanzanian authorities had outlawed it out of concern that learning Tanzania's national language would make it easier for Rwandan refugees to assimilate into Tanzania and more difficult to repatriate them back to Rwanda. But the refugees did so anyway, because it was a preferred language of Rwanda's new rulers, who were composed primarily of Rwandan Tutsi refugees from Uganda. The Rwandans also started organizing primary schools of their own, but this initiative was soon assimilated into the UNESCO-UNICEF structure that will be reviewed shortly.

The massive provision of primary education for Rwandan refugees in Tanzania is unusual. Much more common are refugee-generated responses that may or may not be supported by international agencies. This can have positive or potentially dangerous implications, as will be discussed shortly. During the Rwandan emergency following the 1994 genocide, huge numbers of refugees were positioned on both the Tanzanian and Zairian sides of Rwanda. Yet only on the Tanzanian side was there a coordinated international attempt to develop a "unified, cohesive educational programme."<sup>13</sup> Reasons for this differentiation were attributed to difficult "political circumstances" and "conditions,"<sup>14</sup> but interviews with emergency education officials suggest that resistance among international agency officials in eastern Zaire was also a factor. Over time, "a more *ad hoc* and uneven process occurred whereby agencies, NGOs and refugees initiated educational activities."<sup>15</sup> A UN education expert explained: "When resources [for humanitarian emergencies] are constrained, donors don't want to invest in education."

Left uncontrolled and uncoordinated, the many refugee-led schools in Eastern Zaire became sites for sinister teachings. An education expert described how, in Goma (the administrative center for the emergency response in Eastern Zaire) international humanitarian agency officials "weren't interested in education, [so] the government-in-exile ran the schools." In one of the largest refugee influxes in modern history, the ousted Rwandan government, which was responsible for orchestrating a massive genocide in their country, assumed control of many of the emerging refugee schools. The education official added that the international community "didn't get in there to have any impact on [the schools], and we can only imagine what the curriculum was." Reserved for young Rwandan Hutu refugee elites, it was widely assumed that the schools emphasized the sort of ethnically based version of Rwandan history that provided the rationale for ethnic genocide. The official concluded by declaring that the Eastern Zaire case provided "the strongest argument for why we need to [provide] emergency education support that is timely and involved."

Refugee-generated schools in Guinea provided a far more positive outcome, and set the stage for a largely successful collaboration with local and international agencies. The arrival of Liberian refugees in Guinea in early 1990 resulted in the creation of the first of several refugee camps that, beginning in 1991, also included Sierra Leoneans. At the early stages of camp formation, refugee

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<sup>13</sup> Pilar Aguilar and Mark Richmond, "Emergency Educational Response in the Rwandan Crisis," in *Education as a Humanitarian Response*, ed. Gonzalo Retamal and Ruth Aedo-Richmond (London and Herndon, VA: Cassel, 1998), 119-141; 139.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

health was exceedingly poor. Infant and child deaths from malnutrition, diarrhea, and other diseases were high. “Partly as a result,” a UNHCR publication notes, “health education projects were started in some camps, [some of which] change[d] into school-like arrangements.” Soon, “the very first schools were started under trees in camps...and run on a voluntary basis.”<sup>16</sup>

In Guinea, both the Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee communities contained a significant number of veteran teachers and education administrators (including the head of the Liberian Teachers’ Association) and began, on their own, to develop a refugee-coordinated school system that soon contained 12,000 refugee students. In 1991, UNHCR was working in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee camps with limited partner collaboration.<sup>17</sup> Given evidence of a significant refugee school system in their midst, UNHCR sought an NGO implementing partner to support and help coordinate with refugee education professionals. The International Rescue Committee volunteered, and soon formalized criteria for supporting existing refugee schools. In order to receive support from IRC, a school had to have already served a minimum of 200 students, and the refugee community had to build classroom walls on their own. In return, IRC would train and pay teachers and build classroom roofs.

Among the many achievements of this program were the development of a hybrid Liberian-Sierra Leonean curriculum that is recognized by the education ministries in both countries, the students’ ability to sit for the regionally important West African Examination Committee exams, and recognition of student diploma and teacher training certificates by the home country education ministries. The next step is seen to be coordinating with the home country ministries to eventually shift the schools into both Liberia and Sierra Leone, a move that IRC officials anticipate will facilitate refugee repatriation if successful. Another important step is to continue enlarging access to education: although the program has grown steadily over the years, and more than 60,000 students attend 171 schools containing 1,374 teachers in Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee camps, 71 percent of the estimated total school-aged refugee population—almost 150,000 children—are not enrolled in schools.<sup>18</sup>

### **Burundian Refugee Camps**

The school kit concept, variously known as “school in a box” or Teacher Emergency Package, and promoted primarily by UNESCO and UNICEF, achieved much publicized success in the Rwandan refugee camps of Ngara District, Tanzania.<sup>19</sup> Originally pioneered by UNESCO in

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<sup>16</sup> Lange, Ellen, *The International Rescue Committee Education Programme for Refugees in Guinea, 1991-98: A Best Practice Study*, Full Version (Draft) (Geneva: UNHCR PTSS, 1998), 6.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, an NGO official observed that, at that time, “there were no NGOs working with refugees.”

<sup>18</sup> Based on 1997 statistics in Lange, *The International Rescue Committee Education Programme*. Note that these statistics of children in school, given the recent influx of Sierra Leonean refugees in 1998 (when more than 180,000 new Sierra Leonean refugees entered Guinea) now represents a smaller proportion of the overall school-aged refugee population. The total population of refugees in Guinea is approximately 615,000, which is comprised of approximately 243,000 Liberians and 372,000 Sierra Leoneans.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Retamal’s and Aedo-Richmond’s *Education as a Humanitarian Response*; Foster’s *From Emergency to Empowerment*; Boyden and Ryder’s *The Provision of Education to Children Affected by Armed Conflict*; and Machel’s *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*.

