THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS IN A CHANGED WORLD ORDER 2021: A Narrative Literature Review

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a narrative literature review on "The Political Economy of Education Systems in Conflict-Affected Contexts in a Changed World Order 2021" and is aimed at scholars, students, development practitioners, and Ministry of Education policy makers working in conflict-affected contexts. In 2014, Novelli et al. published a rigorous literature review on The Political Economy of Education Systems in Conflict-affected Contexts, and this report seeks to update it, and reflect on what has changed since then. In the original report, (Novelli et al , 2014), they reflected upon some of the changes that had affected education in conflict-affected contexts in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods. In conflict-affected contexts, education is being shaped, changed and challenged by global agendas of security, stabilization, pacification, humanitarianism and international development (Novelli et al., 2014). The report highlighted how some of the educational challenges to meeting international developmental goals were most acute in countries affected by conflict (Novelli et al. 2014). Furthermore, it showed how obstacles to educational access were exacerbated by "serious governance and capacity deficits in conflict-affected contexts that make educational reform more challenging and make providing and administrating international development assistance more complex and problematic." (Novelli et al. 2014, 5) The overall aim of this report "The Political Economy of Education in Conflict-affected Contexts in a Changed World Order" is to revisit, rethink and update the previous one, by incorporating in the analysis new changes, challenges and shifts in the world order and the global governance of education that have emerged since then, and have an impact on and interact with education in conflict-affected contexts. Some of these changes concern a world order that is constantly in the making and shifting to some form that contains both elements of liberal and post-liberal multilateralism, the rise of bilateral, regional and new non-state actors, the shift from liberal peacebuilding to a stabilization agenda, and the emergence of new global trends, threats and global challenges such as climate change, demographic shifts, health pandemics, food insecurity, rising authoritarianism and populism, among others. In line with the previous report, the current one is strongly interdisciplinary and incorporates debates from a range of international development, education and International Relations (IR) sub-fields.

Methodology & Theoretical Framework

The report is based upon a narrative synthesis approach that combines the robustness of a critical literature review with a comprehensive search (Grant and Booth 2009). The review aims at answering 'what is known?' questions by selecting the following five main themes that are considered as significant for understanding current trends and shifts with regard to education in conflict-affected contexts:

1. Global shifts and UN agendas: peacebuilding, sustaining peace and stabilization
2. Authoritarianism and violent attacks against education
3. Counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism and countering radicalization
4. Non-state actors and privatization: the global aid architecture and financing of education, philanthropy, for-profit education and low-fee schools
5. Pandemics, education and the shift to digital learning

It aims to question and unravel the tensions, contradictions and struggles that characterize education in conflict-affected countries as a result of ongoing global changes. It also reflects upon the functions and role of education in conflict affected contexts as it is shaped, reformed and restructured by the expectations and agendas of national, regional and global, public and private actors. In line with the previous report, the present review is informed by a critical cultural political economy framework, which places education in the broader socio-economic and political structures, institutions and agents that affect and constrain it (Robertson and Dale 2015). It also highlights the importance of politics and policy in shaping governance frameworks, institutional arrangements and outcomes of education in conflict-affected contexts (Novelli et al. 2014).

Detailed summary of findings

This report summarised the findings from the literature on the political economy of education in conflict-affected contexts in relation to the five above-mentioned themes.

1. A shift from the macro to the micro level, from the global to the local 'turn'

There is a structural shift and tendency to locate both causes and solutions to complex processes and phenomena such as conflict, peace, terrorism, violent extremism and educational challenges at the micro, local and individual level. This however might overlook the fact that such challenges and phenomena are embedded in broader, global systems of oppression, domination, coercion, exploitation and injustice. Moreover, this leads to a de-responsibilization of the international community and national states to deal with and address causes and find solutions to specific sets of interconnected challenges and issues that arise for education in conflict-affected contexts. While the locals are called upon as frontline agents for building peace, ensuring security and monitoring and reporting growing attacks against education, it is not clear the extent to which they are sufficiently supported by the international actors that stress their potential.

2. A changed global peace and security setting for education in conflict-affected contexts

In the past decade, education in conflict-affected contexts has been affected by a changed peace and security global setting with conflicts that have become longer and more intractable and that have been exacerbated by mass displacement, emergencies, humanitarian and refugee crisis,

increased involvement of non-state armed groups in intra-state and regional conflicts, the rise of terrorism and counterterrorism as well as increased authoritarianism, state repression and violence. There is a huge gap between and disjuncture between recent UN policy discourses on multi-dimensional, local pro-peace infrastructures and holistic peacebuilding approaches and UN pratices on the ground, with peace operations having become more robust and focusing increasingly on stabilization and counterterrorism. In practical terms, the space for peacebuilding has been reduced and replaced by stabilization missions focusing on security and asymmetrical threat containment. Most importantly, issues of social justice and equality are worryingly absent from international agendas and discourses. Eight years after the publication of the Novelli et al. report (2014), not only is education as marginal to peacebuilding as it was highlighted in the previous report; furthermore, peacebuilding itself has become more marginalized within the UN system itself, having been transformed into the 'peace as maintenance agenda' embedded in broader stabilization imperatives. Education remains central to building sustainable, inclusive and peaceful societies and in addressing drivers of conflict and fragilities in conflict-affected contexts. However, it is not clear what role does education play in current stabilization missions. Lastly, the UN has revised or launched new agendas for peace, security and development touching upon the role of women and youth therein. While education is crucial to the implementation and achievement of these agendas, it remains marginal to all of them. In section 7.2 a number of additional research questions that require further scrutiny on the ground and that have emerged out of this review is presented.

3. Dynamics of violence and increased securitization and militarization of education in conflict-affected contexts

The post-9/11 securitization and militarization of aid to education in conflict-affected contexts identified by the previous Novelli et al. (2014) report has further exacerbated over the last eight years as a result of the worsening of terrorist and insurgency dynamics and the globalization of countering terrorism and violent extremism policies (Kundnani and Hayes 2018). Since the publication of the Novelli et al. (2014) report, the instrumentalization of education to fit counterterrorist purposes has increased and resulted in the proliferation of policies and strategies that put education at the centre. Conflict remains central in understanding the magnitude, nature and geopolitics of attacks against education. However, education has become central to insurgency, terrorism and counterterrorism dynamics. More needs to be known on how stabilization agendas and counterterrorism policies that increase securitization against proliferating insurgencies transform schools into battleground and expose them to attacks. Furthermore, while the impact of non-state extremist groups and on education has been addressed in the literature, little scholarly and policy research has addressed how increased

authoritarianisms and state repression are affecting education. Lastly, how societal sectors and actors such as education and youth are being incorporated in countering violent extremism and counter-radicalization policies in conflict-affected contexts and with what effects is not sufficiently investigated and analysed.

4. Crisis and multifaceted privatization: philanthropy and for-profit education

The emergence and growing power of philanthropists in the global governance of education has to be located in the broader shifts in the world order and the global aid architecture of the pre-Covid environment, which includes the participation of private sector businesses and different types of billionaire philanthropists in the assistance and reform of education systems both in developed and conflict-affected contexts. While several studies identify education as a key area of philanthrocapitalism's intervention, there is a serious lack of first-hand accounts and empirical investigation and research on whether and how education in conflict-affected contexts is affected by these dynamics and actors and how do local actors engage with or resist such interventions. There are a range of knowledge gaps and questions that need further investigation that we put forth in section 7.4.

5. Covid-19 pandemic and education in conflict-affected contexts

The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened and exacerbated pre-existing structural challenges and deficiencies in education systems, particularly in conflict-affected contexts. While it is not clear yet how the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing dynamics in the education systems of conflict-affected contexts such as the decreasing support for public education and the privatization of education a number of preliminary insights can be inferred. First of all, both access and quality of education have been hampered and substantially decreased as a result of global disruptions and fewer hours of instruction and subjects (HRW 2021). Moreover, students and children have had fewer or total lack of opportunities for informal learning experiences through social interaction. More research is needed to understand how children's educational path and trajectories of learning have been hampered and disrupted in conflict-affected contexts as a result of the pandemic. In particular, research needs to identify the barriers that have hampered access to learning and education for categories of vulnerable children. Lastly, how the shift to digital learning presents both additional challenges and potentialities for education systems is a fundamental and relevant questions that need to be addressed, investigated and empirically analysed across a range of conflict-affected contexts. In section 7.5, we put forth a number of research questions that require further investigation in this new emerging area of research and practice.

We conclude the report with some final reflections that touches upon the challenges and potentialities of education systems in conflict-affected contexts over the last eight years and that we hope will be taken into account in present and future education's research, assistance and intervention. As the updated report has shown, a number of important new challenges for education systems and communities in conflict-affected contexts have emerged as a result of changing geopolitical relationships, dynamics and processes. The world in 2021 is much more insecure and violent than it was 7 years ago (2014) when the first report was written. Education in conflict-affected contexts is being pushed and pulled in a number of directions, by a number of different social forces, which have resulted in increased social polarization. The spread of authoritarianism and the violent targeting of education by state and non-state actors have intensified over the last years. The protracted nature of conflicts has made education provision much more challenging but also much more needed. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has globalized a series of challenges and traumas that children in conflict-affected contexts encounter daily and for years, such as school closures, exam cancellations, huge learning loss, among others. While this global challenge may provide with the opportunity to understand and possibly empathize with the lives of those affected by wars, conflicts and crisis, current global response to Covid-19 vaccine provisions and decreasing international development financial commitments (particularly from the UK) towards education in conflict-affected contexts are indicating otherwise. While funding to education in conflict-affected contexts alone cannot address educational challenges nor deliver educational success, it is crucial in meeting both and may become one of the pressing challenges in the coming years as governments in wealthier states shift priorities towards domestic recovery.

