

# All the Talents of All the People

Education: Global priority No.1



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Collected Speeches and Writings of

## Gordon Brown



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# Contents

Acknowledgements	8
Foreword	9
Education and realising potential	
Introduction	15
The case for education	
Education as a basic right	23
On World Refugee Day, the right of every child to an education should have no borders	24
Gordon Brown on Why Education Is Every Human's Right	26
Educating the World — No More Excuses	28
A new responsibility to provide	30
Meeting the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals	33
Building the Global Schoolhouse	34
New Ways to Finance Education	36
A Payment Plan for Universal Education	38
The case for a humanitarian fund for education in emergencies	41
Why 30 million Displaced Boys and Girls Urgently Need Our Help This World Humanitarian Day	42
Reading, Writing, and Refugees	44
A Breakthrough for Child Refugees?	46
To really help Syria, we should start with a bold new humanitarian vision like this	48
The civil rights struggle	51
Gordon Brown: Children lead the fight for equality	52
Gordon Brown on Youth Protests in India and Pakistan	54
Helping the world's poorest children requires radical reform	58
'The Year of the Child' Has Become 'The Year of Fear' for Children	60
The heartbreaking picture that shines a light on education plight of millions of children	62
The World Is More Dangerous for Young People Today Than Ever. But They Are Fighting Back.	64

## Girls' rights 67

The Tragedy of Child Brides	68
Girl Rising: From Demure to Defiant	70
Girl Rising: Adult Complacency Is Over	72
Girl Rising: A Better Life Begins in School	74
The Future Is Hers	76
Gordon Brown: 32 million girls not at school, we must push for change	78
Education for girls all over the world is the civil rights struggle of our time	80
Girls: Silent majority for how much longer?	82

## The campaign against child labour 87

The Delhi 14	88
India must ban child labor	90
The resistance of child slaves themselves will force the end of slavery	92

## Stopping militarization and attacks on schools 95

Attacks on Schools Must Stop	96
We must ensure that schools are never targeted in armed conflict	98
These attacks on children are crimes against humanity	100
We need Red Cross protection for all our schools	102
Four Proposals To Tackle the Growing Militarization of Schools	104

## The case for Syrian refugees 107

Education can offer Syrian children a hopeful future	108
Help! An Urgent Plea For Syrian Refugee Children In Lebanon	110
Gordon Brown: It's time to fund schools for Syrians	112
We are failing the children of Syria and Lebanon. This tragedy is avoidable	114
Why we must act now to educate Syria's refugee children	116
Educating Lebanon's Syrian Refugees	118
Cut overseas aid and you force even more people into the boats	120
Why We Desperately Need to Help Syrian Refugee Children Get to School	122
A powerful antidote to the Islamic State	124
The Syrian refugee crisis calls for a new Marshall plan	126
Virtual Education in Conflict Zones	128
Sowing the Seeds of Syria's Future	130

## Emergencies: from Boko Haram to Nepal 133

A Senseless Massacre of Innocents in Nigeria	134
This is Africa's Dunblane ... so why in God's name was the world so slow to act?	136
50 Days in Captivity	140
Schools Should Be Safe Havens and Places of Learning Not Theaters of War	142
The World Will Not Forget These Girls. Not for One Day. Not for 100 Days.	144
Gordon Brown: Where children are scared to go to school	148
The fight to free Nigeria's girls from Boko Haram must continue	150
The Lesson of Nepal	152
Appeals Fall Short as Nepalese Children Suffer	154

## Pakistan and the fight for education 157

Go Malala! First Day Back at School	158
Stand With Malala for Education for All	162
Reunited: Shazia Ramzan Joins Her Friend Malala in the UK	164
It Is Time To Do More	166

## Conclusion: education as hope 169

'Up for school'	170
Education and the promise of hope	174

## Text acknowledgements and Photo credits 178

## Index 179

## Acknowledgements

This book has one central theme: for all our history, we have developed only some of the talents of some of the people. Our unfulfilled promise highlights a responsibility and hastens a campaign to be the first generation to develop all of the talents of all of the people ushering in the first century where every child enjoys their right to universal education.

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Gordon Brown  
2016

## Foreword

# EDUCATION AND REALISING POTENTIAL

When the body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi washed ashore last year, the world got its conflict-defining image of the moment. For the Second World War, it is the image of a landing craft opening its doors to the smoke and scream of Omaha Beach. For the Vietnam War, it is the image of Kim Phuc running on a road following a napalm attack. For the Sudan famine, it is a vulture eyeing an emaciated girl minutes from death. And for the Syrian Civil War, it is the image of Alan. More effective than any picture of a barrel bomb exploding or a city levelled, Alan's body touched a nerve. Had the young boy's head been pointed up the shore and not into the waves, had he been lying on his back and not his chest, had his eyes been open and not locked shut it all could have been mistaken for a beach holiday. The image and all its disquieting stillness made it impossible for the world to avert its eyes – if only for a fleeting moment – to the horrors of the crisis. He was one of 12 people that died that day crossing the Mediterranean – one of 340 children since last September to be crushed by the waves. We came to know their stories, but their futures became unknowable.

Reflecting on Alan's death, I am reminded of Thomas Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard'. In Britain, the poem is often studied as part of the core curriculum and has left a lasting impression on many, myself included. Considering the triumphs and tragedies of life, Gray writes at the poem's climax:

*Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air. [...]  
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.*

Centuries hence, these words on potential lost remain non-biodegradable. They stay with us. The argument could, of course, be made that the poem is stuck in neutral – that for every Milton there will be a Cromwell, for every da Vinci a Machiavelli, for every Mandela a Mussolini. But it is really a story about potential unfulfilled, talent unrealised and ability untapped. Brought into the present, the unnamed subjects are the millions of out-of-school boys and girls denied an education – forever shut out of the chance to bridge the gap between what they are now and what rests inside waiting to be unleashed.

With around 30 million children denied access to schooling due to their status as refugees and displaced persons because of humanitarian disasters, and a total of 60 million children around the world who are out of school, it is only natural to wonder how many great minds are resting idle. Humanitarian aid resource allocation does not even begin to get us down the runway to providing education for all, and none of this is to speak of children presently in school receiving sub-standard educations. Our failure to provide an education may mean the next Carnegie fails to preach a gospel of wealth, the next Einstein is late to discover the secrets of the cosmos, the next Shakespeare is denied the chance to entertain and illuminate us with their poetry and prose.

These, of course, are obvious examples. Critics are welcome to point out gaps in this argument based on a close reading of biographies. But my hope is that we will focus on the reality of unfulfilled potential and the waste that ensues. Of course one can attend school and see marginal gains; four out of every five of the world's illiterate children are in school. But the beautiful thing about an education is that it excites and accomplishes different things for different people. For some, their minds are challenged in unimaginable ways. Others may find their eyes glazing over, only summoning the courage to stay awake by imagining and building their version of an ideal future. Either way, the mind is at work. I choose to believe that education did not make a difference, it made the difference: that when a child and teacher are brought together, an unlimited stock of potential – of hope – is discovered and released. We can even build it into an equation: Child + Teacher = Hope. One can easily mock the idea that an education provides the oxygen of opportunity our children require – such is the danger of making a case through emotion and not statistics. But I believe the sooner we embrace this principle, the sooner we can realise the potential of all and unleash economies in need of talents, hearts and minds.

I suppose you could say it is an occupational hazard, but I firmly believe that no problem is intractable. If we look far enough into the past, it quickly becomes evident that so many of the generation-defining accomplishments we have come to hail were once viewed as impossible. From securing the survival of our own species through medical breakthroughs, to leaving this planet and touching another, each new generation pushes us further and takes us farther. Rather than turning our gaze to the past for comfort, today's young will one day prove that we have only just begun to realise our potential.

But in order for this to happen, we must secure our young people's future. We can do this by providing an education. It is a well-established fact that successful societies do not waste talent – they become masters in human acceleration and turn potential energy into kinetic achievements. To defeat extremism, we unleash talent by unlocking the innate potential of all people. A failure to do so means we may all become Thomas Gray – standing on a grave for a three-year-old who drowned swimming toward hope – wondering what could have been. 'Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid / Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire.' Or we can decide our imperative is to ensure a world at school. We need more Gates and Buffetts who will put the bottom billion before the bottom line. We need more Kofi Annans and Ban Ki-moons who will show us the path toward peace. And we need more Holsts who will take us to the planets – to the stars. We must give them the education to get us there.

This book is an attempt to show what we must do to make the dream of universal education a reality in our time – to become the first generation in history where every child is at school.

In the first section of this book, I make the case for education to be given greater recognition as a basic human right. It is not that anyone denies its place in the lexicon of rights. Rather, it is that we have not followed through on this promise. Whatever the difficulties, an education must be delivered to all children across borders – irrespective of religion, ethnicity, gender, race or status. While we have created an International Criminal Court to punish extreme violations of human rights, we have yet to

find a multinational mechanism for ensuring that all children are granted their right to be at school and have a pathway to justice if this right is denied.

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was issued in the 1940s, civil and political rights have been pre-eminent considerations where there is torture or genocide – wherever children are violated. Thus, it is understandable that human rights advocates dedicate the bulk of their energies to securing freedom of expression, assembly and religion – not to mention freedom from oppression. But we must also give proper focus to the freedom to thrive and not just survive. To that end, we must enshrine the rights to health care, a sustainable environment, decent incomes and, of course, an education.

And I make the case that we have undervalued the importance of a right to education. Schooling goes beyond the direct benefits to the individual learner: it also unlocks good health, a clean environment, high levels of employment and prosperity while meeting a child's spiritual, emotional and intellectual needs. In turn, the gap is bridged between what a child is and what a child has in himself or herself to become.

In the first set of articles, I focus on the right of every child to a quality education. In the second set, I stress the importance of fulfilling the goals we committed to as an international community. Of note are the Millennium Development Goals that were to be achieved in December 2015 stating, in part, that every child should complete primary school. There are also the Sustainable Development Goals set for achievement by 2030 – that every child should complete secondary school. We have failed to fund these ambitions, resulting in the most marginalised ten per cent – including children in the streets, girls condemned to child marriage, and those in child labour – remaining in want of an education.

The shortfall in funds to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – now estimated at more than \$20 billion a year – demand that we consider innovative means of funding. It is correct that national governments have the primary responsibility to fund and deliver rights to their citizens. But in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international community has a responsibility to act when national governments fail. In short, we need to find multilateral sources of funding to make sure countries with large numbers of out-of-school children see a change. I suggest ways we can achieve this.

The challenge is most evident when we witness the fate befalling the world's 30 million displaced children, 10 million of whom are refugees exiled from their home countries. In all, half of the world's out-of-school children are in conflict zones. Without delivering a programme to meet the educational needs of refugees, we cannot ever expect to deliver universal education and meet the goals we have signed up to.

I argue that there is a structural flaw in our aid architecture, and that refugee children are falling through the cracks. Specifically, education funding stands in a no-man's-land between humanitarian aid, which focuses on food and shelter, and development aid, which is by definition focused on the long term. This systemic gap underpins my case for the creation of what I call 'HOPE' – a humanitarian operation for the provision of education in emergencies – in the form of our new Education Cannot Wait fund.

But the fight for basic education is not a technical matter of costing out enrolment statistics, school desks and classroom places. The fight for basic education is the civil rights struggle of our time; it hails from the same lineage as the fight against colonialism, racial discrimination, apartheid and the denial of basic rights to women. This civil rights struggle is a struggle to end child exploitation, labour, marriage and trafficking. We do this in part by securing an education. As in the struggles of the past, victory is only achieved when compulsory action is unveiled – in this case the prohibition of child labour, child marriage and all forms of child slavery.



““ The fight for basic education is the civil rights struggle of our time. ””

In recent years, it has been young people themselves who have declared themselves no longer prepared to accept that their rights are only what others determine for them. The creation of child marriage-free zones, where schoolgirls band together to resist their preordained fate as child brides highlights the exploitation of children. Without an end to child marriage, child labour and child trafficking, we will never achieve universal education.

It is also an offence against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that schools are militarised and used as weapons of war when they should be havens of security and peace. Schools should be places to seek protection – not structures caught in the crosshairs. Violations of this principle are crimes against humanity.

In recent months, the tragedies befalling Syrian refugees have captured international attention. In a set of articles on Syria, we show that the provision of education in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey will not only provide children with heightened opportunities, but also slow the exodus of families to Europe. Lacking any hope for the future, families are leaving the region and risking death on voyages to Europe. The most basic statistics give us pause – thousands of schools are now closed or destroyed while 6 million children have been displaced. The articles in this work set out how we can finance the education of 1 million Syrian refugees in 2016, and by 2017 all Syrian girls and boys. And we set out the case for a clearing house to provide students in need with organisations and institutions in a position to deliver.

A child's curriculum has never mattered more, as there is a deficit of schooling in mutual understanding and tolerance. The articles in this book share inspiring stories of courageous men and women who are fighting extremists' message of hate with one of tolerance and mutual understanding. I attempt to show how important the teaching of tolerance – a curriculum championed by the government of UAE – is to the future of the Middle East, North Africa and the rest of our highly interconnected world.

The persecution of teachers and pupils is not a problem confined to the Middle East. We focus on Nigeria, not just because it has the largest out-of-school population in the world, with more than 10 million boys and girls denied primary education, but also because its education system has been under attack from terrorist groups. Chief among them is Boko Haram, whose very name means 'Western education is forbidden'. Girls, in particular, have been kidnapped, violated and murdered simply because they are going to school. The Bring Back Our Girls campaign symbolises the demand that education be guaranteed as a basic right and that schools are safe to attend.

Pakistan is also featured in these articles, as it has the second largest out-of-school population in the world, including some 4 million girls and 3 million boys who have yet to pass through classroom doors. When I visited Pakistan a few months ago – speaking to more than 1,000 girls at a rally – I found them determined to speak up for girls' rights even in the face of threats and intimidation from the Taliban. These girls see education as hope and opportunity while the Taliban sees an unwanted social revolution. In both Nigeria and Pakistan, we are working with the governments to devise a plan – funded at least in part by the international community – to accelerate the attainment of universal education.

The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, reporting this autumn, marks the first comprehensive attempt to bring together global experts to chart a way forward for universal education. The Commission is looking to the future – focusing on reform, funding and modernisation – to ensure we fulfil the promise that every child has the right not just to attend school but to receive a quality 21st century education. To that end, we have included articles on the vital role technology can play in delivering the best libraries and teachers to the poorest and most remote regions of the world. The Commission's work will inform international efforts to fund universal education while addressing ladders of opportunity from which all young people can make their ascent. Our dream holds dear the vision of a lifelong, recurrent and permanent education for all.



## Introduction

# THE CASE FOR EDUCATION

Sometimes you have to refresh, recap and remember just why a matter which often appears as commonplace and ordinary, such as the provision of education, is of such monumental importance; why education is so important in advancing the rights of the next generation and why it is the responsibility of this generation.

I want today to remind you about why education is important and set out our broader vision for the future.

Let me start with mothers in South Sudan. It is the newest country in the world, the 45th country in Africa, the 193rd member of the UN. But on the historic day the new country was founded, as mothers crossed the border – refugees in North Sudan now citizens of their new but troubled and vulnerable homeland – these young mothers were asked: what were their priorities for their families and for themselves? And yes, of course food was important because of the fear of famine. So too was shelter because of their reliance on tents which collapsed in bad storms. Safety was important because of the history and prevalence of violence in these lands. But one by one each mother, when asked about her priorities, said that what mattered most to her was that her sons and daughters now received the chance of an education.

For South Sudan is a country of 10 million people – with half a million teenage girls between 12 and 18 – but where there are only 400 girls in secondary education. In London, a city with 10 million people, there are not 400 but 500,000 girls in secondary school, giving a South Sudanese teenage girl a one hundred times smaller chance of the education she needs than that of a girl in London. Mothers put schools above homes and other material possessions.

But why does international aid, and why does our giving to charity and to philanthropic causes, not match this priority? Why is it, for example, that every year US companies give \$6 billion to global health and less than a tenth of that to global education? Why?

Because when you see a child in physical pain, you too feel that pain. When you see a child bleed, you are moved to instant action. When you see a child gasping for breath, you identify with their plight and urgently want to help. When you see a girl or boy brutalised, you are angry. When you see a child dying, immobilised, having lost the ability to resist the illness striking them down, you are moved to tears, you feel a sense of desolation and despair at a child dying before her time.

We share the drama – the fear, the insecurity, the dread and the horror of suffering and sorrow.



But when you see a child standing outside a school denied entry, when you see a girl like Malala resisting the bullets of the Taliban so she could study her schoolbooks, when you see girls in Bangladesh refusing to be child brides and married off because they want to go to school, when you cast up the image of that homeless boy crouched outside McDonald's in a Philippines city straining to use the shop's light to do his school homework, do we not feel the same feelings of compassion and anger? Compassion because of the need for help, and anger at the injustice of it all – at aspirations thwarted, hopes denied, crushed opportunities and talent wasted.

Thinking of education for those without it means we think not just of a body with physical needs but a soul with more than material needs, a person with potential yet to be unlocked. And how can we exclude the weakest, the most vulnerable, the least able to answer back from the most basic right: the opportunity to make something of their potential?

Every child is special, every child unique, every child precious. There are today 60 million very special, unique and precious girls and boys without any chance of schooling. Every single child should have a chance in life, and not one of these children should be left out, lose out, or be left behind.

The experiences that have brought me here today to emphasise the critical importance of education represent, for me, a long journey of realisation.

In my mind are pictures of teenagers I met at a town meeting in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, who came to me and begged for the chance to stay on in school and get decent qualifications.

Etched in my mind are pictures of teenagers living above open sewers in an unlit slum development outside Delhi, India, who just wanted a few days of training so that they could bring electricity to their homes and their streets.

In my head are pictures of the street kids of India I met and whom I marched with alongside Kailash Satyarthi, the brave leader of the street kids, as he demanded children get their chance not just to leave the street life behind but to go to school.

And in my head too are locked the pictures of a young mother in Tanzania who said at a town meeting, in front of all the elders, that she resorted to prostitution as the only way she could pay for the costs of both schooling and health care for her children.

Forever there will remain in my heart the memory of a young girl in Kibera outside Nairobi. I'd just visited the school that is the salvation for so many of Kenya's youth. I met kids in school uniforms, AIDS orphans and semi-orphans, all catered for by the school. And then, as I reached the gates of Kibera, there she was: a girl probably six or seven years old in rags, dishevelled, clearly not going to school because she had been put to work. Her early years, her youth and her innocence destroyed – denied the education that would be her one chance to escape the slums.

And still in my mind is the picture of a classroom with 100 children in it outside Abuja, Nigeria – three to one small desk. And when asked by me and Bono, who was there with me, what they wanted to be when they grew up, they told us of their dreams: one to be a teacher, another a doctor, yet another a nurse, another a scientist and yet another an airline pilot. Not one of them wanted to become a politician and none of them, to Bono's surprise and amusement, a pop singer.

But you knew immediately that none of this would happen. Their school was dilapidated, its books rare, its teaching equipment non-existent, not one computer in sight and its corrugated iron roof leaking. Up the road was a madrasa offering free education but only if you accepted you would be taught a curriculum that was the extremists' dogma, that there could be no coexistence between the religions of the world. What a choice for a child to make – a good school teaching what was bad – or a bad school teaching what was good?

So today I want to put the case for, and my vision for, the provision of education that takes us far beyond where we are today.

Think of the whole history of the world until now. For all the centuries mankind has been on earth, we have failed to develop most of the talents of most of the people. In fact, in the life of humankind we have only developed some of the talent of some of the people. But surely our vision – the vision we have for education – must be to develop all of the talents of all of the people?

I know that all of us, marching under the banner of 'Education for All', do not usually choose to express what we seek, other than in our idealism to do what's right and in our instincts to help a child when things are wrong.

But let us remember the economic forces at work that support our dream of education for all. The company of the future will be defined by its human capital, not just by its physical capital. The economy by its reservoir of intellectual resources, not just its reservoirs of mineral resources. The wealth of nations not just by the level of trade, but by the level of education of the people. So we are marching for education for all not just for education's sake – a noble aim in itself – but also for the whole community's sake.

People may not think of it this way, but when we march for education for all, we are doing so because we see education as vital to the individual self-development and autonomy of every single person. So we are marching for education for all not just for education's sake but for liberty's sake.

And though we may not describe it this way when we march under the banner of education for all, we are also marching because we see education as the key to the human flourishing of every single individual, an affirmation of the dignity of every single girl and boy, woman and man. We are marching for education for all not just for education's sake but for equality's sake.

And when we march under the banner of education for all, perhaps even Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum would be surprised if we said we were marching to develop the capabilities to function as individuals, but that's what we are doing. Even if we just call it marching to secure every child the best chance in life, we are demanding education for all not just for education's sake but for empowerment's sake.

And so our goal of education for all is not just about education. It unlocks other goals too.

An educated girl has safer childbirth, is more likely to avoid HIV and AIDS, is most likely to be able to ensure her newborn child lives healthily. And girls and boys are more likely to work, earn money and leave poverty and slum life behind – and see each other, boys and girls, as equals – when they have education.

So education is the spring that unlocks the other Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals.

Education for all reduces maternal mortality. It cuts infant mortality, makes for better physical health, delivers employment opportunity, pushes forward gender equality. And is the launch pad for a better society.

Education is the best anti-poverty, the best anti-deprivation, the best anti-inequality programme and the best pro-health, pro-equality, pro-life programme we can ever devise.

Education is so important that to talk just about the right to education is not enough. A child can have the right to education in theory but in practice have nothing. We must talk not just of ensuring the right to education but ensuring the resources for education, and talk of not just *why* but *how*: the means by which we deliver education for all.

And who needs educational opportunity most and to whom is it denied today? The poorest, the frailest, the weakest and the most vulnerable of our world's children.

“... the responsibility  
of this generation  
is to ensure the rights of  
the next generation.”

I think of the needs of 17 million AIDS orphans and a total of 107 million orphans who are in danger of falling through the net, neglected, excluded, forgotten, unable to get the education they deserve because they have no parent that will stand up and fight for them.

I think of the 200 million young children trapped in child labour – children who are today one third of the workforce of Africa and one quarter of the workforce of Asia. The victims of the policies pursued by some of the best-known household names. And we have to find a better way to answer the tragedy of families that need working children to be able to escape poverty today – as by forcing children into work today they condemn the children to never ending poverty tomorrow.

I think of the 100 million child brides – the number of teenagers too young to marry who yet still do marry each decade. Each one is someone's daughter, someone's child who is still a child, still a girl when married and never able to have the opportunity to use her talents to escape bondage and deprivation. Many of them are 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 years old.

After the floods in Pakistan we found girls who were sold by parents to settle debts. I think of Bibi, a 15-year-old girl who died in childbirth after being sold in Pakistan into a forced marriage with a 34-year-old, sold after her family lost everything in last year's floods. And I think of the 12-year-old Rem in Yemen, traded into marriage as part of an exchange of favours between families. Fifteen per cent of girls in the developing countries are married before 15, denied the chance of the educational opportunity that is their only true route out of poverty and into prosperity.

And I think of the 300,000 child soldiers who should be at school but who today are at war. No chance for these children to go out to play with their friends or to be with their families; instead they are witnesses to acts of unspeakable violence – sometimes acts of violence against their own families and communities – many beaten, drugged and intimidated before they are forced to become killers.

I think of David, aged ten. Denied education and a victim of war. Go to the Rwanda children's museum and see the picture of him. And then I think of the story of another young woman who promised that if she survived she would help child survivors and who is now helping these ex-child soldiers get an education.

And I think not just of the orphans, the child brides and the boy soldiers denied schooling but millions of the disabled children who miss out.

I think of Miriam, aged only 12, whom I met not in a school but in a field. First her mother then her father had died of AIDS, and now an orphan, she was passed from one family to another with no family to fall back on, no home she could call her own. She herself had HIV and then tuberculosis. And when you looked into her eyes there was a girl, at the age of 12, whose eyes should be full of hope, expectation, anticipation and ambition – but they were blank, dead.

You know that it's not just evil that a child be denied hope: it's a sin.

And most of what stops Miriam, and millions like her, getting an education starts from outside the classroom – war, the breakdown of states, the cultures of early marriage, the failure to help orphans and the abandonment of the disabled and vulnerable.

But there are also forces inside the classroom that prevent the flow of benefits from education – the absence of teachers, the absence of books and the absence of equipment. Seventy million children who can't go to school because there is no school to go to – denied teachers and classrooms to learn in.

For what happens when a government will not provide education and no church or charity or local council is there either? What happens when no education is provided by anyone?

For the last three centuries national self-determination has been the principle upon which the world has organised the lives of our communities. And the responsibility of education has fallen on individual states. But what happens when no education is provided by that state?

Some people would say that the last line of defence is, as John Rawls, the American moral and political philosopher, says, a national government and there is therefore no obligation on the international community to provide education. Others would say, like Thomas Nagel, the American philosopher, that there is indeed an obligation but would add that if the means are not there to make provision, it is impossible to invent the means without inventing a world government.

I would say we have an obligation. Not just to provide education as a matter of principle but an obligation to make it happen.

In the field of health, we have the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières and an agreement that where there is no provision within a country you go behind borders and beyond frontiers. Even in situations of conflict international agreements are reached by both sides that respect the right to act to offer medicine to the sick, care to the wounded, comfort to the dying.

With the UN conventions and protocols upholding the rights of the child, the world has said that a child should not only be protected against conscription as a soldier but that their education should not be interrupted.

We need an 'International Red Cross for Education'. We need 'Education Without Borders', a 'Schooling Without Frontiers'.

So I would urge that we show we believe in universal education for all and that we finance a new education initiative that brings to life the vision of education for all, even in the most difficult and dangerous parts of the world; even in conflict zones and amidst broken down regimes.

But we have to do more to invest in the 1.8 million teachers we need, in the technology we need and in the 4 million classrooms we don't have.

What sort of world is this where the chance of a girl getting education in South Sudan is 100 times smaller than that of a girl in London?

What kind of world is this when we spend only \$400 – or less in many cases – on the education of the young teenage girl and boy in Africa but \$100,000 – 250 times as much – on the education from 3 to 18 of an American or British child?

What kind of world is this when every young girl entering school today in South Sudan or in Somalia has a better chance of being a millionaire than of making it to a university?

I say that without some fairness in outcomes we cannot have any real equality of opportunity. And the world has to invest the extra \$10 billion plus that is needed to ensure we meet the Sustainable Development Goal of Education for All.

Today the numbers out of school are rising not falling. The likelihood is that there will be more out-of-school children next year than this.

We know we failed to meet the Millennium Development Goal by its deadline of December 2015. And on present trends the Millennium Development Goal will not be reached in 2025, or even 2050, not even in 2100. For on present trends it will take 90 years for us to achieve the Millennium Development Goal. And the Sustainable Development Goal of secondary education could remain unachieved well into the 22nd century should we fail to act.

So what have we to do?

We have to treat the absence of education as an emergency that can only be brought to an end when everyone comes together with singular determination, common purpose and agreed timetables.

Some now believe that the responsibility of the next generation will be to pay off the bill for the rights claimed by this generation.

I say the responsibility of this generation is to ensure the rights of the next generation.

And because business is the key to provision, and business needs schools and schools need business, we will work with the Global Business Coalition for Education to expand the circle of educational opportunity.

Because technology is one of the keys to delivering education quickly, we will work with every internet and hi-tech company in the world through the Global Business Council for Education to get technology into the schools.

Because teachers are the key and we need millions of teachers, more than 1 million of them in Africa, to make up the shortfall that exists, we will work with Education International so that we can place qualified teachers in the countries that need them most.

Because faith schools provide millions of places, a third of all places in Africa, and because it is the 'Ark of the Covenant' of every faith that we are responsible for others, we are forming the biggest ever faith group and I can tell you today that in the United Kingdom the Archbishop of Canterbury and the leaders of the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim communities are all part of this coalition.

It was once said by the founder of Save the Children that the one and only international language we all understand is the cry of a child.

Children should not just have a very special place in our hearts but should be the first call on our conscience, the first to be accounted for when things go wrong, the first to receive relief when there's a need. And our children are our window into the future. If we are their eyes and ears today they carry our hopes, our yearnings, our souls into the future. Our children offer us the possibility of building a new world from the broken promises of an old world.

So let their rights be our responsibilities.

“ We need  
'Education Without Borders',  
a 'Schooling Without  
Frontiers'. ”



Education as  
a basic right



# On World Refugee Day, the right of every child to an education should have no borders

This article was first published by  
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20 June 2012

A few weeks ago, outside the town of Juba, I met women refugees who had just crossed the border from Sudan to come to the world's newest state South Sudan.

And when I talked to them it became clear what they wanted most of all. As refugees they were without shelter and homes, and they had no guarantee of food for their families.

But their greatest wish was for schooling for their children.

100,000 have fled Sudan for South Sudan in the second half of 2011 alone. Unfortunately, there are no school places in South Sudan for two out of every three children already there – and while 1 million local children still wait for schooling, I saw children peering in through one small classroom window into classrooms they could never enter because there was no room for them.

You might think the conditions for children were improving. They are not: more children this year are internally displaced or refugees from their own country. Their educational needs cannot be dismissed as secondary because they are in a short term emergency. Without our willingness to provide education without borders the numbers of the refugee out of school will grow.

That is why we need to tackle head-on the hidden crisis of education among displaced people. Last year, the numbers of refugees and displaced people increased for the first time in a decade, as the crisis in the Horn of Africa, violence in North Africa and ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo overwhelmed the resources of aid agencies.

Sadly, humanitarian aid budgets are inadequate – and education has a last call on resources. According to UNESCO's Global Monitoring Report, just 2 per cent of emergency aid goes to education. That's why so many parents and children displaced by violence are being left to fend for themselves.

Globally, of the 42 million people reported by the UNHCR as displaced, around 20 million are children who should be at school. I think of children who are refugees from the Somalia conflict who are in large camps on the borders between Kenya and Somalia. I also think of North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where armed militia deliberately target school children – and where young displaced girls are suffering systematic violence. There is little chance of them returning to their homeland, little chance for thousands of them of getting any schooling.

Children forcibly displaced from their homes by armed conflict desperately need education. Going to school can restore a sense of normality and help children cope with the trauma that

has devastated their lives. As any parent in any camp for refugees will tell you, education offers hope in other ways too. It provides children with an asset with which they can build a better future. And it keeps them out of the hands of armed militia.

Many have been in camps for years. In the week that Aung San Suu Kyi comes to Britain we should think of the fate of Burmese refugees from the Karen tribe who have had to flee to Thailand and who have been in camps there for years. I think now of seven camps I know of where children are being educated only because of the charitable work of a few small but very committed organisations.

World Refugee Day this year has developed its theme "Dilemmas" out of the award-winning "I" campaign launched last year. "Dilemmas" is designed to help us put ourselves in the shoes of refugees facing some of the toughest choices in the world.

Preventing hunger, ensuring vaccination and providing basic health care is vital. Indeed elemental necessities for survival. In a world beset by famine, education can seem like a luxury. But we must not forget why education must be provided to every child as a right. We must not forget that a girl who goes without schooling is more likely to marry young, get pregnant as a teenager, contract HIV/AIDS, be vulnerable to malaria and other diseases, be poor or without a job and bear children who suffer the same fate. It is important to emphasise that education alone can break the cycle of poverty. It is education which unlocks our other goals of good health, good employment prospects and a better life.

The educational needs of refugees must not be forgotten. That is why I and others have advanced a new idea of Education without Borders. With the help of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation we are investigating how refugees and others denied education in South Sudan can secure it quickly.

We want to champion a universal right that every child should enjoy: no matter where you are, and whatever the country you are in does, or fails to do, you have a right to education. It is a right that transcends frontiers and boundaries. It is a right to schooling that the international community will guarantee even if your own country does not. On this day, World Refugee Day, the whole world should know: the right of every child to education has no borders.

“ ... education alone can break  
the cycle of poverty. ”



Education as  
a basic right

## Gordon Brown on Why Education Is Every Human's Right

This article was first published by  
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14 July 2012

The only international language people understand, it is said, is the cry of a child. I will never forget my visit this May to a one-room village school just outside the capital of the world's newest state, South Sudan. There were no more than 20 children inside—the most the tiny hut could hold—but scores more crowded outside trying to peer in through the single window. They were desperate to see what had been denied them: the chance of an education, a right most of us take for granted. Beyond their curiosity, it was possible to see something else, something profoundly disturbing: in their eyes I could see a sadness at being excluded from the future, their slow-dawning realization that they would not have the chances of their peers inside. It was the start of the loss of hope.

A few minutes later I talked to mothers in a village tent. Many were weak from illness. All were living without running water or sanitation, condemned to tents and temporary huts. One of them told me she had been forced to marry at the age of 12. Yet what every single one of these mothers wanted more than anything was a place in the school for their child, a chance for their children to have a better life. One million—some 35 percent—of South Sudan's children still cannot go to school. Around the world, more than 60 million children are in the same position, deprived of even the most basic of schooling in the year 2012.

Two weeks ago, I met with Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to talk about how we could provide teachers for half a million Burmese children, including thousands who have spent years living in camps in Thailand. The Burmese parliamentarian, who was imprisoned for decades for her political activism, told me that if an education for every child in Burma could be one of the fruits of her freedom, then every parent would see the benefits of Burma's road to democracy. She asked my wife, Sarah, and me to draw up a plan to channel international resources towards a place in school for every Burmese child.

Witnessing the pain of a child excluded from school can, of course, never evoke the same heartache as seeing an infant starving to death, or a girl suffering from malaria or AIDS or a boy brutalized as a child soldier. Yet for millions of children, an education is the only route out of famine, poverty, disease, and conflict. Wherever it has taken root in the developing world, education has been the key to better living standards, improved health care, and jobs. Education is integral to ending child labor, child marriage and pregnancy, and even child soldiers. It provides

choices and alternatives. In a world where your income and wealth are increasingly determined by your achievements in education, it replaces the zero options of despair with the endless possibilities of hope.

Our urgent priority must be to make sure the world community meets the promise that it made to its children of a quality education for all by the end of 2015. While we may struggle to meet our targets for reducing maternal mortality, infant mortality, and gender inequality, education for the world's poorest children is the one unmet goal we can certainly deliver in the next three and a half years. There are no scientific, medical, or technological barriers to its attainment. It is simply a matter of will.

During the past two years, while chairing a high level panel on global education, I have come to realize that there is great work done by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Global Partnership for Education, but that we need a coordinated boost to our efforts of the kind outlined by the U.N. secretary general, Ban Ki-moon. Under the path-breaking leadership of Qatar's royal highness, Sheikha Mozah, there is increasing global awareness about the importance of getting every child to school, for the first time in world history. A Global Business Coalition for Education has enlisted business leaders, including India's Ratan Tata, Nigeria's Aliko Dangote, and Mexico's Carlos Slim. Because churches and faith groups provide one third of schooling in Africa, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Vatican, the U.K. chief rabbi, and other faith leaders have been invited to join the first Global Faiths Coalition for Education. Meanwhile, the Web's inventor, Tim Berners-Lee, has been working to achieve his vision of 100 percent Internet connection, ensuring that the poorest school in the most remote corner of the world is linked up to the best libraries and educational materials.

The life story of Ban Ki-moon is the best illustration of the good that coordinated action on global education can do. Brought up in war-torn Korea, his education was only possible because of the work of UNICEF, who provided the teaching—often under a tree—and UNESCO, who provided the books. One of the books he received from UNESCO urged the pupils to work hard and by doing so repay the efforts of the United Nations. The power of global education that changed Ban Ki-moon's life for good can now change the lives of millions more.

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# Educating the World – No More Excuses

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This September, five and six year olds in the western world have enjoyed their first day at school. In the developing world, however, a total of 61 million school-age girls and boys around the world will not go to primary school at all.

While if you visited the classrooms of New York, London or Paris you would find happy young children beginning their educational journey, if you visit the mining regions of Mali, West Africa, you'll find children as young as 10 working in tunnels 30 meters underground. Visit the cocoa growing areas of neighboring Côte d'Ivoire and you'll see young boys of primary school age working with machetes.

This tragic picture of child labor repeats itself across the developing world: new figures show that 91 million girls and boys are currently engaged in child labor. On current trends, there will be as many as 170 million child laborers in 2020, who, instead of acquiring the basic literacy and numeracy skills that we in the western world often take for granted, are engaged in grueling and often dangerous work.

In Africa alone, the number of children aged between five and 14 involved in child labor is projected to increase by some 19 million. Growing numbers of children forced into the workplace, and so denied the opportunity to prosper in the classroom. This endless cycle of poverty begetting poverty through lack of opportunity is ready to repeat itself if nothing is done.