Somalia, the TEP promised to “initiate literacy and numeracy and, through learning and leisure-time activities, enable students to express and deal with their feelings of trauma, insecurity and loss.”<sup>20</sup> It also claimed to provide “a quick response, a self-sufficient ‘classroom’” with “all materials necessary for a class of forty students” and “structured lesson plans in initial literacy and numeracy.”<sup>21</sup> The kits are largely comprised of school supplies gathered from Asia and Europe. For students, the kits contain items such as 40 hard slates and 80 slate crayons, 80 exercise books, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpeners, and chalk. Teachers are provided with, among other things, a teacher’s guide, a registration book, pens, blackboard paint, alphabet and number posters, and a map of the home country. The teacher training manual is a short booklet.

The introduction of TEP in Somalia, in refugee camps in Tanzania, and in a number of other countries has produced what several emergency education experts called “kit-mania.” School kits are popular with a number of international agencies, and United Nations agencies in particular, but their success has carried controversy along with it. Some of the controversy stems from logistical issues. Many of the kits are warehoused in Denmark, far from geographic regions where humanitarian emergencies usually occur. They are heavy and expensive to move. This logistical impediment has aroused debate over whether the entire kit is actually necessary. Is it essential, for example, to import exercise books, pencils, and other school supplies if they can be purchased locally during an emergency? While some emergency education experts seek to preserve the school kit as a conceptual and actual educational unit, one wonders whether it is better to “import all the kits [to the scene of the humanitarian emergency], specific parts of the kits, or to buy all of [the school materials] locally?” The official also noted that the teacher’s guide is short and light, and easily portable, making importing “the big lorry loads of school materials a separate [issue] from the tiny teacher’s guides.”

A more fundamental critique of TEP arose from refugee communities themselves. One education expert working with Rwandan refugees in Tanzania noted that “the refugee teachers said ‘why are you giving us [TEP]? It’s not Rwandan.’” The official argued that “you didn’t need a standardized curriculum” (which TEP provides) and added that TEP’s heavy reliance on materials was “not necessary” and mainly “a promotional kit” for the United Nations agencies that produce them. Finally, the official argued that “TEP may only be relevant where there are no experienced teachers in refugee populations” because it “is not responsive to [their] needs.”

On balance, it should be noted that TEP’s focus on literacy and numeracy is aimed “as a bridge between the absence of schooling and the resumption of some form of regular schooling.” In Ngara, it was designed as the intermediate phase between a recreational phase that begins to assemble refugee students in schools and the “Familiar Education Materials” phase, which was to provide textbooks and teacher guides from the Rwandan school system that refugees left behind. Aimed primarily at students in Grades 1-4, the approach assumes that young students suffering “the psychosocial effects of displacement, violence and bereavement”<sup>22</sup> need to “consolidat[e] and

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<sup>20</sup> Gonzalo Retamal and Mudiappasamy Devadoss, “Education in a Nation with Chronic Crisis: The Case of Somalia,” in *Education as a Humanitarian Response*, ed. Gonzalo Retamal and Ruth Aedo-Richmond (London and Herndon, VA: Cassel, 1998), 74-93 and 82.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, page 82.

<sup>22</sup> Aguilar and Richmond, 138.

develop [their] command of basic literacy and numeracy.”<sup>23</sup> TEP also assumes that refugee teachers need to have their interest in resuming their profession “reactivate[d]”<sup>24</sup>—all inherently valuable goals.

UN and NGO education officials working in western Tanzania with “new caseload” refugees who arrived from Burundi since mid-1996 developed a different approach. They set up primary schools in one month by bringing experienced teachers together and training them intensively for two weeks. The trainings used experienced teachers to train the less experienced ones. And critically, instead of working to gather and reprint Burundian school texts and teacher guides, which the UNESCO-led program in Ngara carried out (albeit with considerable delays), they took advantage of the refugees’ recent arrival from Burundi and asked refugee teachers to rewrite the curriculum from memory.

The TEP school kits never arrived in the Burundian refugee camps, but they may not have been used even if they had arrived. The refugee schools that arose sidestepped the initial literacy and numeracy framework that the TEP/school-in-a-box approach endorses, advancing straight into the resumption of formal primary schooling based on the curriculum of their home country. School supplies were bought locally, some of which would have been part of a TEP kit.

Creating schools for so many children in refugee camps is a formidable task, and it should be noted here that the Tanzanian government initially created impediments to their development. Until recently, Tanzanian authorities banned schooling in refugee camps altogether. UN and NGO agencies responded by creating Children Activity Centers in Burundian refugee camps, which were essentially schools under a different name.

The Tanzanians later pressured agency officials to teach Burundian refugees with a Tanzanian curriculum. The Tanzanian government’s approach conflicted with their approach towards Rwandan refugees who arrived in the wake of the 1994 genocide. The Tanzanians were always uneasy about the presence of huge numbers of often-unruly Rwandans along their border, and preventing them access to the Tanzanian curriculum was seen as one way to hasten the Rwandans’ return home. Burundian refugees, on the other hand, had resided in Tanzania since at least 1972, and had been using the Tanzanian curriculum in refugee settlements for decades. But these new Burundian refugees, who had arrived in Tanzania beginning in 1993, sought to continue educating their children in the Burundian curriculum. The Tanzanian authorities eventually relented on this issue as well, and refugee children are now taught in recognized primary schools in the language and curriculum of Burundi.