INTRODUCTION, AIMS AND RATIONALE FOR THE REVIEW

1.1 *Revisiting the Political Economy of Education in Conflict-affected Contexts 2021*

Since the end of the Cold War, education has been undergoing profound changes. As a result of processes of globalization and new threats to international peace and security emerging over the last three decades, education has been affected and shaped by a myriad of international dynamics that operate in, out and beyond the nation-state and have questioned the very boundaries that regulate the practice and discipline of international relations, and of the place and role of education therein (Robertson 2012). This is especially the case for education in conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts, whereby education is being shaped and reformed by global agendas of security, stabilization, pacification, humanitarianism, and international development (Novelli et al. 2014). In conflict-affected contexts, education is deeply involved in contentious politics and increasingly under-attack from a range of actors (Novelli and Selenica 2014; GCPEA 2020).

Today, new global trends have emerged such as a rising multilateralism, the rise of China as an important peacekeeping actor and funder, the rise of regional organizations alongside the UN in preventing and tackling new conflicts, war and instability, as well as the rise and multiplication of private, non-state actors that play an increasing role in global governance (Martin 2019, viii). Over the last decade, both the nature of conflicts and interventions have substantially changed, with today's conflict defined as "more intractable and less conducive to political resolution" while international interventions are mostly at a stalemate or even contributing to prolonging of conflict (UN 2015a, 2; Kabalan 2019; Policinski and Kuzmanovic 2019) Intra-state conflicts that proliferated during the 1990s are now rendered more complex by the rise and proliferation in a range of geopolitical areas of illegitimate non-state actors. These groups such as ISIS in Iraq and Syria, al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the M23 militia in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and new jihadist insurgents in north-east Mozambique are rewriting the rules of war and affecting the design and deployment of international, regional and national military and peace operations (Peter 2019, 2; Day 2019).[1] The magnitude of their atrocities and the transnational nature of their terrorist activities have placed the Security Council in a difficult and often paralysing position with regard to the kind of actions to be undertaken to address them in conflict scenarios such as Syria where permanent members of the Security Council have polarizing stances. In other less polarizing conflict scenarios such as in the Sahara Sahel belt, the UNSC responses point to a new trend in international interventions, one more concerned with stabilization and pacification rather than

[1] These groups are seen by the UN and the international community as antithetical to peace agreements and have hampered the prospect for sustainable peace (Peter 2015; Bossetti and Einsiedel 2015).

peacebuilding and which are expressed on the ground with robust and muscular missions (Karlsrud 2017, 2019; Gilder 2019).

Conflicts and interventions, are taking place within broader shifts in the global order, all having an impact on how education is delivered, hampered, attacked and reconstructed. While the end of the bipolar Cold War was accompanied by an expansive unipolar peace agenda that aimed at addressing civil wars and reconstructing their aftermath through ambitious, all-encompassing liberal peacebuilding missions, both praised and criticised, today's international interventions in conflict-affected settings are being reconfigured in and as a result of a changing multipolar world and a North-South rebalancing that places increasing emphasis on security and stabilization (Peter 2019; Abdenur 2019, 47-50).[2] At the decision and policy-making level, states of the Global South are increasingly vocal on modalities and goals of international interventions. The rise of regional organizations as providers of security is another change that accompanies and shapes the transformation of international peace operations on the ground (Williams and Boutellis 2014). Non-state actors and civil society organizations continue to play an important role in advocating for people-centred and human-security approaches in peace operations, and are now coupled and accompanied by the rise of private, for-profit philanthropists.

While in the nineties, civil wars and humanitarian disasters were considered as the biggest threats to international peace and security, in the post-9/11 world, and increasingly over the last decade, terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization are defined as among the biggest threats to international peace and security. Tectonic geopolitical changes as a result of the Global War on Terror and the Arab Springs have further fed conflict dynamics, in particular the increasing participation and involvement of regional players in intra-state conflicts, increasing connections between regional and sub-national conflicts, and the increased impact and diversification of global and regional jihadi networks (Day 2019, 74). Other drivers of conflict and global challenges include developmental deficits, climate change, demographic shifts, health pandemics, water scarcity, food (in)security, and rising authoritarianism and populism, among others (Mahmoud 2019).

In 2014, Novelli et al. published a rigorous literature review on *The Political Economy of Education in Conflict Affected Contexts*, and this report seeks to update it, and reflect on what has changed since then. In the original report, (Novelli et al , 2014), they reflected upon some of the changes that had affected education in conflict-affected contexts in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods. It highlighted how some of the educational challenges to meeting international developmental goals were most acute in countries affected by conflict (Novelli et al. 2014).

[2] According to Peter, "the top ten troop and police contributing countries are all from the global South, with Ethiopia, Bangladesh, India, Rwanda and Pakistan topping the list." (2019, 3)

Furthermore, it showed how obstacles to educational access were exacerbated by "serious governance and capacity deficits in conflict-affected contexts that make educational reform more challenging and make providing and administrating international development assistance more complex and problematic." (Novelli et al. 2014, 5)

The overall aim of this report "The Political Economy of Education in Conflict-affected Contexts[3] in a Changed World Order" is to revisit, rethink and update the previous one, by incorporating in the analysis new changes, challenges and shifts in the world order and the global governance of education that have emerged since then, and have an impact on and interact with education in conflict-affected contexts. Some of these shifts concern a world order that is constantly in the making and shifting to some form that contains both elements of liberal and post-liberal multilateralism, the emergence of bilateral, regional and non-state actors, the shift from liberal peacebuilding to a sustaining peace and stabilization agenda, and the emergence of new global threats and challenges, as well as the rise of new actors. In line with the previous report, the current one is strongly interdisciplinary and incorporates debates from a range of international development, education and International Relations (IR) sub-fields. The literature review is not exhaustive; it is rather strategically selective and focuses on five emerging themes in relation to education that we believe are relevant for understanding the political economy of education in conflict affected contexts:

6. Global shifts and UN agendas: peacebuilding, sustaining peace and stabilization
7. Authoritarianism and violent attacks against education
8. Counter-terrorism, countering violent extremism and countering radicalization
9. Non-state actors and privatization: the global aid architecture and financing of education, philanthropy, for-profit education and low-fee schools
10. Pandemics, education and the shift to digital learning

The present research report seeks to review continuities and discontinuities, changes and challenges in the political economy of education of conflict-affected contexts over the last eight years (2013-2021). It aims to highlight new trends, processes and dynamics as well as identify research areas that require further analysis and scrutiny.

1.2 *Methodological approach and structure of the report*

[3] In line with the previous report we use the term conflict-affected contexts to refer to those contexts that have undergone violent civil conflict and/or war in the last two decades (Novelli et al. 2014, 1). According to Novelli et al. 'conflict-affected' is "a more neutral terminology than 'fragile' states, 'fragility', 'weak' states. […] We also prefer to use 'contexts' rather than 'states', as in several cases the conflicts do not necessarily correspond to the entire state territory […] and may cross several borders (Kurdish conflict)." 'Post-conflict contexts' is occasionally used when appropriate.

The report is based on primary and secondary sources, including academic, practitioner- and policy-related literature. For the report, we chose a narrative synthesis approach that combines the robustness of a critical literature review with a comprehensive search (Grant and Booth 2009). The review aims at answering 'what is known?' questions by selecting five main themes chosen by us and considered as significant for understanding current trends and shifts with regard to education in conflict -affected contexts. The review includes different types of work that are reviewed without a standardized checklist, as we wanted to gather a more comprehensive and complete impression of research and trends on several topics than a systematic review could provide. To identify literature for the period 2013-2021 we searched major leading online collections such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science that allows for a multi-disciplinary coverage for the search. Including both scholarly and practitioner discussions our aim is to consolidate what we do know and what we do not know and pave the way for a research agenda and future research directions and debates. Databases were searched in the period between March and May 2021.

The report questions and unravels the tensions, contradictions and struggles that characterize education in conflict -affected countries as a result of ongoing global changes. It also reflects upon the functions and role of education in conflict -affected contexts as it is shaped, reformed and restructured by the expectations and agendas of national, regional and global, public and private actors. In line with the previous report, the present review is informed by a critical cultural political economy framework, which places education in the broader socio-economic and political structures, institutions and agents that affect and constrain it (Robertson and Dale 2015). It also highlights the importance of politics and policy in shaping governance frameworks, institutional arrangements and outcomes of education in conflict-affected contexts (Novelli et al. 2014).

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 identifies changes and shifts in the global order as well as in UN agendas and discourses and reflects upon the impact on and interconnections with education in conflict-affected contexts. Section 3 reflects upon rising trends of authoritarianism and violent attacks against schools and universities in conflict-affected contexts. Section 4 analyses education in relation to insurgency and counter-insurgency on the one hand and to terrorism and counter-terrorism on the other one, by highlighting an increased securitization and militarization of education in conflict prone settings. Section 5 sheds light on dynamics of increased privatization of education at the global and local level by analysing the growing presence and importance of philanthropy, for-profit foundations and low-fee private schools in conflict-affected and developing contexts. Section 6 provides some preliminary reflections on how the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing structural challenges of education in conflict-affected countries. The last section will sum up trends, critical developments,

continuities and changes, challenges and implications and will put forth research questions and identify research areas that need further scrutiny and that could not be reviewed in this report.

2. The changing global context for education, conflict and peacebuilding in conflict-affected contexts

Peacebuilding and peace operations have undergone profound changes as a result of the transformations in the global order over recent years. Similarly, violent conflicts have become more complex, fragmented and intractable as well as lasting longer (UN 2015a). At the same time, new global powers and authoritarian regimes have emerged (TNI 2021). According to Peter (2019), four key global transformations are currently challenging and shaping UN peace operations and the UN commitment to peace more broadly: "(1) the rebalancing of relations between states of the global North and the global South; (2) the rise of regional organizations as providers of peace; (3) the rise of violent extremism and fundamentalist non-state actors; and (4) increasing demands from non-state actors for greater emphasis on human security." (2019, 5) This section will reflect upon these changes and locate education in conflict-affected contexts in this changed global order. Furthermore, it will revise some of the main UN agendas and discourses that have interconnections with education in conflict-affected settings. Lastly, it will incorporate some of the scholarly reflections and debates on the 'local turn' in peacebuilding and the role of education therein.