Contrast this with the western world, where education has taken its rightful place amongst the priorities of government, with centuries of investment in teaching and infrastructure. In ten years' time, 800 million of the world's citizens, primarily in wealthy countries, are set to have university degrees.

More than ever our educational qualifications will determine what each of us earns and owns. As low-skilled jobs become computerized and the value of memory, computation and manual dexterity falls, those who have years of education behind them will be at the front of the line in the jobs market.

Indeed, the education gap is now increasingly recognized as the root of economic disparity. For centuries the world's most brilliant minds have tried to understand why some countries are rich and others poor; why, for example, Americans are 39 times richer than the Nepalese and 140 times richer than the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Attention has focused

on whether it is geography, culture, technology capital or poor institutions that spurs us on or holds us back.

This month's Nobel Symposium in Stockholm on Growth and Development emphasized an often-overlooked rationale for a nation's economic prospects: the power of education. As Nobel Prize winner Robert Lucas demonstrated, the wealth of nations will increasingly come not just from their highly educated individuals but from sophisticated interactive learning communities. From now on, no nation can aspire to become a high income country without education.

Yet just at the point that the world is acknowledging that the creativity and skill of human beings is the key to the future, we have decided to invest less. Out-of-school numbers have stalled as educational aid from rich countries starts to fall, from the already paltry figure of \$13.50 per child per year in Africa.

The time for action is now, if we are not to betray the promise we made in the second Millennium Development Goal, of universal primary education. This week, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched his *Education First* initiative. We will be calling on governments, NGOs, businesses and foundations to rally behind the cause of putting children into school. The business community has already begun to mobilize, with the newly formed Global Business Coalition for Education uniting multinational corporations from across the globe in their commitment to use their resources and expertise.

We will expose the scandal of lost education through child labor; we will show how unacceptable it is that each year ten million girls become child brides instead of going

to school; and how it is hypocrisy to say we are a compassionate world when, in 2012, an untold number of children will be forcibly conscripted into armed groups, used by criminal gangs to perform illicit activities or sold into prostitution.

Education across the world must therefore be a priority for us all — an economic and of course a moral necessity. The challenge is not insurmountable; we know how to build schools and how to train teachers. And so the time for excuses is over, and action must begin today.

... no nation  
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education.

## A new responsibility to provide

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12 July 2016

Across the globe – from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Dupont Circle in Washington DC – more and more young people are coming to recognise a widening gap between what they aspire to achieve and what reality will deliver. Aware they are illiterate, not because of their failings but because of ours, the young are joining together in a movement demanding their right to an education. These civil rights campaigns, often led by young people themselves, emphasize the need to remove children from exploitation – from the strains of child labour to the stresses of child marriage. And having promised free universal primary and secondary education for all, it is time for us to respond.

The last half century of education promises betrayed means we cannot sit idly by hoping national governments, from those in Africa to Asia, finally achieve our aims. For while governments are the principal duty-holders, the responsibility to act – to find a way – and secure education rights extends to the international community. Indeed the responsibility rests with us all as international obligations can best be secured by a global groundswell.

That is why the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (the Education Commission), is set to agree on innovative new obligations – a new responsibility to provide – that will balance the rights and duties of both national governments and the international community. This Commission has been championed by Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg drawing strength from her leadership as co-convenor alongside the Presidents of Malawi, Indonesia, Chile and the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova. And now, this Commission has embarked on a year's work to construct a new and innovative financing case to ensure every single child is in school by 2030.

The statistics confronting the Commission are a reminder of both the scale of the challenge and what is at stake. There are 124 million children out-of-school globally. Among them, 60 million primary school-age children are deprived of an education due to conflicts and emergencies – 30 million of whom are caught in the crossfire. The Syrian Civil War alone has disrupted the education of some 6 million adolescents, half a million of whom are deprived of a higher education. None of this is to speak of the millions of children in school who receive an education inadequate for this century's challenges.

Promises have been made before. In 1990, we made a promise guaranteeing every child a place in primary school. In 2000, we pledged that by 2015 every of-age child will have completed primary education. And last year, we went further saying, by 2030, of-age children will see the promise of universal secondary education fulfilled. Based on current trends, this last guarantee is likely to be met a full century behind schedule in 2130.

Our failure to deliver an education for refugees and displaced children is not accidental but, in part, the result of a flawed aid system. Trapped between humanitarian budgets that inevitably focus on food and shelter, and development aid earmarked for times of peace and not crisis, out-of-school children fall off the agenda. In turn, less than 2 per cent of global humanitarian aid goes to education. To stay the course would be unacceptable.

So what we need is nothing short of an education revolution. As a starting point, the Education Commission – through the generous support of the Norwegian Government – has summoned two dozen global leaders, among them five former heads of government and three Nobel Prize recipients, who are unequivocal in stating education is a basic human right. We are developing a new approach to finance that will ensure every child – irrespective of location, race or wealth – is guaranteed a free education, and that if that child works hard enough the runway to their future is limitless. We know that when a teacher and a child

... what we  
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revolution.

come together in a classroom, we get more than knowledge creation – we see hope come alive. For it is our belief that education should equalise opportunities and incentivise courageous, novel thinking.

It has been said that we are not optimists but we live with hope. I say we can be both. We can secure and provide basic minimums necessary to live such as water, food, shelter – often the international community succeeds in these areas. And we can also exercise rights that push us forward. Food keeps us alive but schooling advances the human cause. An education secures chances and opportunities while humanising us all. Aside from our basic humanity, schooling should be our common denominator.

We should all be able to live with a little less fear of what the future holds, a little more certainty that potential can be unleashed. This will be the ladder we come to climb. Recognising the education imperative, any meaningful ladder of opportunity must codify primary and secondary education as universal rights. If and when governments fail to act, this declaration will be held high. But make no mistake, these victories will be hard won.

Ladders of opportunity have taken us to the summits of mountains, the tops of skyscrapers, and into the very beginnings of the cosmos. And when this ladder is born in the classroom, the rungs lead us into an atmosphere of opportunity and monumental achievements. These ladders remove humanity from the sludge of ignorance instead placing us on firm ground from which we can make our ascent. But before we climb to these unimaginable heights, we all must take that first step into the classroom.





# Meeting the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals

# Building the Global Schoolhouse

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16 May 2015

This year is a critical one for education worldwide. Despite a commitment by the international community to guarantee universal primary schooling, some 58 million of the world's most marginalized children remain out of the classroom. And, as we seek to expand the international community's commitment, so that by 2030 every child has the opportunity to attend secondary school, we must work hard to provide the necessary funding.

This is why the upcoming four-day World Education Forum in South Korea, the homeland of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, is so important. According to most estimates, providing universal secondary education will cost international donors an additional \$22–50 billion a year, even after developing countries ramp up their commitments. If we fail to raise that money, the hopes and ambitions of millions of children are certain to be crushed.

The Forum will focus on how to bridge the funding gap. Later, on July 7, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Foreign Minister Børge Brende will convene a summit in Oslo with the aim of raising education's profile among global priorities, reversing negative trends in financing, and identifying ways to support students more effectively. Other conferences, including the Addis Ababa International Conference on Financing for Development, the Education International World Congress, an #UpForSchool Town Hall during the UN General Assembly, and the 28th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, will provide forums for action and discussion.

It is fitting that the first of these events is taking place in South Korea and that Ban will be one of the key speakers. Ban's personal story illustrates the difference education can make in transforming a life.

Raised in war-torn Korea in the 1950s, Ban's elementary schooling – made possible by help from UNICEF – took place under a tree. UNESCO provided the books, which bore an inscription that read, "Children should work hard, and by doing so they will repay their debt to the United Nations." No one could have imagined that one of those students would repay his debt by becoming Secretary-General and using that position to lead a campaign, the Global Education First Initiative, to provide others with the opportunity he received.

Education is central to achieving all of the other Sustainable Development Goals; it unlocks gains in health, women's empowerment, employment, and overall quality of life. The trouble is that providing for a proper education system requires at least 5% of a country's GDP and usually about 20% of public spending. Few developing countries have undertaken spending on this scale.

For the time being, outside help will be essential. There are clear limits to poor countries' ability to mobilize the domestic

resources needed to provide secondary education for all. The international community must help make up the difference by looking to private foundations, businesses, charitable organizations, and global and national funding.

The cause of education still lacks a major philanthropist like Bill Gates. And, although the Global Partnership for Education raised more than \$2 billion in its replenishment effort, health programs have more funders, reflected in, for example, the \$12 billion Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Only recently has Norway assumed a vanguard role in making education of all children worldwide a national priority.

Currently, education accounts for only 1% of humanitarian aid in emergencies, despite the fact that millions of children are refugees in need of help, not just for days or weeks, but often for years. Nearly half of the out-of-school population – some 28 million children – now reside in conflict countries, with millions trapped in refugee camps or tent cities.

Among the proposals being discussed at this year's meetings

is the establishment of a fund for education during emergencies and a coordination platform to help channel resources to places like Syria, where the conflict has left nearly three million children out of school. Likewise, in Nepal, 25,000 classrooms are in urgent need of reconstruction or retrofitting to withstand earthquakes.

The effort to provide humanitarian aid in emergencies is just one part of the agenda for global education. Just as the International Finance Facility for Immunization provides front-loaded funding mechanisms for health, we now must consider innovative financing instruments, like social impact bonds, that promise not only to increase enrollment, but also to improve student retention and learning.

Today, the richest countries in the world spend about \$100,000 educating a child to the age of 16. In Sub-Saharan Africa, by contrast, an average child from a poor family will receive less than four years of education, at a cost of \$150 per year – only \$12 of which originates in the richest countries.

Our long-term aim must be to ensure that citizens of the world's poorest countries have not only the same educational opportunities, but also the same educational attainment rates as their counterparts in richer countries. Only when this is accomplished will we be able to say that the struggle for the right to education has been won, and that we have created a world in which all children can realize their hopes and ambitions.

No one  
could have imagined  
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repay his debt by  
becoming  
Secretary-General ...



# New Ways to Finance Education

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27 June 2015

Norway, under the leadership of Prime Minister Erna Solberg and Foreign Minister Børge Brende, will soon host a summit on education for development with one simple aim: to bolster global cooperation on education. The hope is that the summit, which United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will attend, will improve the world's chances of meeting the goal, featured in the upcoming post-2015 development agenda, that every child have access to pre-primary, primary, and secondary education by 2030.

We have a long way to go. While over 40 million more children are in school today than in 2000, 58 million primary-age and 63 million secondary-age children remain out of school, with about half of the world's out-of-school primary-age children in conflict- and crisis-affected countries. Indeed, there are more child refugees than at any time since World War II. Girls face a particularly difficult challenge, because they must struggle to gain the right to an education, even as the fight against child marriage, child labor, and the trafficking of women and girls is yet to be won.

Progress will not be easy – not least because there is an intensifying funding crisis within the aid community. Although overseas development aid increased by 9% from 2010 to 2013, aid for basic education fell by 22%, from an already-low \$4.5 billion to \$3.5 billion.

In non-fragile, low-income countries, aid for primary education now stands at just \$23 per child annually – barely enough to buy two textbooks – down 8% from a decade ago. Annual aid for primary education amounts to just \$11 per child in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Togo, and Guinea; \$10 per child in the Central African Republic and Madagascar; \$5 per child in Chad; and a minuscule \$4 per child in Nigeria, the country with the largest out-of-school population.

These figures are low because domestic spending or other funding sources are not high enough to make up the difference. Across the poorest countries, total spending on education averages just \$80 per child per year – compared to more than \$8,000 per child in the advanced economies – and can be as low as \$24 annually (in the DRC).

The simple fact is that providing all children with an education costs money. Indeed, ensuring universal access to pre-primary, primary, and secondary school in low-income and lower-middle-income countries will cost roughly \$210 billion by 2020 – a figure that does not fall by much, even according to the most optimistic estimates. If poor countries spent their *entire* estimated tax capacity on education, they would need at least \$25 billion in additional funds.

The hope is that world donors increase aid for education at a rate similar to that of overall development aid over the last decade. For their part, the poorest countries could experience a 1–2% increase in their economic-growth rates, while raising their education budgets from about 2% to 5% of GDP. But, even in that case, the annual spending gap would still amount to at least \$15 billion.

To close the gap, we need a new approach, one that takes advantage of new sources of funding – such as the private sector,

philanthropic organizations, and emerging economies – while ensuring that the money received is used as efficiently as possible. Several promising proposals are under consideration.

One important proposal is a global humanitarian platform that would fund the provision of education – alongside food, protection, shelter, and health care – during emergencies. A pool of designated funds that leaders could access quickly would have helped the millions of children trapped in conflicts in Iraq, Libya, and Syria, or the million left without schools by the recent earthquake in Nepal. Instead, they were faced with a \$4.8 billion funding gap. With enduring crises affecting children worldwide – from South Sudan to Myanmar – there is no time to waste in creating such a platform.

A second proposal calls on national governments to cut back expensive, wasteful, and poorly targeted domestic energy subsidies, and channel the money they save toward education. Such subsidies cost some \$300 billion annually (by conservative estimates) and tend to benefit the wealthy, as they encourage excessive consumption.

Indonesia, for example, trimmed fuel subsidies considerably, when its government realized that, in 2009–2013, more money was spent on them than on infrastructure and social-welfare programs combined. Given low world oil prices, now is the ideal time for more countries to follow suit, using the extra revenues to build schools, hire and train more teachers, and improve learning for all.

A third proposal entails the use of innovative funding mechanisms, like social-impact bonds, to frontload new education spending. Such a results-oriented approach would help to encourage business philanthropy in education, which currently amounts to only one-tenth of that in health. Similarly creative efforts could deepen the engagement of charitable foundations; as it stands, US-based foundations spend just 1% of their development resources on basic education in poor countries.

A final proposal, which the World Bank is assessing, is the issuance of debt against the projected reflows of international development assistance loans. With repayments of IDA loans to the World Bank set to exceed \$150 billion over the next 15 years, this could generate significant new social investment from the Bank.

Bertrand Badre, the World Bank's chief financial officer, has a plan to leverage future reflows that would match them with other funding streams. If Badre's plan is implemented, an additional \$10 billion – or even as much as \$20 billion – could be raised for international development annually. Some of this funding would undoubtedly be channeled to the area that the World Bank client surveys indicate is the greatest priority: education.

Over the last 15 years, we have proved that global action works. But, if we are to give all children the opportunities that they deserve, we are going to need a lot more of it.

The simple  
fact is that providing  
all children with an  
education costs  
money.

# A Payment Plan for Universal Education

This article was first published by  
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24 January 2016

The Sustainable Development Goals, which the international community adopted in September, include a commitment to provide every child with access to free primary and secondary education by 2030. Finding the additional \$20 billion per year, or more, that will be needed to deliver on this commitment is one of the central objectives of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity.

The commission was established last September by the Norwegian prime minister, and co-convened with the presidents of Malawi, Chile, and Indonesia and the director-general of UNESCO. Its members, including five former presidents and prime ministers, three former finance ministers, six Nobel Prize winners, and three of the world's most successful business leaders – Jack Ma, Aliko Dangote, and Strive Masiyiwa – will report their findings to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the co-conveners in September. On January 24, we met in London to chart the way forward.

The challenge is daunting. Some 60 million primary-school-age children have no access to formal education. Of the roughly 590 million who are attending school, some 250 million – roughly two in five – are failing to learn the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. And some 60% of school pupils in developing countries do not meet basic mathematics standards.

If current trends persist, by 2050, children in most regions of the world will receive, on average, ten or more years of schooling – up from three years in 1950. Some countries in Africa, however, will lag far behind, with just 3–4 years of schooling on average. If we maintain a business-as-usual approach, it will take more than a hundred years – well into the twenty-second century – before every child is provided with an opportunity to complete his or her schooling.

Even as education levels play an increasingly important role in economic growth, the funds needed to raise them have failed to materialize. International development aid for education has fallen by nearly 10% in recent years – and government spending in low-income countries has failed to make up the difference.

In 2002, education accounted for 1.6% of total domestic spending in poor countries. Today, the figure is just 1.4%. Meanwhile, outlays for health increased from 9% to 11% of total spending. And, to make matters worse, in many of the countries with the greatest need for education – including Pakistan and Nigeria – governments are spending too little on it (sometimes as little as 2% of national income).

Nor is the money – when it is made available – spent equitably. In low-income countries, almost half of all education funds are spent on the most educated 10% of children. Very little trickles down to street children or boys and girls in remote rural areas, conflict zones, or urban slums.

According to UNESCO, the ratio of pupils to qualified teachers in the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, and South Sudan is more than a hundred to one. And those teachers receive little support, encouragement, or feedback. Good teachers are undoubtedly the key to quality education; but they can do only so much if they are not provided with skilled supervision, a well-organized curriculum, and access to technology.

The phrase “universal education” will mean nothing if it does not apply to children living in huts, hovels, and refugee

tents. When war or disaster strikes, the international community rightly mobilizes funding for food, shelter, and health care. All too often, however, financing education is only an afterthought. With refugees spending more than ten years away from home, on average, this neglect cannot be allowed to continue.

Fortunately, progress is being made in this area. In an exciting experiment in Lebanon, schools have been put on double shifts in order to accommodate the country's Syrian refugee population. Local children attend in the morning, and in the afternoon, Syrian refugee children study in the same classrooms.

The program has been a stunning success, providing schooling for some 207,000 children who might otherwise have been deprived of an education. And plans are underway to expand the program to cover one million children in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan. The biggest obstacle to what would be a spectacular achievement – as is so often the case – is a shortage of money.

It is to support efforts like this one that the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity was formed. UNICEF leader Anthony

Lake, UNESCO head Irina Bokova, and Global Partnership for Education Chair Julia Gillard have lent their support to a platform for the provision of education in emergencies, a proposal that I hope will be formalized at the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey in May. And it is my goal that by the end of the year we will also have a timetable to provide primary and secondary education to every child in the world – and the funding with which to achieve this most important of objectives.

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The case for  
a humanitarian  
fund for  
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The case for  
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# Why 30 million Displaced Boys and Girls Urgently Need Our Help This World Humanitarian Day

This article was first published by  
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19 August 2015

Today is about action, not just words — it is World Humanitarian Day. It is not a celebration. It is a much-needed recognition of those “who face danger and adversity in order to help others,” a clear signal that there IS good in the world and a message to millions that life is precious.

And what better way to recognise those who help others in the most dire circumstances than to announce we will give priority to new and better international support so humanitarians can carry out their mission to provide every child with opportunity in some of the most trying circumstances.

Over the past several months, world leaders from countries and agencies across the globe have come together to find a solution to how we can better provide education to the millions of children caught up in humanitarian emergencies and crises.

Now a Global Humanitarian Platform and Fund for Education in Emergencies is to be set up in a unique coalition of partners ranging from Anthony Lake of UNICEF, António Guterres of UNHCR, Julia Gillard of the Global Partnership for Education and with development partners such as Norway, the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, the European Union, Dubai Cares and representatives from other countries, including South Sudan, Nepal and Lebanon.

It is clear why we have to act with urgency: World Humanitarian Day will last just 24 hours. A total of 1,440 minutes or 86,400 seconds. As UN Special Envoy for Global Education, I want you to consider one other statistic and care about it enough to do something. If we all spend just ONE of those precious seconds thinking about each and every displaced boy and girl on the planet it would take all of us until early July 2016 to have covered every one of them.

There are 30 million of these young souls. Today, seven years after the General Assembly designated August 19 to coincide with the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, we face a humanitarian crisis that is wider, broader and deeper than at any time since the Second World War.

It is typified not just by the 30 million displaced and refugee children, but a further 30 million adults as well, all in troubled regions around the world. From Nepal to South Sudan, Syria to Iraq, Palestine to the DRC people have been forced to leave their homes in fear.

Take Syria for example, where nearly 3 million children have been forced out of school, nearly 2 million banished from their homes to neighbouring countries, most likely for their entire school careers. Having enjoyed free, nearly universal education in Syria until the beginning of the crisis, Syrian children are now enrolled at rates as low as 6% in some areas, lower than those in Somalia. We are failing not because there are no teachers and no

schools ready to go double shift to accommodate the refugees, but because there is no money.

For the children, what is even more tragic is that they may spend all of their school years away from their homes, without the ability to prepare for the future because of their lack of education.

We owe them at least a fleeting thought but taking an action would make a difference. They are worth it. For how are these young people expected to build a life for themselves without the basic skills of reading, writing and maths? How can they hope for a better world if we do not give them the ability to create it?

Despite all our efforts over the past 15 years, 59 million children are not going to school today and half of them are in conflict zones or where regimes have broken down. Provision for schooling in crisis situations falls through the net because humanitarian funds have to be focused on food and shelter. Less than 2% of all humanitarian aid currently goes towards education.

Eglantyne Jebb, the founder of the humanitarian organisation Save the Children, once noted that the only international language

that the world understands is the cry of a child. But it seems that the world has become deaf. What

other reason can there be when children are sold off daily into marriage, forced down mines or are imprisoned in domestic service? Little is being done to help them because of what can only be described as fatigue.

The head of UNRWA reported that they are now millions of dollars short in providing for Palestinian refugee children. In a few weeks' time more than 450,000 young people will not be able to start the new school year.

The return to school this autumn means nothing to millions more children who will never go to school or cannot return to school because the resources are not available. Why is the need urgent? Because homeless children are being trafficked, sold into slavery by ruthless adults because they are displaced and unaccounted for. If we do not do everything in our power to keep schools running these children are vulnerable to live a life worse than the horror they have escaped from.

So where does the funding come from when hundreds of thousands of Syrians seek refuge in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon? Where do we turn when one million children need their schools urgently rebuilt in Nepal?

In this dark and dangerous world there are millions who still care. Humanitarians. And we now have to mobilise them first by establishing a humanitarian platform and fund for education, and then by persuading governments, companies, foundations and individuals to contribute to these efforts. And if we succeed, perhaps in the future every day will be World Humanitarian Day and we won't need to give it a name.

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The case for  
a humanitarian  
fund for  
education in  
emergencies

# Reading, Writing, and Refugees

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14 September 2015

Just days ago, Abdul al-Kader, his four-year-old daughter, Abdelillah, draped over his shoulders, was photographed standing at a dangerous intersection in Beirut, trying to sell biro pens to feed his family. The image of this Syrian refugee family's plight, tweeted by a Norwegian, Gissur Simonarson, immediately went viral.

Within a day or two, £100,000 (\$154,000) was raised to help Abdul, Abdelillah, and her nine-year-old sister, Reem. When asked what he would do with the money, Abdul said he would use it to educate his children and their friends.

The story of Abdul and his children highlights an obvious, if overlooked, truth: Far from seeking to scrounge off Europe, thousands of Syrian exiles are desperate to return home as soon as it is safe. It is sheer desperation that is forcing them to embark on life-threatening voyages.

And they are not alone. An astonishing 30 million children are displaced around the world: two-thirds to other parts of their countries, and the rest forced to flee from their homelands altogether.

Some refugees are victims of natural disasters – for example, the one million children recently made homeless by the earthquake in Nepal. Others are displaced by climate change. But the main reason for the rising number of refugees is violent conflict. Five years ago, war and fighting displaced roughly 5,000 children per day; today, that number is more than 20,000.

Aside from Afghanistan since the 1970s, Somalia since the 1980s, the Democratic Republic of Congo since the 1990s, and now Syria, the past year alone has seen refugees fleeing the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Burundi. And, because the average time a refugee is away from his or her homeland is ten years, millions of refugee children could go without education for most of their childhood years.

That scenario – life on the streets, with some children trapped in slave-labor conditions, others trafficked for prostitution or forced into unwanted marriages, and all vulnerable to extremists who seek to exploit their suffering – is so unacceptable that it forces us to act. While food, medicine, and shelter come first, education must be a high priority.

I found that out a few weeks ago while visiting a refugee center in Beirut, where mothers pleaded with me to get their children into school. They understood that while nutrition and health care are vital to survival, education – which enables young people to prepare and plan for the future – is what gives them hope.

Yet, despite the efforts of international agencies, these vulnerable children will continue to fall through the cracks unless drastic action is taken now. Refugee children lose out because they benefit mainly from humanitarian aid, which maintains a short-term focus on shelter and food, and development aid, which is by its very nature long-term. Only 2% of humanitarian aid currently goes to schools, and aid agencies struggle to cope with emergencies.

To address this, plans are underway for a humanitarian fund that can provide money to keep schools operating through an emergency or to build new ones in refugee camps and settlements. Indeed, the real test for such a fund is in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, where services are at a breaking point and some two million children – the majority with no schooling – are languishing in shacks, tents, huts, and squalid camps.

Turkey has 621,000 Syrian child refugees and needs additional school capacity for some 400,000. Lebanon has 510,000, with no room for 300,000. Jordan has 350,000, and is 90,000 places short.

Last week, the Global Business Coalition for Education and the charity Theirworld outlined a way forward that is economical and can be implemented immediately. The plan is simple: double shifts in existing schools, with local children attending during the first half of the day, and refugee children attending during the second half. The plan could ensure that one million refugee children are not condemned to lose their chance at an education.

Over the past year, thanks to international donors around the world and a determined education minister, Elias Bou Saab, 106,000 refugee children in Lebanon have been enrolled under a double-shift system. Starting with the new autumn term, the total is set to rise to 140,000.

But the funding for this year is \$30 million short – and 60,000 of the students cannot be accommodated. And then there are the 300,000 children in Lebanon alone whose education needs remain to be met.

Normally in an emergency, there are no facilities, buildings, or staff to keep

children in school. What is missing in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey, however, are not classrooms or trained teachers – there are plenty locally and among adult Syrian refugees – but the money to pay for them.

The sums are not large relative to the scale of the problem. For just over \$500 a year, or \$10 per child per week, we can provide school places that would allow parents and children to do what they would prefer to do – be educated in the region.

Later this month in New York, I will ask the international community – old donors and potential new donors alike – to add another \$250 million to the \$100 million that we have already raised for Lebanon. If an impoverished refugee father is willing to give all he has to help children go to school, surely \$10 a week is not too much for the international community to offer to keep a refugee child off the streets.

What is missing ...  
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The case for  
a humanitarian  
fund for  
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emergencies

## A Breakthrough for Child Refugees?

This article was first published by  
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on 5 February 2016

Buried in the declaration from the just-completed fourth United Nations' Syria Pledging Conference in London is a little publicized but important promise: by next year, every Syrian refugee child will be offered a place in school.

The world, at long last, has taken seriously the need to provide education to conflict-affected children. Up to this point, global humanitarian aid targeting education has accounted for less than 2% of funds pledged. Though this shift is yet to be fully funded, it reflects the long overdue recognition by governments and aid agencies that humanitarian crises are not over in weeks or months, and that refugees need more than food and shelter.

The myriad miseries confronting millions of out-of-school children should give us the political will to fulfill this pledge. Refugees spend an average of ten years away from their homes. Without intervention, many of the children displaced by Syria's civil war – not to mention the other 24 million children worldwide who are out of school because of conflict – would never enter a classroom during their school-age years. As adults, they would remember childhoods spent in shacks, hovels, or the streets, deprived of the fulfillment and hope that comes with an education.

But the costs of a lost education extend far beyond feelings and emotions. When an education stops – or is stolen – children lose the protection of schools. Many are exploited. Young girls are targeted by traffickers and vanish into an abyss of unimaginable depravity. Young boys are forced into factories or the front lines of war.

With adults often banned from working in their country of refuge, those children lucky enough to have living parents are pushed into labor – wherever they can find it – to provide their families with some minuscule income. But no amount of stitching, shoveling, or fighting can secure a future the way an education can.

We see the costs in Syria. Without provision for children, families give up hope for any future in the region and embark on risky – and often fatal – voyages to Europe. Children who remain behind, fearful of an unknowable future, are easily recruited by extremists. If we are sincere in our desire to slow the exodus to Europe, to prevent the radicalization of children, and to prepare for Syria's reconstruction, we must see education, not emigration (much less extremism), as a child's passport to the future.

The failure to fund education for refugees is no accident. It is the direct result of a structurally flawed system that strands the needs of schoolchildren between humanitarian aid budgets (98% of which go to food, shelter, and health care) and development aid (which is necessarily long term).

Now that education for Syria's child refugees has been recognized as a responsibility of the humanitarian aid system, we have to find the means to finance it. The declaration stated only that participants "noted" the need for at least \$1.4 billion in annual funding. While a lot has been promised, we must ensure that it is delivered. And, even if it is, a lot more is needed, as more children are displaced every day.

There is a no better venue to build on the London declaration than the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May. At the

epicenter of the world's biggest refugee crisis, we must take another step forward, by establishing what I call the HOPE fund: The Humanitarian Operation for the Provision of Education in Emergencies, the first permanent fund guaranteeing education in conflict zones.

No one needs HOPE more than Ahmed, a 12-year-old I met in a Beirut reception center for refugees. Like most Syrian refugees, he was out of school but desperate to return. When I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he responded without hesitation: "an engineer." I am used to hearing children tell me of their dreams to be everything from airline pilots to rap artists, but not engineers. Why an engineer? "To return home," he said "and rebuild Syria."

With private foundations, governments, and businesses all pledging to contribute, the HOPE fund that I have in mind could be in operation by the end of the year. With 50 companies already committing \$70 million to fund education for Syrian refugees, we have shown that the most entrepreneurial and innovative companies can be partners in peace.

Consider one of our goals – digital access and online courses for children in refugee camps. If today's technology wizards can enable us to turn on our house lights from halfway around the world, think what they could do for education in emergencies. Facebook, Google, Apple, and others have offered to help. We must now persuade them to coordinate their efforts in offering online classes for teachers and refugee children.

Fortunately, we have a success story to inspire our coming efforts. In the past year, Lebanon has taken vulnerable Syrian children off the streets by creating 207,000 school places. Under a double-shift arrangement, Syrian refugees receive instruction in the afternoon and early evening in the same classrooms that local Lebanese children occupy earlier in the day.

This successful experiment proves that it is possible to offer education to one million Syrian children in 2016, and to all of them in 2017. Following Lebanon's example, both Turkey and Jordan have announced plans to double the number of school places for refugees.

If we can succeed in one of the most war-ravaged regions of the world, progress elsewhere would become much more likely. The forgotten child refugees of South Sudan and Yemen would be brought out of the shadows. Myanmar's persecuted minorities would gain the opportunity to help shape their country's fledgling democracy. And the long-suffering boys and girls along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border would be given the tools to build a future.

The world has come together repeatedly to fight disease and disaster. We have rallied against – and toppled – dictators and tyrants. Now let us be the first generation to put every child in school.

While a  
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The case for  
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emergencies

# To really help Syria, we should start with a bold new humanitarian vision like this

This article was first published by  
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9 February 2016

A special humanitarian conference — the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul — promises to be a defining moment for the 24 million out-of-school children in conflict zones worldwide, for two reasons.

First, the Syrian civil war has reminded us that crises are rarely resolved quickly. Recognizing that, peacemakers in Istanbul will consider a bold plan to create a new humanitarian fund for the provision of education in emergencies.

Second, such a fund speaks to an exciting new narrative in humanitarian relief efforts. Partnerships are increasingly mobilizing all the talents at our disposal, cutting across the public, private and nonprofit sectors. So in Istanbul, society's brightest minds must unite, establish and guide a cutting edge fund for education in emergencies.

In reaching for this transformative funding facility, we have the benefit of a stiff tailwind. We just wrapped up the Syria Donors Conference in London, where international leaders and diplomats pledged \$10 billion for the victims of the war in Syria and made a commitment to focus on the schooling needs for the 2.1 million out-of-school children within Syria itself, plus the 1.7 million vulnerable refugee children in neighboring countries.

But as a report prepared for the secretary-general of the United Nations by the U.N. undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs, Stephen O'Brien, reminds us, we can do more. The thesis is clear: "education ... is not a luxury that can stop and start due to external circumstances."

To see where rhetoric meets reality — the rubber hitting the road, as it were — one need only look at what has happened to children during the war. As the report notes, "education can prevent" all the horrors we have seen — "early, forced and child marriage, abuse and the recruitment of children [to militias —] in the short term."

Time and again we are reminded that in periods of crisis, parents and children identify education as one of their highest priority needs. This is not to diminish the importance of food, shelter and safety; in fact, the vast majority of humanitarian aid goes to securing these basic minimums. But therein lies the rub. Humanitarian aid should not stop at basic minimums. For humanitarian emergencies are never over in a few days or months. Increasingly they are protracted crises — the Syrian civil war now marches into its sixth year, the South Sudanese and Eritrean crises are more than a decade long, the Pakistan-Afghan border disagreement is decades old. The list goes on.

So we need a grander, more sweeping vision recognizing that education provides a dignity that cannot be found underneath a 10-kilogram bag of rice. The report's recommendations to increase the coverage of inter-agency humanitarian appeals to a minimum average of 75 percent and expand the Central Emergency Response Fund from \$500 million to \$1 billion by 2018 prime the international community for further action. Placing equal, if not greater stock in a permanent funding facility for education in emergencies would provide backbone and intuitive weight to his existing set of proposals.

We have seen agreement from a number of U.N. divisions — UNICEF, UNESCO and UNHCR, as well as external agencies like the World Bank — on the need for such a platform. As a believer that an education is a child's best hope in a future worthy of planning, perhaps a fitting name for such an education fund would be HOPE: The Humanitarian Operation for the Provision of Education in Emergencies.

Circumventing the ritual passing of the humanitarian aid begging bowl during times of crisis, an education in emergencies fund could disburse aid at the first sign of smoke. With the support of U.N. agencies and friendly governments, the fund could be up and running by year's end. And with the goal of educating 1 million out-of-school Syrian refugee children in 2016 — and all children forced out of school because of this crisis the following year — the time for action is now.

Creating an education in emergencies fund at Istanbul can also mark the beginning of what I believe is a defining shift in how humanitarian aid will be delivered. The longstanding tradition of the public sector setting the pace of aid delivery will be increasingly complemented by those who can deliver the same goods faster, safer and cheaper. By releasing the pressure from public

institutions spread too thin, we can create a space that is more inclusive and effective. This partnership model aligns with O'Brien's vision of calling for the use of all financial instruments at our disposal to secure humanitarian aid.

Some of the world's largest technology firms and most visible philanthropic organizations have lent their support to the cause. Already, \$70 million has been contributed to the Syrian refugee education effort by 50 companies.

But this story is far bigger than dollars and cents. As history shows us, when broad coalitions of individuals across the private, public and nonprofit sectors come together, they can succeed in advancing the human cause. The companies that joined Bill and Melinda Gates to find — and fund — a cure for Ebola, for example. The entrepreneurs using solar energy and off-grid electricity to power the most remote tribal villages in Africa a full century after the gift of stable electricity was born. From digital learning in refugee camps to rebuilding schools for the 21st century, these stories will only grow in number when backed by an education in emergencies fund.

So inside the humanitarian tent we need charities, philanthropists, businesses and social enterprises as well as governments and international agencies — not just one sector determining who gets to set the pace of progress. Not dogmatic dismissals writing off creative thinkers. And not divisions where unity is most needed. Humanity is everybody's business, and an education is everybody's right.

... education  
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# The civil rights struggle

## Gordon Brown: Children lead the fight for equality

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6 December 2012

In 2010 a rights revolution was born as young adults texted, blogged and then took their demand for change to the streets of Tunisia and Egypt. Two years later, children, no longer prepared to be passive spectators, are demanding that they continue to be listened to.

Eight weeks ago in Pakistan, the schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai was shot because she wasn't prepared to accept a Taliban order that girls should stay away from school. Millions of children globally joined her fight for education. Around the world girls and boys showed their solidarity for her education cause by wearing headbands and t-shirts with the slogan "I am Malala". By the end of January a petition signed by one million of Pakistan's out-of-school children will be presented to the president of Pakistan demanding the opportunity for an education.

Only a few days ago a raid took place in the Indian capital of Delhi, inspired by young people who are challenging adult complacency about the evil of child labor. The Global March against Child Labor liberated 14 children — some as young as eight years old — who were producing Christmas decorations and gifts believed to be bound for sale in Western shops. These children are now freed from slavery.

Again, young people themselves were taking the lead. Following these shocking revelations about Christmas exploitation of child labor, a children's march to ban the practice will start on Saturday in one of India's most northerly regions, Assam province. One hundred rescued child laborers will commence a 300 kilometer (186 mile) walk south, aiming to persuade India's parliament to pass new laws to end the exploitation of those under 14.

A new movement also started by young people in the Nilphamari district in Northern Bangladesh aims to convince parents not to marry off their young daughters as child brides. The declaration of "child marriage free zones" is spreading through the country. Girls, some as young as nine years old, are rising up against forced marriages which cut short their childhood and starve them of an education.