The field visit to the camps in western Tanzania for all Burundian refugees took place in February, 1998. At that time, there were approximately 270,000 refugees in the six Burundian refugee camps located there, although the numbers were and still are increasing. Neither refugee nor UN or NGO education officials at that time were able to place exact figures on the percentage of refugee camp children in primary school (reports ranged from 50 to 80 percent of the primary school-aged population). With the continuance of Burundi’s civil war it is likely that the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

proportion of Burundian children in refugee camp schools is far higher than the percentage of similarly aged children currently attending schools in Burundi.<sup>25</sup>

REFUGEES IN THE KIGOMA REGION, DECEMBER 1997 <sup>26</sup>									
Camp	Total	Children <5		Children 5-18		Adults <60		Elderly	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Myovosi	25,627	2,194	2,168	5,105	4,915	6,127	4,872	138	108
Mtabila	50,329	4,803	4,765	10,345	9,844	10,479	9,500	313	279
Kanembwa	16,119	1,615	1,655	3,151	3,113	3,261	3,042	145	137
Mtendeli	29,853	2,699	2,833	5,821	5,568	6,657	5,842	212	221
Nduta	28,436	2,292	2,246	5,266	4,499	8,792	4,982	230	128
<b>TOTAL</b>	150,364	13,603	13,667	29,688	27,939	35,316	28,238	1,038	873
Percent of Total	100	9.0	9.0	19.7	18.6	23.4	19.0	0.7	0.6

Despite the fact that most primary school-aged children in Burundian refugee camps have attended a refugee school at one time or another, a considerable number have remained outside of schools. The reasons why Burundian refugee children do not attend school are numerous, but they center on domestic demands. Collecting firewood, water and food, and caring for siblings are among the immediate needs facing refugee families, and the pull on girls to leave school to contribute to supporting the family is strong. But the most frequently cited impediment to children's attendance in Burundian refugee primary schools was that the children did not have appropriate clothes to wear, an indication of the symbolic significance of formal education in Burundian culture. "Children don't go to school for lack of clothes," a refugee teacher commented—an issue also highlighted by members of refugee women's groups, parents, and refugee officials known as zone leaders. This perspective was supported by a variety of officials who work with Burundian refugees. "There aren't enough clothes or blankets for the children," a Tanzanian official related. "Some kids are in torn rags," a UNHCR official explained. "A girl [dressed] like that won't go to school. She's too embarrassed." The official also said that this problem was due not only to low supplies, but because regardless of who received the clothes and blankets, refugee men would often end up with them.

<sup>25</sup> Or even before the war in 1993. Eversmann reports that "the percentage of children of school-going age attending classes is 77%. This is an impressive figure if one considers that the primary school attendance rate in Burundi before the onset of violence in 1993 was only 69%." Eric Eversmann, *Internship Report: The Status of Education in the Burundi Refugee Camps of Tanzania* (Kibondo, Tanzania: n.p., Sept. 13 1998), 6.

<sup>26</sup> Source: UNHCR. A similar age breakdown was not available for Lukole Camp, by far the largest refugee camp for Burundian refugees located along Tanzania's border with Burundi. Lukole's population is reportedly between 108,000 and 120,000.

An additional source of considerable frustration for agency officials and refugee educators alike is the fact that since so many Burundian adults never attended school, it is difficult to convince parents that their children should attend. Refugee teachers also noted that few schools were in operation in the villages where most of the Burundian refugees had been living. There is also the legacy of Burundian violence itself. After massacres in 1972 decimated Burundi's population of educated Hutus, many Burundian parents pulled their children out of schools. As one teacher explained, "[Refugee] parents will say, 'Those who go to school will be killed. It must happen!' They just don't know when."

### **The Challenge of Educating Refugee Girls**

According to a UNHCR official, only one in ten school-age refugee girls worldwide attend school. In the Burundian refugee camps, the low attendance of girls in school was partly due to their high dropout rate. In two Burundian refugee camps sampled (Mtabila and Muyovosi), girls comprised 43 percent of primary school enrollment, with their numbers descending from 45-47 percent in Grade 1 to only 32-34 percent in Grade 6. In other cases, Burundian refugee girls living in fragmented family situations, such as families with one parent or families in which the girls serve as the household head, never had an opportunity to attend school. And in general, as a humanitarian agency official noted, "[Refugee] men and teachers say, 'why should girls go to school? They don't go to school in Burundi, so why should they go [in the camps]?'"

Similar findings emerged during a field visit to Sierra Leonean camps in Guinea in 1997. Sierra Leonean refugee society is overwhelmingly female—Koulomba, the largest Sierra Leonean refugee camp, was 75 percent female, and the overall ratio of female refugees to males was more than 2:1. Yet for a society that is overwhelmingly female, refugee schools remain predominately male, particularly in the upper grades. Lower-grade schools are 43 percent female (most girls leave school after the first or second grades), while upper-grade (7-12) attendance is only 26 percent female.

The battle to educate refugee girls has led the International Rescue Committee, which manages and supervises schools for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea, to adopt several creative strategies. IRC schools allow pregnant girls to remain in school, a policy that many refugee teachers initially opposed in the belief that adolescent girls who get pregnant should be punished by being forced from school. The IRC Health Education Department promotes self-esteem and learning about health and reproductive issues for students through school-related health clubs, presentations, skits, and curricular materials. IRC also launched a community awareness campaign to persuade reluctant parents to send their children to school. Interestingly, the arguments set forth by IRC refugee officials did not preach the inherent value of education as much as reflect basic refugee realities, such as: educated refugees would become qualified to work for international organizations in the refugee camps; after refugees repatriate to Sierra Leone, they will need to be able to understand written notices about their entitlements; and education is more portable than wealth, so if they have to flee Sierra Leone a second time, they will carry their education with them. Despite these efforts, most Sierra Leonean refugees continue to perceive education as a luxury, particularly for girls. Few finish school, and very few

examples of educated refugee women in positions of authority exist. Unaccompanied girls taken in by refugee families are usually not allowed to attend school, although their handling of domestic chores can allow the families' daughters to pursue education.

Emergency education experts often cite education as an important refugee protection measure.<sup>27</sup> But in the Sierra Leonean camps in Guinea, refugee parents try to protect their daughters from being molested or raped by doing the opposite. They pull their adolescent daughters out of school and keep them at home, where, they hope, they can shield them from any kind of sexual advance. "All parents have the opportunity to send girls to school" in the Sierra Leonean camps, a refugee education official related in Guinea. "But," he continued,

they [also] believe that [school] is not meaningful. It's just a waste of time [for their daughters] because the daughters won't finish—if they go to school, they become pregnant. They are afraid that the girls will be without supervision, so they will become pregnant [because] boys will grab them and ruin their lives.

The parents' fear that adolescent girls who go to refugee schools will become pregnant was underscored by the loss of ten percent of one refugee school's female enrollment to pregnancy in one month alone.