2.1 *From liberal unipolarism to post-liberal multipolarism? Peacebuilding, Peacekeeping and Stabilisation in conflict-affected contexts*

Changes and challenges in peace operations were analysed by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) in a 2015 report commissioned by the then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (UN 2015a). The report highlighted the tension between traditional peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and the trend towards more *robust* peacekeeping and stabilization mandates increasingly promoted by the Security Council (UN 2015a). In some respect, the HIPPO report stood in continuity with the Brahimi report (2000), in particular by highlighting the primacy of politics over the military and technical engagements in the design and implementation of peace operations. However, it also represented a shift from the Brahimi report by suggesting a move away from the model of large multidimensional peacebuilding operations that had characterized UN missions throughout the nineties and 2000s. The report recommended four key shifts for the UN to be efficient and relevant in a changed global order: (1) primacy of politics over military and

technical solutions; (2) a variety of peace operations tailored on the specific context, thus avoiding templates and one-size-fits all; (3) a global and regional partnership for peace and security, relying on regional and national capacities; (4) more field-focused UN Secretariat and people-centred approaches in UN peace operations (UN 2015a).[4]

Since the launch of the report, the UN has not mandated any new peacekeeping missions. The latest missions to be mandated by the UN were respectively the MINUSMA in Mali (2013) and MINUSCA in the Central African Republic (April 2014), with the former being the deadliest peacekeeping mission in UN history with 146 peacekeepers having lost their lives since its launch (Abdenur 2019, 57). MINUSMA – the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali represents the first of a new generation of peacekeeping UN missions less focused on peace and more focused on stabilisation, security and countering asymmetrical threats such as terrorism and violent extremism.

For some scholars, the difficulties encountered by UN missions in Mali, Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reflect the difficulties to re-adapt large peace operations to changed global, regional and local circumstances (de Coning and Peter 2019, vi). For others, it reflects the challenges and risks of turning UN peace operations into stabilization and counterterrorist missions (Karlsrud 2017; Gilder 2019). In an increasingly multipolar world, which Secretary-General Antònio Guterres has defined as a return to the Cold War logic, within the Security Council it is increasingly difficult to reach consensus on issues of intervention and sovereignty (Martin 2019, viii). This is also reflected in the multiplication of smaller *special political missions* such as those in Syria and Yemen (SPM)[5] that have replaced large multidimensional peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Next to the HIPPO report, two major reviews were also conducted in 2015, which focused respectively on the peacebuilding architecture and the women, peace and security agenda (UN 2015a, 2015b). In the same year, the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted.

2.2 *From Peacebuilding to the Sustaining Peace Agenda*

The peacebuilding agenda has been redefined in recent years through the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture report mentioned above (UN 2015a). The report aimed to review the role and position of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PCB), Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) as well as related UN agencies that are engaged in peacebuilding activities. In line with other UN reports, the HIPPO

[4] HIPPO advocated for prioritization and sequencing and its emphasis on conflict prevention rather than peacebuilding implied smaller context-specific missions.
[5] By 2018, the UN had authorized and deployed 25 SPM operations across Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East (Peter 2019, 10)

report highlighted the changing global context for conflict and peacebuilding, in particular the fact that following two decades of decline, major civil conflicts (most of which have a regional dimension) are on a steady rise, with conflicts having become "more complex, increasingly fragmented and intractable." (UN 2015a, 7) The report found that peacebuilding is marginal and often treated by UN Member States and UN agencies as an "afterthought", and "critically under-recognized, under-prioritized and under-resourced globally and within the United Nation's system," rather than the core principle underpinning all UN's engagement, "before, during and after violent conflicts." (UN 2015a, 7, 12) Reflecting a broader shift within the UN peace agenda, it recommended a more comprehensive approach of '*sustaining peace,*' stressing the need to foster "inclusive national ownership." (UN 2015a, 8, 21)[6] Sustaining peace is a multidimensional process entailing the addressing of drivers of conflict that have become more multifaceted.[7]

The trend of the transnationalization and regionalization of intra-state conflicts, that was a feature of the post-Cold War era, has also worsened in the last decade. In many contemporary violent conflicts such as Somalia, Libya, the Central African Republic, Iraq and South Sudan, the collapse or absence of a dominant central authority has led to the state's fragmentation along ethnic, tribal or sectarian lines and to the emergence of ethnically or religiously homogeneous regions (UN 2015a, 16). The need to move beyond the 'post-conflict peacebuilding' concept and consider peacebuilding as a comprehensive process that affects, addresses and underpins the pre-, during and aftermath of conflict characterizes the UN recent discourse on peace in conflict-affected contexts (UN 2015a, 17). However, it is not clear, how this has been translated on the ground, given the fact that the UN has not authorized peacebuilding missions for several years now. As a result, what role education is envisaged to play, if any, remains similarly unclear.

2.3 *The Women, Peace and Security Agenda*

In 2000, underpinned by the grassroots and bottom-up activism of non-governmental organizations across the world, the UN adopted the Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) that recognized both the devastating impact of war and conflict on women and girls and their huge potential as active agents in peacebuilding. The Global Study and High-Level Review in 2015 of the Women, Peace and Security agenda speaks to the increasing importance of women for building peace and ensuring security (UN 2015b). The revised agenda

[6] Key recommendations included: Promoting coherence at the intergovernmental level; Improving the peacebuilding capability of the United Nations System; Partnering for sustaining peace; More predictable peacebuilding finance; Improving leadership and broadening inclusion (UN 2015a, 48-57).

[7] Some of these drivers concern weak leadership and governance, corruption and fragile institutions; the politics of exclusion and in particular the oppression and violent targeting of minorities; the deepening and exacerbation of gender inequalities; socio-economic deprivation combined with historic and geographical marginalisation; climate change and challenges, population growth, environmental degradation and migration.

recognized that "In crises and emergencies, women and girls are less likely to enjoy certain human rights." (UN 2015b, 28) While over the last two decades, MDG-related investments have played a pivotal role in reducing gender inequalities across all education levels globally, in conflict-affected contexts education parity target remains unachieved (UN 2015b, 31).[8] A range of barriers prevent girls' access to education such as "child, early and forced marriage, lack of security and threat of violence stemming from attending school, targeted attacks against schools, students and related personnel or the military's use of schools." (UN 2015b, 32; OCHA 2015; GCPEA 2014a, 2018, 2020)

To mainstream gender within peacebuilding, the PBF launched the *Gender Promotion Initiative* (2011) now *Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative* (GYPI) that aims to increase financing for fostering women's and youth's empowerment and equality as part of the sustaining peace process.[9] In 2020, the PBF approved $178.728 million in 39 countries; as part of it the GYPI received $59.1 million for women's empowerment and youth inclusion projects (PBF 2020). While the WPS Agenda has succeeded in mainstreaming women's participation in the political life of conflict-affected contexts and more broadly in all areas of peace and security, its formal focus on political participation and gender quotas have often overlooked broader issues of social justice and equality. Moreover, the role that education might play as part of this agenda in mainstreaming gender participation, representation and broader societal changes is not clear and neither formally nor centrally endorsed in the agenda. More empirical research is needed to understand whether and to what extent the agenda has had any impact on girls' education and gender equality in conflict-affected contexts.

2.4 *The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda*

Youth has received increasing attention from policy-makers and scholars, in particular youth in and affected by conflict. This comes as recognition of the fact that "half of the population in conflict-affected countries is estimated to be below the age of 20." (UN 2015a, 22) Moreover, the population in conflict-affected countries, where approximately 2 billion people live, is growing twice as fast as the rest of the world (annual growth rate 2.4% and 1.2% respectively) and these numbers and trends are projected to increase (OCHA 2018). For example, the population in Sub-Saharan Africa, home to many conflicts today, is projected to double by 2050 [99%] (UNDESA 2019).

In 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2250 that launched the Youth, Peace and Security agenda (UN 2015c). Together with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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[8] Gender parity index stood at 0.94 in the aggregate of conflict and post-conflict countries in 2015, according to estimates by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UN 2015b).

[9] https://www.pbfgypi.org/, last accessed 2 April 2021

adopted the same year, increased emphasis was placed on conflict prevention, sustaining peace and addressing militarism and the root causes of conflict as well as conflict re-emergence. Resolution 2250 recognized that "today's generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known and that young people often form the majority of the population of countries affected by armed conflict" (UN 2015c, 1). It also recognized that "youth's access to education and economic opportunities has a dramatic impact on durable peace and reconciliation." (UN 2015c, 1) Moreover, education in connection with employment and training was identified as playing an important role in preventing youth marginalization and promoting a culture of peace (UN 2015c, 5).

The Youth, Peace and Security agenda represented the first international policy framework to recognize the unique role that young people play in supporting peace and security, in particular their positive role for peacebuilding, the prevention and resolution of conflict, and the countering of violent extremism. While the document acknowledged that turmoil and instability take place in countries with large youth populations and that the surge in terrorism and violent extremism of the past 15 years tends to be linked to the role of young men and women, it also called for a richer and more complex understanding of the role of young people in relation to peace and security (UNSC 2015c). However, the resolution was dominated by the call to prevent radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism among and through youth pointing to the securitization of youth's role in such processes.