These new youth-inspired movements, impatient for change, raise fundamental questions about why adults have been so slow in ensuring all children have the right to education.

Children's protests can be tracked back to our new age of technology and communications in which young people can

increasingly connect with each other across the globe. It's a conversation which is revealing the gap between the promise of opportunity and the grim reality of unequal chances.

The promise of globalization, like that of the American Dream, is that all children should be able to rise as far as their talents can take them. For too many children the hope of advancement has to be set against the real world — where it is not what you do or how hard you work that dictates your life chances, but simply where you come from.

I sense from my visits this year to Asia, the Middle East and Africa that young people are waking up to the contradiction between the glib rhetoric of opportunity and the grim realities of social exclusion.

According to recent studies, 80% of the inequality in children's outcomes worldwide can be put down to birth and background. Only a fraction of their success can be explained by hard work, merit, effort or even intelligence.

And yet we do too little to remedy this unfairness and inequality. From birth to the age of 17 we spend just \$400 on the education of an African child in contrast to the \$100,000 spent on a western child.

If we asked a Western audience how much aid they think we give to deprived children living in poorer countries, the answer would likely be that we are generous — perhaps over-generous. Yet the combined international aid of all countries amounts to only 25 cents a week in support of educating a child in Africa — not enough to pay for a simple exercise book.

When you examine the sheer scale of the global gap between the opportunities of a poor rural girl in a developing country and a rich boy from a Western country, you begin to understand that we are not yet living through a glorious era rich in opportunity or one defined by an upward march to progress. Instead, basic rights and equal opportunity are still to be fought for. Adults will have to catch up with the world's children, led by Malala, who are starting to show the way.

“ These new youth-inspired movements, impatient for change, raise fundamental questions .... ”



## Gordon Brown on Youth Protests in India and Pakistan

This article was first published by  
**Newsweek**  
14 January 2013

The new year has begun—just as 2012 ended—with young people on the march. Literally. This week it is young Indians, shocked by the murder of a medical student, who dominate the street rallies that are demanding proper protection for women against rape. A few weeks before, it was thousands of young Pakistanis who responded to the shooting of 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai, forming the majority in the mass protests calling for an end to the discrimination that locks girls out of school.

Defying doom-laden forecasts that social progress is not possible in today's fragile world economy, 2013 is likely to be marked by a rising number of demonstrations for young people and by young people—demanding that their rights be taken seriously and opportunity be delivered.

For these recent assertions of their rights by young people in Pakistan and India are not isolated incidents but part of a new wave of change. In Bangladesh, would-be teenage brides and teenage boys are now, for the first time, leading grassroots campaigns to declare their communities "child marriage-free zones." Even before the Indian rape, Nepal had been witnessing widespread demonstrations condemning violence against women. In Burma, a campaign against child trafficking brought 200,000 young people to that country's first open-air pop concert of modern times. And again in India, a march against child labor was led by 100 boys and girls who, at ages as young as 8, 9, and 10, had been rescued from bonded labor.

Of course, the outrages we have witnessed in India and Pakistan would certainly have evoked an angry response at any time—but, left to adults alone, the protests would almost certainly have come and gone, to be filed in the category of one more terrible rape, one more awful shooting, one more disgraceful act of violence against girls.

What is new is that today's generation of young people have themselves become far more assertive in demanding that their rights be upheld than the adults who are responsible for watching over them.

If the years 2010 and 2011 signaled the start of a rights revolution led by young adults in the Middle East and North Africa, in the years 2012 and now 2013 the rights of even younger girls and boys are being thrust on to the agenda by teenagers themselves. After decades of adult complacency dominated by a false assumption that progress to end child exploitation—whether it be child labor, forced marriage, or discrimination against girls—was only a matter of time and somehow inexorable, it is the victims of the world's inaction who are forcing the world to wake up to the reality that change will only happen if it is made to happen.

And, fortunately, there is no sign of this demand for change abating in 2013. Late last year, more than 2 million signed petitions calling for free universal education in Pakistan, not least because of

the campaigning genius and technology of the activist group Avaaz, which rallied the international community in response to Malala's shooting. But in the first few days of 2013, 1 million Pakistani girls and boys who have themselves been denied education have been signing an updated petition demanding urgent action on their behalf to deliver basic schooling. An anti-child-labor petition, also supported by Avaaz, calling on India to end child slavery has already attracted 600,000 signatures—mainly from young people themselves. The organizations V-Day and One Billion Rising have called for young women in Africa and Asia to rise up on Feb. 14 and be part of what they call "a catalytic moment" to demand an end to violence against females. Young women in Africa, from Kenya to Somalia to Ghana, are planning what, for thousands, will be their first-ever major demonstrations against rape and violence.

And, as a result of this growing and insistent pressure from young people, long-delayed, long-overdue change is starting to happen. Next month, the Indian Parliament will be under pressure to vote to outlaw, for the first time, all child labor for children under 14.

... we are starting  
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you are going.

Following a decision last month by the Burmese government—prompted by a great philanthropist, Andrew Forrest, and the anti-slavery organization Walk Free—to sign a historic agreement to outlaw all forms of slavery, a host of other countries are being pressed into change. And the world's 27 largest multinational businesses, worth \$5 trillion in sales, are now also under pressure from Walk Free and young people who are demanding that by April this year they pledge to remove slave labor from every part of their supply chains—or face criticism and, potentially, boycotts or direct action.

So why in these austere financial times, when the world is reeling from low growth, high unemployment, and financial volatility—and when you might expect a pause in progressive change—is a movement for basic rights that might have expected to do better in times of affluence starting to flourish?

The answer lies in the very nature of the changes wrought by globalization itself. Today's globalization is characterized by two massively transformative forces: first, the free flow of capital and second, the global sourcing of goods and services, both of which play a key role in opening up the world. And, in their wake, globalization is being defined by a third force: our capacity to communicate instantaneously with anyone, anywhere in the world. Of course, there is a huge and as-yet-inconclusive debate about the difference new media made to the Arab Spring—but what is undeniable is that, with the Internet, mobile phones, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube unlocking an infinite set of opportunities for people on one continent to talk to people on another, we can never return to the times a decade ago when, in many countries, sentries stood over fax machines to prevent outside influences from infiltrating their nation.





“ ...we invest just \$400 on the education of the typical African child from birth to 16 compared with \$100,000 for a Western child ... ”

And it is this, our ability to know, share, and compare knowledge and experience across old barriers and all frontiers, that is now showing it has the potential to radicalize a new generation.

In places where for centuries your rights have been only what your rulers decreed and your status and wealth what someone else ascribed to you, young people are asking questions. In countries where for centuries it was accepted that if your grandparents and parents were poor you must be too—and if you were born without the chance to flourish, so too must your children and your children's children be—young people are saying this is not the way they see it. In continents where, if you were a girl, you were inevitably trapped in the circumstances of your birth, all your life's choices dictated by centuries-old patriarchal assumptions, young people are starting to defy the ancient ruling orthodoxies and to assert that, irrespective of gender, race, or religion, every single person has basic rights, that power derives from the people, and that the duty of the state is to meet your needs, uphold your rights, and advance your opportunities.

And as young people find out more about what is happening to other young people, their aspirations rise and they start to discover the emptiness of some of the central claims we have made about the benefits of globalization. For every day the myth that we are now in a world where there is opportunity for all who aspire and strive—that we are all now, somehow, free to rise as far as our talents and work can take us—is being exposed.

And as young people compare their experiences with others across the globe, they are discovering that the vast inequalities in their material circumstances are not so much to do with how intelligent they are, how much merit they have, or how little or hard they work, but where they were born and whom they were born to.

That is why at the heart of protests from the Arab Spring to the Global March Against Child Labour in India to the campaign for child marriage-free zones in Bangladesh is a rejection of the view that one's status at birth is a permanent condition. Instead, we are starting to see an assertion of the truth that what should matter is not where you come from but where you are going, and that, even if we cannot shape our original circumstances, we can at least shape our response to that fate. It is a demand for opportunity founded on a desire to be treated with dignity—regardless of where or to whom you are born. If we are not careful it will

unlock a generational battle—between an older generation who will try to hold on to their social security, health, and pension benefits, irrespective of what is happening to youth employment, and the young, who will feel pushed out of the free education and employment opportunities that previous Western generations of young people had as a right.

This growing global consciousness poses some difficult questions for the richest countries too. We will be asked why, when we know that as much as 80 percent of global inequality is due to birth and background and that education is the one real driver of equality of opportunity, there is still so little international support for investment in education.

We will have to explain why our patterns of educational spending compound rather than correct or compensate for these inequalities—why, for example, we invest just \$400 on the education of the typical African child from birth to 16 compared with \$100,000 for a Western child; why a paltry \$14 is the total amount of all annual international aid supporting that African child; why London, with a population of 8 million, has almost 20,000 girls in the final year of secondary education and South Sudan, with a population of 10 million, has just 400.

You do not need to subscribe to the politics of envy—indeed, I have never believed that for some to do well others have to do badly—to agree that bridging the gap between what young people are and what they have in themselves to become is what Condoleezza Rice has called “the civil-rights issue of our generation,” and that mobilizing the talent of their young through better schools and higher teaching standards is the only sure way of unlocking the potential of the poorest countries in the world.

An April summit in Washington led by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank President Jim Kim will require concrete action from off-track countries to move children from the exploitation that is leading to today's protests to the education that is now denied but can help correct this. A century ago, in his younger, more radical days, Winston Churchill talked of the gap between the excesses of accumulated wealth and what he called “the gaping sorrows of the left-out millions.” We will hear more of this in 2013—and it will come from the voices of youth.

# Helping the world's poorest children requires radical reform

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17 April 2013

The world's newest and youngest liberation movement will make its presence felt at a summit in Washington this week. The Common Forum for Kalmal Hari Freedom, the Nilphamari Child Marriage Free Zone, the Ugandan Child Protection Club, the Upper Manya Krobo Rights of the Child Club and Indonesia's Grobogan Child Empowerment Group may not yet be household names outside their own countries, but schoolgirls demanding an end to child labor, child marriage and child trafficking — and inspired by the sacrifice of Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani girl shot for wanting to go to school — are borrowing the tactics of the U.S. civil rights movement.

Once cowed and silent, these young civil rights leaders in the making have become defiant and assertive, and they are linking up across the world to demand justice for the 32 million girls and 29 million boys still denied places at school.

A petition signed by 1 million out-of-school Pakistani children demanding their right to education is to be presented Friday to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari. The same day, a coalition that includes the Global March Against Child Labour, Walk Free, Girls Not Brides and members of Plan International's "Because I am a Girl" campaign will lay out their plans to end child slavery by 2015.

They intend to petition all governments over the next year and will be led by Kailash Satyarthi, the head of India's Bachpan Bachao Andolan ("Save the Childhood") movement, who last month persuaded Parliament to pass India's first laws against child trafficking.

In a sign that young campaigners will become as significant as the young bloggers of the Arab Spring, they plan to reassemble July 12 in New York, where, on her 16th birthday, Malala Yousafzai will make her first public speech since her lifesaving treatment.

Every year 10 million girls marry between the ages of 11 and 13. Fifteen million children are condemned to working full time in mines and sweatshops, on farms and as domestic labor. No scientific discovery or technological breakthrough is needed to build the 4 million classrooms and employ the 2 million teachers necessary to achieve universal education — just cash. But global education spending — only \$3 billion a year at its peak — has been frozen for three years and is being cut.

With progress stalled, young civil rights leaders who represent the world's most marginalized children are questioning core assumptions that were the basis of our decade-long crusade against poverty. They are asking why the very people the Millennium Development Goals were designed to help most have become those most likely to be left behind. With fewer than 1,000 days left until the goals' deadline, Adam Wagstaff of the World Bank has shown that, despite commitments to reduce infant and maternal mortality among the poorest, death rates for poor infants and their mothers are falling far slower than among the rest of the population. Even when we have the power to target donor resources directly to the most marginalized — with

immunization and antenatal care, for example — the top 60 percent are making more progress than the bottom 40 percent.

Similarly, progress toward the Millennium Development Goal of universal education by 2015 has stopped because of a failure to reach the marginalized, including child laborers and child brides. While the public justification for all our efforts is to offer the most help to the poorest and most vulnerable, setting a universal goal without targeting the most disadvantaged is a recipe for them to be left behind. And when the next set of Millennium Development Goals — with more ambitious universal targets for learning outputs and secondary education — raise the ceiling before we have put the floor in place, then they will continue to lose out.

This weakness in the Millennium Development Goal process was foreseen by the authors of Bangladesh's latest five-year education plan. Children in the country's flood zone and hill areas and among all ethnic minorities, they discovered, had missed out on the country's general progress. So they decided to target payments for education and social protections for the poor on the most marginalized, but they also set an explicit "equity goal,"

... setting a universal goal without targeting the most disadvantaged is a recipe for them to be left behind.

resolving to close the gap in school attendance between the richest and poorest and to close the learning gap between the best- and poorest-performing areas. They understood that providing a malnourished child of illiterate parents the same level of per capita support as children from the richest homes is a prescription for inequality, and that if children with very unequal starting points were to enjoy "equivalent freedoms," more resources had to go to those most in need. Unless a foundation of equal rights is accompanied by resources devoted to reducing inequalities, millions of the marginalized will still be left behind.

Progressive universalism demands that governments and the international community deliver the resources needed to convert the right to equal treatment in health and education into real opportunity.

Wagstaff and Kevin Watkins of the Overseas Development Institute have put forth a worthy proposal for binding targets not just for the whole population but also for greater progress to be made by the poorest deciles. For education, this would mean commitments to reduce, by 2020 and 2025, the gaps in school attendance and school completion rates between the lowest and highest deciles and between the worst and best-performing areas.

Change happened in 1960s America only after public anger escalated against the sheer scale of injustice and only when people were prepared to consider dramatic new remedies. At this week's summit, world leaders have to consider as radical a program of reform and incentives to meet the noble aims of 2013's newest civil rights struggle. Certain that right is on their side, the world's most marginalized young people will remain silent no more.

# The ‘Year of the Child’ Has Become ‘The Year of Fear’ for Children

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12 June 2015

Is it any wonder that we now call this “the year of fear” for millions of children across the world?

The cries of a starving or distressed child are a harrowing enough sound. The screams of a child caught up in violent conflict are an altogether different matter.

Girls and boys are increasingly being brutalized in clashes across the world, according to a shocking report released by the United Nations secretary-general on June 11. And now they have fewer places to run to — fewer places to hide — because the safe haven of a school is not as safe as it should be.

Between 2009 and 2013 almost 10,000 schools were attacked or shut down because of conflict.

In a new report on “Children and armed conflict” unveiled to UN General Assembly Security Council members, the latest figures make for grim reading. The list of actual atrocities is unspeakable.

More than 50 armed groups have been named and shamed as having carried out grave attacks on children.

- Thousands of schools are still being attacked or used in war zones, rendering them no-go buildings for girls and boys.
- Mass abductions are becoming an increasing trend, as is the recruitment of child soldiers.
- The number of cases of extreme violence against girls and boys is rising rapidly.

It has been almost six months since the worst school attack in recent history — the massacre of 132 pupils and their teachers at a school in Peshawar, Pakistan. It has been almost 14 months since some 200 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria, maybe never to be seen again.

But, despite worldwide revulsion, the atrocities against children have not ceased. If anything, the volume of attacks on education is increasing.

In Afghanistan, schools were attacked in 163 instances. A number of incidents involved the use of IEDs, and some schools were targeted because they were used as polling stations for elections. More than 400 schools remained closed here because girls are a primary focus of Taliban threats.

More than 31,000 children were impacted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by upwards of 20 school attacks. Twelve educational facilities were used for military purposes. Meanwhile, in Iraq, last year was the deadliest year in over six years. According to reports received by the United Nations, targeted killings, abductions, violence, forced recruitment and attacks on schools were commonplace in territories controlled by ISIS and affiliated armed groups.

The report, spanning 50 pages, also highlights the terrors of last summer in Gaza, which damaged at least 262 schools and 274 kindergartens. And in Somalia, the report documents nearly 1,900 violations against children, making every page sorry reading with every line screaming yet another reason why children are afraid.

Action is being taken. At an Oslo conference on creating safe schools two weeks ago, 37 countries signed the Safe Schools Declaration, which commits them to protect education from attack.

The countries which signed — including Afghanistan and conflict-torn Nigeria — have agreed to endorse and use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military

Use during Armed Conflict. The guidelines are intended to apply to both non-state and government armed forces.

The full list of signatories are: Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Czech Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Montenegro, Mozambique, Nigeria, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Uruguay and Zambia.

Their pledge and their intent is commendable, but there are more than 37 countries in this world. There are, in fact, 197 countries.

In March, I told the United Nations that the international community had to act urgently, saying:

*It is time for us to end the shameful breaches of international law that violate the rights of millions of children by calling a halt to the militarization of schools, stopping the now-growing abduction of school pupils as weapons of war and insisting — even in conflict zones — that properly resourced safe schools enable children to enjoy their education in peace.*

When will the madness end? From Syria and Iraq to South Sudan and the Central African Republic, we have seen more displaced children and more child refugees than at any time since the Second World War 70 years ago. The number has risen this past year to a staggering 25 million, the number of children in exile now as big as a medium-sized state.

And this new report simply proves what we have been saying for months: that 2015 has become not the hoped-for “year of the child” but “the year of fear.” Vulnerable youngsters — whose right to be shielded from war is supposedly guaranteed in successive United Nations charters and resolutions — have been systematically violated, exploited, injured, raped and killed.

The militarization of schools in Syria was followed by verified reports of child atrocities in Iraq and then of school bombings in Gaza. There are now an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world. One hundred thousand of them are girls, many of whom are being used as sex slaves.

The secretary-general concludes:

*The facts as presented in the body of the present report speak for themselves and should shock our collective conscience. I am more convinced than ever that the United Nations and member states must continue to give the protection of children affected by armed conflict the highest priority. Their plight should be the primary reason not to start conflicts and the primary reason to end them.*

After the bloodshed and incessant school attacks of 2014, I wanted 2015 to be a year of hope, of action and the realization of a promise made 15 years ago to boys and girls across the world: that they would all have a school to go to and they would be safe there, to learn and to have their chance in the world.

Instead, they are frightened. Our children are precious. Let's keep them safe.

# The heartbreaking picture that shines a light on education plight of millions of children

This article was first published by  
*A World at School*  
9 July 2015

A young boy from the Philippines — pictured at a makeshift desk doing his homework in the street, under the lights of a McDonald's restaurant — encapsulates the great paradox of global education today: more young people than ever before realise the importance of the right to education but too few adults are making that right into a reality.

Most of us have a home and yet find it difficult to persuade our children to do homework.

Daniel Cabrera, just nine years old, lives and studies on the streets of Manila because his home was burned down shortly after his father died suddenly.

Left homeless, he now lives with his widowed mother and brother in the same street food stall where she works. Sleeping rough, he needs the bright light from McDonald's to do his homework in the evening. How else would he see his jotter and study his books?

Against the odds, Daniel is fighting hard to get an education. At school he is considered a lively, studious and enquiring pupil and is clearly driven to continue learning outside the classroom, no matter what the conditions. But are we doing enough to help him and millions like him?

The photograph, which has gone viral, coincides with the news that we don't take education seriously enough to ensure 124 million out-of-school children are in education.

Indeed, 59 million primary-age children are not at school and may never even enter a classroom. What's more, there are millions more who are being badly taught. While technology yields the ability to improve learning, 90% of all children in sub-Saharan Africa are in primary schools without electricity.

Daniel is not alone: 1.3 billion people — nearly one in five — do not have access to electricity, meaning that children have limited time to read or study.

Yet just at the time that young people such as Daniel show they want to study hard and get an education, support for education is falling.

Annual aid for basic education has fallen 22% in the past four years from \$4.5 billion to \$3.5 billion. In case you assume education aid was too generous, the figures are just \$11 per child in Guinea, \$10 per child in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, \$5 per child in Chad, and in Nigeria — which has the highest out-of-school population of any nation — just \$4 per child.

The result is that, even when international aid and domestic support are combined, only \$80 per year is spent on the education of a child in a developing country, whereas \$8000 is spent on the education of the typical Western child.

The Philippines has made great advances but it still has 1.2 million children out of school. In Africa the out-of-school figure exceeds 25 million.

That is why the campaign for universal education must continue, must grow and must deliver; why the #UpForSchool Petition — which has already attracted eight million signatures — needs even more support.

It will be presented to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and already has support from schools in the United Kingdom, charities in Bangladesh and celebrities as varied as the makers of Angry Birds and, only last week, Justin Bieber.

We ask of children deprived of the help they need: when will they ever learn? But we ask of adults: when will THEY ever learn? And we ask of governments too: when will they learn that education is too important to be left to chance?

If one nine-year-old boy can emerge from the darkness and show the world how important education is perhaps the adults who can make a difference will finally see the light.

“ Sleeping rough, he needs  
the bright light from  
McDonald's to do his  
homework in the evening. ”



# The World is More Dangerous for Young People Today Than Ever. But They Are Fighting Back.

The spirit of youth and the optimism and sheer defiance of young people today is alive and well. They are set to take their fight for rights to a whole new level.

Not since the end of World War II — exactly 70 years ago — have so many children and teenagers been displaced from so many countries. And never have so many become refugees as a result of civil conflicts and the breakup of regimes.

Today, 30 million young people are officially displaced persons, exiled from their homes in their own countries. Around 10 million have become refugees, forced to seek shelter in countries far from their home and their families.

It is a tragedy of epic proportions, yet amidst the pain and the suffering there is still aspiration, a desire for life, knowledge and opportunity. That hope stems from young people.

Today's International Youth Day marks a new development in thriving youth activism.

This generation is connected. They talk to each other across the globe on mobiles and on social media. They understand. And with a focus on the direct engagement of young people in fighting for their rights, we should be proud to highlight the fact that nothing less than a civil rights struggle is underway, led by young people and their endless energy.

Whatever the world throws at them, they will not cower away. You can almost hear them chant: Bring it on.

They are increasingly determined in the fight for their basic rights to be free of child labor, child marriage and child trafficking and sex discrimination — and to share in and enjoy the provision of basic education.

More and more young people, seeing humanitarian aid drying up in key areas of the world, are demanding action. Almost 1,000 global youth ambassadors, led by A World at School, are today making the case for an end to youth exploitation and the right to universal education.

And next month, a town hall rally will be held in New York on September 28; youth leaders standing alongside Graca Machel will highlight their demands for support.

The world is utterly hostile right now, nowhere more so than in Syria and its neighboring countries. There are currently 5.5 million children who have been affected by the Syrian conflict, most of whom enjoyed education before the civil war. Most now go without any school or education.

And this is not just an issue in the Middle East, but all across the world. Africa is becoming a cauldron for attacks on youth, with girls' rights being specifically targeted by militant groups. Boko Haram's campaign of terror against Western education is the most infamous because of its horrific and high-profile, large-scale attacks but right across the continent children are being denied their rights.

Niger has the highest rate of child marriage in the world, with 75 percent of girls married before they turn 18. And in South Sudan, almost 800,000 children have been displaced as a result of the civil war with thousands of boys recruited as child soldiers, leaving them in danger and traumatized as a result of living on the front line.

The horror doesn't halt there. Children were bombed in Gaza, pupils were massacred in Pakistan, vulnerable young girls were trafficked out of Nepal when an earthquake struck. When 2015 was recently labeled the Year of Fear, it was for a reason.

But amidst the despair, there are pockets of hope, inevitably from young people fighting back to save each other from exploitation and demanding that the world support their struggle.

We have seen the growth of civil rights groups led by youth, such as the Global March Against Child Labor, opposing child slavery; A World at School, championing the right to education for all boys and girls; and Nepal's Common Forum for Kamlari Freedom, fighting against child marriage.

Young people's groups — from Bachpan Bachao Andolan in India to the Yellow Movement in Ethiopia and the Street 2 school campaign in Tanzania — are fighting for the youth.

For too long, young people have relied on adults who have done too little to stop the violation of the rights of the children for whom they were responsible.

Right now, a civil rights struggle of young people led by young people is our best hope for the future. More power to them.

They are fired up, with good reason. They are passionate, and they can and will bring change in a world that, we can only hope, they may understand even better than we do.

“ It is a tragedy of epic proportions,  
yet amidst the pain and the suffering there  
is still aspiration ... ”



# Girls' rights

## The Tragedy of Child Brides

This article was first published by  
*The Huffington Post*  
9 October 2012

“ Girls of nine, ten and eleven are among those whose childhoods are stolen ... ”

This Thursday the first International Day of The Girl Child aims to focus attention on two major issues affecting millions of vulnerable girls — the tragedy of child brides and the importance of girls' education.

Ten million girls every year are removed from school and forced into marriages they did not choose. Girls of nine, ten and eleven are among those whose childhoods are stolen, and destined instead to a future of poverty and exploitation.

My recent report on child marriage makes clear that the surest way to end this scandal of child brides is to ensure that every girl goes to school. Ending the destruction of talent and opportunity that comes with early marriage would also generate wider benefits. Children born to very young mothers (who often live in extreme poverty) are more likely to die before their fifth birthday; keeping girls in school and out of marriage delays them having children so young. Prolonging girls' education could therefore save an estimated 500,000 infant lives between now and the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goal on child mortality.

That is why every government, UN agency and donor should include in their education strategies clear targets for eliminating early marriage, backed by policies and financing provisions. On Thursday I'll be supporting the call by a number of UN agencies and leading campaigners including Desmond Tutu and Mary

Robinson to accelerate progress in reducing the number of child brides.

Commendable progress in narrowing the gender gap in education has been made, though far too many girls are still denied their right to schooling because of gender discrimination. This week Plan International will publish its findings on girls' education. Providing girls with learning opportunities makes them less likely to be a child bride and more likely to be informed about HIV/AIDS, hygiene, nutrition and employment prospects.

Later this year Sarah Brown and Sue Smalley will publish a study summarizing what needs to be done to achieve the Millennium Development Goal promising basic education for every girl by the end of 2015.

Part of my remit as UN Special Envoy for Global Education is to work to end the scandal of violation of girl's rights by offering education for all. Our guarantee on International Day of The Girl Child is that we will do everything, everywhere to ensure that the millions of girls who have not gone to school today will get their chance of an education and have their basic human rights respected.

## Girl Rising: From Demure to Defiant

This article was first published by  
*The Huffington Post*  
23 January 2013

“ ... a refusal to  
accept violence against  
women and girls as a given ”

The rights of girls is becoming the hot topic of the 2013, as a new movement of empowered young women discovers that it has the momentum to force big issues — girls' health, girls' education and the protection of girls against violence — to the centre of the global agenda.

The pressure that has come from anti-rape marches, which have dominated the early days of the year in India and have spread to other countries, will not dissipate in the next few weeks. Indeed it will be stepped up, with Valentine's Day demonstrations around the world, when the online campaign group One Billion Rising plans what it calls a mixture of 'a global strike, an invitation to dance, an act of solidarity with women and a refusal to accept violence against women and girls as a given'.

Girls' rights will be the focus of the 10 x10 Initiative when, on International Women's Day (March 8), award-winning journalists and film-makers will expose in the new documentary 'Girl Rising' just how unfair the distribution of educational opportunities is for so many millions of girls around the world. The new film will give added impetus to long-running campaigns such as Plan International's *Because I Am A Girl*, whose aim is to give four million girls around the world the chance to gain the education that can help them to break out of the cycle of poverty.

In the wake of the shooting last year of Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, discrimination against girls — 32 million of whom

are denied the chance to go to school — will be the theme of a special event during the United Nations General Assembly in September. Ahead of that, getting girls to school in targeted countries will be a top agenda item in a summit on April 18–19 in Washington, to be attended by the UN Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank, in advance of the IMF/World Bank spring meetings. During that week, we will also focus on ways to ban child marriage and child labour, and outlaw the prejudice that prevents girls going to school.

The rights of girls is moving to the top of the global issues agenda because young women are saying with rising resolve that they will no longer accept the rules and conventions imposed upon them by a male-dominated adult population.

Indeed, I see in recent protests a real shift. Demonstrations that started as cautious, often gentle, admonitions to the powers that be, with respectful requests for change, have now come to encompass a set of defiant, non-negotiable demands in the form of ultimatums — and rightly so. Protests that once were pleas to 'please stop this' have become protests that insist 'no more and never again'.



# Girl Rising: Adult Complacency Is Over

This article was first published by  
*The Huffington Post*  
24 January 2013

When Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai was shot by the Taliban last year for daring to go to school, girls took to the streets in mass numbers for the first time. When I visited Pakistan weeks after the assassination attempt, everywhere I went I found girls taking action: writing letters, signing petitions, producing poems or drawings. This new demonstration of the power of girls energised Pakistan civil society. Having organised a million-strong nationwide petition for free universal education, ordinary Pakistanis then decided to highlight the millions of children — mainly girls — who have been excluded from school and denied their basic right to education. Now a second million-strong petition, signed by those losing out on education — in the main young girls — is in the works to be presented to the Pakistani government.

But the recent reaction to rape in India has taken the demonstrations to a new level. Left to adults alone, this awful gang rape would have brought forth the usual responses when atrocities occur: dismay, then shock, and then, after a day or two, the predictable statements we hear from political leaders that this must never happen again — just before sentiment subsides. But, with people shocked to the core by the murder of a modest, conscientious medical student, who was raped and left for dead when accosted while out with her boyfriend, the mood has shifted from pleas for change to urgent timetables demanding it.

As the trial of the accused takes place in Delhi, we can see that the mood on the streets is more than the heat-of-the-moment anger we are used to. Underlying it now is a steely and defiant determination that action must follow words — young girls saying they will no longer accept the casual disregard and routine neglect of their concerns. Now the authorities are being forced to bring in reforms, from fast-track rape courts to changes in sentencing policy.

In fact girls are saying that these outrages can no longer be classified as just 'one more terrible rape', 'one more awful shooting', 'one more disgraceful act of violence against a girl'.

They must instead signal a turning point. They must mark the end of a particular era, one typified by adult complacency about the violation of children's rights, and the beginning of a new era, one where instead of being silent about the exploitation of girls we are vociferous about ensuring their education and empowerment.

It is not just that this generation of girls has become far more assertive in demanding that its rights be upheld. It is that girls who wish to make their voices heard are no longer prepared to be mere protestors. They have become more than demonstrators complaining about the violation of their rights: they have now become change-makers, demanding the righting of wrongs.

The protests about violence against women remind us that too many men in 2013 still treat women as their chattels, to be exploited and brutalized. But they also illustrate that those who violate rights are being challenged head-on by women — and men, too — who are intent on righting wrongs. The very act of declaring 'child marriage-free zones' reminds us that even in 2013 patriarchy still attempt to dictate their daughters' destinies. But it also demonstrates that patriarchy will not hold back girls' aspirations for ever. The demand from girls to go to school reminds us that, for most of history, adults have been able to dictate whether the next generation is free to dream of a better future or not. Now girls themselves are saying that their elders cannot trample on their basic rights any longer.

The internet is radicalizing a new generation of young people. Just as opinions during the Arab Spring spread rapidly via new technologies, so girls are today communicating, exchanging views and learning more about other young people. And because they are making connections across old borders, breaking down traditional barriers, crossing ancient divides and smashing long-established walls of prejudice, they are learning from each other about rights and opportunities.

“ They have become  
more than demonstrators ... they have now  
become change-makers ”

# Girl Rising: A Better Life Begins in School

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25 January 2013

If one thing was made clear by the scale of the recent anti-child slavery demonstration of 200,000 young people in the Burmese capital Rangoon, it is that regimes can repress for a time but they cannot maintain their repression indefinitely. The marches show that while children may disappear one by one into slavery, sold off by relatives or neighbours, becoming in effect invisible people — the victims' cries for help cannot be silenced forever, and eventually the truth will out.

The protests by girls planned for February across Africa and Asia show that while men may try to stereotype women as second-class citizens, truth will travel faster than lies — and that girls are fighting back, connecting with other girls on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

So, in 2013, we are starting to move from decades of adult complacency, dominated by a false assumption that progress to end child exploitation — whether it be child labour, forced marriage, or discrimination against girls — was somehow inexorable and only a matter of time. The next stage is for girls, who have been the victims of the world's inaction for so long, to force the world to see that change will only happen if it is made to happen.

And what's happened so dramatically in India and Pakistan is also happening elsewhere as the power of girls takes on a new form. Even before the Indian rape, Nepal had been witnessing widespread demonstrations condemning violence against women. In Burma, a campaign against child trafficking brought 200,000 young people to that country's first open-air pop concert of modern times. And again in India, a march against child labour was led by 100 boys and girls who at ages as young as 8, 9 and 10 had been rescued from bonded labour.

But perhaps even more significant is the growth in Bangladesh of 'child marriage-free zones'. Here girls themselves declare that they will not be forced into marriage, and demand that, through their community, their right to say 'no' is upheld. They assert that in their area not just they themselves but all girls will be protected from early marriage against their will.

The new self-conscious assertion by girls of their collective rights is the shape of the year to come. Given that so many female rights in so many countries have been promised and yet have still to be established — the right to a childhood free of marriage, the right to go to school, the right to be protected against violence — then the Bangladeshi movement is one that is likely to spread to the rest of the continent.

Laws will have to change, to guarantee girls' rights in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted in 1979). UNICEF has collaborated with the NGO Working Group for Girls, an international network of 400 non-governmental organisations, as well as many other civil society organisations, specialised agencies and professional media groups to push for girls' empowerment.

But the quickest and most effective advance we could secure immediately is to move girls out of exploitation and into education. Before Malala was shot she was planning to link her call for universal girls' education to a demand for an end to the child labour that imprisons girls in everything from cocoa farms to domestic service, and can hold them back from schooling. Thirty-two million girls do not even get to first grade in primary school. In 2013 we could target the off-track countries — Pakistan, Nigeria, India, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and the conflict-affected countries of Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo — and make big progress.

Of course, the issues will now be fought out on the streets and on the airwaves, but the hallmark of 2013 is already clearly visible: it is the year when a new form of female empowerment will not only change the way we see the world, but finally deliver rights that have been denied for too long — and that starts with every girl's right to an education.

“ ... the quickest and most effective advance we could secure immediately is to move girls out of exploitation and into education. ”

# The Future is Hers

This article was first published by Global Motherhood,

*The Huffington Post*

6 March 2013

Unless we act, 531 million of today's girls will never complete a school education, and in the poorest countries only one in 700 will go to university.

Because of two recent tragedies — the shooting of Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai last October, and the rape and murder in December of Indian student Jyoti Singh — girls' rights have moved to the heart of the global agenda for change just as we celebrate the 102nd International Women's Day.

And now in quick succession a series of initiatives organized by women for women — including Feb. 14's V-Day, the Girl Rising films which premiere this week, Girls not Brides, Plan International's 'Because I am a Girl' and Gucci's new Chime for Change program — are making 2013 a turning point in the fight for the emancipation and empowerment of girls. For it is girls themselves, no longer prepared to tolerate the complacency of the adult world, who are standing up for their own rights. They are not just requesting changes in policy, but demanding that their concerns are center-stage. They sense that the future is theirs.

Understandably the focus of recent campaigns has been securing basic freedoms from forced marriage, violence and rape, as women fight to escape these forms of slavery. But girls want to do more than stop men violating their rights; they want to right wrongs. And so we are moving from the 20th-century movement of women's emancipation, where the issue was what we sometimes call 'negative freedom' — from evils that ruined women's lives — to the 21st-century empowerment of women. This demands that we also deliver opportunity, helping girls move out of exploitation and into education.

Go to Pakistan, where I met many of the million-strong Malala demonstrators demanding a girl's right to school. Travel to Bangladesh, where we now have girls who want to be saved from loveless marriages and to go to school, and so have created 'child-marriage-free zones', where girls group together as 'wedding busters' to prevent them being sold into marriage. Visit Nepal, which led the way in demonstrations for girls' rights. Attend the marches in India led by child laborers themselves, demanding not just an end to this form of slavery but the delivery of their right to learn a skill.

The demand for education reminds us that for most of history it has been adults — and primarily men — who have dictated whether or not the next generation is free to dream of a better future. But it also shows us girls themselves talking across frontiers and connecting with other girls, determined that adults will no longer trample on their rights. Indeed, the new superpower that cannot be ignored is the power that girls are rightly seizing for themselves.

If increasingly girls know that the only way to break the cycle of subordination is through education, International Women's Day is a sharp reminder that we still face a girls' education emergency. The stories of young girls' struggles to go to school are told in the Girl Rising film, released this week. Almost twice as many women as men are illiterate: 500 million adult women are unable to read or write.