### **Colombian IDP Children**

Though perhaps difficult to imagine, refugee camps can offer a relatively positive environment when compared to the option of remaining inside a war-torn country. Refugee camps are removed from internal conflicts. Most are generally accessible, and international standards exist to inform the care and protection of refugees. A UN official working with Burundian refugees noted that, compared to the tension and fear existing inside Burundi, some of the refugee children "are having a great time. Some are better off in camps, and more are probably going to school in the camps than in Burundi."

Such stability facilitates the creation of refugee-generated schools, and creates at least the possibility of receiving support from humanitarian agencies, particularly since UNHCR is called upon to "strive to ensure that all refugee children have access to schooling."<sup>28</sup> The results can be positive. It is highly probable that the best educated Sierra Leonean children in western Africa live in the refugee camps in Guinea. Since the refugees' arrival in 1991, many Sierra Leonean children have had access to refugee schools. If examinations can be used as an indicator of quality, then it is certainly significant that the pass rate for Liberian and Sierra Leonean candidates in 1997 for the regional WAEC examinations was 94 percent, the highest in WAEC's history.<sup>29</sup> The massive upheavals that war has inflicted on Sierra Leonean civilians has meant that few, if any, internally displaced Sierra Leoneans have had any chance to even approach such accomplishment.

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Lange, *The International Rescue Committee*, on the IRC program for refugees in Guinea.

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR, *Refugee Children*, 110.

<sup>29</sup> Cited by an International Rescue Committee official, 1998.

Indeed, in so many ways, the situation that confronts IDPs is considerably different from that faced by their refugee counterparts. Colombia is a case in point. One widely respected source for statistics (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento, or Codhes) estimates that approximately 1.3 million Colombians have been displaced since 1985. As the following chart indicates, only two countries in the world have higher levels of conflict-induced internal displacement than Colombia:

Conflict-induced Internal Displacement, 1997/98 <sup>30</sup>		
World Ranking	Country	Total Number of Internally Displaced People (IDPs)
1	Sudan	4 million
2	Afghanistan	1.45 million
3	Colombia	1.3 million
4	Angola	1.2 million
4 (tie)	Iraq	1.2 million

Significantly, although the numbers of displaced are contested, primarily by the Colombian government, the proportion of the displaced who are children is not disputed. This proportion—64.2 percent under the age of 18, or approximately 834,600 children—is high.<sup>31</sup> The following chart depicts the magnitude of Colombia's displaced child problem.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Janie Hampton, ed., *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1998.)

<sup>31</sup> Note that the age definition of “child” is slightly different from the Codhes formula: while the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as anyone below the age of 18, the Codhes figures mix displaced Colombians aged 15-17 with those aged 18-19. Accordingly, the proportion for ages 15-17 has been adopted from Codhes' category for displaced between ages 15 and 19 (12 percent of the total displaced population). Assuming that the proportion of displaced is approximately the same for ages 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19, the age 15-17 category represents three-fifths (or 7.2 percent of the total displaced population) of Codhes' original category for ages 15-19. The remaining two-fifths of this category is represented separately as 4.8 percent of the total displaced population.

Displaced Colombians (By Number and Proportion) <sup>32</sup>		
Age Group	Number	Proportion of IDP Population (in percent)
0-4	247,000	19.0
5-9	260,000	20.0
10-14	234,000	18.0
15-17	93,600	7.2
18-19	62,400	4.8
Over 19	403,000	31.0
<b>Total Displaced</b>	1,300,000	100
<b>Total, Ages 0-17</b>	834,600	64.2
<b>Total, Ages 18+</b>	465,400	35.8

In Colombia, twenty percent of children aged six to eleven are not in primary school.<sup>33</sup> Although no statistics exist as to what proportion of this group is comprised of internally displaced children, interviews with agency and government officials in Colombia indicate that the overwhelming majority of IDP children are not in school.

The Colombian case demonstrates how the context of emergency education among IDPs can differ in fundamental ways from the refugee camp cases considered earlier. When compared to the situation facing IDP populations, refugee camps are sufficiently safe and stable to enable the rise of community schools. Certainly school kits can be adapted for IDP circumstances, and have been on a large scale in countries such as Somalia, Rwanda and, currently, Angola. But Colombia's internally displaced children, like many other IDP populations, lack this alternative. Their only alternative is to attend public schools, provided such an opportunity exists.

Although the 1991 Colombian constitution called for nine years of compulsory education for all Colombian children, nearly all of the displaced children and their parents interviewed for this report stated that their children are not in school. Actual statistics on displaced child enrollment in school do not exist, although it is widely believed that most Colombian displaced children do not attend school.

<sup>32</sup> Based on the figures provided in Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (Codhes), *Codhes Informa: Bulletin No. 9* (March 1998). These proportions are also cited by UNICEF-Colombia in its report, *Emergency Assistance to Women and Children Displaced by Armed Conflict* (Bogota: UNICEF-Colombia, May, 1998). Note that the category for ages 15-17 has been adapted from Codhes' category for ages 15-19, as described in the preceding footnote.

<sup>33</sup> Source: Jesús Duarte, "State Weakness and Clientelism in Colombian Education," in *Colombia: The Politics of Reforming the State*, ed. Eduardo Posada-Carbo (London: MacMillan Press and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 125-153.

Field research in December, 1998 revealed two major reasons why most of Colombia's internally displaced children are not in schools. The first is a fundamental problem that confronts many IDP populations: lack of protection. Although new standards for protection and care exist for internally displaced persons (the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement), they have not been brought into effect in Colombia. Since there are virtually no safe havens in the country to speak of, most displaced Colombians interviewed for this report detailed a survival strategy based on hiding their identities in public. Hiding limits the chance that they will be hunted down by the paramilitary or guerrilla groups which may have forced them from their homes, be abused by government authorities, or exploited by other Colombians. But hiding also excludes them from the possibility of obtaining services that they are entitled to as citizens, including education.