2.5 *The Sustainable Development Goals Agenda*

The Sustainable Development Goals replaced the Millennium Development Goals and anchored development objectives within a broader, global commitment along with peace, humanitarian and security imperatives (UN 2015e; UNESCO 2015b). Development is critical to prevent relapse into conflict, as some of the most important conflict root causes are economic and social grievances. The SDGs Agenda has a greater focus on conflict and addresses factors that give rise to violence, insecurity, inequality and injustice calling for the need to redouble the international community's efforts to prevent conflict and support post-conflict countries. The SDGs agenda increased emphasis on quality education (Goal 4), gender equality (Goal 5) and stable and peaceful societies (Goal 16). Goal 16 calls for the promotion and maintenance of "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development [which can] provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." (UN 2015e) As part of *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UN 2015e), and *the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* (UNESCO, 2015b), a roadmap for the achievement of the education Sustainable Development Goal 4 was proposed that envisaged for its achievement the inclusion and the participation of non-state, private actors.

Figure 1[10]

2.6 *Education, peacebuilding and the 'local' turn in theory and practice*

Over the last three decades, post-conflict peacebuilding has been extensively theorized and practiced, criticized and problematized (Paris 1997, 2004; Richmond 2005; Chandler 2010; Visoka and Richmond 2017; Jackson 2017; Visoka and Musliu 2019). While the scholarly debate has been characterized and diversified across a plethora of problem-solving and critical approaches, all share the basic assumption that the task of rebuilding peaceful societies in the aftermath of a war is a complex one often accompanied by multi-faceted and multi-layered missions. Most of the critical approaches to peacebuilding have particularly problematized its top-down and elite-driven character that have failed to understand the complexities on the ground, address root causes of a conflict and incorporate local perspective and agency. Empirically, outcomes of post-conflict peacebuilding interventions have frequently resulted in unstable and fragile peace agreements, frozen conflicts, and have often been locally hybridized, resisted or rejected (Visoka and Musliu 2019).

[10] Source from UN 2015

In a study on education and peacebuilding in post-conflict Kosovo, Selenica (2018) has shown that education reform and educational outcomes are often the hybridized result of a clash between international and local agendas on the role of education in the post-conflict phase. In other terms, education reform in post-conflict Kosovo, reflected tensions between liberal values and multicultural ideals promoted by international actors and the nationalist, exclusive concerns of local actors (Selenica 2018). The study found that education reform as part of a peacebuilding mission is underpinned by stabilization imperatives; in the name of security, education is reformed in ways that it not only fails to address root causes of the conflict, but it rather reproduces and reinforces them (Selenica 2018). Education's centrality to conflict and the failure to rebuild and transform it in ways that could support a process of sustainable peace is also confirmed by a study on peacebuilding and the role of education in conflict and post-conflict Sierra Leone (Novelli and Higgins 2016).

The crucial role of local agency in education and peacebuilding and their potential for shaping and hybridizing international educational templates and agendas is recognized by other empirical studies on the relationship between education and peacebuilding in conflict-affected contexts. The complex and contradictory role that teachers play in sustainable peace and development as well as their multiple potential to contribute to both and foster social cohesion is highlighted in a study with Pakistan, Uganda, Myanmar and South Africa as case studies (Novelli and Sayed 2016).

A 'local turn' can be identified among recent peacebuilding scholarship and critical education and conflict scholarship, which emphasises the need to unravel the unexplored, local and everyday narratives, experiences and struggles that are often hidden or overlooked by mainstream scholarly approaches and UN peacebuilding missions on the ground (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Pogodda and Richmond 2015; Randazzo 2021). This does neither simply imply replacing top-down with bottom-up approaches nor merely incorporating (and often co-opting) local ownership within donor-driven templates. Rather it entails pushing "peacebuilding theory towards radically different ways of rethinking about governance, conflict and peace" through the engagement with Indigeneity, alterity and the incorporation of relationality and decoloniality approaches (Randazzo 2021, 142).

The 'local turn' expressed in the focus on local ownership and interest in indigenous knowledge and experience has also been incorporated in the current UN 'sustaining peace' agenda, in particular its focus on 'local pro-peace infrastructures', "inclusive national ownership"[11] and people-centred approaches to peace (UN 2015a, 21; de Coning and Peters 2019; Mahmoud 2019; UN 2016a). The European Union has also embraced its commitment to Indigenous empowerment

[11] According the Advisory Group of Experts "this implies participation by community groups, women's platforms and representatives, youth, labour organizations, political parties, the private sector and domestic civil society, including under-represented groups." (AGE 2015, 21)

as part of poverty reduction schemes and through projects that focus on Indigenous knowledge and experience to improve governance of conditions of poverty, conflict and environmental degradation (Randazzo 2021). This policy trend of incorporating local forms of knowledge to increase resilience to threats and crisis has been interpreted with scepticism by critical scholars. For some scholars, attempts to incorporate traditional knowledge within resilience programmes may reflect the need to strengthen liberal governmentality in its goal of controlling and normalizing post-conflict societies (Chandler and Reid 2018). Other scholars have argued that 'local ownership' is a rhetorical device that conceals and perpetuates the exclusion of indigenous communities and perspectives within policies, theories and praxis of peacebuilding and development assistance (Wilson 2017; Brigg and Bleiker 2016).

Conclusions of the section

The section has reflected upon a number of key global transformations, which have coincided with an intensification of global organized violence, armed conflicts and war, with the purpose of locating education in conflict-affected contexts in these broader changes. Conflicts have multiplied and escalated in many locations over the past decade, while the number of people that need humanitarian assistance, 80% of which are in armed conflicts, has tripled (UN2015b). They have also led to the mass displacement of refugees following prolonged wars. The Syrian war has led to 11 million Syrians either internally displaced or fleeing to neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq (Pherali, Abu Moghli and Chase 2020, 148). These transformations and the entry of new actors from the global South in peace approaches suggest that the UN is entering a pragmatic era that responds to threats on the ground often by making peacekeeping operations more robust and muscular (Berdal 2019). The liberal consensus that defined the UN modus operandi in conflict-affected settings for two decades is now being replaced by a struggle between "liberal international norms and realist security concerns." (Peter 2019, 9) People-centred approaches, conflict-sensitivity and longer-term approaches are key components of an agenda of just and sustainable peace, however, it is less clear how are they incorporated in peace missions in the field and what the role of education therein is.

While discursive and policy revisions in the UN's peacebuilding architecture display a degree of reflexivity and adaptation of the UN peacebuilding architecture, predominant paradigms remain insufficiently holistic, sustained and resourced (UN 2015a, 24). Furthermore, deep fragmentation within the UN system is persistent. A growing focus on prevention is implied by several UN documents and reports and which more broadly reflects a pre-emptive shift within the international community to tackling threats and risks following the post-9/11 and post-Arab

Springs events. The reviews conducted by the UN between 2015 and 2016 have presented a sharp and complex picture of the peace and security context, which is characterized by:

> [b]latant violations of human rights and humanitarian law, complex drivers of conflict, involvement of a growing number of non-state armed actors, new technologies and transnational connections that are changing the nature of warfare. These challenges have underlined the need for stronger focus on prevention, more holistic and consistent approaches, and a focus on mechanisms that place human rights at the core of security, protection, political, humanitarian, peacebuilding and socio-economic development work. (UN 2015b)

Emphasis on local ownership and indigenous knowledge might reflect the failures of previous peacebuilding missions and thus the incorporation and co-optation of critical peacebuilding theories as part of the local turn within the UN policy agenda. It might also reflect a fundamental shift from liberal peacebuilding to a less ambitious peace maintenance agenda. However, some of the challenges and dilemmas identified by the previous Novelli et al. report are still present today and can be applied to education in conflict-affected countries research and practice: how to reconcile UN top-down and state-centric approaches with bottom-up and local approaches to education and peace; who are the locals and how to reach beyond elite circles and civil society representatives; how to draw lines between local communities and insurgent groups in asymmetrical conflicts; and, how to overcome the UN's tendency to prefer thematic expertise over local knowledge or the ever-present dichotomy between externally-driven generic 'tools' and endogenous curriculum.

All of the above-mentioned dynamics and changes have a range of implications for education governance, delivery and impact. In the context of protracted wars in which international interventions no longer come in the form of liberal peacebuilding missions, a considerable shift in focus towards refugee education and education in emergencies is being observed and often as crisis are prolonged, refugee education is being integrated within and aligned with the country's formal public education systems (Pherali, Abu Moghli and Chase 2020, 147). Moreover, the focus is increasingly shifted towards education, radicalization and de-radicalisation programmes as sub-section 4.3 will address. Lastly, a growing scholarship embraces and advocates for post-colonial and alternative, indigenous knowledge(s). While this is a fundamental endeavour "to support thinking better about education and a future which overturns colonial relationships of hierarchy, dispossession, exclusion and subordination" (Unterhalter and Oketch cited in Kadiwal et al. 2020), it needs to be aware of the risks of uncritical glorification of alternative knowledge that may result in or is underpinned by erasure, essentialism, relativism and simplistic and problematic accounts of difference (Basma et al. 2021).

3. Authoritarianism and attacks against education in conflict-affected contexts

Since the publication of the previous report (Novelli et al. 2014) that already stressed the phenomenon of education under attack, attacks on educational institutions, students, teachers, schools and trade unionists have worsened and intensified in a growing number of countries across the world. The worrying trends are documented by the three Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) reports respectively in 2014, 2018 and 2020 (GCPEA 2014a; GCPEA 2018, GCPEA 2020). The following three sub-sections will reflect upon these trends during the period 2014-2021, by also placing specific emphasis on the attacks against universities and students. Lastly, it will focus on some of the monitoring, preventative, protective and advocacy initiatives reflecting upon their successes and limitations in view of the growing attacks.