But if nothing is done now, equality of opportunity will seem a distant dream, as an estimated 531 million of this generation's young girls will leave their teens without ever completing a basic school education.

Teenagers in the West now consider tertiary education a basic right, but things are starkly different in a country like Chad, where

only one girl in 700 has that chance. In northern Nigeria the average length of girls' schooling is just six months, with several million Nigerian girls never at school. If the debate in the West is why women can't have everything, the debate in the developing world is still why so many women don't have anything.

Yet we know that girls' education — and with it access to medical information — also sparks the health revolutions that reduce infant mortality, maternal mortality, malaria, HIV and Aids, and prevent early marriage, early childbirths and poverty. We know, in truth, that there will be no success in attaining the other Millennium Development Goals until there is success in attaining the goal of universal education. No country will succeed for long unless its girls are free to express their talents, its women fully integrated into its political and economic life.

That is why a girl's right to education is becoming the civil rights issue of our time, the war of liberation that must be waged, the freedom fight for which we have to mobilize. It is perhaps no accident that the Taliban sought to deny Malala Yousafzai what they fear is the most powerful weapon of all: an education.

Even if a girl cannot shape the predetermined circumstances of her birth, she must now be able to shape a response to her fate. The empowerment of girls through education is the way we move from an old world — where for centuries your rights have been only what your rulers decreed, your status and wealth what someone else ascribed to you — to a new world, where even if your grandmothers and mothers were poor, you need not be poor too, and even if you were born without the chance to flourish, your daughters and your daughters' daughters need not be.

So today we announce the start of our campaign to promote the one change that will break the cycle of poverty: making sure that girls receive an education. We are demanding an end to all forms of child slavery by the end of 2015 — including an end to child trafficking, forced marriage and child labor. And we are showing that we need higher levels of investment, and higher educational standards, to correct the injustices that come from birth and background, break the generation-to-generation cycle of poverty and deliver the unrealized promise of globalization, that every child can make the most of their potential.

By Dec. 31 2015, under the banner 'The Future is Hers', we aim to ensure that every one of the 32 million girls currently out of school has found a place to learn, and the education emergency that prevents them getting schooling is brought to an end. We have a set of bold new policies discussed with technology entrepreneurs, ambitious leaders of developing countries, the UN and the World Bank. It encompasses online courses in a hundred languages; smart-phone training for teachers; new hi-tech visual aids; and above all a determination to end child slavery and get two million teachers to work.

This Friday, on International Women's day, we are mobilizing for a year of change, showing that what seems impossible can be achieved: a day when any girl, in any country, from any background, can believe that the future is hers.

# Gordon Brown: 32 million girls not at school, we must push for change

This article was first published by

CNN

29 March 2013

Can the world agree that 2013 will be the year when a girl's right to education will finally be won — even in the most remote and once lawless corners of the globe?

Last October, shocked by the attempted murder of the 15-year-old Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai, three million people around the world rushed to sign a petition demanding universal girls' education.

The Pakistani government then agreed for the first time to legislate compulsory free education and provided stipends for three million children.

Only this week Shahnaz Nazli, a brave 41-year-old teacher on her way with her child to work at an all girls' school, was shot dead and joined an ever-lengthening list of teachers and students murdered because of their support for the basic right of girls to go to school.

The murder demonstrates yet again that in parts of the Indian subcontinent, Afghanistan, and Africa, intimidation and violence are the daily reality of life for many girls who want to go to school and the many educators who want to teach them.

Even today, five months after Malala's shooting in the Swat Valley, her school friends remain in fear of violence simply for attempting to return to school.

A new petition, launched this week on [www.educationenvoy.org](http://www.educationenvoy.org) — with its first signatories, Malala Yousafzai and her father Ziauddin — calls for an immediate tightening of security protection for pupils and teachers when going to school in Pakistan.

It is because of the tragedies that befell Malala and her school friends — and now Shahnaz — that in Washington in three weeks' time the U.N. and World Bank will bring together the countries that are off-track in securing universal primary education to devise a plan to move further and faster to universal education by the end of 2015, the date by which the Millennium Development Goals are to be met.

The atrocity against Shahnaz — murdered only 200 meters from the all-girls school where she taught in Khyber tribal district — is a stark reminder of the continuation of the threats, intimidation, shootings, arson attacks and sometimes even murder that are the Taliban's weapons of a war against girls' opportunity.

They also remind us that the silent majority who once stood in the face of these threats will be silent no more and that public revulsion against the violence has strengthened the resolve of girls to go to school.

Over the past several years, Pakistani Taliban militants have destroyed hundreds of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Last year Al Jazeera showed how Shabeena, the headmistress of a state-run girls' primary school in the troubled province, was battling to keep girls in school in spite of the threats. The film

features Afshan, one of six daughters of a night security guard, determined to secure an education. It also tells the story of Zarina, whose fight to stay in school required her to resist her family's plan to marry her off at the age of 14.

What's happening in Pakistan is also occurring in Afghanistan where, despite the removal of the Taliban from the control of the national government, local teachers and pupils are under pressure to stay away from school. Last year an investigation was carried out into allegations that Taliban extremists were poisoning school girls through infecting their school water. Still women run schools, sometimes going underground, claiming they are offering only sewing lessons.

There are many reasons why 32 million girls are not at school today. For some there are no schools to go to and no teachers. Seven million are laboring in fields, mines, factories and in domestic service or they have been trafficked.

Others still are child brides, forced out of school and into loveless marriages, often undergoing early pregnancies that put their lives at risk. But most of them are victims of unfair discrimination against girls, an assumption that girls do not need to be educated to play their part in the world.

This week's tragic killing near the Afghan border — just five months after the shooting of Malala and her friends on a bus — also reminds us that the discrimination against girls that provoked Malala's shooting has not gone away, and that the struggle of families in Malala's own community in the Swat Valley is far from over.

Injured with Malala were her friends Shazia Ramazan, who has had to relearn how to use her left arm and hand, and Kainat Riaz. I have spoken to them twice on the phone about their desire to

continue their education and their ambition to become doctors. These sentiments were also expressed to the physician Seema Jilani in her New York Times piece.

According to recent reports that have been sent to me, armed policemen have had to be deployed to the homes of Shazia and Kainat as well as other girls to shield them from harm.

While Kainat says that things are better than four years ago, it is nonetheless the case that the girls still need police escorts to go to school.

You can sign the petition supporting the girls and teachers who are demanding they go to school free of intimidation and violence at [www.educationenvoy.org](http://www.educationenvoy.org). On that site you can also see the details of our plans to meet Malala's ambition, for every girl should go to school.

They also remind us that the silent majority who once stood in the face of these threats will be silent no more and that public revulsion against the violence has strengthened the resolve of girls to go to school.



# Education for girls all over the world is the civil rights struggle of our time

This article was first published by  
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6 July 2015

They are all Malala. Four defiant, courageous girls who stand toe-to-toe with the education campaigner Malala Yousafzai. Four ordinary girls who have done extraordinary things representing thousands of Malalas across this dark and dangerous world.

And their cause – empowerment for girls – is the theme of a critical Oslo conference on education and development today, convened by the Norwegian prime minister, Erna Solberg, which Malala and I will address.

The four girls' stories are different to Malala's, but the bravery of each one of them is just as astonishing, and they all want the same outcome.

Malala was shot by Taliban gunmen for wanting to go to school and survived a bullet in the head. Like Malala, Geeta, Ashwini, Dilan and Razia have been fighting daily personal battles against those who would deny them education and condemn them to lives of child labour, child marriage or child trafficking.

They are waging the civil rights struggle of our time: a demand to end prejudice, discrimination and exclusion; and for ours to be the first generation in history to guarantee every single girl basic rights.

Geeta, from Nepal, was nine years old when she was sold into the sex trade and trafficked to India. To secure clients Geeta would wear makeup and be on the streets soliciting until 2am. She says she was forced to be with as many as 60 men each day. But out of a deep family tragedy is built a personal triumph. Rescued at the age of 14, she is now leading the way along with organisations such as the American Himalayan Foundation, who are trying to stop thousands of girls, including many made homeless from Nepal's earthquake, being sold for \$500 each into India.

At the age of 10, Dilan became part of what is now a mass exodus from Syria, fleeing with her mother in the dead of night into Lebanon – but it was a journey that took her from a school classroom to child labour. She spent her 11th birthday toiling in a garlic factory, peeling cloves and not earning a wage, only the right to a roof over her and her mother's heads. Now, at 13, she wants to get back to school, become a teacher and one day help rebuild Syria. She is one of 1,000 global youth ambassadors for education, and is campaigning for 500,000 Syrian refugees to attend Lebanese schools.

Razia, who grew up in a village on the outskirts of Meerut, India, was sent to work at the age of four, stitching together small pieces of hide to make footballs. "My fingers bled whenever the needle pierced through them," she recalls. "It happened with many children and some of them have suffered severe deformity. We had no idea that football players and businessmen made millions of dollars whereas we were trapped in a vicious circle of hunger and servitude."

Rescued by the Nobel peace prize winner Kailash Satyarthi, she then pursued her education, became a young leader in the Global March Against Child Labour network, and when I met her was establishing the Nepalese national commission on child labour.

Ashwini was born blind and brought up in a poor rural community in India where bigoted neighbours tormented and mocked her for being disabled. One day, she decided to fight the discrimination and not only got the school grades that took her to college but has now become India's premier champion of disabled rights, opening a residential school for visually impaired children.

These everyday stories of courage are repeated thousands of times over in girl-led movements such as the Nilphamari child marriage free zone in Bangladesh, Nepal's Common Forum for Karmal Hari Freedom, Indonesia's Grobogan Child Empowerment Group and the Upper Manya Krobo Rights of the Child Club.

And there is good reason why this civil rights struggle is being stepped up now. Out-of-school numbers are rising fast because

... 30 million displaced children on the long march from their homes into exile, often outside their own country in refugee camps, tents and hovels, offering little chance of ever going near a classroom.

of the greatest exodus we have seen since 1945: a staggering 30 million displaced children on the long march from their homes into exile, often outside their own country in refugee camps, tents and hovels, offering little chance of ever going near a classroom.

After two decades during which 40 million more children enrolled for school, progress towards universal education has not only stalled but has gone into reverse with, as confirmed by Unesco figures today, 124m children out of school, 59m of them primary age, and the majority of them girls who have never enrolled.

The new set of statistics is damning.

A look at primary and lower secondary ages combined shows one out of eight girls was out of school in 2013, and one out of nine boys. But the most tragic figures of all are that 24 million children will never enter a classroom. Half of all out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa will never enrol. And girls are the most disadvantaged, particularly in south and west Asia, where 80% of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school, compared to just 16% for boys.

The UN's new sustainable development goals call for secondary education for all by 2030; but to meet the additional costs and bridge the annual funding gap of \$25bn for the poorest countries, we need innovative thinking.

This will start today in Oslo, when we consider creating the first humanitarian fund for education in emergencies. With its creation we can guarantee rapid action to help Syrian, Iraqi, South Sudanese and other girl refugees and intervene in places such as Nepal when catastrophe hits.

# Girls: Silent majority for how much longer?

This article was first published by  
**Al Jazeera**  
3 January 2016

When it is a proven fact that girls matter more to the health of families than boys, why do we persist in helping them less?

When women are recognised to be the lynchpins of successful communities, why do we continue to tolerate the sex discrimination and exploitation that has left 500 million in abject poverty and another one billion on the edge of it?

And when "Girl Power" has been such a massive driver of change in western societies, why have the past 50 years seen global movements to liberate women, and men, from colonialism, apartheid, black discrimination and prejudice against gays, but no civil rights struggle to liberate girls from oppression?

2016 must be the year of girl empowerment globally – the beginnings of a worldwide civil rights movement that focuses on freeing girls from the worst persecution in some of the poorest, most remote and most dangerous places in the world.

## ■ Child labourers

As we enter 2016, more than 68 million girls under the age of 14 are child labourers working in slave conditions, in domestic service, unsafe factories and even down mines.

This year, 15 million girls will be married off before the age of 18 – one child bride every two seconds. These numbers are rising even faster in conflict zones. One example is that of Syrian girls in Jordan where the rate of child marriage has doubled.

Today an astonishing 17 million girls each year become mothers before they are legally able to be married. More than 720 million women alive today were married or entered into a union before their 18th birthday. The rights of girls to a childhood are so routinely trampled upon that in the next few decades it is expected that child brides will not fall in number but rise to a staggering one billion.

And because so many children are caught up in conflict, the trafficking of girls is on the increase with an estimated half a million sent into slavery this year.

And as report after report on Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and Myanmar has revealed, thousands more are subjected to rape, molestation and conscription into child militias – all in breach of the Rome Statutes of the International Criminal Court that define such practises as crimes against humanity and a reason for indictment and prosecution.

Girls form the majority of children who are out of school and denied the opportunity to plan their own future. More than 30 million girls never enjoy a first day at school or drop out before they finish primary education. One estimate suggests that as many as 500 million girls worldwide will never complete their schooling despite the Millennium Development goal promise of universal primary education by 2015.

## ■ Century is too long

It will take until 2086 before every girl goes to primary school. And while the world recently approved sustainable development goals to achieve universal secondary education by 2030, the best estimate is that it will take until 2111 before every girl completes lower secondary school – 70 years behind the richest boys who are projected to achieve that milestone in 2041.

We know children born today will live longer than generations past, but a century is too long for an infant today to wait for her basic right to be upheld.

In Africa and the Indian subcontinent, girls' chances of reaching university are so slender that it is estimated that while in 2050, 80 percent of Taiwanese, Singaporean and Japanese girls will be university graduates, the figure will be three, four or at most five per cent for girls in the world's poorest countries.

We spend an average of \$400 on an African girl's education but more than \$100,000 on that of a Western child aged three to 16. The truth is that, in the delivery of opportunity, many countries are 100 years behind their richer neighbours, and as rich countries continue to expand higher education for girls, we cannot comfort ourselves in the knowledge that the gap between rich and poor is narrowing. It continues to widen.

I once heard Nelson Mandela say that promises made to children are so sacred that they should never be broken, but as the author JK Rowling has reminded us: No one is easier to silence than a child. Fortunately, the silent majority will remain silent no more.

From my vantage point as chairman of the Global Citizenship Commission – reviewing the first 70 years of the universal declaration of human rights – the most eagerly-anticipated and exciting development in 2016 will be the growth of civil rights activism among girls themselves.

## ■ The wedding busters

Starting in 22 communities of Bangladesh, brave girls have formed child marriage-free zones. Nicknamed by some "the wedding busters", they come together as one – defying their fathers if necessary – to prevent any one of their schoolmates being married off as children. Supported by Plan International, their success has inspired child marriage-free zones in Pakistan, India and parts of Africa.

Under the banner of the Global March against Child Labour, led by Nobel prize winner Kailash Satyarthi, child labourers are literally on the march to demand their freedom.

And inspired not just by fellow Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai but also by the Bring Back Our Girls campaign to free the 200 Chibok girls abducted a year ago by Boko Haram in Nigeria, there are now 1,000 global youth ambassadors and they are to be found on Facebook and Twitter under the banner of A World At School.

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This year many established charities will shift their priorities to make girls' rights even more central to their campaigns and this year in support of UNICEF's State of the World's Children report, THEIRWORLD charity will work with others to set out a clear agenda.

This autumn the report of the Commission on Global Educational Opportunity to Ban Ki Moon UN Secretary General will set out a plan for how in one generation – over the next 40 years – the education attainments of girls in poorer countries can converge with that of girls and boys in rich countries.

#### ■ Urgent need for action

But there is an urgent need for action to support 15 million displaced girls now in conflict zones by establishing what I call HOPE – the Humanitarian Operation for the Provision of Education in Emergencies – to get them into education.

In 2005, Security Council Resolution 1612 established a monitoring mechanism to expose grave violations of children's rights during armed conflict. But as the new head of the

International Criminal Court has said, girls will see things change only when there are well publicised prosecutions and indictments.

And while there is a legal right, in theory, to take cases of child abuse to the UN Human Rights Committee under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, only 14 countries have signed the Protocol – with, sadly, those most likely to infringe it least likely to sign. So we also need a new political mechanism to force countries to act on the abuse of girls' rights.

I suggest that each year the Security Council should meet at least once as a Children's Rights Council to speak up for the half of humanity who represent our future.

The long-term goal is simple: girl power is not just for the comfortable West and "leaning in" is not just for the comfortably off. Girl power will achieve its goals only when the rights of the world's most vulnerable and the most desolate girls are championed and made real.

“ But there is an urgent need for action to support 15 million displaced girls now in conflict zones by establishing what I call HOPE ”



The campaign  
against child  
labour



# The Delhi 14

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5 December 2012

Just 72 hours ago in the Indian capital of Delhi, 14 children were freed from slave labour. They were being held in dark, insanitary conditions and forced to work for up to 15 hours a day making Christmas decorations. Two were just eight years old.

The suffering of these young children, cruelly trafficked into slave labour, is the real Christmas story of 2012. Their plight must become a wake-up call for all concerned about the treatment of vulnerable children around the world. It demands we move immediately to ban all child labor.

The children rescued in Delhi had been beaten and intimidated. Imprisoned in dingy, locked rooms where they were forced to make Christmas goods with no access to light or fresh air. Malnourished and underfed, many had injuries as a result of using glass to make trinkets and because of violent assaults by their gangmasters. All had been sold into slavery and trafficked by middlemen.

The Christmas decorations and seasonal gifts they were making were for export from India to the West. There are near identical items on sale in shops in America and Europe right now.

The courageous morning break-in that freed the children from this slave labor was organized and carried out by Kailash Satyarthi and his co-leaders of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) and Global March Against Child Labour (GMACL). They faced violent resistance by the gangmasters and thugs.

Because the gangmasters had received a tip off that a raid would take place, most of the children had been whisked away from the workshop and 12 were incarcerated in a pitch-black cell no bigger than 6ft by 6ft.

Only with police help were the locks to the cell broken and all children rescued. They are now receiving rehabilitative care and arrangements are being made for them to go to school.

The 'Delhi 14' are just a few of the thousands of children forcibly conscripted into a multi-billion Christmas sweatshop trade in hundreds of hidden factories and workplaces. The child laborers are just a tiny proportion of the 15 million children under the age of 12 who do not go to school because they are forced to work.

Christmas is supposed to be a festive celebration but for the 'Delhi 14' it had become a nightmare of exploitation, cruelty, neglect and violence. Their suffering is amongst the most tragic Christmas tales of our times.

The cry for help of a child should be an international language we all are able to understand and respond to immediately.

We must now demand that before the Indian Parliament finishes its session on December the 20th legislation is passed banning all child labor for under fourteens and outlawing hazardous work for under eighteens.

Our petition on [EducationEnvoy.org](http://EducationEnvoy.org) asks concerned citizens around the world to support our call to end child labor.

The figures of child exploitation makes appalling Christmas reading: of the 61 million children who do not go to primary school one in four work full-time. In Africa child labour is rising.

My report on child labour — published with the help of the Brookings Institution's Kevin Watkins and a number of organisations including the excellent Understanding Child Work project demonstrates — many children who go to school part-time also work part-time. In total, 215 million children are in some kind of employment.

More alarming is the number of children aged less than 12 who are involved in hazardous forms of labor, 90 million in total. These children are to be found risking their young lives down narrow tunnels mining for gold in Tanzania. They are working on cocoa farms in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire or in garment factories in South Asia. More than half of these vulnerable children are trafficked, forced into prostitution or armed conflict. The anti-slavery organisation Walk Free reports that in some parts of the world children as young as five and six are sold as slaves.

People assume all too readily that child labor will simply die out of its own accord. So we fail to press companies and consumers hard enough to demand the policing and enforcement of anti-child labor laws. For too long governments around the world have stood by and not taken sufficient action to

The education of  
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eradicate child labor. That's why I am now calling on governments, donors and UN agencies to come together and put in place the policies needed to get children out of exploitative employment and into education. Just as universal education was the catalyst a century ago for consigning child labor to the history books of the rich world, so it can free a generation of children today.

The new exposé of the children denied schooling because of child labor comes just six weeks after the Taliban's shooting of Malala Yousafzai simply because she wanted to go to school. The world is discovering that in 2012 millions of children are forcibly prevented from attending lessons because of child labor, child marriage, child militias, child trafficking and the brutal discrimination against girls. In total 32 million girls and 29 million boys are denied their right to education.

We now know from these appalling new revelations the sheer scale, severity and depth of inhumane treatment visited upon young children. It is time for the U.N. to draw up a plan to end child slavery.

The education of all children cannot of course start to happen until we end the exploitation of children. 2012 must be the year when the casual complacency about the plight of 61 million out of school children ends, 2013 must be the breakthrough year that ushers in urgent and practical action. Let this year's grim Christmas tale lead to a New Year resolution the world will honour — the end of child slavery once and for all.

# India must ban child labor

Pressure is mounting on the Indian Parliament to end child labour after 150,000 Indians signed an abolition petition demanding an immediate change in the child labour laws.

The petition follows the recent revelation of slave labour conditions under which young children of eight and nine were making Christmas decorations. Currently dangerous work is outlawed in India — but there is no blanket ban yet on child labour under the age of fourteen. As a result India accounts for some of the worst excesses in global child labour; overall fifteen million children worldwide work full time when they should be at school.

This week the children who escaped slave conditions have spoken of their fate and about their ambitions for the future. During their horrific ordeal they were trafficked, exploited, imprisoned and denied food and their stories underline the urgent action needed to end child labour. They would still be making tree decorations and other trinkets but for the courageous rescue carried out by Kailash Satyarthi and his co-leaders of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) and Global March Against Child Labour (GMACL).

Their captors were slave masters who had them trafficked from Indian provinces. Often their parents were tricked into believing they were leaving to be given free education.

Their stories, recounted in a new film published on our website [EducationEnvoy.org](http://EducationEnvoy.org), reveal a pattern of child abuse. The first child featured on the film is eleven-year-old Rahim from Malman Nagariain. From the moment he boarded a train to India's capital he became a prisoner and was eventually confined to a dark and dingy sweatshop in LNJP colony. He was forced to work 18 hours a day with only two recesses of ten minutes each for eating. He was never allowed to leave the premises and had to cook food for himself and his employer inside the sweatshop. He was often scolded and hit for being slow at work. His employer did not pay him a single rupee for his work despite being promised INR1500 per month. Now free he wants to study hard and become a soldier.

Imran is eleven and hails from the Katihar district in Bihar. He was indentured to an employer who promised he could send home money to support his family. In the asphyxiating sweatshop, which also doubled up as his living quarters, Imran had to work 14 hours a day. While he produced quality Christmas ornaments and gifts for export, he was never paid anything.

Imran will find it difficult to recover from his ordeal as his health suffered having to spend endless hours inhaling chemicals and adhesives. Though he is now free from the shackles of slavery and wants to go to school, the injuries he endured may be lasting, standing in the way of his ambition to be a teacher. He feels strongly that no child should experience what he went through.

Aslam, twelve, is a native of Sipur village, Azam Nagar in the Katihar district. Despite being promised a good education he too ended up in the same dingy sweatshop in Delhi. Like the other rescued children he worked very long days, sleeping in the same room where he worked. He was never paid a single rupee. Interestingly he too now wants to be a teacher.

Abdul came from the same village as Aslam. His parents sold him after they were promised their son would receive training to help him get a job. Instead he worked from 10am until midnight every day for months. He is now at BBA's transit Mukti Ashram rehabilitation centre whilst the legal formalities of his repatriation are completed so he can go home. Like Rahim, he wants to be soldier when he grows up.

These boys tell similar stories — from when they were trafficked through to being eventually rescued — but they are only four of around fifteen million children not at school because they are forced to work.

Only a bold change in the law and the policing of it will change the plight of these child slaves. So when the Indian parliament reconvenes in February, the Global March Against Child Labour is seeking a change in the law which bans forever child labour under fourteen and restricts the minimum age to eighteen [for hazardous work]. The bill has been drafted. Politicians of all parties support it. It just needs the time required to be heard in Parliament so it can be voted through and passed into law.

Join us at [EducationEnvoy.org](http://EducationEnvoy.org) in demanding the Indian people finally abolish child labour. Children should be putting up decorations not making them; the only work they should be doing is school work.

Let's make 2013 the year child labour is consigned to history.

“ Children should  
be putting up decorations  
not making them ... ”

The campaign  
against child  
labour

# The resistance of child slaves themselves will force the end of slavery

This article was first published by  
**The Guardian**  
19 April 2013

Ratni was 14 years old when she was sold into slavery, handed over to a family friend who had promised her a better life. Forced into bonded labour as an unpaid domestic servant for one year in Delhi and then another in the Indian Punjab, Ratni has told of how she was raped by the man who was supposed to be her guardian.

She escaped only when, being trafficked through a rail station on her way to another year of bondage, she spotted a group of charity workers representing Bachpan Bachao Andolan, the Indian Save the Childhood Movement, and made her dash for freedom.

Only now that her sister has also been rescued from the same group can Ratni's story be told. Her ordeal – and that of many others – has stimulated 1m signatures in a petition to end child labour and child trafficking, and has helped persuade the Indian parliament to finally outlaw child trafficking.

Nanuska has not been so fortunate. She is a six-year-old Afghan girl. She was sold by her father to be married off at seven to a 17-year-old boy. The payment is to cover her mother's medical bills, but one condition of her sale is that her husband-to-be has banned her from going to school. I have written to President Hamid Karzai asking him to intervene to protect her.

Education International, the teachers' organisation, has raised the case of a 12-year-old girl from Marrakesh, Raouia, told by the Moroccan education minister – whose duty it was to promote girls' education – to leave school, go home and take up her "proper" role as a child bride.

It is because of situations like these – and the prevalence of child slavery and forced labour in Africa and Asia – that in Washington on Friday a new anti-slavery coalition on child labour, trafficking and marriage will assemble to campaign for the right of every child to be free of exploitation and secured in education. Focusing on global civil rights for children, international anti-slavery groups including the Global March Against Child Labour and Walk Free will join local and national groups, from the Shakti Samuha in Nepal to the Cultura de Paz of San Salvador, to call for decisive action to ban child slavery by the end of 2015.

They will make the case that, with less than 1,000 days to go until the millennium development goals (MDGs) expire, the needs of the most marginalised children – the street child, bonded labourer, child bride, trafficked teenager – have been

neglected. Without a plan to get their rights recognised now and in the post-2015 framework, these groups are in danger of being left further behind.

Ten million girls each year are forced into marriage, their lives put at risk by early pregnancy before they are mature enough to bear children. As many as 15 million children are denied even a single day of schooling because they have to go to work. This group represents one quarter of the world's 61 million children who are out of school – and the number of children working in Africa is rising.

The issue is receiving renewed attention, with a bill about to go before the Indian parliament to finally outlaw all forms of child labour. And, as will be discussed in Washington, there are direct and immediate actions that companies and individuals can take to end the practice. Georg Kell from Global Compact, Guy Ryder from the ILO and I have written a letter to encourage all companies to remove all forms of child labour from every part of their supply chains. There are phone lines to raise the alert in some countries. This needs to be rolled out globally to ensure that a child who is trafficked from one country to another has access to support through a phone call or email. The Polaris Project, based in Washington DC, is looking at developing such a programme.

But why does the problem of child slavery still exist when we made firm promises for progress on gender equality, child health and universal education through the MDGs? Because resources have not been sufficiently targeted at the most marginalised; those at the very bottom are making slower progress than those just above them. Yet while only education can break this cycle of structural disadvantage, basic education aid, currently just \$3bn (£1.9bn), is

being cut, and even at its peak averaged only \$12 per child.

The most marginalised are now speaking out and will not wait for a slow-moving policy process. Look at the mushrooming of the groups of "wedding busters" in Bangladesh – where girls are getting together to resist their parents' determination to marry them off and force them out of school. It is the energy, determination and impatience of these young freedom fighters that is forcing the pace of change. It is the resistance of child slaves themselves who will force the end of slavery – and we must be there to support them.

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Stopping  
militarization  
and attacks  
on schools



# Attacks on Schools Must Stop

This article was first published by  
*The Huffington Post*  
4 February 2013

A third Pakistani school has been attacked in an escalating wave of violence by Taliban militants determined to stamp out the provision of girls' education.

Two out of the three classrooms of an all-girls school in Zalim Kalan in the Bannu Province were the latest school buildings to be destroyed, this time by 4.5kg of explosives detonated from a plastic canister hidden by terrorists inside the school.

This latest bombing follows last Friday's shooting of Shahnaz Nazli, a 41-year-old teacher who was gunned down in front of her son 200 metres away from the all-girls school where she worked in Shahkas, part of the Khyber tribal belt on the Pakistan-Afghan border.

Saturday saw the bombing of a school prize giving ceremony at the Rehmania Muhalla district chapter of the National Secondary School in Karachi, demonstrating that the violence had moved from the tribal areas right to the heart of Pakistan's urban areas.

"Parts of Pakistan are among the most dangerous places in the world to go to school today", according the Ali Dayan Hasan, the Pakistan director of Human Rights Watch, who stated that "It's time Pakistani authorities understand that expressions of outrage alone are inadequate and such attacks will only end if they hold abusers accountable."

So severe are the new attacks that one columnist in Pakistan's Dawn newspaper headlined her article 'Shoot a teacher: Kill a county'. Another national paper, *The Express Tribune*, has the headline 'How Many Will Be Murdered in the War On Education?' The article is subtitled 'Would I want to teach — or get an education at the peril of my own life?'

According to an up-to-date report by Human Rights Watch, at least 250 schools have been shut down by bombing or arson attacks in just two years, preventing thousands of girls from going to school. The Zalim Kalan School is now closed indefinitely.

But until now the vast majority of the schools shut by this violence are to be found in the tribal areas, in KPK and Balochistan, whose terrain makes it difficult to protect pupils and teachers.

As a sign of changing times the Karachi school bombed last week is unlikely to reopen. Instead since the death of the school Principal, parents, fearful of retaliation for sending their children to school, have been pulling their children out. There is no doubt that this is what the murderous attacks are designed to achieve. Saturday's attack, which happened during the school's annual prize giving day with its invited guests, was calculated to send a message in the most savage manner possible. For we now know that in the presence of 500 students, mainly girls, a tennis ball loaded with 250 grams of explosives — including ball bearings designed to maim — was hurled into the school, followed by a spray of thirty

bullets from 30 bore pistols, leading to not just the death of the principal and injuries to two adults, but three students were also hurt: Tahira Nazeer, ten; Amna Kareem, eight; and the principal's daughter Atiya Rasheed, 12.

It is likely that these murderous bombings will escalate in the run-up to the hotly contested Pakistan elections. But in a strong gesture indicating that Pakistani civil society is waking up to the cause of girls' education, and that a silent majority is no longer prepared to stand by and allow threats and intimidation to prosper with impunity, a coalition of organisations have come together today demanding security for Pakistan's girls and teachers and supporting a scholarship fund in honour of the slain teacher, Shahnaz Nazli.

Education International, the worldwide teachers' organisation with 30 million members, is also calling for parents, teachers

and students to sign a petition now available at [educationenvoy.org](http://educationenvoy.org) and it is working with the Pakistan Teachers' Organization's Council; the Pakistan Workers' Federation; the Central Organization of Teachers and all the Pakistan Government School Teacher Associations — all seeking a cessation of violence against teachers who are defending the right of girls to go to school.

The rising tide of violence against girls' education demands a global response. This month in Washington the UN Secretary General and World Bank President will host meetings designed to help off-track countries deliver the goal of universal education. Special sessions will be held on universal girls' education and child trafficking.

Last October — shocked by the attempted assassination of Malala Yousafzai and by persistent threats, intimidation, shootings, arson attacks and murder that are the Taliban's weapons in a war against girls' opportunity — a

total of one million Pakistani citizens signed a petition calling for free compulsory education for all girls and boys and the Pakistani government agreed for the first time to legislate universal schooling and provided stipends for three million children. Now authorities in Pakistan are under international pressure to deploy their security services to ensure the safety and protection of teachers and ensure all girls can go to school. Most political parties fighting the elections have agreed to radical increases in investment in schooling. Now, it is hoped that a new petition focusing on the right of all girls to go school — and on security and safety of teachers — can lead not just to the usual words of protest but defiant and courageous action.

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# We must ensure that schools are never targeted in armed conflict

This article was first published by  
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27 July 2014

A total of 120 schools, more than 70 run by the United Nations refugee agency, have been bombed or suffered collateral damage during the recent emergency in Gaza. But it was last Thursday's devastation, with the deaths of 15 women, children and UN staff and the injury of more than 200 in the bombing of the UN school in Beit Hanoun that brought the issue to a head. It has challenged us to end, once and for all, the use of schools and their pupils as pawns in the pursuit of war.

As the UN secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, has said, schools are for learning and must never become theatres of war. They should be safe havens for boys and girls, and their violation is a crime against international law. And whatever the provocation, their militarisation – by whatever means – should be outlawed.

Of course everyone, in theory, subscribes to an international consensus that schools have only civilian and not military uses. This is in line with the UN convention on the rights of the child, whose 25th anniversary is now being marked and which has formed the basis of a recent UN security council resolution passed during the Luxembourg presidency. That resolution emphasised the ban on the use of schools, colleges and universities in armed conflict.

There are good reasons behind it. Schools are not only essential to the delivery of opportunity and sustainable development; it is important that, even in the darkest of conflicts, children see their schools as sanctuaries, as places of normality and safety. But there is another reason: in times of war, people need material help – food, shelter, health care. But they, especially young people, also need hope. It is through education that we do most to communicate the idea that we are planning ahead for a time free of conflict.

Current procedures, however, are not enough to guarantee the safety of schools. Israel has been given the physical coordinates of Gaza schools, and Hamas warned not to store arms in schools

once they have been evacuated. But we know that, despite all this, schools have been targeted.

And the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is but one example among many. Thousands of child refugees from Syria can testify how their schools became targets for bombs and bullets. I have visited Nigeria and seen how schools there have been singled out by Boko Haram – whose name can be translated as “western education is a sin” – and, as a result, hundreds of pupils and teachers murdered in the name of shutting schools for good. And I have been in South Sudan, where millions of children are denied education, and seen how schools have become ready targets for violence.

That is why the pleas of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, which has consistently campaigned for new rules that preserve a child's right to education during armed conflict, must now be taken seriously and enforced by the international community.

And it is the need for more definitive guidelines for the protection of schools that has led the Norwegian government to urge all countries to support what are called the Lucens guidelines. These advise the military authorities of each country how to prevent schools being used as instruments of war.

So far 30 countries have indicated their support for implementing the guidelines. But now, in the wake of the Gaza deaths, it is urgent that all UN members follow the secretary general's advice, and send a message that is loud and clear: that just as wars should never be fought through the targeting of hospitals, and they should never be waged through the violation of schools.

“ ... schools are for  
learning and must never  
become theatres of war. ”

## These attacks on children are crimes against humanity

This article was first published by  
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8 September 2014

If the abiding image of the summer of 2014 will be the knives of hooded Isis executioners pointed at the necks of innocent victims, the abiding legacy is the torment of two million newly displaced children trapped in conflict zones, in Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Central African Republic and South Sudan. Both are unthinkable, but now we see them. Both are unacceptable, and we must not accept them.

In fact at 25 million boys and girls – the largest number in any of the 70 years since the end of the second world war – the world's displaced children are now akin to the population of a medium sized state. The sight of children exiled from their homes, often for years on end, is now so common and their suffering so profound that the world seems frozen into inaction by the sheer enormity of their plight. Vulnerable children, whose right to be shielded from war is supposedly guaranteed in successive UN charters and resolutions, are being systematically violated, exploited, injured, raped and killed, in a succession of theatres of war. The summer of 2014 will go down in the history books as the summer of the child refugee.

Today the US ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, took the issue to the United Nations Security Council, in an open debate on children and armed conflict. Hopefully a watching world will have heard there the whispers of innocent victims of the conflicts raging around the world. We need to act so that they may wear school not military uniforms, so that their school precincts will be safe zones not combat zones, and so that the innocence of children will be sacred and not sacrificed.

Yet the arithmetic of despair is worsening with every day that passes. During the week last month in which the UN observed World Humanitarian Day, we learned that a quarter of a million Iraqi children had been forced to flee from Mosul and surrounding areas. It is bad enough to discover that 8,800 of the 190,000 killed in Syria's brutal civil war are wholly innocent children, and that 2,165 are under the age of 10. But the office of the UN high commissioner for human rights has reported that in 83.8% of deaths, the victims' ages have yet to be recorded, and child deaths will inevitably be much larger.