Government officials recognize that, as one official commented, "most displaced Colombians hide," but appeared reluctant to consider why they hide. Colombian IDPs interviewed for this report detailed their fear of government authorities, which many IDPs and most local and international agency officials interviewed believe are colluding with one of the primary perpetrators of Colombian violence, paramilitary groups. Stories of government officials, often policemen, who fail to respond to violence were commonplace. Illustrative of such fears are the following descriptions of interaction with policemen by two displaced women. One explained that in her village "the paramilitaries killed some men and burned houses at 6:00 a.m., when people were inside their houses. Policemen never came to investigate the incident." Another revealed how she had to leave her home after her "husband received a note from the paramilitaries saying [their family] had to leave their land. My husband went to the police, but the police kept the letter [and] said to ignore it. The policeman said he'd keep the letter and start an investigation. My husband was killed on January 19, 1998." Paradoxically, in these and many other cases, displaced Colombians chose to protect themselves by avoiding government authorities charged with protecting citizens. As a Colombian human rights expert observed, "the majority of the displaced are not organized; they try to be invisible."

Colombian government authorities have admitted that they have yet to accept the responsibility of protecting displaced Colombians. "Protection for IDPs does not exist," a government official responsible for assisting the displaced commented. "They are recognized as victims, but there is no recognition of the concept of protection for IDPs." The government has also limited the mandates of two key UN agencies responsible for protection concerns, the High Commissioners for Human Rights (UNHCHR) and Refugees (UNHCR), respectively. Meanwhile, a UN official allowed that, in general, "the UN has had a fairly late start on [Colombian] IDPs." A vigorous local human rights community has long pressured the international community, and especially the Colombian government, to assume their responsibilities to protect and advocate for the displaced, but the results have proven disappointing at best.

Bureaucratic barriers are the second major reason preventing most of Colombia's IDP children from entering school. This was cited by displaced Colombians as well as government and agency officials responsible for the displaced. Here are the most significant of these restrictions.

The first restriction involves “the card.” This usually refers to the *cédula de ciudadanía* (citizenship card), which allows a Colombian citizen to, among other things, vote, drive, work, and qualify to leave the country. The *cedula de ciudadanía* also lists information such as a person’s place of origin, name, date of birth, height, specific scars, and skin color. It also lists where the person received the card. However, to get this card, there are two preliminary cards that must be obtained first. These are the *registro civil* (civil registration), which every citizen is supposed to carry with them, and then, for the displaced, a second card: the *certificación de desplazados* (certification of displacement).

In rural areas, many of which lack schools, families may not have any identification cards. They may only apply for a card in order to register their children for school, as it is required. Those who are displaced by violence and did have an identity card may have left it behind. Once displaced, they may hesitate to apply for any identity cards because it would call attention to their displacement, which, for a variety of reasons, they may be afraid to make known. As one NGO official working with displaced Colombians in Bogotá commented, “Many IDPs avoid sending their children to school, as it may expose the family as IDPs and make their life harder.” But living without an identity card is also difficult. A veteran researcher of Colombia’s displaced commented that, in a sense, “the displaced are not even citizens. If you take the identity card as an indicator of citizenship, you have to have one. Without it, you cannot get access to state agencies.”

Displaced Colombians may also not know how or where to obtain one of the cards. Card applications are often drawn-out and difficult processes. One Colombian NGO that helps displaced Colombians receive their identity cards says that the process a displaced person must endure to obtain an identity card is “a government strategy for not doing anything.” But without any of these cards, obtaining services, such as schooling or access to a health clinic, is often not possible: government officials may require one or more cards before a displaced person can expect to receive services. Even if the displaced person had carried an identity card with her from her rural home, government officials may argue that the displaced person can only receive services in the place where she received the card in the first place.

A third common government response to a displaced person seeking services is “we’d like to help you, but we have no money.” In some cases, such a response may be an outgrowth of problems municipalities encounter as a result of current decentralization reforms, which have resulted in expanded responsibilities for municipal governments and insufficient funding to carry them out. A United Nations official working with municipal government officials commented that “the government is decentralized and the municipalities are broke.” In such cases, the provision of services to displaced Colombians are often accorded a low priority.

Even if a displaced child is permitted to attend a nearby school, another roadblock frequently exists: money. Although school is supposed to be free to all Colombians, it is common for schools to require payment for books, uniforms, and other fees from the parents of students. Since money is usually scarce for displaced families, especially those headed by women, school is usually not possible for displaced children even when an opening exists. The result of all these roadblocks and bureaucratic maneuvers is an education system that is at best discouraging to

displaced families and at worst sharply discriminatory. It is thus rare to find displaced children attending school, and common to find school-aged children working at home or in the street. One expert on Colombia's displaced noted that "[d]isplaced parents see no return for the effort of trying to get their children into school, and they need the cheap labor their children can provide."

But some displaced children do get to school, a small number of whom receive educational support from international agencies. UNICEF, for example, does not provide school kits, but it has provided a limited number (2,000) of "edu-kits." The difference between the two is significant. School kits are centered on re-starting schools, while "edu-kits" only provide supplies to students who are already in school. The materials each student receives are contained in a blue cardboard folder. All of the handful of materials each "edu-kit" contains—pencils, exercise books, erasers and so on—are imported from Europe. UNICEF's decision to use only imported materials for their "edu-kits" is troubling. It is probable that more displaced children could have been supported if UNICEF had decided to purchase and distribute materials purchased locally. Such a move would have also supported local tendencies, since the school equipment students commonly use is purchased inside Colombia.

In Cartagena, two cooperative schools are available to poor and displaced children living in Barrio Nelson Mandela, a neighborhood with approximately 25,000 displaced people. These two cooperatives represent a rare opportunity for displaced children, and they have attracted limited capital assistance from international agencies such as the European Community Humanitarian Organization. The municipal government funds the schools. The schools receive US \$42 per child, and all of the money goes to pay salaries, which are decidedly low: one school director receives \$13 per month, less than a third of the pre-displacement salary he received as a teacher. Even though parents are expected to pay for all school supplies, demand is extremely high for entrance into the school. The school administrators stated that a census a year prior to our interview found 9,654 school-aged children under 15 living in the Barrio, although they added that the figure is outdated, since displaced families continue to enter the neighborhood. There are 1,876 children in school under the age of 15, or 19.4 percent of the eligible students in that Barrio. There are no secondary schools in the area.