3.1 *Education Under Attacks in conflict-affected contexts*

In 2016, four schools or hospitals were, on average, attacked or used for military purposes in 40 armed conflicts each day across the world (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016; UNICEF 2016). This has had the effect of disrupting educational opportunities for more than 75 million children age three to eighteen in at least 35 countries (Nicolai et al. 2016). Targeting and attacking social services such as schools and hospitals that are protected under international law has become a widespread tactic of armed groups in war zones and conflict affected contexts, such as the al-Shabaab's attacks at Garissa University College in Kenya on 2 April 2015 (resulting in the death of 147 people, mostly students), the airstrikes by Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen and Russian forces in Syria that have targeted and attacked hospitals and schools, in particular after 2014, as well as Israeli bombing of schools (including UNRWA schools) in the latest attacks against Gaza (Sengupta 2016; United Nations 2016c; Gettleman, Kushkush and Callimachi 2015; Shah 2021; Save the Children 2021).

Attacks on education have combined and included bombing and looting of schools and university buildings, the killing, raping, abduction, and arbitrary arrest of students and teachers, the recruitment of teachers or students by armed forces or groups, both state and non-state actors, more predominantly during armed conflict or settings affected by forms of insecurity and destabilization (GCPEA 2020). Attacks have direct and indirect effects on schools, students, teachers and education systems. Beyond the immediate effect which is the disruption of access to education and to the right to education, attacks, violence and conflict devastate education systems in the long term by disrupting learning, diverting funding streams, and reducing the qualified workforce of teachers. The consequences range from the psychological, to the socio-political and

economic level and impact not only education systems more specifically but also country's development more broadly, both in the short and long term (Novelli and Selenica 2014).

As part of these attacks, during the period 2015-2019, more than 22,000 students, teachers and academic have been injured or killed in attacks on education during armed conflict (GCPEA 2020). Moreover, more than 11,000 separate attacks on education facilities, students and teachers took place over the same period (GCPEA 2020). The latest report, published in 2020, shows that in the period between 2015 and 2019, 93 countries experienced at least one reported attack, marking an increase of 19 affected countries from the previous 2018 report (GCPEA 2020). Countries such as Burkina Faso and Niger have recorded a sharp increase in attacks that have contributed to the closure of more than 2,000 schools, with attacks carried out mainly by non-state armed groups (GCPEA 2020). In conflict-affected and war-torn settings such as Yemen and the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 1,500 attacks on schools have been recorded respectively.

Afghanistan, Cameroon, Palestine and the Philippines were the countries that recorded the highest number of direct attacks against teachers and students. Separatist armed groups have threatened, abducted and killed students and school personnel in Cameroon because they did not respect the group's boycott on schools' attendance in the Northwest and Southwest regions (GCPEA 2020). In West African countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, armed groups have threatened teachers for using secular state curriculum, and have led to the closure of thousands of school closures in the region (GCPEA 2020). In Guinea, Iraq, Pakistan and Sudan students and teachers protesting against education policies have been targeted and attacked by police forces (GCPEA 2020).

Three of the world's most dangerous places to be a student are North and South Kivu in the DRC and Mogadishu in Somalia (Bennouna et al. 2017). Both countries have fragile child protection mechanisms and fragmented monitoring mechanisms for human rights violations (Bennouna et al. 2017). The protection of education and the monitoring of attacks against the sector are considered a low priority for both state and humanitarian agendas, according to a study focusing on the period between 2013-2016 (Bennouna et al. 2017). Local organizations and institutions, i.e., education institutions, NGOs and local communities, have reported more than 70 percent of incidents.

Other conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Palestine and Syria have experienced each more than 500 attacks on schools. Most of these attacks in these three countries have been indiscriminate in nature and carried out through the widespread use of explosive weapons (GCPEA 2020). Female students and teachers have been particularly targeted in an increasing number of conflict contexts. Attacks on women and girls were reported in 21 countries during the period 2015-2019: Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, DRC, Egypt, India, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar,

Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Venezuela and Yemen pointing out to a gendered dynamic of violence and attacks on education (GCPEA 2020, 19). Most of the attacks have occurred in conflict-affected countries and aim to prevent them from attending schools and denying the right to education for girls. Afghanistan has been one of the countries with the highest number of attacks against female students and teachers, with Taliban groups targeting them, and in the last three years (2018-2021) the Islamic State of Khorasan Province, an affiliated group with the Islamic State (ISIS) that has been targeting in particular the Shia Hazara community (Gossman 2021). As the US and the international coalition is set to withdraw all forces by September 2021, as part of a broader effort to ascertain their authority and vision for post-US Afghanistan, Taliban groups and Islamic States affiliates have intensified their attacks against female schools and students. On May 8, 2021, militants killed at least 85 students (most of which were schoolgirls) and injured more than 147 following a bomb attack at Sayed Al-Shuhada school in the Dasht-e Barchi area of West Kabul, an area populated largely by the Shiite Hazara community (Deaton and McKenzie 2021). No group has claimed responsibility; the government has accused the Taliban, and the latter Islamic states affiliates who have previously targeted the Hazara Shiite minority and universities in Kabul. Girls' education in Afghanistan is being targeted as part of a larger dynamic of sectarian violence and insurgency (Rasmussen and Amiri 2021).

During the latest attacks on Gaza by Israeli military forces in May 2021, 63 children were killed and 450 injured, fifty schools damaged by Israeli airstrikes impacting 41,897 children and 47,000 displaced people that were sheltered within UNRWA schools to escape Israeli bombing (Save the Children 2021). The unlawfully indiscriminate targeting of schools in Gaza by Israeli forces has also been documented in the 2014 conflict (HRW 2014).

3.2 *Attacks on higher education in conflict-affected and authoritarian settings*

Higher education has increasingly been targeted both in war and authoritarian settings (Novelli and Selenica 2014; GCPEA 2018; GCPEA 2020). However, far less attention has been placed, both by the international community and national states, on attacks on higher education, and even less on protection and preventative measures as opposed to the growing body of work on the magnitude and severity of attacks affecting other levels of education and the international mechanisms of monitoring put in place by the United Nations (Novelli and Selenica 2014). Attacks on universities, students and academics have an impact on all other levels of education and the broader society.

> The university sector throughout the world has a complex and multifaceted role in developing human capital vital for scientific, political, economic, social and cultural progress. This

> includes developing pedagogy and providing future teachers for schools; acting as a point of critical reflection on national development; preparing young adults to become active citizens and future leaders; and offering a potentially autonomous space, independent of state, capital, religion and society, where key issues can be debated and solutions developed through evidence-based discourse (Novelli and Selenica 2014, 93).

Attacks on higher education have been reported in 73 countries during the period between 2015-2019; in 36 of the 37 countries profiled during the same period, more than 9,100 university students have been injured, killed or arrested (GCPEA 2020). 75 percent of the 1,200 reported attacks "involved armed forces, law enforcement, or paramilitary groups detaining, arresting, or using excessive force against university students or personnel." (GCPEA 2020, 18) The highest numbers of teachers and students directly attacked were recorded in Afghanistan, Cameroon, Palestine and the Philippines (GCPEA 2020, 14).

A significant underpinning cause of some of these attacks remains the use of schools and universities for military purposes and the recruitment of students by armed groups. While some of the causes and motivations are similar to other levels of education, attacks on higher education have additional and peculiar underpinning causes and motivations. Furthermore, as the last three GCPEA reports have highlighted, attacks against universities occur not only in conflict-affected contexts but frequently and increasingly in a range of authoritarian regimes such as Turkey, Egypt, Belarus, Myanmar, Colombia, Hungary, Hong Kong etc. (Novelli and Selenica 2014; GCPEA 2018; GCPEA 2020; Doğan and Selenica 2021). Law enforcement authorities and governmental armed forced have used excessive and/or lethal force to disperse university students and staff from protesting on campuses in a range of countries (GCPEA 2020).

While attacks are both complex and context-specific, the reasons underpinning such attacks can be grouped under three main categories, each political in nature, and often found interwoven in the same attack: 1) the subject and nature of teaching, research, writing and publishing; 2) identity, religious, sectarian and gender issues; 3) factors that are specific to armed conflict or high levels of coercion, violence and authoritarianism in a society (Novelli and Selenica 2014, 94). This third category of reasons encompasses a wide range of reasons: destroying state symbols and legitimacy and thus weakening the state; defeating the enemy; terrorism; insurgency and counter-insurgency; the militarization of opposition groups (Novelli and Selenica 2014, 94). More broadly, academics and university students are targeted because they can threaten the power of state and non-state actors as well as criticize and questions narratives that underpin and legitimize power and authority.

In Turkey, following the failed 2016 coup d'état, academic freedom has been heavily restricted and attacks against Turkish academics and students intensified (Doğan and Selenica 2021). Furthermore, many academics have been either dismissed from Turkish universities or forced to

exile as the Turkish government defined them as terrorist following their call for peace as part of the petition 'Academics for Peace' (Butlet and Ertur 2017; Doğan and Selenica 2021; Vatansever 2020). Similar trends have taken place within the European Union, when in 2018, the Central European University was forced out of Hungary following several attempts by the Hungarian government in its attempt to consolidate its power and control of the higher education sphere and repress any critical voice against its rising authoritarianism (Redden 2018).

In Myanmar, a decade-long insurgency, communal, religious and ethnic conflicts have attacked hundreds of schools and killed dozens of students and teachers; schools and students belonging to the Rohingya Muslim minority have been heavily attacked by states forces (GCPEA 2018). Between 2015 and 2016, police and government security forces attacked and arrested dozens of students, who protested against the new 2014 National Education Law, which restricted students' and teachers' unions and prohibited minority ethnic language education at universities (GCPEA 2018). Lastly, as a result of the military junta's coup d'état on February 1, 2021 in Myanmar, students have been heavily targeted (Reuters 2021). While security forces occupied university campuses in Yangon and elsewhere as protests broke out, at least 11,000 academics and other university staff have been suspended after going on strike in protest against military rule (Reuters 2021).

In Colombia, the latest GCPEA report (2020) noted at least 48 reports of attacks on Higher Education institutions between 2017-2019, an increase from earlier periods. Patterns of violence and attacks were often similar: including excessive use of force by police against students, the targeting and threatening of students and academics for their political activities and/or research activities. Violence was often linked to periodic increases in protests over national or educational reforms linked to austerity processes. Attacks often went beyond police/military actors and included suspected right wing paramilitaries and occasionally insurgent groups. In 2021, university students have been participating in an ongoing national strike, which has led to deaths and disappearances at the hands of Colombian security forces (Glatsky 2021).