In the first six months of 2014, in the Central African Republic, 277 children have been maimed and another 74 killed. And while the announcement of a long-term ceasefire in Gaza comes as an enormous relief to civilians on all sides, almost 500 children have died, with 250 schools shelled. Schools, like hospitals, are supposed to be oases of peace, sanctuaries where children are guaranteed protection even in times of conflict, and yet schools have been targeted by all sides as instruments of war.

There is not only an increasing trend for children to be put directly into the firing line, but they are more likely to become targets or to be cynically used and abused by abductors, as was the case in April when more than 200 girls were kidnapped from their school dormitories in northern Nigeria. Over the past five years, a pattern of targeted attacks against schools has been reported in 30 countries and six – Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Syria – have each experienced 1,000 or more attacks on schools and universities and their staff and students. In Syria alone, by early 2013, 2,445 were reported as damaged or destroyed but, in addition, nearly 1,000 schools have allegedly been used as detention centres and in some cases torture centres. And an all too high number of children are taken from the school playground to be enlisted and brutalised as child soldiers.

In Syria and Iraq, children as young as seven are reportedly being forced by Isis into taking up arms, while others have been forced to watch executions. Those who perpetrate such violence know that, in doing so, they sow fear and a deep sense of powerlessness among civilian populations.

It is not just boys who are brutalised: of an estimated 250,000 child soldiers in the world today, 100,000 are girls, many of whom are being used as sex slaves.

Whatever our chosen route to justice, today's security council meeting must send a message after this summer of infamy and carnage that these attacks on children are crimes against humanity.

“ We need to act ... so that the  
innocence of children will be  
sacred and not sacrificed. ”

# We need Red Cross protection for all our schools

This article was first published by

*The Guardian*

17 December 2014

I am in Kinshasa. I am in a college hall talking to a thousand young people about education. I am handed a note of what has happened just minutes before in Peshawar, Pakistan. The children stand as one. Silence. Faces fall. We are exactly 3,960 miles from London, 4,507 miles from Peshawar, but the vast distances mean little. An event – a terrorist attack, as almost always – has united the world in outrage again: 132 children dead, murdered by the Taliban in classrooms and corridors. This horrific attack, the worst school atrocity ever, was on boys and girls everywhere.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where violence has been common and often brutal, these students understood the enormity of what had just occurred a continent away. Why boys and girls? Why a school?

Mass murders in classrooms shock us because historically they have been so rare. When children were shot and killed in Columbine, Dunblane and Sandy Hook, parents and pupils across the globe mourned because no one expects, when children go to school in the morning, that they will not come home.

But in the past few years in my role as UN special envoy on global education, I have seen how schools are increasingly used as theatres of war. Afghanistan, Colombia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan and Syria have each experienced a thousand or more attacks on their schools and universities since 2009. In total 9,600 have come under assault. Since the Taliban's school bus shooting of Malala Yousafzai in Swat Valley in 2012 I have had to send too many messages of condolence to families of girls and boys murdered in classrooms: most recently to Nigeria, where Boko Haram has wreaked havoc, shooting nearly 200 teachers and hundreds more pupils. The list is heartbreaking. Only yesterday, as children died in Peshawar, 15 boys and girls were blown up on a school bus in Yemen.

Schools, which should be safe havens never to be violated, even in times of war, are now terrorist targets because of the shockwaves sent out by murdering innocent children.

But nothing can surpass the horror of Tuesday's indiscriminate killings by seven members of the Pakistan Taliban and their cowardly justification for it. Their suicidal spree of bombs and bullets was explained away, in one of the most dishonest and disgusting statements, as retaliation against army killings of Taliban fighters.

Perversely claiming they had exempted the younger pupils and targeted only the older boys because of their closer association with the army, they cynically tried to legitimise killing a 15-year-old as if it was in any way less morally abhorrent than killing a 12-year-old.

In fact, children who escaped say the militants went from one classroom to another shooting indiscriminately. One boy told reporters he had been with a group of 10 friends who tried to run

away and hide. He was the only one to survive. Others told of a teacher set on fire.

Abdullah Jamal, who was shot in the leg during a first-aid class, said: "All the children had bullet wounds. All the children were bleeding."

The Taliban want this one cowardly assault to strike so much fear into schoolchildren that no Pakistani child who sits in front of a teacher in a classroom anywhere will ever again feel safe. But it is their terrifying message that anything now goes – and that using classrooms as killing fields is not off limits – that forces us to act.

The world cannot hide from this. We must try to do something to prevent boys and girls feeling terror when doing something as basic – and as fundamental to human rights – as going to school.

This year in Nigeria I helped President Goodluck Jonathan launch a safe schools initiative designed to increase the security of pupils and teachers in their school grounds. Now it has to be expanded as quickly as possible to every country where terrorists have to be contained.

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Starting with a 500-school pilot programme in its northern states, Nigeria's initiative aims to build better school fortifications, deploy security guards and link schools to police stations by mobile telecommunications. And it will create community security groups promoting safe zones for education consisting of teachers, parents, police, community leaders and young people themselves.

We should be defining attacks on schools as crimes against humanity. Schools that already have the same legal rights under international law as hospitals should also be the subject of agreements that they never become instruments of war. We should make them as safe as the hospitals with Red Crosses on them, and the buildings and vehicles that bear the blue UN symbol.

The perpetrators of terrorist crimes against children should be made aware that murdering or abducting schoolchildren is a crime international authorities will punish. Even in the world's most dangerous places we must establish the right of all children to schooling and make a new idea of "education without borders" a reality.

More than 20 million out-of-school children are growing up in conflict zones, whether it be on the Afghan-Pakistan border, on the fringes of Burma, or in South Sudan, and all of them are vulnerable to extremist influences and attacks.

And while we cannot end terrorism overnight, we can show our collective determination to stand up to it by making schools safer, and to never stop defending every girl and boy's right to education – and to life.



# Four Proposals To Tackle the Growing Militarization of Schools

This article was first published  
*The WorldPost*  
19 March 2015

A couple weeks from now, the world will commemorate the one-year anniversary of the kidnapping of about 200 Nigerian schoolgirls by Boko Haram.

But a mass abduction that was seen a year ago as unprecedented — sparking justifiable outrage across the world — now seems, after a series of further kidnaps, to look like a sadly increasingly familiar tactic in the terrorist arsenal. The unthinkable of 2014 is in danger of becoming the commonplace of future years.

One month ago, 89 children, aged between 12 and 15, were snatched while taking their school exams in the town of Wau Shilluk, near Malakal, South Sudan. They were taken by a notorious warlord who has made it clear they are to become soldiers — among an estimated 12,000 child conscripts seized by factions in the country's civil war.

Meanwhile, Pakistan is still reeling, with too many classrooms still terrorist targets since the shocking Peshawar school attack three months ago when 140 innocent boys, girls and teachers were murdered.

And now we are entering the fourth year of the Syria crisis, which has forced nearly two million children into Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and other countries with few able to resume their education and many forced into child marriage or child labor.

As these indignities increase in frequency, abuses and violations of child rights — from Iraq to Nigeria, Yemen to Pakistan — are now more common than at any time in 40 years.

Children's author JK Rowling said recently, "Children are ignored because who is easier to silence than a child?" But it is our responsibility to ensure that girls and boys in danger are not ignored but are kept safe.

In South Sudan, 70 percent of the 1,200 schools in the major conflict areas are closed, and 36 schools are being used as war bases by military factions. In Nigeria, by the end of 2014, a total of 338 schools were destroyed, at least 196 teachers and more than 314 students were killed, and more than 276 students were abducted. In the three states of emergency in the north, there is a growing perception of schools as "danger zones." These perceptions of parents and pupils cancel out the gains achieved by targeted school enrollment drives, as they no longer see their schools as safe havens.

This is unacceptable. We must do all that we can to ensure that 2015 is seen as the year for ENDING the violation of the rights of the child.

A series of initiatives in the next few months are designed to transform the potential of education and come to the aid of children. In May, the World Education Forum will meet in Korea, and in July, the Norwegian government have called a conference in Oslo to coordinate bilateral donors. Later in July, in Addis Ababa, the third International Conference on Financing for Development will convene to discuss how we can fund education and the new sustainable development agenda from now until 2050.

And this week as a contribution to the decisions of these conferences, I am putting forward four proposals to tackle the growing militarization of schools and to make them safer.

First, I am calling on international partners to reach an agreement this spring on a new multi-million-dollar Global Humanitarian Fund for Education in Emergencies. This funding would end the situation where aid for education is only one percent of humanitarian aid and would allow the international community to act immediately to fund schools in conflict areas. We have set a deadline for progress on this new fund at the Oslo Summit on Global Education in July. There is no excuse for us not to come together and plug the gap that leads to 28 million children missing out on basic education.

Second, with the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Borge Brende, I am calling on international donors to end the nightmare faced by 500,000 Syrian child refugees in Lebanon by supporting a pledging conference on April 16 in Washington for the delivery of refugee education via a pact with the Lebanese minister of education. Our aim is to raise the \$163 million needed to operate a double shift system in Lebanese schools. In the morning, the same schools will teach Lebanese students and in the afternoon, Syrian students.

Third, we are asking all countries to sign the International Safe School Declaration to protect schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. The declaration gives guidelines for the protection of schools that are similar to the protections granted to hospitals in conflict zones by the Geneva protocols. These efforts to protect schools from attack are now supported by 30 countries and international organizations.

And fourth, following the encouraging start to what has been called the Safe Schools Initiative set up by President Goodluck Jonathan and finance minister Ngozi in Nigeria, we are now announcing a new safe schools partnership between private and public sectors in Pakistan. With the support of Prime Minister Sharif, we will launch a 1,000-school pilot to use modern technology to advise schools on how they can best protect themselves and prepare against any armed attacks. We will cooperate with the Global Business Coalition for Education company PredictifyMe which, on a pro bono basis, is putting its scientific expertise at the disposal of schools. And we are in discussions to extend this Safe Schools Initiative to countries such as South Sudan, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Now is the time to act. For millions of children, education cannot wait until civil wars and conflicts end. While we cannot guarantee that children will always be safe as a result of these initiatives, we can reassure parents and pupils the world over that everything is being done to counter extremist threats so that children can exercise their right to education in safer schools and do so free from perpetual fear.

"... who is  
easier to silence  
than a child?"



# The case for Syrian refugees

# Education can offer Syrian children a hopeful future

This article was first published by  
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10 January 2014

There is a tiny glimmer of hope amid the ruins of Syria. Syria's conflict has produced the world's biggest refugee crisis since 1945, for which \$6.5 billion in international aid has been sought. Polio has reemerged, and there are shortages of clean water, food and medical supplies.

Yet an emerging plan would cut through mountains of red tape and ensure that, within weeks, as many as 400,000 exiled Syrian boys and girls could go back to school.

Children are the almost-invisible victims of armed conflict. Scores of Syrian boys and girls were killed just before Christmas in the regime's 10-day air offensive against rebel areas around Aleppo. Bodies of youngsters were found piled up after the May massacre outside the city of Baniyas. After the chemical attack in August, rows of children's bodies lay under white sheets.

Half of the 6.5 million Syrians forced out of their homes are children. Four years ago, Syria was close to universal education. Now thousands of schools have been bombed, burned out, turned from educational establishments into military outposts or simply closed.

Some lucky families — often those who paid traffickers to get them out — have managed to secure asylum. There are, for instance, 15,000 Syrians in Sweden. Yet nearly 1 million of the 2 million who have left Syria are refugees in neighboring Lebanon, and 400,000 of those are school-age children.

For decades, getting children of conflict back into school has been almost an afterthought. Typically, about 1 percent of humanitarian aid goes to education; last year it was 1.5 percent, according to the International Network for Education in Emergencies. In emergencies where resources are scarce, the urgent need for food, shelter and medical supplies takes priority.

In Syria, only one dollar in every six required to educate children has been funded. And yet the average conflict lasts 10 years and a typical camp — and period of exile — for displaced people exists for 17 years.

Every day without a teacher and every month — and year — out of a classroom drastically reduces the likelihood that children will finish their schooling. The result? Entire communities go uneducated and become permanently disadvantaged. Already, some have deemed the boys and girls of Syria a lost generation. Their childhoods are vanishing, their lives put on hold. Some have become child laborers, often selling goods and services on the streets. Others have seen their relatives murdered or assaulted.

Young people engulfed in violence need more than nutrition and medicine: They need hope. Providing education makes the strongest possible statement that young people have a future worth preparing for and that, even in the most horrendous

circumstances, it makes sense to plan for a time beyond conflict and seek to triumph over despair.

At first, Lebanon may seem an unlikely place to establish a new child's right to schooling. Syrian refugees have become a quarter of the Lebanese population. Fifty thousand more cross the border every month.

Lebanon's political cleavages run deep, with some of the population supporting the Assad regime and some backing the Syrian opposition. Because of widespread opposition to refugee camps, there is only one formal camp. Refugees are dispersed across 1,500 locations. Some 200,000 are homeless, with the majority of the rest crammed into makeshift accommodations — flats, hovels and huts — paying exorbitant rents.

Ironically, the absence of camps and the widespread dispersal of child refugees favors the use of existing schools across Lebanon. The plan, crafted by UNICEF and the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR in conjunction with the Lebanese government, would open schools in a double-shift system beyond current hours. For just \$196 million a year, each of the 400,000 Syrian child refugees in Lebanon would be offered a place at a school or college.

The need is urgent. Tensions between refugees and host communities are mounting over classroom seats. There are logistical obstacles: Syrian children have traditionally been taught in Arabic, but Lebanon's schools use English and French. Still, this plan would provide stability and help children rebuild their shattered lives. Education offers the prospect that, beyond bombs and bullets, there are jobs to train for and futures to contemplate.

One hundred and thirty-three years ago, the principle of life-saving health care in war zones was established through the

Red Cross. Forty years ago Doctors Without Borders popularized the notion that casualties of crises, whoever and wherever they are, must have health care. Now it can be the turn of education: the right of children to learn, irrespective of borders.

And if Syrian children can go to school in one of the world's most unstable regions, so could many more of the 22 million children denied education in other countries with armed conflicts and broken-down regimes. When Lebanon, supported by donors around the world, establishes that the right to education transcends borders, child victims of conflict will never again have to survive in a world without hope.

Four years ago,  
Syria was close  
to universal  
education. Now  
thousands of  
schools have been  
bombed, burned out,  
turned from  
educational  
establishments  
into military  
outposts or simply  
closed.



# Help! An Urgent Plea For Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon

This article was first published by

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6 February 2014

In the village of Akroum, in the northeast corner of Lebanon close to the Syrian border, a unique experiment is taking hundreds of Syrian refugee children off the streets and into school.

Akroum's local village school has teamed up with exiled and unpaid Syrian teachers to offer, through a double shift system outside of normal school hours, an education in Arabic to children who have fled from Syria. Many of the children are learning for the first time in three years having fled from their Syrian schools, which have been burnt down or are being used as military outposts.

And thanks to a remarkable partnership between Lebanese parents, Syrian teachers and international charities, these children — who were a few weeks ago child laborers or even beggars — have started to recover their lost childhood and now have hope that there is a positive future worth preparing for. They show what can be achieved when good people come together in a common cause. And what has been achieved for a few hundred children can be now achieved for all 435,000 Syrian child refugees in Lebanon — if we urgently adopt a bold plan.

Lebanon, one of the smallest countries in the region, is now shouldering the biggest burden of the Syrian refugee crisis. It is being rocked by wave after wave of suffering, bearing the brunt of the biggest humanitarian crisis since 1945 as the Middle East lives through one of the most tumultuous times in its history. The recent security incidents in Beirut outside the Iranian Embassy and the assassination of the former Finance Minister, Mohamad Chatah, have increased fears of Lebanon dragging back into the abyss of sectarian strife.

One quarter of the country's population are now Syrian refugees, the equivalent of 15 million people turning up one day on the shores of the U.K. or 79 million refugees arriving in the U.S. In some areas of the country — like Wadi Khaled and Aarsal — incoming refugees outnumber national residents. And while Lebanon has never closed its borders where there is need for refuge, Lebanon urgently needs additional help to cope.

The impact on Lebanese host communities is also enormous. Lebanon has been exceptionally generous in its support of refugees fleeing Syria, opening its borders and sharing its resources, especially with children. But the additional strain on an already overburdened public sector is beginning to compromise the ability of the government to meet the needs of its own people, let alone respond to the needs of refugees.

The majority of the refugees are seeking shelter in the traditionally deprived Northern and Bekaa regions of Lebanon, where already vulnerable host communities are seeing increased expenditures, declines in incomes and an erosion of public services. Tension between refugee and host communities, in classrooms and between children, is mounting. The anecdotal evidence is that Lebanese children are also dropping out of school as a result.

So investment is urgently required from the international community to improve the education opportunities for vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian child refugees. The country needs help to narrow the gaping inequalities, ease unrest and reduce the long term damage to Lebanon's economic recovery in the face of the Syrian crisis.

Lebanon — historically a land of refuge for people fleeing persecution — cannot take any more displaced people. So Lebanon welcomes moves to open Britain and other countries to Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. But for those already in their country, Lebanon needs international support to do more. There are grim personal accounts of children begging on the streets, children being trafficked and girls sold into early marriage, even of young people feeding the international market for body parts by selling their kidneys to survive — and this is happening because thousands of the near one million refugees urgently need the help that an under pressure Lebanon can no longer give on its own.

Many people live huddled in tents, makeshift huts and overcrowded tenement buildings. They lack clothing and proper shelter, clean water and sanitation. There is also a great risk of epidemics of waterborne diseases, measles and tuberculosis spreading. But in addition to shelter, food and medicine, children need something else. They need hope. And it is the offer of education that can demonstrate to young people that it is worth planning for the future.

With the support of the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the education campaigner Malala Yousafzai, an ambitious plan has been drawn up costing \$195 million (£117 million) a year to repeat across Lebanon what the Akroum school have achieved in one village. The brilliance of the idea is that it can be operational within weeks. Instead of having to build new camp schools for refugees, exiled Syrian children will use existing Lebanese schools on this two-shift system.

In the next week in Britain, meetings will be held with British NGOs and a briefing will be held for members of Parliament. The British government has provided nearly \$1 billion in aid over the last three years. But there is a global gap between what has been done and what is needed — and it is nowhere more glaring than in the provision of educational opportunities for those children who are at risk of becoming the lost generation. This week, we hope the U.K. government can help us make education a reality for every Syrian refugee in Lebanon and show that we can establish the principle that child casualties of crises, wherever and wherever they are, have a right to schooling.

More than one hundred years ago, the Red Cross established the principle that the right to health care transcends borders. Now we can establish that even in war zones children can learn. Out of the ruins of a civil war and a humanitarian catastrophe, some good may finally come.

One  
quarter of the  
country's population  
are now Syrian  
refugees ...



# Gordon Brown: It's time to fund schools for Syrians

This article was first published by  
**CNN**

13 February 2014

I had to act. A frail 18-year-old Syrian refugee girl had pleaded: "Why have you abandoned us?" Her apartment in Homs, Syria, had been bombed, her family made homeless, her wheelchair-bound sister thrown out on to the streets with no shelter and no food but also no medical help and no schooling for the girls.

I discovered that before the civil war the girl excelled in sport and chess, had led a youth group and sang with her church choir. Now she had lost her home and her school, and she was rapidly losing hope. She had written in a private letter: "Everything is lost. I feel like I should show you so you will believe me."

And so because of recognition from the Syrian supporters in a school in Wales, she was offered the chance of a scholarship to study in the UK. She has now been here for six months and is thriving.

She works hard because she dreams that one day she can return and make a difference to her war-ravaged country.

Today, UNHCR figures show there are 3 million Syrian children displaced by the conflict, more than 1 million of whom have had to flee their country in what is now a disaster of biblical proportions.

Some years from now the world will look back and ask why so many of us did so little, faced with a catastrophe that has made more people permanently homeless than in the world's worst recent natural disasters, like the Asian tsunami of 2004 and the Haiti earthquake of 2010.

Of the 1 million exiled Syrian children, almost half of them are in beleaguered Lebanon, and the mantra of 50 of the world's top anti-poverty advocacy groups and international institutions is simple. "Education cannot wait."

On best estimates they are likely to spend 10 years in camps or temporary shelters. They need food not only when starving, shelter when destitute, medical drugs when faced with the risk of polio. They also need hope — hope that there is a future worth preparing for. If they are not to lose their childhoods — a loss that can never be replaced — the one way to deliver hope is by ensuring they can resume their education.

Amid the chaos there is a plan, a plan conceived in Britain. It puts existing Lebanese schools on double shifts — starting earlier and finishing later to give more lessons for more pupils — and offers all 435,000 refugees spread across the country the chance of formal education.

The annual cost is \$400 dollars per pupil which is cost-effective because we do not have to create new facilities.

Proof that the double shift system works, albeit on a smaller scale, can be found in a north Lebanese village called Akroum. In a unique effort volunteer Syrian teachers, local Lebanese school heads and a small Scottish charity called Edinburgh Direct Aid, are operating the local school on a timeshare basis outside of normal school hours.

Almost immediately boys and girls who have fled from burnt-down and bombed schools and who were a few weeks ago child laborers or even beggars have started to recover their lost childhood and now have hope that there is something to live for.

The country-wide Lebanese plan can be operational within weeks. And what has been achieved for a few hundred children in Akroum can be now achieved for all 435,000 Syrian child refugees in Lebanon — if we urgently adopt the plan.

My frustration is that an idea conceived eight months ago, negotiated with the Lebanese Prime Minister six months ago and the subject of two in-depth reports — one by the respected Overseas Development Institute and another by UNICEF and UNHCR — is still sitting on a table waiting implementation while children spend a winter walking the streets begging, some now trafficked into prostitution and some even forced into marriage as child brides.

This week the Lebanese prime minister, Najib Azmi Mikati, travels to London to make a plea for his nation and its people. One of the world's smallest countries, Lebanon has been left to shoulder the biggest burden of the crisis and it is unable to cope without international support.

Almost 25% of its entire population are now Syrian refugees. It is the equivalent of 15 million refugees arriving on the shores of the United Kingdom.

The U.S., Norway, Denmark and the UAE have backed the plan, which would cost \$195 million dollars a year to secure schooling for the 435,000 children. Now with 50 of the world's top international aid agencies making an urgent plea, today all countries with aid budgets should come on board.

An important principle is at stake. More than 100 years ago, the Red Cross established the principle that the right to health care transcends borders.

Now we can establish that even in war zones children can learn. Some good can yet emerge out of the ruins.

On best estimates they are likely to spend 10 years in camps or temporary shelters. They need food not only when starving, shelter when destitute, medical drugs when faced with the risk of polio. They also need hope — hope that there is a future worth preparing for.

# We are failing the children of Syria and Lebanon. This tragedy is avoidable

Valley after valley of snow-covered canvas tents. Temperatures plummeting below zero. A landscape that screams Siberia but a reality that is altogether different. This is Lebanon, and a freak winter is the last thing this nation needs.

The tragedy of a six-year-old Syrian boy who froze to death in last week's heavy snow highlights the plight of 465,000 Syrian child refugees, who having fled to neighbouring Lebanon remain destitute as plans to give them nutrition and education rapidly fail due to lack of funds.

The boy, from a family party of three, died with his father while crossing from Syria into Lebanon. He perished not because of bullets, but simply because he was too weak to survive a blizzard on the perilous mountain trek. And only four days ago, a 48-year-old Syrian mother of two died of cold inside her unheated tent in Baalbek. Her two young daughters, who survived the extreme temperatures, have already been taken in by a Lebanese family, it was reported. This winter storm, called Zina, is bringing a new form of heartbreak to a country that is all too familiar with human tragedy.

"Children are freezing and hungry," I was told by desperate Syrian refugee leaders who explained that food rations had been cut, what shelter there is remains makeshift, and the promise of school places for children is evaporating. Incredibly, amid the winter snow many children still wear open sandals and have no proper clothing. No one truly believes this will be their last winter as refugees.

In just four weeks, Unicef and its partners have distributed 70,000 winter kits including clothes to help keep children warm. But due to the most recent snowstorm, key roads and highways were blocked, hindering delivery trucks and mobile medical units from reaching badly affected areas. But a longer-term solution, and the funding of it, is now critical.

An increase of just \$7 a week per child – \$163m in total – is urgently needed to top up the fund to make sure that each one of the Syrian and Palestinian refugees have school places in Lebanon under the double-shift system and non-formal education plan accepted by the Lebanese government and backed by international organisations. But the plan, which works, has yet to receive the full funding it needs.

Today I will meet the Lebanese education minister whose government has generously offered to provide school places for all Syrian refugees if the money can be found to get them to school.

Only \$100m of the required \$263m has been collected, despite the generosity of many international aid agencies. Very soon we will need more: it is estimated that the number of Syrian refugee children who are between the ages of three and 18 will rise to 655,000. They are joined by more than 50,000 Palestinian refugees looking for school places, and another 40,000 Lebanese children who are currently without schooling.

To make the situation worse, many thousands of children have now been out of school for several years, live in informal settlements, work in the fields, are forced by parents and family to beg, and are at risk from the worst forms of child labour, exploitation and of being drawn into gangs and militant activities.

With 6 million Syrians now displaced, the refugee tragedy is fast joining the list of the world's biggest humanitarian disasters since 1945, and it is hitting children hard. Nearly half of Syrians registered as refugees with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are under 18, and they should have their right to access education guaranteed by the convention on the rights of the child.

Often the reason that help is not provided, and suffering not relieved, is that it is impossible to deliver aid in an emergency and the chaos makes co-ordination too difficult. But in the case of humanitarian aid for education, there has been a long-term undervaluing of its importance: it forms only 2% of humanitarian aid budgets. And it is shameful that in the case of the current Syrian crisis in Lebanon there is a plan that can help all exiled children, but we do not have sufficient international aid to deliver it.

The plan commits government and partners to providing 470,000 Syrian school-aged children (aged from three to 18) affected by the Syria crisis, and poor Lebanese children, with access to quality learning opportunities in safe and protective environments by 2016.

But our failure to deliver so far means that children are on the streets – vulnerable, at risk and without hope. Sadly, some have been forced into child labour, some girls have been forced to become child brides and some, tragically, are being recruited into militant organisations. Too many are subject to abuse.

During the 2013–14 school year, 229,000 children out of 619,100 in need received support to help access education, leaving an estimated 390,100 not in school, of whom approximately 300,000 are Syrians registered as refugees with UNHCR. Additionally, 141,000 children were helped to enrol in formal education (90,000 Syrian children registered as refugees by UNHCR were supported through payment of enrolment fees, 44,700 poor Lebanese were supported with parent contributions, and 6,300 Palestine refugees from Syria attended UNRWA-managed schools in Lebanon); 99 schools were renovated in order to increase classroom capacity, improve school conditions and provide wash facilities for boys and girls; 2,500 Lebanese teachers benefited from professional development; and psychosocial support in learning centres and schools was increased to cater for nearly 55,000 children traumatised by the conflict.

Now an official UN survey is poised to show that international efforts mean 45,000 children from Syria have successfully enrolled in the double-shift schools, but 71% of displaced Syrians have never gone to school, and those who do enrol are at primary level, with very few (only about 3,000) going to secondary. Most are still without schools.

So in the next few days it is urgent that we get beyond the \$100m pledged so far, and raise the additional \$163m that is needed. We will be asking every aid agency and Middle Eastern country to do more. When you see avoidable tragedy it is time to act.

# Why we must act now to educate Syria's refugee children

As donor countries gather in Washington to help with the endless tragedy of Syria, another awful milestone is being reached. Nearly one in four children in neighbouring Lebanon are now refugees.

And if a humanitarian crisis can only be judged by sheer numbers then could this be one of the worst of all time? 10,000 children killed, 14 million children affected. No end in sight.

And we have watched it happen. For four years now the world has blankly stared as this horror unfolds, image after image, clip after clip of refugee columns snaking across borders, fear and despair etched on the faces of children bombed out of their schools and forced instead to work or marry early. For many girls and boys, day-to-day survival is their life.

The magnitude of this tragedy should be unfathomable, the numbers affected by the horrors of war – displaced and forced out of their homes – growing not by thousands but by millions year after year. Yet still it rages on.

More than 14 million children – the most neglected and forgotten of victims – have been affected by this brutal conflict in Syria and much of Iraq. Three million of them have been out of school for years now, forfeiting opportunity and hope. They will never go back into learning and an entire generation's potential is being squandered.

And nowhere is this deprivation more apparent than in Lebanon, a small country troubled by decades of conflict and where one in four children in the country is now a Syrian refugee.

Yes, it is relentlessly bleak but there is a sliver of hope.

For the 500,000 refugee children now living in Lebanon – a small country troubled by decades of conflict – there exists a chance to reclaim their future. In an unprecedented commitment, the Government of Lebanon has developed a plan in collaboration with the international community to provide access to quality learning opportunities for more than 470,000 Syrian and underprivileged Lebanese children by 2016, generously opening its public schools and committing its teachers to an extended day double shift teaching arrangement named the "Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon" – or RACE – strategy.

The implementation of this strategy is a race – a race against time and the untold damage that could be inflicted upon children if we fail to provide them with an education.

We have made progress but it has been too slow. This year, 110,000 Syrian school-aged children will be enrolled in Lebanese public schools, leaving more than 400,000 children out of school. Already operational, the RACE strategy can accommodate thousands more if fully funded but it cannot be fully executed until we form a delivery and financing pact between the government and the international community.

That is why this week global leaders will assemble in Washington D.C. during the Spring Meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to move forward in securing the right to education for these children which is well within reach.

Borge Brende, the Minister of Foreign Affairs from Norway, is championing this critical issue and has agreed to co-host this vital meeting. The international children's charity Theirworld has published a report this week highlighting what can be done to achieve the ambition of universal education in Lebanon. Leaders must heed, with a fierce urgency, the opportunities laid forth to accelerate progress in delivering education.

First, we need the donor community to come through with predictable financing. Two-thirds of UNICEF's education funding has come from two generous donors – the EU and Germany – but we must do more. Financial support from the international community has consistently fallen short, leaving the Lebanese government with a \$163 million dollar funding gap this year.

Second, we need agreements with the government to form a project management unit in the ministry, develop a regulatory framework for non-formal education to complement the formal education programs and to eliminate barriers to access but setting up a seamless enrolment process for this upcoming school year where we can hit key education targets.

In four months, a new school year will start in Lebanon and we must form a delivery and financing pact to restore hope and opportunity for Syrian refugees and the Lebanese host community.

If we continue to fail these children, the consequences of our inaction for young people will haunt us for generations to come.

“ ... it is relentlessly bleak but  
there is a sliver of hope. ”

# Educating Lebanon's Syrian Refugees

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**O**n a recent visit to Beirut, I met a girl and a boy who struggled through a year filled with dread. Both of them are 14-year-old Syrian refugees in Lebanon, eager for an education, but unable to go to school.

Their stories show what is at stake in the next few months, as Lebanon struggles to raise funds for an ambitious effort to provide education for its resident refugee population. This year should have been the Year of the Child – the deadline for the Millennium Development Goal of providing all children with primary education. Instead, for hundreds of thousands of young people, it has become what some are describing as the Year of Fear.

The girl – Dilan – fled Syria with her mother when she was ten. The two of them found work in Lebanon in a garlic factory. Dilan spent her 11th birthday peeling garlic cloves, earning only the right to the roof over her head. For the last 18 months, she has been out of school; the closest she has gotten to a real classroom is a day center where she has studied Arabic. Even though she is now fluent, her goal of attending school remains elusive; she has no money with which to pay the necessary fees. All she wants, she says, is to train to be a teacher – “to help remove the sadness from children’s hearts.”

Ahmad, the boy, has not attended school for a year. He wants to become a doctor, but first he must undergo a different kind of healing: dealing with the memory of his last day in school, when armed men entered his classroom and forced everyone to flee. Ahmad’s deep anxiety is that he will not be able to complete his education. When I spoke to him in Beirut, he told me: “What are we out-of-school Syrians going to be in the future? We will be illiterate, and it will be like we turned back time to decades or centuries ago. We need education to become better people.”

It is said that “you can survive 40 days without food, eight days without water, and eight minutes without air, but not for a second without hope.” Like many of the young refugees in Lebanon, Dilan and Ahmad are losing hope that they will ever be able to attend school again.

Providing the refugees with an education would cost around \$500 a year – less than \$10 a week – per pupil. That is a small price to pay for hope. Until now, however, the international community has failed to do enough to help.

Lebanon is one of the world’s weakest, least-stable countries, riven by factionalism and riddled with violent extremist groups. And yet it has found the resources to house 1.1 million Syrian exiles – equivalent to nearly a quarter of its population – and lead an international endeavor to ensure that refugee children are provided access to education.

Education Minister Elias Bou Saab has cut through red tape and sectarian disputes to introduce a double-shift system in the country’s schools, beginning in September. In the morning, Lebanese children will be educated in French and English. In the late afternoon and early evenings, some 500,000 Syrian children will be taught in Arabic.

The program – at a cost of \$263 million – is set to be the largest education humanitarian effort ever mounted during an emergency. And yet, so far the urgency of the appeals has been matched only by the slowness of the response. With just three months until the beginning of the next academic year, only \$100 million has been raised.

Usually, in an emergency situation, there are no buildings in which to hold classes and no staff able to teach them. This gives donors an easy excuse: they would have helped, if only there was the capacity to do so. In Lebanon, however, with schools ready and teachers available, there is only one stumbling block: the will of the international community. If each international aid agency gave no more than an extra \$10 million, a half-million children in Lebanon could begin the new school term in September.

The uncertain fate of programs such as Lebanon’s underscores why it is a tragedy that education receives only 2% of humanitarian aid – and why it is so important to establish a permanent fund for education in emergencies. Why should refugee

children have to wait for months while the begging bowl is passed around?

Dilan and Ahmad illustrate the stark choice that all of us must confront: either we properly educate a future doctor and teacher, or we abandon them. If we choose the latter, we should be clear about what that means: a lost generation, at risk of abuse or trafficking – or, worse, a permanent source of fuel for radicalization and ongoing violence.

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# Cut overseas aid and you force even more people into the boats

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9 September 2015

If the tiny, lifeless body of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old boy whose body washed on to a beach in Turkey, has finally shamed Europe into offering sanctuary to Syrian refugees, just what will it take to shock the entire world into dealing with a problem 100 times bigger?

While the European commission still struggles to find agreement on a quota of 40,000 refugees, there are 4 million Syrians holed up in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon desperate for food, shelter, healthcare and schooling for their children.

The 1.1 million Syrians now in Lebanon have increased the country's 4.5 million-strong population by one quarter. It is the equivalent of 16 million refugees descending on Britain's shores or 80 million crossing the border into the United States. The impact of that in either country would be almost unthinkable.

"Why have you abandoned us?" a Syrian refugee girl desperate to go to school challenged me when I recently visited a Beirut refugee centre, where hundreds of mothers and their children were crowded into one room.

There I met 10-year-olds working in factories for wages that cover only a roof over their heads, girls who had been living on the streets at risk of being trafficked, and girls of 12, 13 and 14 who feared being forced into early marriage.

Most families were living in shacks, and many looked as if they were going without basic nutrition. Their healthcare needs were barely being met. But for the mothers, some three and four years into their exile, their critical and repeated question was: "How can my children get an education?"

No government should truly be asked to absorb what has been forced on an already troubled and divided Lebanon, but to his country's great credit the Lebanese education minister wants to offer a school place to every single refugee child.

The plan is quite simple and involves operating double shifts in their schools, which is possible because the refugees are spread right across the country. In the morning and early afternoon, Lebanese children will be taught in French and English. In the afternoon and early evening, in the same classroom, Syrian children are taught in Arabic.

In the past year, thanks to fundraising around the world, 105,000 refugee children have been enrolled for school. In the new term, starting just a few days from now, enough has been raised to educate 140,000. But we need to cater for 510,000

children in Lebanon, at least 215,000 in Jordan, and upwards of 400,000 in Turkey.

What is missing is not the classrooms or the trained teachers but the money to pay for them. For \$500 a year, or \$10 a child each week, we can provide school places that would allow parents and children to do what they would prefer to do – to stay in the region.

And so, while the crisis may seem overwhelming, we need not be overwhelmed; and in reply to those who ask, "What can we do?" we can point to a detailed plan, to be unveiled at the UN later this month, which starts by taking 1 million child refugees off the streets. I will ask the international community to build on the

\$100m we have already raised with another \$250m immediately.

Over the past few days, I have consulted King Abdullah of Jordan, the Lebanese and Turkish governments and Tony Lake of Unicef. In the next few days, at the invitation of the Lebanese government, I will visit Beirut again.

To its credit, the UK government has already given £20m to this plan. But it runs counter to its, and Europe's, interests to cut the international aid budget in this troubled region as Britain tries to cover the new costs of refugee support within the UK. Instead we should be increasing it, so that parents don't think the only chance of a future for their families is sailing out in flimsy boats on death voyages but are assured there is support much closer to home.