A look at enrollment figures for one cooperative's primary school reveals declines in school enrollment over time and girls' enrollment in particular:

Enrollment by Gender in One Primary School in Colombia					
Grade	Boys		Girls		Total
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
Preschool	46	40.7	67	59.3	113
First Grade	80	43.2	105	56.8	185
Second	48	51.6	45	48.4	93
Third	31	63.3	18	36.7	49
Fourth	29	47.5	32	52.5	61
Fifth	28	56.0	22	44.0	50
<b>Totals:</b>	262	47.5	289	52.4	551

Interviews with members of the school’s administration on reasons for declines in enrollment in the upper grades and the general shift from dominance of girls in lower grades to boys in the upper grades revealed a number of social and economic factors that affect the lives of displaced children. They reported that parents pull their daughters out of school “when boy and girl students start to like each other.” The school administrators also identified a parental response similar to parents’ decisions in Guinea’s Sierra Leonean refugee camps: fearful for the safety of their daughters at school, many Colombian parents feel they will be safer if they remain at home, and pull them out of school.

## FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

Emergency educators call for the introduction of emergency education soon after a humanitarian emergency occurs. “Basic education for children should be planned as soon as agencies intervene in an emergency settlement and should be activated as soon as basic needs such as health, nutrition and shelter have been addressed,” writes Lynne Bethke in a recent advocacy document on emergency education.<sup>34</sup> “Donors should extend the boundaries of emergency funding to include support for education [which] should be accepted as a priority component of humanitarian assistance,” writes Graça Machel.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Lynne Bethke, *Topic 22—Education and Training, Conference Working Draft, for the Emergency Settlement Conference* (Madison: Interworks, n.d.), 3.

<sup>35</sup> Graça Machel, 49.

While a number of donors have become increasingly supportive of emergency education, including Scandinavian donors like the Norwegian Refugee Council, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and some private foundations, resistance to supporting education during emergencies remains strong among many donors who support relief efforts. An indication of such institutional resistance to supporting emergency education was related by a USAID official about her experience at a meeting on emergency funding policy. When the official asked about expanding emergency support to include education, veteran officials at the meeting strongly opposed the idea, and many were astonished that the idea was even raised.

Resistance among some donor agencies to supporting emergency education will here be condensed into three general areas: whether education is truly necessary during emergencies; potential problems that providing such support could raise; and what support for emergency education would specifically entail.

Perhaps the most commonly cited objection to supporting emergency education is that it is inappropriate. Foster's reporting that "relief agencies tend to see education as a development activity" was supported in interviews with donor officials.<sup>36</sup> "We don't fund education because it's not relief. It's development," one humanitarian donor official related.

To understand this argument, it is first useful to reflect on what donors think emergencies are, and when emergency periods metamorphose into periods of sustainable development. The much-discussed, and oft-maligned, concept of the relief to development "continuum," or whether the transition process is more holistic, has become a hotbed for discussion, most recently by Smillie.<sup>37</sup> In many cases, the differences between an outright humanitarian emergency and the liminal, transitional period linking relief and development assistance is institutionally driven.

The USAID example is instructive, in large part because its creation of the Office of Transition Initiatives served to make the uncertain, transitional period between war and peace, or relief and sustainable development, institutionally concrete. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance is designed to provide a range of assistance measures to address the basic survival needs of people directly affected by disasters. Although there has been some recent movement away from this approach,<sup>38</sup> OFDA's efforts have mainly been directed at keeping people alive. OFDA is supposed to leave once the disaster situation they are addressing ends, but this end point is often difficult to determine. The creation of the OTI within USAID serves, in operational terms (and only in the limited catalog of countries OTI works in), to, as agency officials point out, "bridge the gap" between emergency relief to save lives (which OFDA carries out) and longer-term sustainable development (in which regional bureaus within the Department are engaged).

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<sup>36</sup> Annie Foster, *From Emergency to Empowerment: The Role of Education in Refugee Communities* (Washington, DC: Academy for Educational Development, 1995), 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ian Smillie, *Relief and Development: The Struggle for Synergy, Occasional Paper #33, Humanitarianism and War Project* (Providence, RI: Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Sue Lautze, *Saving Lives and Livelihoods: The Fundamentals of a Livelihoods Strategy* (Medford, MA: Feinstein Famine Center, Tufts University, April, 1997).

One of the problems with the application of institutional responsibilities—from OFDA for emergencies, sometimes overlaid by OTI after a while, to the regional development bureaus—to reality is that actual change is hard to identify. Post-war situations are notoriously unstable, and they often necessitate the prolonged presence of OFDA in places where peace is slow to arrive. As a consequence, OFDA remains in some countries for years, and sometimes, in cases such as Angola and Sudan, for a decade or two. Yet regardless of the length of OFDA’s stay in a country, their policy remains unchanged. “There is essentially no OFDA budget going to education, as it has been an area considered not part of lifesaving humanitarian activities,” an OFDA official explained. “The major lifesaving activities supported by OFDA include health, water and sanitation, emergency commodities (plastic sheeting, etc.) and basic agricultural support (seeds and tools).”

Emergency education experts highlight this emphasis on providing funding to “save lives” as a critical constraint on the expansion of support for emergency education. “Donors don’t see [it] as a priority,” one expert noted, adding that “stabilizing the lifesaving aspects [of a population] is [the donors’] overriding first concern.” This is true not just for OFDA but for ECHO, which is another major humanitarian response donor, as well. “We’re reluctant to finance more than strict humanitarian assistance,” one ECHO official explained. “We don’t finance school education for refugees or income generation projects. Our priority is to maintain the maximum [support] for basic humanitarian needs.” As with OFDA, ECHO’s identification of “basic humanitarian needs” carries a strong accent on essential biological requirements that forced migrants need to survive, and does not recognize the psychological afflictions or elemental cognitive needs of forcibly displaced people.

Another reason why some donor agencies remain resistant to supporting education during periods of emergency is their concern over the “magnet” effect of schools. Emergency education officials related donor fears that refugee schools would become “magnets” that would attract people to the camps from their destabilized homeland. Emergency education would thus have the counterproductive result of attracting people to camps and then working to slow their return to their homes.

