***Education plays a key role in the lives of children and youth in conflict and emergency settings. Can you please explain how education safeguards children and youth and helps them to rebuild their lives in situations of conflict and emergencies?***

***Excellency’s, delegates & distinguished guess; it is indeed an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Save the Children.***

Children living in conflict and other emergencies state education as their number one priority. Save the Children’s new Education Against the Odds report shows that children are *twice* as likely to rank going to school as their top concern, compared with needs like food, water, shelter or money. However education interventions receive only 2% of humanitarian funding. This is leaving 75 million school-aged children and young people in urgent need of education support in 35 crisis-affected countries. We know from UNHCR sources that over a third (39%) of refugee children of primary school age are *not* in primary school and 77% of secondary school age children are *not* in secondary school.

Nearly one fifth of children worldwide live in a conflict-affected area and of these children, 142 million are living in high-intensity conflict zones. Close to 31 million children worldwide were forcibly displaced at the end of 2017. These are comprised of 14 million child refugees and asylum-seekers and an estimated 17 million children displaced within their own countries by violence and conflict.

Attacks on education are one of the most extreme effects of conflict on education. In 2017, there were 1,432 verified attacks on schools. Four million children in Syria and Yemen are locked out of education as their schools have been destroyed by missiles and bombs or are occupied by armed actors. In Nigeria, the armed group Boko Haram has killed an estimated 2,295 teachers and more than 600,000 children have lost access to education. Nearly 65% of the 920 schools closed in Mali are located in the one region affected by conflict; most have closed due to insecurity, depriving more than 179,000 children of their fundamental right to education.

Apart from direct attacks on education, the effects of conflict and emergencies on education are multi-faceted. For individual students effects include injury, displacement, psychological stress, missing exams, credits, certificates, loss of access to schools, loss of instructional time and learning materials, loss of family and other support and increased risk of abuse and forced recruitment into armed forces. At school and community level there is damage or destruction of learning environments, displacement and dispersal of the school community, greater stress on teachers, disruption to their pay and support, school closures, loss of accesses to information and loss of access to referral paths to other support services. At the systems level there may be loss of teacher workforce, and human resource management systems for teachers, loss of data, increased cost of reconstruction of schools, politicisation and inequality in support to education, increased school populations due to arrival of girls and boys who are refugees or displaces.

Save the Children (in collaboration with partners and other agencies) helps to address this challenge through the education in emergency approach which is child-focused and holistic, child-rights-informed, including an emphasis on outcomes for wellbeing as well as numeracy and literacy. The approach promotes boys and girls continuity in learning and works to build-back better, not only restoring the previous education system but improving education quality and building resilience in girls and boys and community and systems level.

Our approach adapts the Quality Learning Framework working to achieve outcomes in term of wellbeing, literacy and numeracy through adapting five foundations to emergency settings. These foundations are: emotional and psychosocial protection, physical protection, teaching and learning, parents and community and school leadership and management. Furthermore we have developed our Common Approach on Safe Schools which is a multi-pronged, integrated approach to ensuring that schools are kept safe from attacks and other hazards and provide an environment free from violence.

Through our work in education and emergencies and our collaboration with Education Cannot Wait we have seen how education, when well delivered, can offer girls and boys a safe, stable environment, and help restore a sense of normality, dignity, and hope. From our deep dive research in Iraq we found children still have hope and they associate school with “future success” and have a clear understanding that education is key to their futures. There are a number of ways education can help to keep children safe and help them to rebuild their lives.

In terms of *physical protection* we know from our learning through INEE that there are a number of ways for education to safeguard girls and boys, keep them safe from a range of physical threats and health hazards.

During conflict and displacement, girls and boys accessing education – whether formal or non-formal – often have better access to life-saving information and survival skills, including awareness of hazards such as landmines, better nutrition, avoidance of HIV infection and other diseases. Education can enable girls and boys to access information about prevention of sexual abuse and other harm. Children and adolescents who are *not* in school are more vulnerable to violent attacks and rape, and to being recruited into prostitution, into armed forces, criminal activities and other life-threatening activities. While conflict and other emergencies leads to increased child marriage in some settings, girls with secondary education are less likely to be married under the age of 18.