We have to provide both a home for refugees here and help for the millions struggling for survival on Syria's borders. And cutting international development aid to the region would be counterproductive. It would not solve the problem but exacerbate it, forcing more to leave; and it would cost more.

Eglantyne Jebb, who started Save the Children to help child refugees after the first world war, said the only international language the world understands is the cry of a child. But from her own experience of visiting neglected orphans, the author JK Rowling feared that: "No one is easier to silence than a child."

In the next few weeks we will find out whether, instead of becoming the lost generation, millions of children will finally be heard.

"Why have you abandoned us?" a Syrian refugee girl desperate to go to school challenged me when I recently visited a Beirut refugee centre, where hundreds of mothers and their children were crowded into one room.

# Why We Desperately Need to Help Syrian Refugee Children Get to School

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10 September 2015

Her name is Shems [Shams]. It is Arabic for “sunlight,” and it can also be interpreted as “hope.”

Just as the body of Alan Kurdi was being washed up on a beach in Turkey, Shems came into the world, born far from sunlight, in a dirt-ridden, rat-infested subway beside a Budapest railway station to a Syrian refugee.

There was no room in any hospital for a mother who, while nine months pregnant, had already been on a hazardous and terrifying boat and rail journey from Syria, through Turkey and Greece to Hungary.

When she flagged down a Budapest ambulance and begged the driver to help her, he simply refused and drove off.

Shems started her life swaddled in all that was available — a roll of used tinfoil. “It was a wonderful moment,” said a migration aid worker who was present at the birth, according to the *Sun*, “but it broke my heart that it happened in such an awful place.”

Newborn Shems is one of the youngest additions to the world’s biggest exodus since 1945, joining a total of 30 million displaced children wandering the world, 10 million of them now exiles from their home country as refugees.

Luckily, Shems will end up in Germany after her parents were given a dispensation to travel by train from Budapest to Berlin. The fate of other girls such as Shems is more uncertain.

The World Food Programme has had to announce dramatic reductions, dropping a third of refugees in Middle Eastern host countries from its food voucher program. Nearly 90 percent of Syrian refugees in Jordan are living below the poverty line and nowhere near enough get the cash grants they need despite the great work of compassion against the odds by António Guterres the brilliant, soon-to-retire UN high commissioner for refugees.

But as the numbers of refugee children swell, an even bigger gap in provision has opened up in an area that has too long been neglected and yet has huge long-term consequences for global stability: millions of refugee children will go through their entire school-age years in exile and will never even enter a classroom.

They will simply fall through the net — trapped between a humanitarian system whose limited resources are rightly focused on shelter and food and a development aid system that cannot easily plan for emergencies — and the resultant exclusion of millions from educational opportunity will become an opportunity for terrorists to turn another young mind.

So as the new school year resumes, there is an immediate emergency: we need to get millions of school-age children off the streets where they are easy prey for child traffickers and those who wish to sell them off into child labor or into forced early marriage.

Many agencies focused on emergencies, including UNICEF, UNHCR, the Global Partnership for Education, USAID, the Department for International Development, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dubai Cares and others have long sought a way of providing not just shelter and food, but education

in emergency settings, and for years dedicated aid workers have fought for better conditions.

But Syria’s mass of displaced children — about 5 million in total and around 2 million of them left out of education and on the streets — have become a test case of whether we can do better.

Today, three detailed reports have been published by Theirworld showing the scope for action in three of Syria’s neighboring countries where most child refugees reside — Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. The reports outline the growing number of child refugees and how the numbers of these refugee children educated could multiply principally through introducing a double-shift system in these countries’ schools.

In the past year, thanks to the initiative of Lebanese Education Minister Elias Bou Saab, 105,000 refugee children have been enrolled for school in Lebanon. In the first half of the day, Lebanese children are taught in French and English. In the second half, in the same classroom, Syrian refugees are taught in Arabic.

As the reports outline, the same double-shift system is being used in Jordan and Turkey, with the support of the governments, and could be scaled up.

Invariably during emergencies, we find we don’t have the buildings, the staff or the capacity to cope. But in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, what is missing is not trained teachers or classrooms — but money.

For the new school term, starting just a few days from now, we have raised money to educate 140,000 pupils in Lebanese schools. But that is not good enough: we will soon need to cater for a total of 510,000 children in Lebanon, at least 215,000 school-age children in Jordan and about 400,000 children in Turkey.

More international aid will be needed, and when the United Nations General Assembly meets in New York, an appeal will be made that is stark yet simple: for less than an average of \$2 per child per day, we could get 1 million Syrian refugee children into school.

Costing on average about \$500 per student annually, this is one of the best value-for-money interventions the international community could make.

Europe will need to do far more to provide for asylum seekers within our borders. But while Europe copes with tens of thousands, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey urgently need more aid to cope with millions.

And it’s common sense, too, for us to help parents provide for their children on the borders of Syria without them feeling compelled to embark on the “death voyages” around the Mediterranean.

A few days ago, a little bit of “Shems” came to a dusty alleyway in a Hungarian city. Now, all we ask is that we get the chance to deliver hope on the scale needed to a lost generation of children holed up today on Syria’s borders.

... a little bit of  
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# A powerful antidote to the Islamic State

This article was first published by  
*The Washington Post*  
29 November 2015

In Beirut — the troubled capital of a country with one of the worst histories of sectarian violence in the world — a unique experiment is underway.

Born out of a National Charter for Education on Living Together in Lebanon — which leaders of all major religions have signed — a common school curriculum on shared values is being taught in primary and secondary schools to Shiite, Sunni and Christian pupils.

The curriculum focuses on “the promotion of coexistence” by embracing “inclusive citizenship” and “religious diversity” and aims to ensure what the instigators call “liberation from the risks of . . . sectarianism.” But the new curriculum is more than an optimistic plea to love thy neighbor and an assertion of a golden rule common to all religions. It teaches pupils that they can celebrate differences without threatening coexistence.

The curriculum is designed for children starting at age 9 and includes four modules. The first tells the story of the global human family, asserting that all are equal in dignity. The second focuses on the rights and duties of citizenship, irrespective of religious or ethnic background. The third covers religious diversity, including the “refusal of any radicalism and religious or sectarian seclusion.” In the fourth, the emphasis shifts from the local to the need for global cultural diversity.

Of course, there is a long way to go before this experiment bears fruit, but the fact that it is happening today in Lebanon is of global significance because of the country’s decision to offer schooling to all Syrian refugee children.

Operating under a double-shift system — Lebanese children are taught in the morning, Syrian refugees in the afternoon — the public schools now house more refugee pupils — nearly 200,000 Syrian boys and girls — than local ones.

Lebanon’s offer of school takes young people off the streets and ensures that they are being taught in an ordered environment. More important, the curriculum’s focus on peace and reconciliation between religions is an antidote to the extremist propaganda of the Islamic State. The curriculum challenges the narrative of the violent extremists that there is an irreconcilable divide between Muslim believers and the apostate “others”.

The strategy of the Islamic State is to “capture the rebelliousness of youth, their energy and idealism, and their readiness for self-sacrifice,” according to its own propaganda. Central to this worldview, as one former hostage held by young Islamic State extremists bore witness, is “the belief that communities cannot live together with Muslims” and “that there is a kind of apocalyptic process under way that will lead to a confrontation between an army of Muslims from all over the world and non-Muslims.”

But if most Syrian refugee children are getting an education that promotes decent, humane values, the space this apocalyptic worldview holds rapidly diminishes.

President Obama is right to say that the Islamic State has to be destroyed as we also condemn those whose perverted interpretation of Islam leads them to condone violence. But hard

power deals best with the hard core. We have to offer these young people an alternative vision of their region’s future and accept that there has been an abject failure in education. This has left too many Arab youth with little knowledge of the common strands within the world’s religions and of any alternative other than in jihad to closed and unreformed institutions that are unable to provide jobs or hope.

Today, 47 per cent of Middle Eastern and North African youth are either unemployed or underemployed. By 2025, the region will be home to 250 million people under 25. With these young people under daily pressure to identify with the suffering of their fellow Muslims, we have to show that there is a third way beyond terror and an often tyrannical status quo.

All evidence suggests that if there were educational, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, the region’s youth would seize them. Most want to live in a more open society with the chance to benefit from scientific advances like other young people. In a recent survey, nearly 40 percent of Middle Eastern youth said they wanted to start their own businesses.

It is time to show we are not only on the side of openness, tolerance and diversity but also of opportunity. We need to guarantee that every refugee child has what the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1989

... we are  
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and diversity but also  
of opportunity.

Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2000 Millennium Development Goals promised: the right to education irrespective of where the children are located, what religion they practice or what status they have — refugee or otherwise.

Before the civil war, most Syrian children were in school. Now, with most of the 2 million Syrian children exiles on the streets, theirs is a lost generation among whom child marriage rates have doubled in Jordan and for whom child labor — according to recent survey of Turkish refugees — is rampant.

In just a few months, thanks to Lebanese Education Minister Elias Bou Saab, 175,000 refugee school places have been created without having to build one new school. But it is not enough. There are 200,000 school-age children still on the streets of Lebanon and even more in Turkey and Jordan.

But a lack of money is holding us back. For about \$500 million, or \$500 per year per student, we could put 1 million refugee children into school across Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

If education is available within the region, many parents will think twice about life-threatening voyages across the Mediterranean, and we will slow the exodus to Europe of thousands of refugee families. But the case for large-scale Western financial support for an education program in refugee communities is more compelling than that: It is about how we not only deal with the terrible suffering and sorrow of millions who have lost everything in a brutal civil war, but also offer a vision of a future that makes coexistence between religions a reality.

# The Syrian refugee crisis calls for a new Marshall plan

This article was first published by

*The Guardian*

4 February 2016

As world leaders meet in London to confront the biggest humanitarian crisis since the end of the second world war, perhaps the answer we need – and the bold plan we want – can be found 70 years in the past. For only an initiative as ambitious as the postwar Marshall plan can address the chaos of 12 million Syrians displaced from their homes.

The need to think in large scale is undeniable. Yesterday, the King of Jordan mourned that his country was at a “boiling point” – unable to offer refugees jobs, or even schooling for their children. And Care International reported that, in desperation, up to half of the 1 million refugees who have already fled from Syria to Jordan were considering a second exodus – to Europe.

A tectonic shift in migration patterns is already under way. Until the summer of 2015, men accounted for three out of every four who risked the perilous sea crossing into Europe. But according to new figures from Unicef, women and children today account for the majority of all refugees arriving in Greece.

The exodus through the eastern Mediterranean and western Balkans into Europe now includes entire families who have lost hope that they can ever make their future in their home region. For them the risks of a dangerous voyage to Europe are preferable to their fate holed up in camps, hovels and shacks in Lebanon, Turkey or Jordan.

In many refugee communities, child marriage rates have doubled as parents decide their girls are safer married off than on the streets. Europol estimates that already 10,000 children have gone missing, victims of this century’s most common form of slavery: trafficking.

And child labour is rising. A recent Save the Children report found that 47% of refugee households in Jordan rely, at least in part, on putting boys and girls to work to make ends meet. Even after up to five years of exile, the majority of refugee boys and girls are still out of school. And all this amid the endemic hunger, biting poverty and untreated disease that afflict the mass of displaced persons.

It is not just because this is the biggest humanitarian disaster since 1945 that we need a bold plan: it is because people everywhere have lost confidence in our capacity to deliver any solutions.

Confronted with this, history offers us a compelling analogue. Out of the ashes of postwar Europe, amid mass migration and destruction, came the Marshall plan, a model for enlightened self-interest. Two per cent of the resources of the world’s richest country were mobilised for the benefit of Europe’s poorest in an unprecedented outpouring of humanitarian generosity funding reconstruction.

To encourage peace, to make sure children are safe and not fodder for extremists, to slow the flow of refugees to Europe, and to prevent the emergence of a permanently scarred lost generation of young people, we must offer a grand vision equal to the challenge.

First, any plan must ensure Europe finally does what our values command: treat humanely those refugees who are now here, with a planned and orderly resettlement across the

continent. Second, while we reach for that elusive peace, we must guarantee the regular flow of food, shelter and healthcare for those cut off at the centre of the conflict. And third, despite the panic surrounding levels of migration into Europe, 14 in every 15 of Syria’s displaced persons are still in the region.

If we fail to rise to the challenge of providing for families close to their homes, countless more will soon take the long-term decision to start a new life in a different continent. But if we want families to stay in the region, we must give them a reason to hold on, and we must recognise that families need more than food and shelter: the children need education and the adults jobs.

Fortunately, a breakthrough in an otherwise troubled Lebanon has shown the way forward and should be the inspiration for a Middle East plan. Under what is called the double shift system 200,000 Syrian children are being educated every afternoon and evening in the very same classrooms that local Lebanese children occupy in the morning. The success of the Lebanese experiment proves it is possible to offer education to 1 million additional refugee children in 2016 – and to every one of them in 2017. If we can raise the £6bn at today’s London conference, I believe we can reach agreement at the World Humanitarian Summit in May on a long-term global humanitarian fund to offer schooling in every emergency.

Universal schooling is but the first step towards a comprehensive plan for the region. Economic zones should be created in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey as part of a job-creation initiative that will help both refugees and locals. Oil revenues should fund a major cross-region infrastructure programme along the lines proposed by an Arab consortium led by Majid Jafir of Crescent Oil. A welter of smaller-scale initiatives should be brought together and expanded under the umbrella of a new, locally financed Middle East Development Bank – as proposed by the former prime minister of Qatar – and charged with the reconstruction of the region.

Today 47% of the region’s 18- to 25-year-olds are unemployed or underemployed. This reality must yield to a new one. The burgeoning youth population of the Middle East and North Africa, 200 million in all, should have what is in shortest supply: hope. Either we mobilise our power and resources in the cause of opportunity in the region, or there will be mounting chaos there and at Europe’s points of entry as refugees clamber over walls, and sadly each other, in search of a future.

We know the face of failure. From South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Afghan-Pakistani border, pinprick policy solutions have led to ever-lengthening conflicts and aborted attempts at reconstruction. But in enacting the postwar Marshall plan, and more recently in fighting the global recession, delivering African debt relief and addressing climate change, the world has shown itself capable of uniting in great, transformative acts of statesmanship. These achievements prove that compassion and competence need not be at odds. We now urgently need an injection of both.

... the world has shown itself capable of uniting in great, transformative acts of statesmanship.



# Virtual Education in Conflict Zones

Educating refugees and children in conflict zones is one of the biggest challenges facing the international community. Their schools have been reduced to rubble. Their teachers have fled or are struggling to survive. Their libraries have been looted or burned.

Fortunately, solutions are possible. After all, these days, compelling lectures and well-stocked libraries are available at the click of a button. A bold pilot project, sponsored by the Dubai-based MBR Foundation, reflects this reality. The best coursework on offer – in mathematics, science, foreign languages, and literature – can be loaded onto a mobile phone and placed in a student's hand. If the 58 million children who are currently unable to attend school cannot be brought to a classroom, then the classroom must be brought to them.

Aid groups are already blazing the trail, using the Internet to provide Syrian refugees with educational opportunities. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, for example, is holding an international competition – called *eduapp4Syria* – to develop smartphone applications that “can build foundational literacy skills in Arabic and improve psychosocial wellbeing for Syrian refugee children aged five to 10.”

Similarly, in Lebanon, the Beirut-based non-profit organization Sawa for Development and Aid, facilitates the work of *NaTakallam*, a service that offers unemployed Syrian refugees a chance to work as Arabic tutors. And in Egypt, the *Nafham* platform allows its users to upload educational videos on topics in the country's K-12 public school curriculum.

From abroad, the British Council offers online courses in English, through a program called “*FutureLearn*.” And the Silicon Valley-based NGO *ReBootKAMP* and UNICEF's Raspberry Pi coding classes offer young refugees a chance to learn computer programming.

The Internet is being used to help refugees pursue higher education as well. The European Union is funding a three-year e-learning course to prepare 3,100 Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon for university. And the American nonprofit *The University of the People* has offered 10,000 Syrian refugees a tutor-supported online university education.

These efforts prove that, with the press of a button and the swipe of a finger, two million refugee children in Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan could be offered the opportunity to continue their studies.

The advantages of online learning are manifold. Prefabricated schools are expensive to ship and often unsuited for real learning. As these become less of a priority, funds will be freed for providing appropriate learning materials and on-site tutors.

This shift in emphasis opens opportunities for contributions by the private sector as well, revolutionizing how education is provided in conflict zones and other emergency situations. The Khan Academy, Google, Apple, and roughly 50 other companies have recognized this need, providing some \$70 million in funding, low-cost tablets, online education programs, and assistance with logistics. And in September, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced that his company would work with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide Internet access to all refugees.

History shows how much broad coalitions that transverse the private, public, and nonprofit sectors can accomplish. Private companies are often well positioned to deliver goods more quickly and less expensively than public institutions, allowing the latter to focus their efforts elsewhere. Examples of this dynamic include the startups and multinationals that have joined the Bill & Melinda

Gates Foundation to help find a cure for Ebola and entrepreneurs using solar panels to provide off-grid electricity to remote villages in Africa.

But when it comes to providing education for out-of-school children, making the most of the opportunities provided by technology will require a clear, overarching vision. Efforts must be coordinated so that initiatives do not compete or interfere with one another.

Already, UNHCR has established a task force in Jordan to explore how information and computing technology can be leveraged to provide refugees with greater access to higher education. The Global Business Coalition for Education has offered to coordinate educational organizations and their private-sector partners. And in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May, private companies

have already begun to mobilize resources and harness their capabilities in the service of innovation.

When the library at Alexandria burned in 48 BC, humanity did not crawl back into caves and stop learning. What went up in smoke was only the physical manifestation of human knowledge; the desire for discovery and progress remained intact. When the flames died down, our ancestors set out to recover the knowledge that had been lost.

That experience has been repeated throughout recorded history, and it should inform our response to the destruction of libraries and schools in Syria. Instead of asking the country's children to accept the end of their education, we must help them rebuild – with the most modern tools at our disposal.

If the 58 million children who are currently unable to attend school cannot be brought to a classroom, then the classroom must be brought to them.

## Sowing the Seeds of Syria's Future

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7 April 2016

We are at risk of producing a lost generation of young Syrians. Nearly six years of civil war have displaced them from their homes, denied them the chance to plan for their future, and stolen their hopes. And in hopelessness, as we now know all too well, lie the roots of future violence in the Middle East.

The end of Syria's brutal war may seem far off. But we must not behave as if peace will never come, because, when it does, Syria will have to call upon its best and brightest – the generation at risk of being lost – to rebuild their country.

Today, almost all of those young people have been denied training in the skills they will need in the future. If there is to be any hope for meaningful reconstruction, it will have to be built on the bedrock of a higher education.

We must, of course, be realistic and acknowledge the obstacles in the way of delivering higher education to refugees outside their country.

There are language barriers. Academic credentials must be documented or verified in some way. And significant new funding will be necessary (with just 1.3% of global humanitarian aid directed toward education, such funding will be hard to come by).

Notwithstanding these challenges, there is one significant step we can and should take immediately: the creation of an international clearinghouse dedicated to providing access to higher education. The existing, if limited, resources available to refugees must be brought together in one place, providing comprehensive information for Syrians seeking to begin or resume their studies.

Many important initiatives are already underway. Turkey recently unveiled plans to open three institutions tasked with offering higher education to Syrian refugees. In Lebanon and Jordan, a European Union-funded program is providing 3,000 young Syrian adults with the skills necessary for higher education. And a coalition of Canadian higher education institutions and providers has joined with the World University Service of Canada to increase financial support for refugees.

With the support of Jusoor, an organization led by Syrian expatriates, the Institute for International Education has created the Syria Consortium for Higher Education in Crisis, a consortium of colleges and universities providing scholarships for Syrian students whose education has been disrupted by the conflict. The institute also provides educational opportunities to Syrians through its Emergency Student Fund, which issues grants to ensure that students from Syria can continue their studies in the United States.

At the grassroots level, individual donors such as George Soros have been generous in their support. Moreover, universities have offered scholarships, and organizations like the Dutch NGO Spark are reaching out to Syrian refugees still in the region to provide opportunities for higher education. The Scholar Rescue Fund offers fellowships to academics to continue their work in safety outside of Syria.

Meanwhile, digital advances are helping to close the gap between refugees and a university education. The University of the People is an accredited US university dedicated to providing a quality, traditional college education online at no cost (except for a small fee for processing exams) to students with no other accessible alternatives. It has created a scholarship program to cover the cost of the examination fees for 500 refugees, with the goal of serving 12,000 in the future.

To make these chances available to more young people, we need a clearinghouse linking refugees in need with universities and organizations in a position to help them. John Sexton, President Emeritus of New York University, is dedicating himself to creating such a clearinghouse; and, under his guidance, the newly formed Catalyst Trust has provided seed funding.

The reasons to support this effort are manifold. Jorge Sampaio, a former president of Portugal, has spearheaded the Global Platform for Syrian Students, connecting universities offering scholarships with refugees (through his effort, some 150 students have resumed their studies). Sampaio says that a clearinghouse could increase awareness and mitigate the risks faced by refugee students, with dramatic positive effects.

By the time the World Humanitarian Summit takes place in Istanbul in May, we must establish a funding facility for education in emergencies. In addition to ensuring that conflict does not disrupt the education process, such a fund could provide ongoing support to the global clearinghouse – perhaps even providing financial aid to talented young people.

We cannot wait for the war to end to pick up the pieces and rebuild – not when there is work that can be done today. By removing barriers to information we will provide refugees with the opportunity to continue their studies. And, as hope takes root among Syria's lost generation, they will lay the groundwork for the reconstruction and revival of their country.

If there is to be  
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# Emergencies: from Boko Haram to Nepal

# A Senseless Massacre of Innocents in Nigeria

This article was first published by Global Motherhood,  
*The Huffington Post*  
27 February 2014

When courageous Malala Yousafzai was shot, 5 million men, women and children signed petitions calling for every girl in Pakistan to have the chance to go school.

But this week the world remained silent when 40 schoolchildren were shot and then burnt to death in a school in north east Nigeria. The incident was nothing less than a massacre of the innocents.

This latest attack, perpetrated by Boko Haram, brings the number of people murdered in the last month by the terrorist group to 300. Many were children targeted simply for going to school.

President Jonathan called the attack "a callous and senseless murder by deranged terrorists and fanatics who have clearly lost all human morality and descended to bestiality." US Secretary of State John Kerry has condemned "unspeakable acts of terror." Malala herself has spoken out for Nigerian children murdered when they are at school.

But so far there has been scant global reaction. Militant terrorists from Boko Haram make a practice of burning down schools and murdering boys and girls and their very name, translated from the Hausa language, means "Western education is sinful." Last month they razed a whole village to the ground, casually shooting panicked men, women and children as they fled for safety.

It is time the world came to the aid of Nigeria as they try to make schools safe for children and to address and tackle the discrimination that prevents millions of children getting an education.

Nigeria has more than 10 million children out of school, the worst record in the world. We cannot meet the millennium development goals for universal education by December 2015 unless we tackle the education gap in Nigeria. A failure to address historic under-provision and discrimination in the northern provinces has left 6 million girls without any chance of an education.

The education challenges in Nigeria are real and many. There is a teacher shortage of nearly 1.3 million, basic infrastructure is lacking and there is a shortfall of up to 1.2 million classrooms. There are fewer children in school each year due to child marriages and gender and religious biases and education is simply too costly for the poor.

For those that do find ways to get their children into school, learning is limited if it happens at all. The number of adults who cannot read or write has risen to 35 million, confirming that illiteracy is a huge barrier to the future success of the Nigerian economy. Shockingly, around 52 percent of young women who complete primary education remain illiterate.

Nigeria — which in 2025 will become the world's fifth biggest country by population and could surpass South Africa in

economic size — will continue to lag behind the rest of the world for decades in the provision of educational opportunity unless something is done.

If nothing is done, Nigeria cannot make the transition from low-income country to high-income country in the foreseeable future. The latest figures suggest that by 2025, 71 percent of 30- to 34-year-olds in Japan, 79 percent in South Korea and 87 percent in Singapore will have tertiary education. But in Nigeria, it will only be 24 percent — unless there is a sea shift in educational provision.

The mountain Nigeria has to climb will be the subject of a summit held by President Goodluck Jonathan in May. We want to offer help from the rest of the world with a \$500 million package, made up of \$250 million from the federal government, which was matched by international donors.

These funds will support state-led initiatives including school building programs, teacher recruitment and training and the implementation of new technologies in learning.

Donors including the USAID, the Global Partnership for Education, Qatar's Educate a Child, the UK's DFID and the business community (represented by the Global Business Coalition for Education) have shown their determination to give practical support to President Jonathan in the drive for education.

But in the midst of the education crisis, President Jonathan is prepared to take unprecedented action. He realizes that getting every child into school and learning is feasible and achievable and the key to Nigerian prosperity.

Learning from what works best, financial incentives must be fine-tuned to help the government deliver. This means teacher training and professional development must be undertaken by leveraging technology. The curriculum of Islamic schools must be strengthened to develop literacy and numeracy skills and families must be supported in their demand for education through conditional cash transfers that, having been pioneered in some states, can

encourage enrollment and attendance.

Nigeria itself is calling for the education it needs. Despite the violence and attacks on education from extremist groups, many Nigerians have signed the petition to support President Jonathan's commitment to education. They are calling for safe schools for all of Nigeria's children and for state level implementation of plans for universal education.

The future for education in Nigeria will be built not just with its government's commitment and international support but because it is the demand of girls and boys everywhere to make education a civil right.

... getting every  
child into school  
and learning is ...  
the key  
to Nigerian  
prosperity.



# This is Africa's Dunblane ... so why in God's name was the world so slow to act?

This article was first published by  
**The Daily Mail**  
11 May 2014

A knock at the door in the middle of the night. A policeman telling you your teenage daughter has been abducted. They're trying to find her but she may have already been sold as a sex slave or a child bride. A chance she might be dead. And 270 of her friends have been taken too. Vanished. Inconceivable in this country. Reality in parts of Nigeria.

In Britain and the United States we still have the capacity to be stunned when evil descends on our classrooms. Who could forget? Sixteen boys and girls and a teacher murdered at Dunblane Primary, 12 students and one teacher wiped out at Columbine High, 20 children and six staff shot dead at Sandy Hook Elementary. All of them events of such horrific magnitude they will forever be etched in the world's collective memory.

These massacres shocked us to our core precisely because they were so out of the ordinary – innocent children gunned down in the supposed safety of their schools. But in Nigeria, where I have been this past week, the bombing, burning and kidnapping of schoolchildren is now almost a regular occurrence. Another day, another outrage. Schools are far from safe havens, and they must be just that.

They have almost become instruments of war, and the brutality inside those walls has become so commonplace it is rarely reported.

Why in God's name has it taken three weeks for the world to sit up and care about this atrocity?

I once visited a school on the outskirts of Nigeria's capital, Abuja, with Bono. When we asked the children what their ambitions were, we found they were the same as kids all around the world.

Some wanted to be teachers, doctors and nurses, others engineers, airline pilots and scientists.

None, of course, had ambitions of being a politician – and to Bono's surprise, none wanted to be a rock star.

What struck me most during our visit were the appalling conditions and the substandard education they were receiving. Lessons were being offered in a dilapidated school with a leaking, corrugated iron roof. Children huddled together, three or four at a rickety desk built for one.

What we ultimately learned was deeply disturbing. We found this school was losing pupils to a madrasa only a few miles away – a new, fresh, well-financed institution that offered free education.

But the drawback was that they were indoctrinating students by preaching support for terrorism.

So it is no surprise to me that extremism, fed by propaganda infiltrated through the education system, is on the rise in Nigeria.

And now, thankfully, the international community has finally woken up to the fact that 270 girls were snatched at gunpoint from their school.

The murderous terrorist group Boko Haram – the name means 'Western education is forbidden' – has claimed responsibility for the abductions, and their twisted leader Abubakar Shekau released a video stating the girls should not have been in school and should be married. A further eight girls were kidnapped last week.

These lives now hang in the balance. Kidnapped and carted off in lorries into the jungle territory of Borno state, their parents are unsure whether they will be used as sex slaves, taken over the border and sold as child brides, or killed.

It is horrendously late but a search, involving the UK and US and using state-of-the-art equipment, will finally begin. Three weeks ago and within hours of the mass abduction, I asked for international support to rescue them.

Thanks to William Hague, our Foreign Secretary, and John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, specialist teams are in place. Last week the world was angry and vocal.

Look to the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. This week the world will be watching and praying.

And the Nigerian government and their people deserve the fullest support in tackling terrorism. Last week in Abuja, Boko Haram bombed and killed dozens. Over the past four years the group's attacks on Nigerians have taken more than 4,000 lives.

We also now know that in a separate incident in the past few weeks, seven teachers were murdered and 27 members of their families were abducted in Borno state. Another day, another outrage.

This brings to 171 the number of teachers who have been assassinated in Nigeria since 2009. It makes it all the more important that a Safe Schools Initiative I announced in Abuja on Wednesday – to increase the security available to pupils and teachers in their school grounds – is moved forward as quickly as possible.

We simply cannot stand by and see schools shut down, girls cut off from their education and parents in fear of their daughters' lives. The education system that has the potential to transform Nigeria cannot be undermined.

Starting with a 500-school pilot programme in northern states, the Safe Schools Initiative will focus on school and community interventions, with special measures for the most at-risk children. The initiative will build community groups to promote safe zones for education, comprising teachers, parents, police, community leaders and young people.

This initiative, which came from the Global Business Coalition For Education led by my wife Sarah, is part of our work to give every girl and boy in Nigeria the opportunity to learn and fulfil their ambitions. Surely in the year 2014, every boy and girl should be at school and no one should be prevented from an education.

Sadly there are still 57 million across the world who are denied even basic schooling.

There ARE children in Nigeria prepared to stand up to terrorism. Last week 12 young Nigerians, appointed global ambassadors by education initiative A World At School, made a statement showing that they will not be cowed by terrorist threats. They declared they will continue their work for the right of every child to go to school safely.

And Nigeria is not the only country at risk. More than two million out-of-school children are growing up in conflict zones, whether it be the Afghan-Pakistan border, on the fringes of Burma,

These lives  
now hang in  
the balance.



or in South Sudan, and all of them are vulnerable to extremist influences as we cut global education aid year after year.

All the world's aid put together offers sub-Saharan Africa only \$13 per pupil per year – barely enough to buy one school book per child. Faced with a rising school-age population, Nigeria receives just \$2 per pupil, but it needs to spend \$2 billion a year more if it is to meet the UN Millennium Development goal that every child be at school by 2015.

I also now believe that discrimination against girls has become the civil rights struggle of our times. Thankfully, millions of girls across the world are now prepared to stand up for their rights.

A few weeks ago I returned to Pakistan 18 months after a visit I made following the shooting of Malala Yousafzai. Then, there was rage that a young girl could be shot simply for wanting girls to go to school. A whole population almost seemed fearful and cowed by the Taliban.

However, on my recent trip, addressing 2,000 girls who had turned out in Islamabad, I found a determination that no girl should ever be forced out of their country by the Taliban again. None of them wanted their country to be defined to the world any more by a shooting. They wanted Pakistan recognised not by their failure to get girls to school but by their success.

These socially aware girls, desperate for education and careers, are globalisation's children – born in the latest wave of change, aware, through their mobile phone contact with the outside world, of the opportunities girls enjoy elsewhere. Their outrage at the denial of opportunity could threaten over the coming decade to bring unresponsive governments to their knees.

A generation ago, young people might have accepted that their rights were what others bestowed on them, their opportunities simply what parents and grandparents handed down, and that a shortage of ability, not a shortage of opportunity, explained their fate.

Now not so, and probably never again. They are fighting back but there will be moments of despair on their journey.

In Chibok this past week, it has been heartbreaking to see the desolation on faces as they wait for news about the girls.

We should be taking even more action. Schools that already have the same legal rights under international law as hospitals should also be the subject of agreements that they never become instruments of war. They should be as safe as the hospitals that have Red Crosses on them and the UN buildings and vehicles that bear the blue UN symbol.

Perpetrators of terrorist crimes against children should be aware that murdering or abducting them is a heinous crime that the authorities will punish. Even in the world's most dangerous places, we must now establish the right of all children to schooling and make a new idea of 'education without borders' a reality.

And while we cannot end terrorism overnight, we can show determination to stand up to it by making schools safe and defending every child's right to education... and to life.

“ ... discrimination against girls has become the civil rights struggle of our times. ”

# 50 Days in Captivity

This article was first published by  
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4 June 2014

To a teenage girl, 50 days can seem like a lifetime. 50 days have gone by since over 200 schoolgirls, kidnapped from their school in Chibok by Boko Haram, were taken and remain in captivity.

A new video has been released by their captors and we cannot allow international focus to stray from Nigeria now we have heard their desperate pleas.

The film shows eight of the girls, dressed in their homemade school uniforms of pale blue gingham, forced to walk in front of a camera. One girl is heard saying: 'I never expected to suffer like this so much in my life'. Another cries: 'They have taken us away by force.' The third girl complains: 'We are not getting enough food.' An older girl keeping her composure says: 'My family will be so worried.'

The video was recorded two weeks ago and there are now fears that most girls are being held in Cameroon, Chad or Niger. The fear is that few remain in the Borno forest area into which they were first abducted.

Teams of military experts and advisers sent to the region are advising on possible rescue operations. Nigeria's Chief of Defence, Alex Badeh, has said the government knows the location of the girls.

However there is a premium on making existing schools safe and rebuilding the Chibok School to be ready for the return of the kidnapped girls if and when they are liberated.

The kidnapped girls and their families have a right to know that when they are released they will have a safe school to study in.

The petition that has captured the world's imagination to "Bring Back Our Girls" and create safe schools in Nigeria reached 995,000 signatures. And as silent vigils are held in Nigeria and across the world, attention has shifted to what we can do to not only bring back our girls but ensure all children are in safe learning environments.

This is why the Safe Schools Initiative, a program launched by Global Business Coalition for Education in partnership with the Nigerian Government is so important. Both parents and children must feel that a place of learning is a place that will be protected.

A fortnight ago, I met with President Goodluck Jonathan in Paris and we agreed that while the hunt is on to locate the 280 missing schools girls, the Safe Schools Initiative could help Nigeria's other 30 million schoolchildren who are now in fear of going to school.

The fund already contains over \$20 million, contributed by the Nigerian government and the Global Business Coalition for Education's Nigerian business community. Now attracting support from the UK, Norway and other countries, the Safe Schools

Initiative is designed to reassure Nigeria's 30 million schoolchildren that everything possible is being done to make their schools secure from Boko Haram — the terrorist group which wants to stop any girl going to school.

We are two weeks away from the Day of the African Child, where I and many others are choosing to honor the bravery of the Chibok girls and all those children who fight for an education. During the next few months the Safe Schools Initiative fund for Nigeria is also gaining traction in time for the upcoming school year.

I have submitted a plan to President Jonathan with proposals for physical protection of schools, community liaison teams, better early warning systems in the event of attacks, and support for parents trying to keep the schools secure. Our measures draw on the experience we have gained from other conflict zones — from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Somalia and Nepal.

These plans could be implemented quickly once the fund has gained its necessary finance. We are now working with experts from all over the world — including the UN agencies in Nigeria and UNICEF experts who have implemented such programs in other countries — to start to secure the schools in the north that are most vulnerable.

There are signs that Nigeria's youth will not be cowed by the terrorists. Late last month several Nigerian young people, appointed A World at School Global Youth Ambassadors, declared they will step up their work for the right of every child to go to school safely. We are working with faith communities led by Pope Francis and senior Muslim clerics who are taking a stand against violence.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has agreed to support the observation of the Day of the African Child and he has offered support to the Nigerian schoolgirls. Members of the Global Faiths Coalition for Education — including Muslim Aid, the Islamic Society of North America and others, have all condemned this attack on girls' education. In addition, last week the International Trade Union confederation — which counts 30 million teachers among its 200 million members, issued a statement of support. Over the last four years 171 teachers have been massacred in separate incidents in Borno state.

Every child is special, every child is unique and every child is precious, and they all deserve the right to learn. And on June 16, the Day of the African Child, the whole world should ponder the statement of the late Maya Angelou, which expresses the global desire to help the kidnapped girls. The writer said: 'None of us is free until all are free'. And we will not stop until every girl and boy is in school, safe and learning.