Host governments, as well as some relief officials, oppose education programs because they may benefit the refugee population over the local population, which is often very poor. The majority of refugees and IDPs are in the developing world, where poverty is most severe and where governments are unable to provide basic health, education, and other services to their citizens. Providing education to refugees who are in exile in these host countries creates enormous tensions, as local populations see “outsiders” or “foreigners” receiving services their own families have never received. Host governments fear tensions will rise between the local population and the refugee population. In addition, questions of curriculum are critical and can become major impediments to providing education, as noted in the Tanzania examples of the report.

Donors are also concerned that building schools in IDP or refugee camps will lend the impression of permanence to the settlements, making it difficult to persuade people to return to their homes. “Institutionalizing refugee camps with permanent structures—literally permanent buildings—is a

big no-no,” one donor official noted. “Building [schools] implies that refugees or IDPs will be in the camps for a long time.”

## CONCLUSIONS

### Linking Parallel Worlds

There appears to be more discussion and interest in supporting education during emergencies, as evidenced by recent reports cited in this paper and recent meetings of NGOs, governments and UN agencies in Oslo and Washington, D.C. Though not yet sufficient to meet the education needs of most children during emergencies, important first steps have been made. Still, significant support is neither present at all humanitarian emergencies nor readily available to forced migrants during the early months, and sometimes even years, of an emergency. Moreover, the distribution of educational opportunities to forced migrant children during an emergency may be uneven.

Yet the absence or late arrival of suitable education professionals and funding for education during an emergency does not mean that education is not already taking place within forced migrant communities. On the contrary: it is probable that, in some form, it is. Universal declarations in support of education as a right for all children are frequently acted on by refugee and displaced parents, educators, and community leaders. In such cases, an opportunity presents itself to recognize and support the positive and important initiatives of refugees and IDPs starting their own schools.

Unfortunately, international education experts may not look to these schools as a starting place for making their assessments and providing technical and material assistance. They may instead arrive with prescriptive assessment and provision remedies. Bethke’s review of best practices in the field of emergency education illuminates the significance of locating an appropriate starting place for providing educational assessments and assistance. Bethke suggests, for example, that “[i]deally, members of the emergency settlement community should assist humanitarian responders with the assessment” to provide “basic facts that individuals responsible for developing an education plan need to know.”<sup>39</sup> The implication of her approach is that refugee or displaced communities should support foreign education experts.

But this approach might not serve to bridge gaps between foreign experts and refugee or displaced communities. As many of the cases in this report suggest, asking refugee or displaced people to play supporting roles may be counterproductive if they have already started schools on their own. In such cases, the roles should indeed be reversed: foreign emergency education experts should arrive and develop ways to support initiatives that were first developed by the *local* emergency education experts.

Community-created refugee or displaced schools should thus be considered as the starting place for outside foreign interaction and support, as they provide clues towards understanding the

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<sup>39</sup> Bethke, 6.

educational priorities and needs of affected communities. The positive effects of outsiders developing such relationships with communities starting their own schools is well demonstrated by the case of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea and the involvement of UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee. The potentially negative effects of outsiders delaying or avoiding interactions with communities building schools is illuminated in the Goma case, where extremists developed schools that presented serious security problems in the refugee camps. This example underscores the need for outside education experts to engage with local forced migrant communities on education issues during the early stages of an emergency.

Across all emergency stages, however, it is critically important to take care to listen and appropriately adapt expertise to existing educational initiatives and not be prescriptive. This does not mean that imported educational approaches like school kits should be avoided. The TEP/School-in-a-Box approach has achieved some success in humanitarian emergencies that should not be under-appreciated. The literacy and numeracy approach it provides for restarting an educational environment for refugee and displaced children is important, and it has a record of qualified success, such as in Somalia (beginning in 1993), in Rwanda, and the Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania (starting in 1994).<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's findings in Angola suggest that the implementation of TEP in the field can be flawed. And in the camps in Ngara, Tanzania, as seen in this report, the TEP approach came under much criticism from teachers because it was too prescriptive and did not allow creative input from teachers.

But the application of such remedies should be measured and carefully considered. For example, is it necessary to import school supplies to an emergency when the same supplies can be bought locally, and for less money? Can an adequate curriculum be developed from the memories of refugee teachers? Do assessments examine the quality and extent of education in forced migrants' home areas before developing an appropriate "education plan"? And in cases where getting schools up and running either has taken place (as in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee camps in Guinea) or can happen quickly (as in the Burundian refugee camps) by the time educational experts arrive, would the introduction of school kits be more disruptive than beneficial? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, has the effort taken by refugees or IDPs to start schools themselves, usually despite extremely difficult conditions, been adequately recognized, supported, and set as the core of an education plan by members of the international community arriving to build emergency education systems?

For internally displaced people such as those in Colombia, and for many refugees, appropriate emergency education support will require advocacy as well as assistance. Governments that host refugees are often reluctant and sometimes resistant to providing education for refugees. This can pose a major constraint on the development of an emergency education program, which may require considerable negotiation and concerted international support to gain approval for refugees to be educated. In Colombia it is apparent that the government currently lacks sufficient will to appropriately act in support of its own displaced citizens, either in terms of providing protection or in facilitating access to basic services like education. Displaced school-aged children are

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<sup>40</sup> For more information, see, for example, Aguilar and Retamal; Retamal and Aedo-Richmond, *Education as a Humanitarian Response*; and UNICEF, *Education in Emergencies: A Basic Right... A Development Necessity*.

entitled to education, but most do not receive it, a situation common for many if not most IDP populations. At the same time, the very limited international response to the educational needs of displaced Colombians suggests that attention to the educational needs of IDP children will require a considerable increase in support.