Non-state actors or 'would be' actors are seeking to control universities in Afghanistan following the scheduled withdrawal of international coalition forces between July and September 2021. The latest of these attacks recorded at the Kabul University in November 2020 and claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province took the lives of 35 students (Shalizi 2020).

Several trends have contributed to the widespread growing of attacks against higher education institutions over the last six years: the spread of extremist armed groups, in particular Islamic State affiliates that were responsible for attacks in 12 out of the 28 countries profiled in 2018, targeting particularly female students and teachers; the use of aerial bombardments by state forces against

armed groups that has caused damage to thousands of schools and universities; violence against students and teachers during school and university protests; the growing number of protracted armed conflicts (GCPEA 2018).

3.3 *Mechanisms of monitoring, prevention, protection and advocacy*

The Education under Attack reports, initially under UNESCO and later under the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), has played a pivotal role in documenting the systematic violence and attacks against educational institutions, infrastructure and personnel as both a common and increasingly used tactic of war and in advocating for monitoring, reporting, preventative and protective measures and mechanisms. Moreover, it has launched initiatives such as the *Safe Schools Declaration* [12] to make states more accountable in preventing and responding to attacks.

Despite transnational efforts and initiatives, reporting attacks and response remain insufficient (GCPEA 2014, 2018, 2020). During the World Humanitarian Summit on 23-24 May 2016, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) established the *Education Cannot Wait* fund which aimed to raise USD 3.85 billion between 2016 and 2021 and respond to education in crisis and conflict (Bennouna et al. 2017). The total amount of resources mobilized between 2020-2021 has been USD 690.4 million with a total funding gap for the same period of USD 386.5 million.[13] However, as the Overseas Development Institute notes "the lack of real-time and up-to-date data and analysis to inform decisions on education's response" remains an obstacle to proper planning and accountability (Nicolai et al., 2016, 13).

A key challenge, in particular for higher education, remains the lack of detailed documentation and verification procedures (Bennouna et al. 2017). This challenge is suggested can be addressed through a better monitoring and reporting partnerships between UN agencies, international human rights and development NGOs, education ministries and district education offices "to improve data collection and verification of data, and better inform the range of responses." (GCPEA 2014, 63) The UN has also called for a stronger collaborative partnership among the protection, education and health clusters and civil society and community partners to enhance cooperation and coordination and improve capacities of monitoring attacks on schools (OSRSG-CAAC 2014) underpinned by the assumption that local actors are "best placed to provide first alerts on incident of attacks." (OSRSG-CAAC 2014, 22) While the unique position and role of local institutions and actors in reporting attacks is a common finding among several studies (among others, see Bennouna et al. 2016), there is less attention and research focus on the effects that this

[12] As of May 2021, 108 countries have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.
[13] Education Cannot Wait. (2021). https://www.educationcannotwait.org/about-us/ last accessed 11 May 2021

might have on local communities and actors. Being at the forefront of monitoring, documenting and reporting attacks on schools might further expose religious leaders, school administrators and teachers at violent attacks.

As the Asia Director of Human Rights Watch argues following the attacks at the Sayed ul-Shuhada school on May 8, 2021, it is above all the Afghan government and subsequently the UN and the donor community that should do more to prevent future attacks in the future (Gossman 2021). In this regard, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) called on concerned countries to support demands for a transparent investigation under the UN auspices and establish a commission of inquiry to investigate the increased number of attacks on civilian facilities such as schools and mosques (AIHRC 2021). In particular, Afghan authorities, according to the Commission should make sure that "the community's grief, questions and demands…be heard." (AIHRC 2021)

A range of preventative and protective measures that have been developed for other levels of education and that can be applied to higher education have been proposed in the GCPEA 2014 report (see Novelli and Selenica 2014, 94-99). The restriction and military use of university facilities in war zones and conflict-affected settings is one of them. Despite a GCPEA separate report on the topic as well as calls, initiatives and guidelines for protecting universities and schools from military use (see GCPEA 2014b), universities continue being converted into military facilities in several armed conflicts:

> From 2015 to 2019, military use of schools or universities was reported in 33 countries, including 27 countries profiled in the report: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, India, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen. Armed forces and armed groups also used schools in Indonesia, Lebanon, Mozambique, Republic of Congo, Saudi Arabia, and Zimbabwe, countries which are not profiled in this report (GCPEA 2020, 15)

Another one of such proposed measures concerns the security-enhancing potential of strengthening and increasing university autonomy. As attacks against universities in Hungary and Turkey have shown in recent years, university autonomy is paramount for enhancing both prevention and protection against violent or coercive attacks. Indeed, state authorities have explicitly targeted, attacked and narrowed university autonomy, thus increasing students and academics' multiple vulnerabilities and subjecting them to a range of further attacks and fragilities in contexts that are both neoliberal and authoritarian (Doğan and Selenica 2021; Vatansever 2020).

> [e]nhacing university autonomy vis-à-vis the state can provide a possible way model for reducing attacks on higher education system, particularly when coupled with university-controlled internal security provision. […] Developing and extending the notion of the

university as a space outside direct state control (even when funding is largely provided), including control of recruitment, financial and administrative management, curriculum and freedom of research (Novelli and Selenica 2014, 95).

Conclusions of the section

This section has sought to reflect upon the trends of violent attacks against education in the past seven years, focusing on the growing number of attacks against children, teachers, educational facilities in conflict-affected contexts; on the specific and peculiar phenomenon of attacks against higher education both in conflict-affected and authoritarian settings; and on some of the efforts and limitations to put in place systems of monitoring, reporting and protection. The findings based on the three GCPEA reports published respectively in 2014, 2018 and 2020 and on empirical comparative case study analysis paint a disturbing picture of the scale of attacks on education across the world, which has been steadily on the rise, despite a multiplication of transnational advocacy initiatives to report, monitor and protect education from attack.

Geographically, attacks on education are unevenly distributed and mainly affected by patterns of violence and armed conflicts. Findings from the last two reports respectively in 2018 and 2020 present mixed trends. The overall trend of decreased attacks between 2018 and 2020 reports may be due to the overall decrease in violence and insecurity between 2017-2019 in countries such as Iraq, Nigeria, the Philippines, Palestine and Ukraine, which were heavily affected by attacks on previous reporting periods (GCPEA 2020, 25). However, in other areas such as West Africa's Sahel region and in countries such as Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Chad, and Mozambique, attacks on education have been increasing and have been embedded in a context of increased instability, insecurity and insurgency (GCPEA 2020). This suggests that some countries have experienced lesser attacks as a result of the de-escalation of armed conflicts, while other countries have experienced a growing rate of attacks as a result of conflict escalation, pointing out to the ever closer link between attacks on education, war, armed conflicts and insurgency dynamics, a nexus already highlighted by the previous Novelli et al. report in 2014 as well as the World Bank report (2005) and the UNESCO GMR report (2011).

Armed groups and forces, both state and non-state actors, have continued to target schools and universities as 'soft targets' as part of their broader clashes and fights in prolonged armed conflicts. Collecting timely, accurate and complete data in conflict zones is a huge challenge despite a number of reporting mechanisms that have been put in place especially at the international level. Reporting, monitoring and collecting data remains a bigger challenge for attacks on higher education as the sector is highly politicized and often a target by state forces. Local sources and knowledge remains crucial in collecting most of the data and reporting most of the attacks as

several studies have found and as advocated and recommended by the GCPEA. However, special measures should be undertaken to safeguard local informants networks from the risk of reprisals (Bennouna et al. 2017).

In global, regional and local complex contexts that are in constant flux and characterized by prolonged asymmetrical conflicts, monitoring and reporting measures as well as more broadly a legal approach to the phenomenon while necessarily and important are not sufficient to address attacks and put in place preventative and protective systems of support. Success is likely to be more efficient and possible if highly context-sensitive and case specific (Novelli and Selenica 2014). Putting education at the centre of national and international agendas and efforts remains paramount for the long-term commitment of addressing and decreasing attacks on education locally and globally. A broader strategy of reducing overall violence is necessary so that education communities and facilities are not attacked as soft targets in a broader conflict.

4. EDUCATION, COUNTERING TERRORISM, VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND RADICALIZATION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

Since the 9/11 attacks and increasingly over the last decade, terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization have become central issues and concerns at the top of the international agenda across policy, practitioner and academic circle and its milieu (Karlsrud 2019; Kundnani and Hayes 2018). Since 2000, the number of fatalities have sharply increased from 3329 (2000) to 32,685 (2014), with 2014 being the deadliest year as a result of the rise of the Islamic State as well as Boko Haram (IEP 2015). The rise of many jihadist groups is redrawing the geopolitical maps of terrorism and counterterrorism in Africa and Asia. Some of these groups include Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq; 'IS' and 'IS' affiliated groups in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan; Al Shabaab in Somalia; AQIM, Al Mourabitoun and Macina Liberation Front in Mali; Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon (Karlsrud 2019, 154; Danzell, Yeh and Pfannenstiel 2018; GCPEA 2020). In conflict-affected contexts, this has been reflected in the further overlapping and blurring of lines between security, humanitarian and peace imperatives and actions, with UN missions formally mandated for peacekeeping that increasingly engage with counterterrorism actions (Karlsrud 2017).[14] Both at the supranational and international levels as well as at the national level, there has been a discursive and policy shift from terrorism to violent extremism and radicalization, with the terms

[14] The above-mentioned HIPPO report suggested that peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations should never cross the line and engage in counterterrorism actions in their operations (UN 2015a). MINUSMA is the first peacekeeping mission that has been mandated by the Security Council to take " direct action" to respond to asymmetric threats that terrorist groups pose on the ground. By engaging directly, MINUSMA's personnel have been exposed to attacks with 147 peacekeepers that have been killed since its launch in 2013.

problematically used interchangeably. In 2016, the former UN Secretary-General launched the *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, in which it was stated that:

> [t]here is no single pathway to violent extremism. But we know that extremism flourishes when human rights are violated, political space is shrunk, aspirations for inclusion are ignored, and too many people – especially young people – lack prospects and meaning in their lives." (UN 2016b)

The UN has advocated for a comprehensive preventative agenda (Figure 2) that seeks to address root causes of violent extremism such as "injustice, marginalization, under-development, governance structures undermined by corruption, lack of responsive governments and social cohesion, weak and limited state-society relations, and externally supported religious radicalisation" (Karlsrud 2019, 157). The Plan has also integrated "youth's participation, leadership and empowerment as core to the United Nations strategy and responses" (UN 2015c, 2).