... the whole  
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Emergencies:  
from  
Boko Haram  
to Nepal

# Schools Should Be Safe Havens and Places of Learning Not Theaters of War

This article was first published by Global Motherhood,  
*The Huffington Post*  
2 July 2014

Today marks the 80th day of captivity for the more than 200 Chibok girls who have been kidnapped by the terrorist group Boko Haram and held in captivity in remote forests of northern Nigeria.

For nearly 11 weeks, the girls' families have been living through every parent's nightmare; waking up not knowing whether your daughter is dead or alive, and spending all your waking hours worried that she is being molested, raped or has been trafficked and sold into slavery.

Yesterday in the Nigerian Borno state capital of Maiduguri, the terrorist group Boko Haram bombed dozens in the shopping market. In the last month alone, the sect has been responsible for a massive explosion in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, which killed at least 24 people; the bombing of a medical school in the northern city of Kano which killed at least eight people; an attack at a military camp that survivors say killed at least 51 soldiers and various village incursions in the north. This includes a Sunday raid where fighters sprayed gunfire, killing 30 worshippers in four churches, just a few miles from where the Chibok schoolgirls were abducted.

It is a reminder of the world's limited attention span that when last week it was reported that another 90 schoolchildren — 60 girls and 30 boys — were kidnapped from another village in northern Nigeria by the same terrorist group, there was only a short flicker of attention.

The crisis facing Nigeria now extends beyond the need for surveillance and aircraft and helicopter support to locate and free the girls and to stop further terrorist attacks. A new crisis has developed: children have stopped going to school in most northerly states of Nigeria. Many schools have been closed for weeks.

I talked to three of the girls who had escaped the clutches of Boko Haram by running away. All three want to be doctors, but they cannot find a safe environment in which to learn and sit their exams. Like many others, their education is on hold.

And so today, a worldwide appeal that focuses on a girl's right to education will be started. It calls for funding for a safe schools initiative, and it is designed to ensure that every girl can go to school again — free from fear of assault, violation and abductions. It is designed within Nigeria by the Nigerian government and the business community with support from education experts around the world.

Nigerian Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, will formally launch the initiative at a meeting of British Members of Parliament whom she is addressing in the House of Commons in London this afternoon. At this meeting, I will ask the U.K. government to

step up its support, as well as do more with aircraft, helicopter and surveillance support to aid the rescue mission to recapture the missing girls.

The Safe Schools Initiative provides provisions for better school infrastructure, including basic walls, lighting and communications systems. It also demands working with parents and teachers to empower and reassure them that the security of their children is being taken seriously.

The \$100 million Safe Schools Fund paired with the initiative has already attracted \$10 million from the Nigerian business community, \$10 million from the Nigerian government, £1 million from the United Kingdom, \$1.5 million from Norway, and promises of support from the United States and the European

Union as we develop an international co-financing mechanism.

Already, security experts from the Metropolitan Police have gone at their own expense to Abuja to offer to help the Nigerian government. There are also experts from UNICEF-backed initiatives for safe schools providing guidance and experiences from other countries. But I hope we can do more.

Schools should be safe havens for children and places for learning and should never become theaters of war. At the UN in September, there will be pressure on every country to adopt military guidelines that include rules of engagement preventing schools — like hospitals — from being militarized or used as instruments for waging war in conflicts or civil wars. But the need is now urgent and immediate.

A worldwide appeal has now been issued by the charity "A World at School" to raise some of the

estimated \$100 million now needed to fund its recommendations for safe schools. The charity suggests improving school safety infrastructure, such as walls, lighting, and communications equipment, and community-based programs that make it safe for girls to go to school.

With the initial \$20 million already pledged, we will now see the public challenge governments and aid agencies to contribute an additional funding needed to ensure safe schools for all Nigerian children. Because current donor contributions are not enough to cover the thousands of schools in need of security installations, I will ask at the Commons debate today for further help, for it is not just in Nigeria that this initiative must take off. Neighboring Chad, Niger and Cameroon face similar threats from terrorist groups determined to peddle their perverted and extreme religious dogma that girls should not be at school. And they need our support, too.

... the girls' families  
have been living  
through every  
parent's nightmare;  
waking up not  
knowing whether  
your daughter is dead  
or alive ...



# The World Will Not Forget These Girls. Not for One Day. Not for 100 Days.

This article was first published by  
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23 July 2014

Wednesday, July 23, marks a tragic milestone. It is the 100th day in captivity for over 200 Nigerian schoolgirls. For an adolescent with plans, dreams and ambitions, 100 days must seem longer than an eternity.

And still, even now, there is mystery over what has happened to the lost girls of Chibok. Stories are whispered of mass rapes, shotgun marriages, violent beatings, forced starvation — and even the murders of girls who won't comply and do the terrorists' biddings.

But they are uncorroborated stories because no one really knows the details after the girls were tricked by Boko Haram terrorists wearing Nigerian army uniforms and promised they were being taken to a safe place. It is inconceivable that even they were driven away from their school and their families into the vast forest areas of the Borno state, that 200 girls can just disappear forever. And no news is not good news. What is clear is that their childhood has been taken from them, never to return. Brutalized by the mass abduction, nothing will ever be the same again.

But the world will not forget these girls. Not for one day. Not for 100 days. On Wednesday, vigils were staged in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the United States. Candlelight demonstrations were held in African countries from Togo and Tunisia to Tanzania, organized by the Global March Against Child Labour. Girls took to the streets in Pakistan, led by Baela Jamil of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, the girls' rights group campaigning for what the Chibok girls have lost — their right to an education.

In India, vigils were led by Kailash Satyarthi and the Bachpan Bachao Andolan group, which rescue children from trafficking and slave labor every day and have common cause with these Nigerian girls who have been taken from their homes.

With 145 sister organizations around the world, Girls Not Brides has called on its groups in 45 countries to protest, reminding them that many of the Chibok girls could meet the same fate as their members, married off against their will.

Walk Free, the anti-slavery organization led by Australian billionaire Andrew Forrest, who have exposed the extent of child slavery in the modern world, is throwing its weight behind the campaign. And across the globe, A World at School's 500 Global Youth Ambassadors, led by the U.N. youth envoy, will be marking the events, handing in petitions to embassies and consulates in the world's biggest capitals.

A new online petition by A World at School calls for the safe return of the girls and all messages of support will be passed to Chibok community leaders and families of the girls. The petition supporting the president of Nigeria in all of his military and diplomatic efforts to bring back the girls will also be sent to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Coinciding with the July 23 vigil is the deployment, by the Nigerian government to the Borno area, of helicopters and aircraft with enhanced surveillance capacity and night vision equipment, capable of identifying the captured girls.

Around the globe there is an understanding that Nigeria is simply the latest country (after America with 9/11 in 2001 and Britain with its 7/7 in 2005) to be hit by terrorist outrages, and that in its hour of need, Nigeria deserves the support of the world community against a terrorist sect that thinks nothing of killing and raping schoolgirls and seeks to deny them the basic right to education.

The petition is not just for the rescue of the girls but for the rebuilding of their Chibok school and the creation of safe schools throughout Nigeria, particularly in those areas where girls are not going to school for fear of terrorism.

The Safe Schools Initiative, a fund set up to pilot 500 safe schools in northern Nigeria and led by Nduka Obaigbena, brings the Nigerian government and Nigerian business leaders together with the international community to ensure that all children are secure when learning. The fund total currently stands at \$23 million.

Ultimately, young people are demonstrating because they see the connection between the abductions in Nigeria, the rapes and murders of young girls in India, the so-called "honor killings" of Pakistani girls who marry against family wishes, the genital mutilation of girls in preparation for child marriages across Africa and the ever-present reality that 7 million school-aged girls are working full time, often in slave labor conditions, many of them trafficked out of their home country when they should be at school.

There is a common denominator: Seventy years on, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has failed to take girls' rights seriously. So, girls are taking action to make themselves heard. Incensed by the realization that it will take 100 years for them to have the same right to basic education as boys, girls will lead their liberation struggle. And the new divide across the world will no longer be between the educated and the uneducated but instead between the educated and those demanding to be educated.

Slowly but surely, local embryonic civil rights movements are linking up with global leaders: Girls Not Brides, Walk Free and A World at School are now umbrella organizations, pioneering the creation of hundreds of youth ambassadors and part of the emergency coalition to achieve zero child labor, zero child marriage, zero education exclusion and zero girls' discrimination at school. This has set a timetable for ending girls' exclusion from education and ending exploitation.

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So, girls are taking action  
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heard.



The Emergency Coalition for Global Education Action's work program will be launched in September during U.N. General Assembly week.

For years, we have assumed a clear if often rocky pathway towards human rights and universal education, but today in Iraq, legislators are considering reducing the age for child marriage to eight. Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology is calling for all age limits to be abolished. India has once again passed up another chance to outlaw child labor, and for the past three years, progress to get the 58 million out-of-school primary-aged children into school has stalled.

We are in reverse, and we now have to support a new world of youth activism. It explains why I, a former prime minister, am

supporting a global civil rights struggle under the leadership of young people. I cannot live any longer with the idea that every day a vulnerable girl is forced into a child marriage against her will, or a child who should be at school is forced down a mine or into domestic service or being trafficked for money. I cannot feel comfortable as long as any child is condemned to poverty through lack of basic opportunities we in the West took for granted a century ago.

Girls should be able to study in a classroom, free of fear and without the need to demonstrate on the streets.

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“ ... we now have to support a new world of youth activism. ”

Emergencies:  
from  
Boko Haram  
to Nepal

# Gordon Brown: Where children are scared to go to school

This article was first published  
**CNN**  
16 January 2015

**B**oko Haram's murderous tactics have descended to a new barbaric low. Last Saturday, a bomb strapped to a schoolgirl exploded in the center of Maiduguri in Borno state, killing at least 20 people. Then, on Sunday, two girls simultaneously blew themselves up in a market in Potiskum in Yobe state, killing three and injuring more than 40.

It is clear that girls as young as 10 are being lined up as suicide bombers to further Boko Haram's cause. And these new bombings come as Boko Haram has also caused outrage around the world with its indiscriminate massacre of innocent men, women and children in the towns of Baga and Doron Baga.

Indeed, new photographs obtained by Amnesty International show the devastation of more than 3,700 homes, local shops, local churches and their local schools. Nothing, it seems, is sacrosanct. Daniel Eyre, Nigeria researcher for Amnesty International, said this was the "largest and most destructive" Boko Haram assault his organization has ever seen. The Nigerian government estimated 150 people were killed, but some widely reported private estimates put the figure as high as 2,000.

Days earlier, on January 4, 40 boys and young men, ages 10 to 23, were abducted from a village in the Nigerian state of Borno.

This willful destruction of even the most innocent of lives destroys any illusion that Boko Haram will try to shield any civilian, however young or however frail, from its attacks and killings. As a result, this year is poised to be a year of infamy that could exceed the horrors of the last one.

In November, for example, at least 120 people were killed in a bomb attack on a central mosque in Kano, the principal city of northern Nigeria. A few weeks earlier, the terror group kidnapped at least 97 people, including many children, during raids on villages in Borno state. When earlier in the year they invaded the northern village of Izghe, Boko Haram militants went door-to-door, killing any man, woman or child they came across.

And perhaps most infamously, last year some 220 girls were abducted from Chibok by Boko Haram. Sadly, there has been no news on their whereabouts, meaning none of these families know whether their daughters are safe. No one knows if his or her daughter has been married off, raped, violated or even whether she is alive or dead. Every waking hour remains a nightmare for these families.

Boko Haram's ever more violent and ever more vicious abuse of children as weapons of war — as victims, as slaves and as suicide bombers — must be addressed, because the threat is only likely to grow.

After all, the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau, who has a \$7 million bounty on his head, was seen last week in a video praising the jihadists who killed 17 people in the Paris attacks. The Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium has described Shekau as a "religious intellectual, yet also a gangster and vigilante as well as a mad leader."

With all this in mind, I am urging the international community to step up its pursuit, exposure and surveillance of Boko Haram and to do more to coordinate action against their cross-border incursions into Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and other countries.

Following the kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls in Chibok, a special initiative for children was launched — the safe schools plan. It was in response to the news that children, fearful of further terrorist attacks, had been staying away from school. The idea behind this is admirable — the notion of safe schools and a universal call for every child to have the right to education, free of fear and intimidation. This plan is being put into place, and steps are being taken to fortify and guard schools, to improve security and to create a line of communication between schools and police and army.

These new initiatives are backed by the Safe School Guidelines, passed by the United Nations to stop the use of schools as military targets and to ensure that they are havens free from exploitation by terrorist groups.

Just as hospitals are regarded as protected under international law, so should schools. While better fortifications will of course not ultimately stop the carnage if a terrorist group is hellbent on an attack, the deterrent effect of enhanced security measures offers at least a first line of defense. And it also sends the important message to parents that everything possible is being done to make schools safer for their children.

Over the last few weeks, \$23 million has been raised for safe schools from the international community, and in the last few days the United States and Britain have announced further help for

the initiative. But we are calling on all aid agencies to support this innovative plan, one that could, if applied round the world, help children worried about the threat to their schools, in countries from Pakistan to Lebanon.

It is hard for many of us in the West to imagine what it is like to be scared even to travel to school, yet too many children around the world confront that fear every day. It is time for that to change.

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# The fight to free Nigeria's girls from Boko Haram must continue

This article was first published by

*The Guardian*

13 April 2015

Mark Enoch has been told his daughter is dead. He should grieve but he can't because he refuses to believe it is true. So he will pray again, just like he has for the past 364 days and nights, kneeling at the side of her empty bed.

She was studying to be a doctor. On the night of 14 April 2014, she was abducted, along with more than 200 other girls from the town of Chibok in north-east Nigeria. Boko Haram terrorists rounded them up in the dead of night at gunpoint and spirited them away.

One year later, and despite worldwide outrage, their whereabouts remains unknown. The final, haunting memory is a group photograph of the girls – clad in grey and black – taken in scrubland and posted online by the kidnappers as proof of their mass abduction.

Mark, a pastor, has been told that his girl was murdered. He doesn't know when it happened or where it happened. He was only told how it happened. Boko Haram spies spread the rumour that she refused to convert from Christianity to Islam. He has been told she was stoned and then buried alive.

We don't mention her first name, because if she is still alive there could be repercussions. Mark told me he and his remaining family have recently had to move far from Chibok. On the day Boko Haram captured his daughter, family members almost died when bullets were fired into his home. Now, finally, their house is evacuated and they are on the move, always fearful of another attack.

Mark finds sleep difficult, and even eating – not that there is much food around without him working on nearby farms as a casual labourer. He cannot give up hope that his daughter and a girl they adopted – who was 16 and staying with the family when she too was kidnapped – survived. Mark told me: "For nearly 365 nights I have knelt and prayed for their return. We are in one house at the moment with four families

in a compound. We are almost refugees in our own country. Any time I hear a noise it feels as if Boko Haram is coming for us."

The United Nations human rights chief says Boko Haram is frequently using children as "human bombs and shields" and targeting women and girls for horrific abuse, including sexual slavery. Calling for a thorough investigation, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini told a special session of the UN human rights council in Geneva this month that his office had received reports of the militants putting children forward as "expendable cannon fodder" for its first line of attack. "Bodies of children around 12 years old have been found strewn across such battlefields," al-Husseini said.

Boko Haram has been attacking towns and villages in northern Nigeria and border regions of neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger. "The group has also repeatedly used young children as human bombs, including a case of a 14-year-old girl carrying a baby on her back who detonated a bomb in a marketplace," al-Husseini said. The council condemned "the heinous terrorist activities of Boko Haram", including the abduction of the Chibok girls, and called for "drying up all possible sources of financing" for the group.

It is a massive challenge for Nigeria's new president Muhammadu Buhari, who says he will "spare no effort" to wipe out Boko Haram. Nigeria and its neighbours have so far succeeded in driving the group from many of the positions they controlled earlier this year, reversing the militants' gains that forced the country to delay its presidential election.

Many of the retreating militants have murdered their so-called "wives" – the women and girls they held as slaves – and other captives as military offensives by Nigeria and its neighbours advanced, al-Husseini said. The world has not forgotten the girls of Chibok. A global campaign, Bring Back Our Girls, has been supported by millions. And in the past week a seven-day remembrance of the girls has included vigils, demonstrations, letter-writing, and a Global Schoolgirl March. The girls of Chibok should never be abandoned, neglected or forgotten in their greatest hour of need. We must not, cannot and will not quit on them.

For Mark Enoch, this week will reignite a spark of hope. The international community has helped, he says, with their prayers and the knowledge the parents have that their daughters are not forgotten. But the parents and families may never truly recover. They have been scattered across the country, too afraid to stay in Chibok, and moving regularly for fear that Boko Haram will find and attack their new hiding places. "I don't think we can ever return there," says Mark. "The village has been destroyed and it is too dangerous."

"I also worry the education of so many children has just been ended by Boko Haram. My girl wanted to be a doctor. She studied hard and she and her brother were both interested in helping people by learning medical skills."

The campaign for the girls – kidnapped simply because they wanted to go to school – is the most iconic fight of a freedom struggle. The fight that will be won some day. No injustice can last forever. But for the sake of these girls, it must be won soon.

"We are in one house at the moment with four families in a compound. We are almost refugees in our own country. Any time I hear a noise it feels as if Boko Haram is coming for us."



## Emergencies: from Boko Haram to Nepal

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A disaster happens. Bilateral aid is promised. Then the waiting game begins. It is a pattern that is all too common, and it is one that, sadly, is being repeated in Nepal. More than a week after the earthquake and aftershocks killed more than 8,500 people and devastated the capital, Kathmandu, and despite the mobilization of massive amounts of aid from international agencies, the country's finance minister had yet to receive any of the money promised by foreign countries.

Disaster aid for education in such circumstances almost always flows far too slowly, because there is no central pool of funds available to be distributed when a crisis erupts. And for the children of Nepal, the consequences are doubly devastating. More than 1.7 million children require immediate aid, according to UNICEF Australia. More than 16,000 schools have been damaged, including some 5,000 that were completely destroyed. Of the 500 schools in the hard-hit Gorkha district, 450 have been leveled or are now derelict.

The United Nations is doing what it can. According to the UN resident coordinator, there has been a quick airlift and supply of materials – such as the well-known “School in a Box,” a pre-packaged educational kit suitable for teaching up to 40 children, Early Childhood Development Kit, and Recreation Kits – for displaced boys and girls. In the meantime, the best that can be hoped for Nepal's children is that tents and shelters can be brought in to create Child-Friendly Spaces.

An entire education system is under threat. Schools that remain intact are now housing the homeless, and school buses have been requisitioned to help victims travel out of Kathmandu. As the death toll spirals upward and the full horror unfolds, much of the relief effort is on hold, unable to move ahead until the funds that have been promised arrive – a process that could take weeks or months.

The world must end this paralysis. With established pools of aid being stretched to address immediate needs – medical assistance, shelter, and food – education is being neglected. Indeed, only a fraction of humanitarian aid budgets, roughly 1%, is allocated to education. Meanwhile, long-term development budgets are set in stone years in advance and lack the flexibility to respond to natural and man-made disasters.

A humanitarian fund for education in emergencies needs to be established, and soon, so that when calamity strikes, vulnerable children are not forced to wait in misery and insecurity while the adults pass around the begging bowl.

Such a pool of money would help the roughly 50% of the world's children who are out of school – some 28 million

boys and girls – because of conflicts, civil wars, or humanitarian emergencies. It would have been helpful during the Ebola outbreak, when extra funding would have helped to reopen schools quickly, rather than leaving five million children unable to pursue their studies. It could provide opportunities for students in Iraq and Palestine whose schools were destroyed and have yet to be reopened, as well as for some half-million Syrian children in Lebanon, displaced by four years of mayhem.

In the case of Nepal and other disaster-prone regions, the fund could, and should, be used to strengthen immediate relief plans, improve coordinated responses, and support longer-term efforts to bridge humanitarian relief and development, including preventive measures, such as retrofitting schools. Initial reports

following the recent disaster suggest that schools that were retrofitted as a precaution against earthquakes (the typical cost was \$8,000) escaped most of the damage.

No one is asking donors to make education a priority over immediate life-saving responses, or that financing be diverted from other emergency relief efforts. But it is crucial to realize that, for children, educational opportunity underpins all humanitarian and development interventions. Schools provide more than the skills that children will need in later life; they also serve as vehicles for disseminating lifesaving health and safety information.

The average refugee child spends more than ten years in exile; that child's education cannot wait until he or she is able to return home. Education may not provide humanitarian support in exactly the same way that the provision of medical care, food, or shelter does, but the risks facing children out of school during crises – including labor, marriage, human trafficking, and recruitment as soldiers – can be as grim as any other type of suffering.

On July 7, the Norwegian government will convene a conference on education in Oslo. The assembled leaders and policymakers should take the opportunity to heed the call of organizations – such as the International Network for Education in Emergencies, UNICEF, and UNHCR – to ensure that no child falls into the gap between humanitarian and development assistance.

Schools provide their students with something that no other service or humanitarian assistance program can offer: hope of a return to normalcy and of a future worth planning for after those delivering the emergency response have left.

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# Appeals Fall Short as Nepalese Children Suffer

This article was first published by  
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1 June 2015

The little red sticker posted to buildings paints a thousand words but only one of those words matter: Condemned. Strwn across earthquake-hit Nepal, school buildings are being assessed for structural damage. And like so many things the world over, the colors red and green are used as indicators. A green sticker on the outside of the school signals it has passed all safety checks; red indicates serious structural damage and an inability to reopen.

Depending on where they live in the region, children's futures are now hanging in the balance, and the numbers are horrendous.

One month after April's disaster, which took the lives of 8,000 people, nearly one million Nepalese girls and boys are at grave risk — homeless, on the streets and still not at school.

It is good news that, this week, many schools have reopened in the country but as monsoon season fast approaches, hundreds of buildings and thousands of classrooms remain closed. Children are unable to study or even be protected from gangs of child traffickers intent on selling them on to India for little more than \$500.

More than 50 percent of Katmandu schools have been given the red sticker, after preliminary visual assessments.

And child-friendly spaces have been established but as yet, they are only reaching about 109,000 children — just 10 percent of those in dire need.

Given the current pace of assessment, it will take many months to complete the construction of temporary learning centers and then to rebuild all of the damaged classrooms.

According to the Department of Education, a total of 32,145 classrooms were destroyed and 15,352 damaged in 42 districts covering around 8,000 schools in the worst-hit districts of Gorkha, Sindhupalchok and Nuwakot. It is estimated that more than 90 percent of schools were destroyed there.

While some have been temporarily rebuilt, BBC reports say this has been done only with bamboo, wood and tarpaulin. Much reconstruction work has still to be done. Nepal authorities estimate 999,000 children aged three to 18 years will be unable to return to their classrooms, even when classes have officially resumed.

One reason is that funding has been slow to materialize. Even one month on, food and shelter for those homeless are in short supply, and Nepal's government has called for more direct aid funding.

But during a video conference with the Nepalese education minister, it became clear to me that getting the funding for education faces the biggest hurdles. The education sector flash appeal for \$21 million still lacks half of the funding needed.

And that means more children at risk. Just a few days ago, Nepal state radio was broadcasting warnings to children and parents that child traffickers were exploiting the earthquake's fall out — with thousands of homeless children on the streets — plying their already vile and lucrative trade of lifting them from their communities and selling them into India. This serious threat is yet one more reason why it is imperative to get children back into school.

Nepal already had a serious shortage of secondary school pupils, according to Unicef. The country had made huge progress in primary education before the earthquake but the high school dropout rate was becoming a major concern. In total, about 1.2 million Nepalese children between the ages of 5 and 16 have never attended school.

Now, the earthquake has set back whatever progress has been made over the past decade and lays bare the need to deliver the opportunity of secondary education to teenagers.

To deal with the current crisis, the government is planning to open 15,000 temporary learning centers, according to the Asian Development Bank. Education ministry official Lavadeo Awasthi has announced that the temporary classroom structures "will have to do for the next two years, in which time the buildings should be restored."

News reports say that many children will be attending lessons in classrooms built on school playing fields or in the green-sticker buildings marked "safe" after inspections.

And while the United Nations has distributed educational kits, which include puzzles and picture books aimed at having an impact on children's psychology, the need to return to a full education program is critical.

Ultimately, we need to devise a strategy that delivers humanitarian aid for education in emergencies. By the end of this year, we hope to establish a fund that will allow us to act quickly without having to send the begging bowl around, whenever a crisis emerges.

In the short term, I will be convening a meeting through the United Nations to bring together potential donors to enable them to provide aid to both rebuild schools and retrofit them so we can avoid the huge damage done where there is no retrofitting.

When those red stickers indicate something is "condemned," it should mean the building, not the future of a girl or a boy.

When ...  
something is  
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# Pakistan and the fight for education



# Go Malala! First Day Back at School

This article was first published by  
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19 March 2013

Malala Yousafzai has gone to school today for the first time since she was shot last October. Then, the 15-year-old Pakistani girl was left for dead by the Taliban, a punishment inflicted on her simply for wanting to be educated.

Malala's journey back from a hospital bed to the classroom is not only an inspirational story of courage triumphing over all the odds but a story of determination and, indeed, of destiny: a signal to the world that nothing—not even bullets and death threats—can now stand in the way of every girl's right to education.

Yesterday Malala, who spent months in hospital recovering from neck, face, and head injuries, met teachers at her new school in Birmingham, England. Today she has met the pupils with whom she will learn as she starts to catch up on lost months of her schooling.

But around the world there are 32 million girls who will not be joining Malala at school today, unable to go to school because they are prevented from doing so or because there is no school to attend. Some of them are Malala's friends in Pakistan's Swat Valley who still face threats from the Taliban—and who understandably remain fearful that when they take their first step back into school, they will be attacked in the way she was nearly six months ago.

I have talked with Shazia Ramzan and Kainat Riaz, two of Malala's close friends who were on the fateful school bus and sitting next to Malala on the day she was shot. Still living in Swat, they are very brave girls. Both were hurt in the shootings. Both are determined, nonetheless, to have an education. They want to be doctors. But in the face of the threats and intimidation, they are finding it difficult to continue their schooling.

Of the 700,000 children not at school in their home province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), 600,000 are girls. Until we provide both the resources and security for them and others to travel securely to school and feel safe from the Taliban while there, then many of Pakistan's schools will remain closed, and literally millions of Pakistani girls will be denied an education.

If Shazia and Kainat are two of that total of 32 million girls who cannot join Malala in going to school today, there is an even more alarming statistic that sums up the unequal chances girls have in education. An astonishing number—500 million—of today's generation of young girls are unlikely to complete their schooling. Indeed violence in and around schools is one of the biggest reasons for dropping out around the world. Up to 1.5 billion children experience violence every year, many within the supposedly safe walls of a school.

Some, perhaps as many as 10 million girls each year, will be taken out of school because they are forced into child marriages against their will. Like Mariama, the 13-year-old girl featured in the moving Plan International film on Niger in West Africa, about to be married off into a loveless partnership she did not choose.

Other girls, perhaps as many as seven or eight million school-age girls, will become domestic laborers, sent to sweatshop

factories or to languish in the fields and farms. Others, like a young Indian girl, Ratni, taken from her village at only 13 and who is featured in our film on [educationenvoy.org](http://educationenvoy.org), will be trafficked into harm's way—often violated, usually held captive in towns and cities far from home, left unprotected because families think naively that if their daughter leaves home for the city she might have a better chance of an education.

The bad news is that millions of children remain vulnerable because child labor, child trafficking, and anti-child-marriage laws are not being properly policed or implemented in dozens of countries around the world. The good news is that now girls themselves are joining Malala in fighting back. Around the world we see girls battling against their oppression by demanding the right to educational opportunity, and refusing to accept their subjugation.

In 14 areas of Bangladesh, where the average age of marriage is 15, girls have recently come together to declare 'child-marriage-free zones'. There, groups of girls called 'wedding busters'—supported by boys and teachers—are challenging the patriarchal systems that allow a father to sell a girl into a forced marriage at ages as low as 10, 11, and 12.

Since I first started writing about the movement for girls' education, I have discovered how, in country after country, girls are now standing up for their rights against entrenched old patriarchal practices. In Nepal, a new girls' movement is fighting an age-old custom under which at least 10,000 local girls are sold off each year into domestic labor. Again girls joining with girls, challenging the old traditions, are freeing thousands of their number from slavery and getting them back into school.

In India, dozens of girls who have been rescued from child labor have led a march, organized by The Global March Against Child Labor, to demand that laws against child trafficking be included in the new legislation on girls' and women's rights now being introduced in the wake of the Indian rape case. Their petition, a plea to the Indian Parliament to end this age-old discrimination and slavery, can be signed at [www.educationenvoy.org](http://www.educationenvoy.org).

Girls' protests have spread from the Indian subcontinent to Africa. In Niger, a few months ago, where the vast majority of girls are married before 18, two girls challenged their parents' decision to sell them off into wedlock at the ages of 14 and 15. As well as winning their battles in the courts, they and others have also appealed to tribal leaders and clan elders to enforce the laws that prohibit child marriage.

The technological revolution has helped advance change. In 2013, the internet—and especially the increased availability of mobile phones—are proving to be important tools that allow girls to connect with and talk to other girls across borders, raising global awareness about girls' rights. And it is campaigns like 'Girls not Brides', originated by The Elders, and Plan's 'Because I am a Girl', that are giving girls a new confidence and elevating the 'rights'

... in country  
after country, girls  
are now standing  
up for their  
rights





agenda from its 20th-century theme—the emancipation of women from evils inflicted on them—adding to it to a more modern 21st-century one, the demand by girls and women for their empowerment. Quite simply, girls want not just to be free from child labor, child marriage, and discrimination, but also to make the most of their potential.

When Pakistani girls wore headbands saying “I am Malala” in the wake of the shooting last year, they signaled that they would no longer be a silent majority acquiescing to their subjugation. Now that girls in Pakistan, India, and elsewhere are, in record numbers, signing petitions, leading demonstrations, writing protest letters and campaigning online and on the streets—not just against the violation of rights but for the immediate righting of wrongs—the world will never be the same again. Indeed the new power being demonstrated by girls is fast becoming one of the new superpowers of the age. By the middle of March in Pakistan alone,

one million young people who are not at school have signed a nationwide petition calling on their government to recognize their right to free education. It is this pressure from below that is spurring international and national leaders to meet in Washington on April 18 to discuss what they can do to help off-track countries build schools, hire teachers, and provide learning for millions of out-of-school children.

Today Malala has opened a new chapter in her life going to a new school. Between now and the date by which the Millennium Development Goal on universal education has to be reached—the end of 2015—this growing movement for change, inspired by Malala, can ensure that 32 million once-forgotten out-of-school girls will follow her into the classroom.

“ By the middle of March in Pakistan alone, one million young people who are not at school have signed a nationwide petition calling on their government to recognize their right to free education. ”

# Stand With Malala for Education for All

This article was first published by Global Motherhood,  
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17 June 2013

Malala Yousafzai — the 15-year-old Pakistani girl militants tried to assassinate — is the first signatory of a new worldwide petition launched today after terrorists, hell-bent on preventing girls being educated, murdered 14 students at an all girls' college in Pakistan.

The full horror of Saturday's terrorist attack on 45 girls on a college bus is only now becoming known. It now seems clear that suicide bombers, including one female terrorist, blew up the vehicle, before following the casualties to a nearby hospital, taking the injured, their relatives and nursing staff hostage and peppering the medical facility with bullets and grenades before blowing themselves up.

This latest atrocity brings to nearly one thousand the number of attacks on Pakistani, Afghan and African schools and colleges in recent years by terrorists wanting to prevent the education of girls — and represents a descent into barbarism.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has issued a statement calling the attacks 'heinous' and Malala herself, urging people to sign the petition, has issued a video and statement, saying:

*Those involved in the attack on the Bolan Medical College girls are barbarians and they are devoid of humanity. These terrorists have no religion. They are the enemies of Islam and Muslims. The terrorists have shown that they are cowards and they have no morals and ethics.*

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a hard-line terrorist group with links to al-Qaeda, have now claimed responsibility for boarding a bus carrying 45 students and teachers at the female only Sardar Bahadar Khan Women's University in Quetta, the capital of the Baluchistan province. Having just completed their day's studies, the girls were targeted by a female suicide bomber who detonated an improvised bomb, killing 14 girls on the spot.

Later as the wounded were rushed for emergency medical treatment, three more suicide bombers invaded the hospital, took the injured, their relatives and the medical staff hostage, eventually blowing themselves up.

The names of seven out of the fourteen deceased students of have been confirmed as Abida Malik, Riyana Aurangzaib, Sunam, Noorul Ain, Shugafta, Sadaf and Atia, while the identity of other bodies was yet to be confirmed since they were completely disfigured.

This, the bloodiest atrocity yet in escalating violence against female students, comes eight months after the attempted

assassination of Malala and her two friends Kainat and Shazia, targeted by terrorists just because they wanted to go to school.

In the intervening months a school principal in Karachi and some of his pupils were murdered as they assembled for a school prize giving ceremony one Saturday morning. A few days beforehand a female teacher in Malala's home of the Swat Valley was assassinated as she drove to the all-girls' school where she taught.

Extremists determined to close down girls' schools are partly responsible for the high number — 30 million — of girls around the world who continue to be entirely left out of school. Some are in child labour, others have become child brides, but even more are simply discriminated against because of opposition to the very principle of girls' education.

That is why today, in advance of Malala Day on July 12th, we are launching our worldwide petition to demand that global leaders ensure 57 million out-of-school girls and boys are given the chance of education by December 2015, the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals.

The fight for girls' education emphasises just how far short we have fallen in delivering those goals. Goals which set out to help the most vulnerable and the poorest have ended up leaving the most marginalised even further behind. By failing to reach the child labourer, the street child, the rural poor, the trafficked girl and the child bride, we have let down the very people we want to do most to help.

Now, as we approach 2015, many countries have seen the gaps between the rural and urban, the richest and poorest child widen. This shows that unless post-2015 goals include benchmarks for the progress of the most marginalised groups, they may be left even further behind.

Inspired by Malala's vision and determination that every single girl — and boy — is delivered their right to an education, today's petition, which will be submitted to the UN on July 12th, calls for all concerned individuals to stand with Malala in demanding world leaders provide the schools and teachers needed to ensure every child is in school and safe.

As Malala has said today: "The innocent girls who died on Saturday have nothing to do with politics and only wanted to empower themselves through education. Obtaining education is every man and woman's birth right and no one is allowed to take away this right from them."

“ ... we have let down the very people  
we want to do most to help. ”

## Reunited: Shazia Ramzan Joins Her Friend Malala in the UK

This article was first published by Global Motherhood,  
*The Huffington Post*  
1 July 2013

Ever-escalating violence against girls in Pakistan is causing the murder count to rise and forcing under-threat teenagers to leave the country, fleeing for safety to the rest of the world.

Today, Shazia Ramzan is free in the United Kingdom after escaping death threats from the Taliban. Shazia was one of three girls, including Malala Yousafzai, who were seriously injured when a Taliban gunman attacked their school bus last October. On Saturday, Shazia and Malala were reunited for the first time since the attack.

While Malala was quickly flown to the UK to have emergency surgery on her head injuries, Shazia spent weeks in a Pakistani hospital recovering from neck and shoulder wounds. She tried to resume her schooling in the dangerous Swat area of Pakistan — but last week, after a massacre of female students which left 14 dead at a women's college in Quetta, Shazia decided to leave Pakistan and take up the offer of a scholarship in Britain close to her lifelong friend Malala.

Just how dangerous it is for girls like Malala and Shazia was demonstrated by the killing this weekend of two sisters, 15 and 16, simply because a video of them dancing in the rain had circulated around their local area. Making the video was said to have 'stained the family's honor' — and so Noor Basra and Noor Sheza were shot while playing outside their home in Chilas, alongside their mother who also died.

The campaign for girls' education in Pakistan gained huge support because of the public outrage last October at the shooting of Malala. Then, two million Pakistanis — a million of them out-of-school children — joined with sympathizers from across the world in calling on the Pakistani government to ensure that education for girls was universal and free.

At the time, the Pakistani president agreed to provide three million stipends to enable girls to go to school. The political parties in Pakistan agreed that they had to double the budget for basic education — but since then there has been a stepping up of violence against girls.

Only a few weeks ago a teacher was shot dead as she travelled by car to the girls' school where she worked. On a recent Saturday morning in Karachi, a gunman opened fire on a school prize-giving ceremony at a school that Malala herself had visited in support of girls' education. The principal was shot dead and many pupils injured.

But in spite of rising violence, girls in Pakistan are more resolute than ever in standing up for their rights. Malala herself, undeterred by the threats to her life, has issued a message calling on all supporters to sign a new petition demanding universal education. She will present it to Ban Ki-moon when she addresses the United Nations on July 12 — the day of her sixteenth birthday.