### **School and the Protection of Girls**

Getting and then keeping girls in schools is a serious, worldwide, and seemingly intractable problem. UNICEF has noted that, “[e]ducation plays an essential role in enabling women and girls to assert themselves and to develop the skills and competencies necessary to cope with new challenges during emergencies.”<sup>41</sup> With refugee and displaced parents and guardians often reluctant to send their girls to school, strong advocacy is needed to increase the enrollment of girls in schools during emergencies. But while attempting to increase girls’ attendance, it should be recalled that, as Sierra Leonean refugee and Colombian displaced parents demonstrate, keeping girls out of school may be viewed as a protection measure. In such cases, it will be important to work with refugee and displaced parents and guardians to design a viable protection plan that satisfies them, and allows their girls to attend school.

### **Battling Barriers**

The intractability of some funding agencies on the subject of emergency education is troubling. Support for emergency education is a relatively low-cost investment. It facilitates the organization of camps, and frees up parents’ time to address issues funding agencies are more interested in supporting, like water and sanitation, food distribution, and the dispersal of seeds and tools. Schools can also be a tool for protection. Young boys not in school may be targeted for service in militias or recruited to work in mines. Girls may be forced into servitude or prostitution if they are not being educated.

A new approach to the steadfast resistance of some funding agencies is here proposed. Formal education promises to replace the inactivity, boredom, restlessness, and even violence that face refugee and displaced children with order, structure and hope. Education programs can support normalcy; their absence invites chaos. Education programs can be helpful in addressing trauma with constructive activity, and provide an environment for identifying and referring severe child trauma cases to health professionals. In short, by strengthening children’s mental health generally and facilitating recovery from trauma specifically, emergency education is a therapeutic intervention. “Lifesaving” is not only a question of saving bodies—it is also a question of psychological rescue.

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<sup>41</sup> UNICEF, *Education in Emergencies*, 8.

The literature in support of this perspective is wide and strong,<sup>42</sup> yet still not strong enough to convince some major funding agencies. Additional efforts should be made to both strengthen this argument through focused research and to enhance advocacy efforts.

This advocacy, for both donors and governments with refugee or IDP populations, should include challenging any perceptions of emergency education as creating school “magnets.” A source of donor resistance to supporting education during emergencies is their opposition to building permanent school structures. But structures are but one element to education, and it is one that can usually be improvised.<sup>43</sup> It is usually not even the most important: training teachers, acquiring appropriate school supplies, and assembling an administrative structure may be far more essential for supporting education during a particular emergency.

It should also be kept in mind that building schools and clinics in either poor urban neighborhoods housing IDPs or refugee camps will not necessarily constitute magnets for attracting displaced or refugee populations. Most refugee families have told the Women’s Commission that they long to go home to their lands and their communities. Forced migrants are not choosing to migrate to cities or camps to enjoy the facilities that may be available to them there. They are leaving their homes in search of protection. However, education, which is a right enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a high priority for most communities and can be used as a tool for repatriation and reconstruction. In fact, the International Rescue Committee’s plans for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea indicate that emergency education can be used in this way by shifting emergency education schools from refugee camps into Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Accordingly, local governments and the international humanitarian community, including major humanitarian donors, should seek ways to expand access to education. And the starting place should be recognizing and supporting existing refugee or IDP created initiatives for educating their children.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

“What it boils down to,” an emergency education expert commented on the current disjuncture between educational need during emergencies and the current humanitarian response, “is the lack of political will (and knowledge) to give priority to education, training and life-long learning.” With an eye towards expanding appropriate support for education during emergencies, the following responses are recommended:

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Boyden and Ryder; Bethke; Foster; Machel; and Aedo-Richmond’s *Education as a Humanitarian Response*.

<sup>43</sup> One example of improvisation can be found in Aguilar and Retamal’s description and diagram for mobile tent schools.

**To local governments responsible for refugee and IDP populations, and to donors, including bilateral and multilateral donors:**

1. *Undertake further exploration and outreach to policy makers to promote education programming in emergencies.*

It is clear that many donor and local government officials would benefit from dialogue, perhaps in the form of workshops, to enhance their understanding of emergency education and its potential benefits to forced migrant communities. Providing education in emergencies addresses not only a child's right to education but can also be a protection tool. Positive engagement in emergency education can address security concerns by limiting opportunities for extremists to create refugee or IDP schools for military purposes or use them for recruitment. Support for education does not require the construction of permanent buildings, but schools in some form can also become venues for educating communities on subjects such as human rights, peace building, and public health.

In these and many other ways, donor and government officials should be enlightened about the benefits of supporting education during emergencies, and on how to avoid envisioning education exclusively as a post-emergency development activity.

**To UNHCR, international NGOs, and others with program responsibilities in emergency education:**

1. *The initial assessment process needs to feature an investigation and evaluation of existing educational activities, consultations with local emergency educators, and the adaptation, not prescription, of the appropriate application of outside expertise and assistance.*

From this process, community needs and resources (such as teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, and community commitment to build school structures) should come into view. Existing emergency education packages and products should then be used as items on a menu of potential resources to be applied only if deemed appropriate by the local and outside emergency educators involved.

2. *Education programming should incorporate some local community teachers and administrators, both as expert resources and as beneficiaries of training and professional development.*

In places where children in the host community do not have access to education, the international community should explore appropriate ways to assist that community.

3. *Equal access to education for boys and girls must be ensured.*

Special pilot projects need to be tested, monitored, and evaluated to help girls stay in schools. Just as important are the piloting of projects that promise to educate girls who are prevented from attending school, perhaps by designing distance education materials for them.

4. *Work to ensure that most if not all school-aged children have access to some useful form of education during emergencies.*

Target groups for discussions include donor and government officials skeptical about emergency education, as well as parents and guardians, who may need to appreciate the potential for education to address a multitude of new problems that children face during emergencies. They may also need to understand that education may be more, not less, important for their children during such times.

5. *An independent evaluation of TEP/school-in-a-box needs to be carried out.*

In different venues where it has been used, the effectiveness of materials should be evaluated, particularly from the perspective of refugee and displaced teachers, students, and administrators who have been involved in TEP programs. This information should be compared to situations where emergency education took place in the absence of TEP/school-in-a-box materials. Such an evaluation may help identify how the TEP/school-in-a-box approach can be improved, and differentiate between emergency situations that are most appropriate and those that are inappropriate for the introduction of TEP/school-in-a-box.

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