In order to facilitate dialogue and prevent conflict, the plan has included 'Education, skills development and employment' as one of the seven action areas incorporated in the UNSG's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (A/70/674) [UN 2015]. According to the Plan, for education to efficiently counter violent extremism, it should on the one hand equip students with cognitive skills for fostering critical thinking and behavioural and socioeconomic skills contributing to peaceful coexistence, tolerance and respect for human rights and diversity and on the other hand build teachers' and educators' capacities to support this educational agenda (UNSG 2015, para 54).

Figure 2[15]

[15] Source from UN 2016

Plan of action to prevent violent extremism

Addressing Drivers of Violent Extremism	Setting The Policy Framework	Taking Action 7 Priority Areas
Conditions Conducive & Structrual Context	**Global Framework**	**Dialogue & Conflict Prevention**
Lack of Socio-Economic Opportunities	United Nations Charter	Strengthening Good Governance, Human Rights and the Rule of Law
Marginalization & Discrimination	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Engaging Communities
Poor Governance, Violation of Human Right & Rule of Law	Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy	Empowering Youth
Unresolved Conflict	General Assembly Reso-lutions Security Council Resolutions	Gender Equality and Empowering Women
Radicalization in Prison	**National PVE Plans of Action**	Education, Skill Devel-opment and Employ-ment Facilitation
Processes of Radicalization	National Ownership	Strategic Communica-tions, the Internet and Social Media
Individual Backgrounds & Motivations	All-of-Government	
Collective Grievances and Victimization	All-of-Society	
Distortion & Misuse of Beliefs, Political Ideologies & Ethnic and Cultural Differences	**Regional PVE Plans of Action**	
Leadership & Social Networks	**Coherent UN support**	
	All-of-UN	

The UN is among the most engaged actors along with a plethora of international, national and local actors that are supporting and promoting CVE and de-radicalizations programmes and projects across the global North and South, and increasingly in conflict-affected contexts (Novelli 2017; Kundnani and Hayes 2018; Selenica 2019). As the following two sub-sections will show, education alongside other social sectors is increasingly a key sector for terrorism dynamics and counterterrorism responses. Education's growing incorporation in counterterrorism and counter-radicalization agendas comes as a result of the shift from terrorism to violent extremism and radicalization as well as the incorporation, along security-based law-enforcement measures, of soft societal measures that target education, youth, and local marginalized communities in the EU and increasingly beyond EU borders (Ragazzi 2017; Novelli 2017; Selenica 2019). A 'whole societal' approach to terrorism and violent extremism was clear in the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda adopted in 2015 and discussed above, in which the Security Council calls for states

> [t]o engage relevant communities and non-governmental actors in development strategies to counter the violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist acts, address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism, including by empowering youth, families, women, religious, cultural and education leaders, and all other concerned groups of civil society and adopt tailored approaches to countering recruitment to this kind of violent extremism and promoting social inclusion and cohesion. (UN 2015c, 5)

What is particularly and increasingly tangible in conflict affected-countries, in line with previous trends in the European Union members states (Heath-Kelly 2012; Ragazzi 2016), is that youth and education are seen at the same time as 'at risk' or 'risky' categories and sectors for radicalization and at the forefront of counter-radicalization and CVE responses. This has a myriad of effects on both. The ways in which education has become central to terrorist and counter-terrorist dynamics will be addressed in the following sub-sections.

4.1 *Education, insurgency, terrorism and violent extremism*

The securitization of education following 9/11 and the incorporation of education in insurgency-counterinsurgency dynamics (Novelli 2017), has entailed a dichotomization between Western secular and Islamic education with consequences stretching beyond Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan to a number of other conflicts zones such as Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Mali, Kenya, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mozambique. Education provision has become a battleground between Western secularism and Islamic values (Danzell, Yeh and Pfannenstiel 2018). In practice, this has been translated in attacks against students, teachers, and education institutions by non-state militias and oppositional armed forces, state actors and international forces with education institutions and communities becoming central in the war between such different groups (Novelli and Selenica 2014; GCPEA 2014a). They are particularly and more heavily attacked as part of broader dynamics of insurgency, terrorism and jihadi-based political violence. Specifically, jihadist groups in the Sahel-Sahara region and increasingly in Sub-Saharan Africa and East Africa have been targeting education institutions and national education with trends that have worsened over the last few years (Danzell, Yeh and Pfannenstiel 2018; GCPEA 2020). IS or affiliated groups perpetrated attacks on education in "Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Syria, Yemen between 2015-2019" (GCPEA 2020, 26). In most of these cases, girls' education and their right and access to education has been particularly targeted by terrorist groups (UN 2015b, 61; GCPEA 2018, 2020).

In a study about the relationship between education and terrorism, Sarah Brockhoff, Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks (2015) argue that such relationship is not a straightforward one and it varies across different regions and countries. According to the authors, in countries with poor-country specific conditions – i.e., sustained education levels, strong labour market competition, slow economic growth, youth bulge – the effect of education on terrorism is positive. In other

terms, more education might fuel terrorism rather than prevent it. By contrast, in countries with sound conditions, the effect of education on terrorism is negative (Brockhoff, Krieger and Meierrieks 2015). A more recent quantitative study finds a curvilinear relationship between the quantitative expansion of education and terrorist attack intensity: more specifically, the "growth of schooling in the least educationally developed countries is associated with a significant tendency towards the growth of terrorist attack intensity" (Korotayev, Vaskin and Tsirel 2019, 1) .

A quantitative study exploring the role of education for mitigating a turn to terror among youth in 50 African countries during the period 1970-2011 finds that "expansions in primary, secondary and tertiary education appear to have different influences on domestic education" (Danzell, Yeh and Pfannenstiel 2018, 1731). Furthermore, while the relationship between education (levels and expansion) and terrorism is highly context-dependent, the study finds that "education should not be relied upon to counter extremism without additional initiatives to facilitate socio-economic opportunities" (Danzell, Yeh and Pfannenstiel 2018, 1731). At the individual level, the expansion of education without employment may enable mass discontent or grievance based violence; at the group level, extremist elites within al-Shabab and Boko Haram denounce and target educational institutions as instruments of Western culture that go against their ideology. Often these groups recruit adherents to "rid their society of sinful Western education through targeted attacks." (2018, 1732) Across Northern and central Mali, the Macina Liberation Front has terrorized teachers and closed 400 schools seeking to replace the French education system with a Koranic one (Monnier 2018). This unique attention that African terrorist groups place on the expansion of Western influence and culture through education is central to understanding the education-terror nexus in the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa and also understanding why making education a 'soft power' antidote against extremism and terrorism may expose schools, teachers and students to more attacks.

Another study focusing on Pakistan investigates the relationship between religion, education and extremism (Hanif, Hassan and Shaheen 2019). According to the authors, school type (madrassas or mainstream schools) is a strong predictor of religious extremism, i.e., madrassas students tend to hold the most extreme views (Hanif, Hassan and Shaheen 2019). However, the same study finds that it is an individual's religiosity rather than type of schools that affects sympathy towards the Taliban (Hanif, Hassan and Shaheen 2019). Thus, "education seems to amplify frustrated ambitions among individuals who then find gratification in taking extremist attitudes and/or actions" (Hanif, Hassan and Shaheen 2019, 489). Critical terrorism scholarship has questioned the religious underpinning of terrorism, even among self-proclaimed jihadist organization (Gunning and Jackson 2011). Furthermore, while most of the academic research and governmental strategies takes as given the linear path from extremism to terrorism, empirical

research has shown that holding extremist and radicalized views and ideologies, including religious ones, do not necessarily imply commitment to terrorist acts and other forms of political violence (Alonso et al. 2008; Horgan 2008).

4.2 *Education, counter-insurgency and counterterrorism*

Along with the rise of terrorist attacks and violent extremist acts that impact education access, the variety of responses and measures as part of counterterrorism, CVE and counter-radicalization can impact education in several ways and forms. As a matter of fact, narratives about the nexus between education and (counter-) radicalisation/violent extremism have gained currency both in policy and academic debates. Scholars have pointed out that education within international development studies and security agendas, is increasingly regarded as a space for radicalisation and violent extremism to take root, as well as an arena where counter-radicalisation strategies can be deployed, both in conflict-affected and OECD countries (Durodie 2016; Novelli 2017, 1; Ragazzi 2017; UNESCO 2017; Selenica 2019).[16]

According to Novelli, practices and assumptions that have underpinned the area of CVE have been strongly informed by security imperatives and concerns and have been characterized by a *securitised* approach (Novelli 2017). This has created an area where reflexive and open critique including the role of education therein has been largely missing. Only recently have a number of scholars critically questioned the mainstream 'education for CVE approach' by tracing its security roots back to the Cold War and its becoming prominent in post-9/11 Western military interventions in a number of countries and zones of contention such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia etc. (Novelli 2017, 2). In this regard, education systems, institutions and communities have been increasingly entrenched and intertwined with post-9/11 'War on Terror' security agendas of Western powers and international development assistance, both discursively and materially.