To achieve these benefits Save the Children works with our Safe Schools approach to create safe spaces for learning and we use a menu of strategies to ensure *physical protection* through education. We rehabilitate and refurbish existing spaces to make them safe and resilient. We also establish safe, temporary learning spaces, establish gender sensitive WASH facilities, integrate health and nutrition messages and interventions, such as vaccinations and school feeding, and develop and implement comprehensive school safety and security plans. For example inMali, Save the Children provides protection support to conflict-affected children through mechanisms for community preparedness, alertness and reaction to different levels of threat to the local education system.

Furthermore we collaborate and advocate to protect education facilities from attacks. We collaborate in support of the Safe Schools Declaration now signed by 95 states. The Declaration appears to be having a positive effect. In Save the Children’s new report *Education Against the Odds* we have pulled together data on incidents of military use of schools. In countries that *have* endorsed the Declaration, the number of incidents of military use of schools has *dropped* by half since 2014. In countries that have *not* endorsed the Declaration, the reported incidents of military use of schools has almost *doubled* in the same period.

Apart from physical protection, *emotional and social* protection of girls and boys in emergencies is also key and education can contribute in a number of ways. Appropriate quality education can provide basic psychosocial support to enable children to recover from trauma. In conflict and other crises the links between social, emotional, and academic learning become stronger as girls and boys of all ages struggle to cope and survive in unstable environments. Studies have shown that children who feel safe, supported and protected can learn better. There is a statistically significant link between children’s reading abilities and their involvement in classrooms that support social and emotional wellbeing.

Moreover, we have drawn on research that shows that social and emotional learning can decrease aggression and emotional distress, and improve children’s interpersonal skills, how they view themselves, and their academic achievement.

Save the Children provides a menu of strategies for emotional and social protection – for example we provide safe spaces for play and learning, establish child safeguarding policies, teacher codes of conduct and accountability mechanisms and train teachers in establishing a violence free environment, in gender sensitivity, child protection, emotional first aid and social and emotional learning. For example in Syria Save the Children partners have trained teachers in our education programmes to provide children with basic psychological first aid, including the use of simple techniques such as stretching and breathing that can reduce stress in children.

Providing a quality education during a conflict can also help to counteract some of the causes of violence by promoting values of inclusion, tolerance, human rights, and conflict resolution. While conflict situations are complex, some reports on the role of education indicate that more education leads to higher civic engagement, including the understanding of and support for democracy and conflict resolution, participation in civic life and tolerance for people of different ethnicities or religions. Further, some research suggests that greater education equality between male and female students decreases the likelihood of violent conflict.

Given the crucial role of education in supporting children and communities in conflicts and other crises we call on governments and other actors to:

**Agree a global plan of action on education** focusing on securing learning outcomes in pre-primary and basic education. In line with the Leave No One Behind principle, the plan should focus on action for the furthest-behind countries and for the poorest and most marginalised children. The action plan must align and accelerate efforts towards SDG4 and allocate responsibilities for its delivery and accountabilities to developing countries and to the international community.

**Commit to more and better funding for education** Low- and middle-income countries should allocate an average of 6% of GDP and/or at least 15–20% of public expenditure to education through growth and improved resource mobilisation. Donors should increase education’s share of development aid to 15% and its share of humanitarian funding to 4–10%, and should ensure more of this funding is channelled through multilateral mechanisms in multi-year increments to ensure maximum impact. Governments, private-sector companies and foundations should increase funding for Education Cannot Wait (the global fund for education in emergencies), to support efforts to raise $1.8 billion in funding for education in crisis settings by 2021. This investment will support the delivery of quality education to nearly 9 million children affected by some of the world’s worst humanitarian crises each year.

**Deliver the education commitments in the global compact on refugees** To deliver quality education to the world’s 7.4 million school-aged refugee children, we urge governments and international organisations to support the development of a needs-based global plan of action for refugee education in advance of the world’s first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019.

**Endorse and fully implement the safe schools declaration** Endorse, implement and support the Safe Schools Declaration to ensure that all students and educators, male and female, can learn and teach in safety. Avoid using schools and universities for military purposes, including by implementing the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. Strengthen monitoring and reporting of attacks on education, systematically investigate them and ensure perpetrators are prosecuted.

***Thank you very much!***