Now safely in the UK, Shazia is also planning to put the case for girls' education as she starts a new life in college, with hopes to be a doctor. Her aim is to ensure that schools are built for all out-of-school girls — not only in Pakistan but around the world.

The July 12 Malala Day events, which will include activities in cities across the world, will lead on to the September UN General Assembly meetings, when leaders will be asked to agree a plan to secure extra school places for girls and boys at a rate of 20 million a year for the next three years. Leaders must agree on measures to help the most marginalized girls — especially child brides, child domestic laborers and girls who have been trafficked. And the package will focus on pressuring countries like Pakistan, where discrimination against girls is rife, to step up security to protect girls both at school and on their way to and from home.

The fight for girls' education is the civil rights struggle of our generation. It will need a determined and vocal global campaign to make it a priority in countries where girls' needs have been neglected. Malala Day on July 12th will be the chance for the world's young people to call on world leaders once and for all to put education first.

“ Shazia is also planning to put the case for girls' education as she starts a new life in college ... ”

## It Is Time To Do More

This article was first published by  
*The Huffington Post*  
12 July 2013

Malala Yousafzai, the girl the Taliban shot for going to school and who has become the world's symbol for the right of every girl to have an education, will speak at the United Nations on her sixteenth birthday today.

She will deliver, in front of 500 young campaigners from over 80 countries of the world, a rallying call: we must do more to find school places for the girls and boys who currently are forced to go without.

Last fall, waves of public support for Malala led the Pakistani Parliament to agree for the first time to universal compulsory education. But when Malala speaks today she will remind world leaders that half the girls in Pakistan's poor, rural areas still do not ever enjoy a first day at school, that around the world 31 million girls of primary school age still remain out of education, and that an estimated 500 million school-age girls will never complete their schooling.

Unless we change course, the 21st century will be a desert of lost opportunities for girls' education. It may be Malala's day today — but until we take action we won't have a century in which we can say her dream of education for all will be realized.

Progress towards securing girls' education has stalled because we have failed to reach the most marginalised — the child labourer, the child bride, the trafficked child and the girl discriminated against for her gender.

These girls, protesting for their right to go to school, are engaged in nothing less than a civil rights struggle, a freedom fight for which they need our support. Fortunately, they are not prepared to be cowed into silence or intimidated into subjugation. In Pakistan two million people — 1 million out of school girls and boys included — have signed petitions demanding the right of children to be educated.

In Nepal the Common Forum for Karmal Hari Freedom fights child trafficking and seeks to move children from exploitation into education. In Bangladesh what are called 'wedding busters' have created 19 Child Marriage-Free Zones to protect girls from forced marriages at ages as young as 10. And in India, Bachao Bachpan Andolan, part of the Global March Against Child Labor, rescues young girls and boys from exploitative work and helps them back into school.

But the girls who are becoming more assertive in demanding their right to education need far greater support from us — the international community charged with delivering that right. First the UN must debate the growing threats and brutalization of children thrust into the front line of a terrorist war in which militants want to stop all education. In the last month alone, 14 girls were massacred after a suicide bomber blew up the school bus in which they were travelling from their all-girls campus in Quetta, Pakistan.

We must show a determination that education will continue even in face of such dangers. Just as in fragile areas health care is provided by the Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres, so too should education be provided by delivery agencies, even where the area is less than secure. This is even more essential for the world's conflict zones and fragile states, where historically a breakdown in law and order has meant the curtailment of schooling for children. A new organization, 'Education without Borders', should be created to provide, from Somalia to Syria, a continuation of education even in strife-torn areas.

But second, what I would call a 'progressive universalist' approach — measures specially targeted on the most marginalised — is also needed to move child labourers, street children, girl brides and trafficked children from exploitation into education. The way to give practical support to the liberation struggle now under way — and to reach the most marginalised — is to write into the next Millennium Development Goals a stipulation that we narrow the gap in educational opportunities between rural and urban, and between rich and poor areas. Doing more for those who have least is the only way to deliver opportunity for every child.

So today Malala Yousafzai brings to the UN, with my support, a clear message: it is time to do more. The problem is clear, the solutions known — and if the voice of this courageous young woman on her sixteenth can help push world leaders into action, then she deserves the birthday congratulations of the whole world.

“ Doing more for those who  
have least is the only way to  
deliver opportunity for every child. ”





Conclusion:  
education as  
hope

# ‘Up for school’

## Youth rally speech

19 November 2014, Southbank Centre, London, United Kingdom

Today we meet as 219 Nigerian girls are in captivity, having been taken prisoner more than six months ago by terrorist organization Boko Haram, simply because that organization did not want these girls to have an education. And so today I think we should send out a message of solidarity and sympathy to the girls who are still being held by this terrorist group in Nigeria, and also send a message to the thousands of girls in Nigeria refusing to be terrorized by Boko Haram who are insisting on their right, the right of every girl, to go to school and get an education.

Let us salute the Nigerian girls.

Eglantyne Jebb, the lady who founded Save the Children almost 100 years ago, said one very important thing. She said the one international language that people understand is the cry of a child.

We all heard the girl from Syria on the video only a few minutes ago say to us, ‘Why have you abandoned us?’

There are half a million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. We have a plan to give these refugee girls and boys an education. But only 100,000 of the 500,000 are currently being given an education because there is no money being raised by the international community for the additional 400,000.

We have to say it is time that we stop abandoning the refugee girls and boys from Syria in Lebanon and Jordan. Just as it is time to stop abandoning the refugee boys and girls in Gaza who saw their schools bombed over the summer; their schools theatres of war when they should be sanctuaries for peace and learning. The girls and boys in Iraq, in the Central African Republic, the girls and boys in South Sudan, all in conflict zones — 28 million in total who have been denied education. We should stand up for their rights.

I was in one of these countries a few months ago, in South Sudan. I went to a village just outside the capital, Juba, and I met mothers — many of them teenage mothers — and I asked them what their issues were, what they were worried about the most. They said yes, they wanted shelter and they wanted security because they had come over the border from Sudan to South Sudan as refugees, and they needed food and better homes, but what they wanted most of all was for their sons and daughters to have a chance of education.

And then I went to a village school. It was one hut and it could only take 20 pupils. They were all sitting on the floor without any desks and there were two teachers. There was a small portal in the school where you could look out of the window. There were about one hundred children standing outside, looking into the school for the education that they could never have because there were only 20 places for all the children of the village.

Then I went and met a mother who had twin sons, both eight years old, but she had been told only one of them could get the education because of the shortage of places. And so she had a terrible choice that no parent should ever have to make. She had

to choose which of two boys was to be given an education and which was to remain illiterate without ever the chance of learning in the foreseeable future.

And we cannot be satisfied with that today, two thirds of a century after we signed what is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that declared that every child should have an education. Twenty-five years after we signed the Convention for The Rights of Every Child, for every child to have an education. Fifteen years after we signed the Millennium Development Goals that Bob Geldof, Bono and others have promoted around the world that said that by 2015 every child should have an education, every single child in the world. And we cannot be satisfied, any of us, when there are still 58 million children out of school.

They don’t go to school today and they won’t go to school on any day.

Fifteen million of these children — our children — are working full time and should be at school but instead they are in slave labour conditions, have hazardous working lives and are unable to enjoy the chance of an education.

Fifteen million girls who are school age are having to leave school because they are forced into child marriage, and fighting discrimination.

Thirty-two million of the 58 million children out of school are being discriminated against in countries where they are denied an education, like Malala, Kainat and Shazia, simply because they are girls.

Half a million girls are trafficked every year, out of the country, some of them never to be heard again, having been bought and sold by gang masters against their wishes and without the chance of education or a proper life.

And many children — disabled and blind — are denied the chance to go to school. Many others are discriminated against simply because they’re girls or because of their sexual orientation and that too is unacceptable in the modern world.

We have to ask ourselves why it is, in these last 25 years, we’ve seen the Internet, the World Wide Web, we’ve got artificial intelligence, we have stem cell research, we’ve discovered secrets of the human genome yet we cannot create a situation where millions of children can even write their own name because they are not in school, they are illiterate and denied an education.

And you know what’s going happen 50 years from now, there will still be girls and boys not even at primary school. And despite all the advances, if the present trends continue, 100 years from now there will still be girls and boys who will not have a chance to undertake or even begin secondary education.

I say to you 100 years is far too long.

Two or three generations from now is too long.

Too long to wait for every single child to have their basic rights.

And that’s why we’re asking you today to sign the petition, ‘Up for School’, asking you to campaign for the rights of every child in the world to be free of exploitation, free of child labour,

... hope is that  
small voice that says  
we will not be  
silenced ...

free of child marriage, free of child trafficking, free of discrimination against girls, and for the basic right for all of our children to go to school.

I think everyone here knows how important an education is. Education gives you the chance to bridge the gap between what you are and what you have in yourself to become. Education gives you the chance to realize your dreams and find that they are no longer impossible. Education is the only way that poor countries can become richer countries. For the only way forward is to have an education and a skilled workforce that can bring prosperity and an end to poverty.

Yes, whenever you see a child that is suffering, whenever you see a girl or boy stunted, whenever you see someone who is underfed and malnourished, you are compassionate and angry and want to do something about it. And when I talk about the importance of education, I'm not talking about less but more action that has got to be taken to deal with starvation, malnutrition and squalor and of course disease in our world.

But you know that it is education more than anything else that will make people healthier, better able to get jobs, and better able to have a secure and better quality of life.

And if we are to meet the Millennium Development Goals to reduce maternal mortality, reduce infant mortality, ensure gender equality and end poverty, then we have also at the same time to meet the Millennium Development Goals that every child should have an education. For it is education that unlocks health equality, better employment prospects and a better quality of life.

And you know in Britain, when we made education compulsory in the 19th century and made it universal, ensuring that every child had to be at school, that's when we found that there was child labour no more, that's when we found there was child marriage no more, that's when we found that discrimination against girls started to fall.

And that's why today we are calling on the United Nations to create a Children's Court so that any country that fails to deliver the right to education for their children, allows child labour, child marriage, child trafficking and discrimination against girls to continue can be brought before this international court and forced to take the action that is necessary to secure the rights of children and their country.

But let me just say one other thing, that change is coming. Change is coming perhaps not from the generosity of governments but from the determination of young people themselves. Change is coming not because of the charity of the oppressor, as happened in history; changes happen usually because of the courage of the oppressed.

When you see girls in Bangladesh whose sisters have been married off in their teens, and who have decided they are not going to be married off like their friends before them, and when they stand up to the parents and say, 'No, you will not send me off into marriage,' and when they club together, combine together as a group and form what are called 'child marriage free zones' then you see that a liberation struggle is being waged by girls themselves.

And first two girls, and then four, and then ten, and then 20 in Bangladesh, in Pakistan, in India and Africa — girls forming child marriage-free zones that say each will support the other if they are being forced into an early marriage they don't want.

And Kailash Satyarthi says no to child labour: leading marches of young people refusing to be exploited as child labourers across India and marching in hundreds, and then thousands and then hundreds of thousands — and signing petitions even when they cannot write — petitions to say they are no longer going to be prevented from going to school. For their cause, the end of child labour, a freedom fight is underway.

Then you will see groups of students and young people fighting the most evil of crimes — fighting rape, genital mutilation, fighting basic discrimination that happens to girls as we have seen in Nigeria but also in the rest of the world.

And then we see groups like the Freed Kamlari Development Forum and the Yellow movement in Ethiopia — different groups — and then groups of boys and boys under the umbrella of 'A World at School' and Girls Not Brides and the Global March Against Child Labour.

You know people one day will look back and say now in today's generation, in 2014, a historic civil rights struggle for the rights of young people is underway.

Remember when you look at

your history books, the 1950s and the civil rights struggle against colonialism. In the 1960s, Martin Luther King's civil rights struggle to ensure that colour prejudice was barred — the rights for everyone irrespective of the colour and race. And remember the 80s and 90s and Nelson Mandela fighting the civil rights struggle against apartheid. Well, now we have a civil rights struggle of young people determined that their rights will be won too.

And the battle for civil rights for young people is the unfinished business of the anti-colonial revolution: you know it liberated countries in Africa, but now it's time to liberate the children of Africa. Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela fought against oppression against blacks, but it is now the time for children who are oppressed to be made free.

It's the unfinished business of the suffragettes, as they were fighting for women's rights, and it's now time we also fought alongside each other for girls' rights.

But as long  
as any child,  
in any place, in any  
continent of the  
world is being  
bought and sold,  
the civil rights  
struggle must  
go on.

And yes — William Wilberforce and others helped liberate thousands of people from slavery. But as long as any child, in any place, in any continent of the world is being bought and sold, the civil rights struggle must go on. And as long as there are boys and girls in any part of the world in slavery, in child labour, forced into early marriage or trafficked or denied the right to education, we must fight on their behalf.

This, I believe, is a time of hope and we need you to work with us.

It is said by someone that you can survive for 40 days if you don't have any food. And you can survive for eight days even if you don't have any water. You can survive for eight minutes even if you have no air and are unable to breathe.

But you can't survive a second without hope.

Hope is what is there when everything else is lost.

Hope is that small voice that says we will not be silenced if we have strong beliefs we follow.

And what is it but hope that led Malala, without the resources, without the money, without the status — and as she is said — with nothing but a book and a pen in her hand, to win the battle against the Taliban?

What is it about hope that makes Girls Not Brides create child marriage-free zones to stand up against fathers, patriarchs,

whole families and an entire culture, and say it is right that they should be at school and not be married off? What is it but hope that does not die even when things seem hopeless; that helps us win these battles against child forced marriage?

What is it but hope that leads us all to fight against the odds when we believe something is right?

I said to you today: never stop believing, because the cause we are talking about — the right of every child free of exploitation to have an education — can be won in this generation.

And never stop believing that this is the generation — your generation — the first generation in history where every single child should be able to go to school. Never stop believing that this is the generation where instead of developing some of the talents of some of the children some of the time, we can start developing all of the talents of all of the children of the world all of the time. This is a cause worth fighting for.

# Education and the promise of hope

It was once said you could survive for 40 days without food, three days without water, eight minutes without air, but not for a second without hope.

Hope is no guarantee of a better future, but it summons us to try and build one. Hope is not the promise of success but the promise that perseverance, irrespective of outcome, is a virtue. Hope tells us to look to the stars – and then reach – even when the sky is matte black. Perhaps that is why I believe hope is synonymous with education, as both offer the assurance of a future worthy of planning. For education and hope are forever in tandem – one without the other is impossible.

Even when confronted by overwhelming odds, hope tells us to keep dreaming, to keep reaching, to keep fighting. What is it but hope that propels an engineer to give up his secure livelihood and dedicate a life to leading the march against child labour? What is it but hope that leads a young girl – armed only with the belief that a book is more powerful than a gun – to confront a terrorist militia? What is it but hope that leads the youngest in our society to form child marriage-free zones to ensure an education and counter exploitation? Each singly has its limitations, yet each embodies hope.

Hope is to carry on even when things seem hopeless. Hope does not presume we always win – in fact we are often met with defeat. In turn, we come to know the pain of loss. But we get back up because hope is the conviction that above all – against all odds – we achieve a moral victory in the presence of physical defeat. Even when we lose we still believe. For hope implies a vision of a future pursued actively and not held passively.

Hope is not allowing oneself to be discouraged when looking at the statistics. When 24 million children are out of school in conflict zones worldwide. When 6 million children are made homeless by the Syrian Civil War, and 3 million are left without an education. When 25 per cent of children in Jordan take a trip to the altar instead of school. When 77 per cent of Syrian refugee children in Iraq work to support their families. And when 10,000 refugee children who make it to Europe vanish into the abyss of trafficking.

The images these figures produce are anything but kaleidoscopic; looked at in any direction – in any light – we see desolation when we ought to see hope. But the slow march of progress is a strange animal. We stop walking and turn our backs on the future, not because the wind has become too stiff or the terrain too steep. Not because the road is long and winding when we expected straight and narrow. Not because the map is mistaken and unreadable. We turn our backs because our compass fails us and our bearings are lost. As the winds of hope yield to the stillness of exhaustion, we encounter the most profound loss of all. For everything that surrounds us is proof that the greatest limit to human endeavour is the frailty of our own hope.

Hope is to  
carry on even  
when things seem  
hopeless ...

The evaporation of hope takes many different forms. Some people slam the book closed. Other people slam the door shut. Others pound their fists in despair. Some take to the sea or just walk away. But none of this occurs in a vacuum. A bully in school, an argument at home, a civil war. With that loss of hope, a candle is snuffed.

Yet every day I see proof that hope is not extinguished without a fight and need not ever be defeated at all. There is the story of Ahmed, a 12-year-old I met in a Beirut refugee reception centre. The circumstances were predictable – he was out-of-school but desperate to return to learning. But when I asked him what he wanted to be, he immediately responded 'an engineer'. Why an engineer? 'To return home,' he said, 'and rebuild Syria.' Ahmed gives me hope.

In Lebanon, 207,000 Syrian refugee children have been taken off the streets and placed in the classroom. By educating local Lebanese children in the morning before turning to Syrian refugee children in the afternoon and evening, hundreds of thousands have been given the hope that can only come with an education. There is no sleight of hand in accomplishing this, no paradigmatic shift that has suddenly made education possible. All that has taken place is that those with the means – aligning with the arc of history – have demanded an education for all.

Working with dedicated public servants in my capacity as UN Envoy for Global Education, we have set a clear goal for the next two years. In 2016, our efforts will be dedicated to ensuring that one million Syrian refugee children are guaranteed a place in school. Breakthroughs in Lebanon, along with \$500 million of the required \$750 million already pledged, give us the confidence to make this promise. And in 2017, this assurance of a future – this promise of hope – will be extended to millions more out-of-school child refugees.

To realise this longer-term vision will, of course, require funding. At May's World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, we agreed on a permanent education in emergencies funding facility: Education Cannot Wait. The fund will bring about hope, as it truly is a global humanitarian operation for the provision of education in emergencies. Rather than scrambling to cobble together funds amidst a crisis, a permanent platform will give us the confidence to make education an all-weather right, that even during times of conflict or emergencies schools will be open.

This fund is nothing without two major changes. First, the brightest minds – our most creative thinkers – from businesses, government, and philanthropies must all be brought together. A score of people at a cabinet table in a government office did not put a man on the moon. Like and unlike minds coming together will push us forward. And second, we must introduce a vision of the Middle East that is not defined by conflict and collapse but rather reconstruction and wild optimism. The yellow brick road to this Oz is clear enough: every out-of-school child must be





“... every day I see proof that hope is not extinguished without a fight and need not ever be defeated at all.”

guaranteed a seat in the classroom. This will give us the renaissance we so desire. This will secure hope.

It is often said that it is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness. Some will disagree, although historical experience tells us we need not. Without doubt flames will always flicker uncertainly; howling blasts of winds will threaten to extinguish the very things we hold dear. But when we make the decision to shield that candle – to keep the hope alive – all the wind will do is carry us forward.

For the out-of-school refugee child who stays up late into the night repeatedly reading the same book over a kerosene lamp. For the families who leave their homes and take to the waters in search of a future. For the thousands of children lost amidst a sea of chaos and misery. We say we will light a candle. We say your hopes can be fulfilled. We will deliver an education to every child.

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## Index

### A

A World at School 65, 83, 137, 141, 145  
Abdullah, King of Jordan 121, 127  
Afghanistan 45, 47, 61, 75, 79, 93, 101, 103  
Ain, Noorul 163  
*Al Jazeera* 79  
American Himalayan Foundation 81  
Amnesty International 149  
Angelou, Maya 141  
Arab Spring 53, 55  
Argentina 61  
Asian Development Bank 155  
attacks on schools 12, 61, 98–9, 103, 137  
    Afghanistan 61, 79, 101, 103  
    crimes against humanity 100–101, 103  
    DRC 25, 61  
    four proposals 104–5  
    Gaza 61, 65, 99, 101, 171  
    Lucens guidelines 99  
    Nigeria 61, 103, 105, 134–5, 136–39  
    Pakistan 61, 65, 79, 96–7, 101, 103, 105, 163, 167  
    Red Cross protection 102–3  
    Syria 61, 99, 101, 103  
    see also Safe Schools Initiative  
Aung San Suu Kyi 25, 27  
Aurangzaib, Riyana 163  
Avaaz 55  
Awasthi, Lavadeo 155

### B

Badeh, Alex 141  
Badre, Bertrand 37  
Ban Ki-moon 27, 29, 35, 37, 39, 57, 59, 63, 99, 111, 145, 165  
Bangladesh  
    child marriage-free zones 53, 55, 59, 75, 83, 93, 159, 167, 172  
    education 59, 63  
    girls' rights 75, 172  
Berners-Lee, Tim 27

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 35, 49, 129  
Bokova, Irina 39  
Bono 16, 137, 171  
Brende, Børge 35, 37, 105, 117  
British Council 129  
Brown, Sarah 27, 69, 137  
Buhari, Muhammadu 151  
building the global schoolhouse 34–5  
Burma (Myanmar) 25, 27, 47, 55, 75  
Burundi 45

### C

Cabrera, Daniel 63  
Cameroon 143  
Care International 127  
Central African Republic 37, 39, 45, 101  
Central Emergency Response Fund 49  
Chad 37, 39, 63, 77, 143  
charitable organizations 15, 25, 35, 37  
Chatah, Mohamad 111  
child brides 12, 19, 65, 67–9, 71, 73, 125, 127, 147, 171  
    see also child marriage-free zones  
child labour 12, 19, 29, 30, 59, 71, 83, 93, 172  
Côte d'Ivoire 89  
Ghana 89  
India 53, 55, 75, 81, 88–9, 90–91, 93, 147, 159  
Kenya 16  
Lebanon 81, 115, 121  
Nepal 81, 93, 159  
refugees 127  
Syria 131  
Tanzania 89  
child marriage-free zones 53, 55, 59, 75, 81, 83, 93, 159, 167, 172  
child slavery 43, 59, 77, 83, 145, 173  
    Burma 75  
    India 53, 55, 89, 93, 145  
child soldiers 19, 20, 61, 65, 83, 101, 105  
child trafficking 12, 77, 83, 127, 171  
    Burma 55, 75  
    India 59, 89, 91, 159

Nepal 65, 81, 155, 167  
Pakistan 19  
Children's Investment Fund Foundation 25  
Chime for Change 77  
Churchill, Winston 57  
civil rights 12, 30, 172  
  danger and optimism 64–5  
  light for homework 62–3  
  radical reform for the poorest children 58–9  
  'the year of fear' 60–61, 119  
  youth protests 16, 52–3, 54–5, 59, 145  
  see also girls' rights  
Colombia: attacks on schools 101, 103  
Commission on Global Educational Opportunity 85  
community 17  
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms  
  of Discrimination against Women 75  
Convention on the Rights of the Child 75, 85, 99, 125,  
  167, 171  
Côte d'Ivoire 29, 61, 89  
crimes against humanity 100–101, 103

## D

Dangote, Aliko 27, 39  
Day of the African Child 141  
Democratic Republic of Congo 29, 103  
  attacks on schools 25, 61  
  funding for education 37, 63  
  girls' rights 25, 75  
  refugees 45  
  Safe Schools Initiative 105  
Department for International Development 123, 135  
development aid 12, 37, 45, 47  
disabled children 19, 81, 171  
disaster aid 153–5  
displaced children 11, 25, 42–3, 45, 47, 61, 81,  
  85, 101  
  Syria 12, 47, 113, 123, 127  
domestic energy subsidies 37  
Dubai 123, 129

## E

education  
  for all 13, 15–21, 127,  
  as a basic right 11, 23–9  
  and economic disparity 29  
  higher education 77, 83, 129, 131  
  payment plan for universal education 38–9  
  as potential 9–13  
  resources 17, 19–20

  responsibility 11, 15, 19, 21  
  virtual education 128–9, 131  
Education Cannot Wait 175  
Education First 29  
education funding 11–12, 15, 20, 29, 47, 59, 63, 81  
  emergency aid 25, 35, 37, 43  
  innovations 36–7  
  Nigeria 37, 39, 63, 135, 139  
  Pakistan 39, 47, 79, 165  
  payment plan for universal education 38–9  
Education International 35, 93, 97  
Education without Borders 25, 103  
EducationEnvoy.org 79, 89, 91, 159  
Egypt 53, 129  
emergencies  
  education funding in 25, 35, 37, 43  
  Nepal 152–5  
  Nigeria 134–5, 136–45, 149–5  
  see also HOPE; humanitarian aid; humanitarian fund  
  for education in emergencies  
Emergency Coalition for Global Education Action 147  
Enoch, Mark 151  
Eritrea 49  
Ethiopia 65, 75, 172  
European Union 43, 129, 131, 143  
Europol 127  
Eyre, Daniel 149

## F

faith schools 21, 27  
Forrest, Andrew 55, 145  
Francis, Pope 141  
The Future is Hers 76–7

## G

Gaza  
  attacks on schools 61, 65, 99, 101, 171  
  Palestinian refugee children 43, 115  
Ghana 59, 81, 89  
Gillard, Julia 39, 43  
'Girl Rising' (film) 71, 77  
Girls Not Brides 59, 77, 145, 159, 173  
girls' rights 37, 139, 159, 172–3  
  adult complacency 72–3, 75  
  Bangladesh 75, 172  
  child labour 81, 83  
  child soldiers 83, 101  
  child trafficking 75, 77, 81, 83  
  DRC 25, 75  
  education 53, 69, 71, 74–81, 83–5, 162–7, 171

  empowerment 70–73, 75, 76–7, 82–5, 139, 145,  
  159–61, 172  
  India 75, 159  
  Nigeria 75, 77, 135, 139, 170–1  
  Pakistan 12–13, 53, 55, 73, 75, 97, 139, 145,  
  159–167  
  South Sudan 15, 20, 57, 75  
  see also child brides; child marriage-free zones  
Global Business Coalition for Education 20–1, 27, 29,  
  45, 105, 129, 135, 137  
Global Citizenship Commission 83  
Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 99  
Global Compact 93  
Global Education First Initiative 35  
Global Faiths Coalition for Education 27, 141  
Global March Against Child Labour 57, 59, 81, 83, 89,  
  91, 93, 145, 159  
Global Partnership for Education 27, 35, 39, 43,  
  123, 135  
Global Platform for Syrian Students 131  
globalization 55–7  
Gray, Thomas 9, 11–12  
Guinea 37, 63  
Guinea-Bissau 39  
Guterres, António 43, 121

## H

Hague, William 137  
Hasan, Ali Dayan 97  
health 17, 83, 109, 111  
higher education  
  for girls 77, 83  
  Syrian refugees 129, 131  
  via the Internet 129  
hope 10, 13, 19, 25, 61, 113, 173–7  
HOPE (Humanitarian Operation for the Provision of  
  Education in Emergencies) 12, 47, 49, 85  
Human Rights Watch 97  
humanitarian aid 11–12, 25, 35, 43, 45, 47  
humanitarian fund for education in emergencies 37, 39,  
  43, 105, 153  
  displaced children 42–3  
  reading, writing, and refugees 44–5  
  refugees 42–3, 46–7  
  Syria 35, 37, 43, 47, 48–9, 120–21  
  al-Hussein, Zeid Ra'ad 151

## I

India  
  Bachpan Bachao Andolan 59, 65, 89, 91, 93,

  145, 167  
  child labour 53, 55, 75, 81, 88–9, 90–91, 93,  
  147, 159  
  child marriage-free zones 83  
  child slavery 53, 55, 89, 93, 145  
  child trafficking 59, 89, 91, 159  
  girls' rights 75, 159  
  protection for women 55, 71, 73, 159  
  youth protests 16, 54–5  
Indonesia 37, 39, 59, 81  
inequality 17, 53, 55–7, 59  
infant mortality 17, 27, 59, 69  
Institute of International Education 129, 131  
International Commission on Financing Global  
  Education Opportunity 13, 30, 39  
International Conference on Financing for  
  Development 35, 105  
International Criminal Court 83, 85  
International Day of The Girl Child 69  
International Labour Organization 93  
International Monetary Fund 117  
International Network for Education in Emergencies  
  109, 153  
International Trade Union Confederation 141  
International Women's Day 71, 77  
International Youth Day 65  
Iraq 37, 45, 61, 101, 147  
Islamic State 125

## J

Jafir, Majid 127  
Jamal, Abdullah 103  
Jamil, Baela 145  
Jebb, Eglantyne 43, 121, 171  
Jilani, Seema 79  
Jonathan, Goodluck 103, 105, 135, 141, 145  
Jordan 45, 47, 83, 123, 125, 127, 129  
Jusoor 131

## K

al-Kader, Abdul 45  
Kareem, Amna 97  
Karzai, Hamid 93  
Kell, Georg 93  
Kenya 16  
Kerry, John 135, 137  
Kim, Jim 57  
King, Martin Luther 172  
Kiron University 131  
Kurdi, Alan 9, 121



## L

Lake, Anthony 39, 43, 121  
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi 163  
Lebanon  
Lebanese children 115  
    Palestinian refugee children 115  
    schools 111, 115–121, 123, 125, 127, 129  
    shared values curriculum 125  
    Syrian refugees 39, 45, 47, 81, 105, 109–21,  
    123–5, 127, 129, 171, 175  
liberty 17  
Libya 37, 45  
light for homework 62–3  
literacy 10, 29, 44–5, 59, 77  
Lucas, Robert 29

## M

Ma, Jack 39  
Machel, Graca 65  
Madagascar 37, 61  
Malala Day 163, 165, 167  
Malala Yousafzai see Yousafzai, Malala  
Mali 29  
Malik, Abida 163  
Mandela, Nelson 83, 172  
Marshall Plan 127  
Masiyiwa, Strive 39  
maternal mortality 17, 27, 59  
Médecins Sans Frontières 20, 109, 167  
Mikati, Najib Azmi 113  
militarisation see attacks on schools; child soldiers  
Millennium Development Goals 11, 17, 20, 29, 59,  
69, 93, 125, 163, 172  
Morocco 93  
Mozah, Sheikha 29  
Myanmar see Burma

## N

Na Takallam 129  
Nagel, Thomas 20  
Nazeer, Tahira 97  
Nazli, Shahnaz 79, 97  
Nepal 29, 133  
    child labour 81, 93, 159  
    child trafficking 65, 81, 155, 167  
    Common Forum for Karmal Hari Freedom 59, 81,  
    167, 172  
    earthquake 35, 37, 43, 45, 152–5  
    girls' rights 159  
    violence against women 55, 75

Niger 65, 143, 159  
Nigeria 12  
    attacks on schools 61, 103, 105, 134–5, 136–39  
    Boko Haram 12, 61, 65, 83, 99, 103, 105,  
    133, 137, 139–45, 149–51  
    Bring Back Our Girls campaign 12, 83, 137, 141,  
    151  
    children's dreams 16  
    funding for education 37, 39, 63, 135, 139  
    girls' rights 75, 77, 135, 139, 170–1  
    violence against women 75  
    see also Safe Schools Initiative  
Noor Basra 165  
Noor Sheza 165  
Norway 35, 37, 61, 113, 123, 129, 153

## O

Obaigbena, Nduka 145  
Obama, Barack 125  
O'Brien, Stephen 49  
Okonjo-Iweala, Ngozi 105, 143  
One Billion Rising 55, 71  
orphans 17–19  
Overseas Development Institute 59

## P

Pakistan 147  
    attacks on schools 61, 65, 79, 96–7, 101, 103, 105,  
    163, 167  
    child brides 19, 83, 147  
    child trafficking 19  
    fight for education 12, 55, 59, 73, 97, 167  
    funding for education 39, 47, 79, 165  
    girls' rights 12–13, 53, 55, 73, 75, 97, 139, 145,  
    159–67  
    youth protests 54–5  
Palestinian refugee children 43, 115  
Philippines 63  
Plan International 59, 69, 71, 77, 83, 159  
Polaris Project 93  
poverty 19, 25, 58–9  
Power, Samantha 101  
PredictifyMe 105

## Q

Qatar 27, 61, 127, 135

## R

Ramzan, Shazia 79, 159, 165  
Rasheed, Atiya 97  
Rawles 20  
ReBootKAMP 129

Red Cross 20, 102–3, 109, 111  
refugee children 11, 37, 42–3, 61, 65  
    a breakthrough? 46–7  
    reading and writing 44–5  
    right to education 24–5  
    see also Syrian refugees  
Riaz, Kainat 79, 159  
Rice, Condoleezza 57  
Robinson, Mary 69  
Rowling, J. K. 83, 105, 121  
Ryder, Guy 93

## S

Saab, Elias Bou 45, 119, 123  
Safe Schools Initiative 61, 103, 105, 137, 141, 143,  
145, 149  
Sampaio, Jorge 131  
San Salvador 93  
Satyarthi, Kailash 59, 81, 83, 145, 172  
Save the Children 21, 121, 127,  
Sawa for Development and Aid 129  
Sexton, John 131  
Sharif, Nawaz 105  
Shekau, Abubakar 137, 149  
Simonarson, Gissur 45  
Singh, Jyoti 77  
Slim, Carlos 27  
Smalley, Sue 69  
Solberg, Erna 35, 37, 39, 81  
Somalia 20, 25, 45, 61, 101, 103  
South Sudan 47, 49, 65  
    attacks on schools 99, 105  
    child soldiers 65, 105  
    education 15, 25, 27, 39, 57, 105, 171  
    girls' rights 15, 20, 57, 75  
Spark 129, 131  
sub-Saharan Africa 35, 81, 141  
Sudan: attacks on schools 101, 103  
Sustainable Development Goals 17, 81  
    funding for education 11, 20, 35, 37, 39, 81  
Sweden 109  
Syria 49, 65, 131  
    attacks on schools 61, 99, 101, 103  
    child soldiers 101  
    displaced children 12, 47, 113, 123, 127,  
    humanitarian fund 35, 37, 43, 47, 48–9, 120–121  
Syrian Donors Conference 49  
Syrian refugees 9, 12, 45, 109, 113  
    child brides 125, 127  
    education for children 43, 47, 49, 108–23, 127, 171  
    higher education 129, 131  
    in Jordan 45, 47, 83, 123, 125, 127

    in Lebanon 39, 45, 47, 81, 105, 109–21, 123–5,  
    127, 129, 171, 175  
    a new Marshall plan 126–7  
    overseas aid 120–21  
    shared values curriculum 125  
    virtual education 128–9

## T

Tanzania 16, 65, 89  
Tata, Ratan 27  
Teachers International 21  
technology 27, 47, 55–7, 63, 65, 73, 75, 129, 159  
Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium 149  
Theirworld 45, 85, 117, 123  
Togo 37  
tolerance 12  
Tunisia 53, 145  
Turkey 45, 47, 123, 125, 131  
Tutu, Desmond 69, 141

## U

Uganda 59  
Understanding Child Work 89  
UNESCO 25, 27, 30, 35, 39, 49, 81  
UNHCR 25, 43, 49, 109, 113, 115, 123, 129, 133  
UNICEF 27, 35, 39, 43, 49, 75, 85, 109, 115, 117,  
123, 129  
United Arab Emirates 12  
United Kingdom 21, 43, 63, 113, 143, 149, 165  
United Nations 167  
    Children's Court 172  
    disaster aid 153  
    General Assembly 35, 71, 123  
    Human Rights Committee 85  
    Security Council 61, 85, 101  
    Syria Pledging Conference 47  
    universal education 30, 79  
    see also Convention on the Rights of the Child  
United States 43, 103, 113, 121, 137, 143, 145, 149  
Universal Declaration of Human Rights 11, 12, 83,  
125, 145, 171  
University of the People 129, 131  
UNRWA 43  
Up For School 63, 170–2  
USAID 123, 135

## V

V-Day 55, 77  
virtual education 128–9, 131  
    see also technology



## **WX**

Wagstaff, Adam 59  
Walk Free 55, 59, 89, 93, 145  
Watkins, Kevin 59, 89  
women, violence against 55, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 159  
Working Group for Girls 75  
World Bank 27, 37, 49, 59, 79, 117  
World Education Forum 35, 105  
World Food Programme 123  
World Humanitarian Day 42–3, 101  
World Humanitarian Summit 39, 47, 49, 127, 129,  
131, 175  
World Refugee Day 24–5  
World University Service, Canada 131

## **Y**

Year of the Child 60–61, 119  
Yemen 19, 45, 47, 75, 103  
Yousafzai, Malala 53, 71, 73, 79, 81, 83, 111, 135,  
158–65, 173  
Yousafzai, Ziauddin 79  
youth protests 16, 52–3, 54–5, 59, 145

## **Z**

Zardari, Asif Ali 59  
Zuckerberg, Mark 129