Iraq and Afghanistan have been laboratories at the forefront of the incorporation of education in the US-led counter-insurgency strategy for 'winning hearts and minds' through school reconstruction programmes, de-radicalization strategies and technical and vocational trainings (Miller and Mills 2010; Zambernardi 2010; Novelli 2017). Underpinned by a similar securitized logic, the Sabaoon Project initiated by the Pakistan Army and run by Social Welfare Academic and Training organization (SWAat) has aimed to de-radicalize and rehabilitate former militant youth previously involved in violent extremist activities. The project based on an individualized

[16] See https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/event/wp1510/, last accessed 29 April 2021; See also the 'Essentials of Dialogue' education programme by the *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*, http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/projects/supporting-next-generation/supporting-next-generation-essentials-dialogue-0, last accessed 29 April 2021

approach follows a three-step model – assessment at induction, intervention and reintegration – with education playing a role both in terms of mainstream education and vocational training (Peracha et al. 2015, 50).

4.3 *Education, countering violent extremism and counter-/de-radicalization*

The shift from countering terrorism to the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation dates back to the Madrid and London bombing, in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Originated in the UK and the Netherlands, later in the EU and the US, this shift is now increasingly translated and globalized across CVE and counter-radicalization policies in conflict-affected contexts. Education plays an increasing role in such policies and its role for the prevention of extremism increasingly is debated in international development (UNESCO 2017; Savage 2015; Malone 2015). In conflict-affected countries such as Kosovo, education comprises 40 percent of the activities of the national plan for countering violent extremism (Office of the Prime Minister 2015).

Mitigating the growth of violent extremism in Africa for 2016-2019 was also the object of a four-year UNDP regional development project, focusing on the areas of employment opportunities, youth skill-building activities and levels of education (UNDP 2016). Youth empowerment as a positive force for change, peacebuilding and conflict prevention has also been central to UNDP's Youth Strategy (2014-2017) [UNDP 2014]. The role of teachers in this regard has been the subject of the Kenya-based initiative *Teachers Against Violent Extremism*, a network of educators fighting radicalization among Muslim youth in schools, madrassas and community centers. Ayub Mohamed, co-funder of the network, who qualified among the finalists of the 2016 Global Teacher Prize, has developed a lesson plan that teachers can use to incorporate de-radicalization messages into key subjects.[17] In 2016, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in partnership with Djibouti and the US Government launched the 'Counter Violent Extremism Center of Excellence and Counter Messaging Hub' at the *Institute of Diplomatic Studies* in Djibouti. The centre is a dedicated platform where training, research and analysis, counter narratives and best practices are cultivated and shared.[18]

On 21 October 2015, the *INEE Working Group on Education and Fragilities* hosted in Geneva a roundtable on the "Role of Education and Youth in Preventing Urban Violence and Violent Extremism" with the two-fold aim of gathering scholars and practitioners sharing research and experience on the intersections between education, youth, urban violence and violent extremism and articulating priority areas for research, programming and intervention in the above-

[17] See http://stoppingviolentextremism.org/kenyan-teacher-acting-against-violent-extremism/, last accessed 15 April 2021
[18] See http://www.icepcve.org/, last accessed 15 April 2021

mentioned fields.[19] More specifically, the goal of the Roundtable was "[t]o foster a better understanding of both the positive and negative roles that education can play in mitigating, preventing or exacerbating the active engagement of young people [...] in violent extremism." (INEE 2015, 4)

The growing attention on the link between education, youth and violence/violent extremism has increased in recent years out of the recognition that the number of young people living in conflict-affected settings has never been larger, accompanied by an increase in intra-state armed conflicts (Themnér and Wallensteen 2013, 512) and migrations flows (IOM 2014, 1). According to a UNESCO report, out of 121 million children and adolescent out-of-school 36 per cent of them live in conflict affected states (2015, 3, 8). The debate on the negative and positive sides of education in conflict and more specifically how education can both minimize or exacerbate radicalized beliefs and patterns of violence has been flourishing since the publication in 2000 of the UNICEF report by Bush and Saltarelli "The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict – Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children" and Lynn Davies' *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos* (2004), both laying down how education can be a solution or root cause of conflict, affecting and at the same time being affected by it.[20]

It is in continuity with this framework that a number of international organizations are rediscovering and reshaping education's meaning and role as both a cause and a cure of violent extremism and radicalisation. Search for Common Ground has been active in the field of education and CVE in conflict-affected contexts[21] by seeking to enhance education's positive preventative role and by linking educational access to youth engagement. The rationale has been working on the ways in which education can prevent youth "[f]rom being vulnerable to engaging with violent extremist groups." (INEE 2015, 7) It includes increasing the chances and possibilities for education to be a more attractive venue for youth rather than participating in violent and radicalized groups, reaching out to the most marginalized and providing youth with the possibility to access different and alternative narratives to violence (Ibid., 7).

Education's potentiality to provide with alternative narratives to that of radicalized and violent extremist groups has also informed the work of *Hedayah*, an independent organization, which is part of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and is jointly chaired by the UK and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Hedayah bases its commitment to countering violent extremism

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[19] See http://www.ineesite.org/en/round-table-role-of-education-youth-urban-violence-extremism, last accessed 16 April 2021

[20] In other words, education's contents and structure can increase social cohesion, develop critical thinking, nurture tolerance and contribute to social justice and peacebuilding by addressing conflict drivers and roots causes but at the same time it can deepen existing inequalities by an unjust and unequal provision of access and opportunities or by the teaching of radicalized beliefs (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Davies 2004).

[21] Its youth and peacebuilding programmes are based on the *Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding*

through education on the guidelines provided by the *Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Education and CVE*, whose declared aim entails a discursive and programmatic shift in the 'Education and CVE' approach. The Memorandum suggests a number of shifts at the 'general good practices,' as well as at the educational, institutional, family/community-based, and cultural level. At what is named the 'general good practices' level it suggests that for efficient 'education for CVE's' programmes they should aim to be holistic, comprehensive and multi-sectorial highlighting how labelling activities under the CVE umbrella might be counter-productive as the term has been long associated with international security/military agendas (Zeiger 2014).

Moreover, it recommends for educational approaches to contribute at the same time to problem-solving and critical thinking skills, promote civic education and responsibilities, offer vocational and technical trainings, promote safe spaces for discussion of ideas in school settings and train teachers on managing bias and identifying signs of radicalisation (Zeiger 2014, 2-4). In the newly redefined governance of 'education for CVE', next to more traditional military actors in the fight against extremism and terrorism, a new range of other actors are envisioned to play a role and enhance and amplify the role of education to counter violent extremism, in particular young people themselves. Moreover, beside teachers and school administrators, the *Memorandum* identifies families, community leaders, and stakeholders from the private and media sectors for an approach that aims to become "softer" thus more efficient (Zeiger 2014, 4-7).

While there has been a refocusing on the role and importance of education, and more specifically, vocational training and youth empowerment on forms of violence and violent extremism, the relationship and impact is not sufficiently analysed nor does there exist solid evidence on how vocational skill development, education and youth empowerment could build stability and resilience to violent extremism (Mercy Corps 2015).

Another contribution in this regard has been the UNESCO report on *Preventing violent extremism through education: a guide for policy-makers* (2017) and the UNESCO report *A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism* (2016). The 2017 UNESCO report acknowledges that the terminology around violent extremism is complex, largely debated and still presenting a number of challenges (United Nations 2016).[22] Nonetheless, the UNESCO report - in

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[22] The understanding of 'violent extremism' that the *UNESCO Guide* employs is one which refers to "[t]he beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals [...] the conceptual core of violent extremism is that it is an ideologically motivated resort to the use of violence" (2017, 19). By contrast, for the Guide "[T]errorism refers to a particular strategy adopted to achieve a political goal, which is singularly the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear." (UNESCO 2017, 19) With regard to the term 'radical,' the UNESCO Guide recognizes that it is as much debated as the term 'extremism.' Depending on certain contexts, it may mean simply "wanting to cause political change," yet "[i]n the context of efforts to prevent violent extremism, radicalization is commonly used to describe the processes by which a person adopts extreme views or practices to the point of legitimizing the use of violence," with the key notion being the embrace of violence (UNESCO 2017, 20). In this regard, radicalisation describes more the process by which one becomes a violent extremist or resorts to violence.

line with the United Nations General Assembly and the UNSG's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism – takes "a practical approach" that does not give a definition of terms such as extremism, violent extremism, terrorism and radicalization (UNESCO 2017, 18) but at the same time it offers a review of how such key terms are commonly used and therefore adopted by the above-mentioned *Guide*.[23] As the Guide deals with the ways through which education addresses the ideologically motivated use of violence, it does not deal with terrorism and its relationship to education. Nevertheless, it acknowledges that terrorism and violent extremism are mistakenly interchanged in discourses and practice as "[t]errorism is a form of violent extremism, and terrorism is also often motivated ideologically" yet "the conceptual underpinnings of terrorism that distinguishes it from violent extremism is the creation of fear or terror as a means to an end" (UNESCO 2017, 19).

The role of education and its relationship to such violent extremism and radicalization processes is thus ambiguously conceptualized as both a cure and a cause. As a cause, education, both formal and non-formal, is linked to radicalization and violent extremism in that it contributes to the creation of beliefs, motivations, and ideologies, including the political justification of violence (the content of education curricula). However, the approach that the *UNESCO Guide* takes is one that tries to use education as a preventative tool, linking it to the concept of resilience.

> In the context of violent extremism, 'resilience' refers to the ability to resist – or not adhere to – views and opinions that portray the world in exclusive truths, which legitimize hatred and the use of violence. In education this implies developing students' capacity to think critically, to learn by inquiry (inquiry-based learning) and to verify acts so that they do not fall prey to the simplistic and one-dimensional views of the world propagated by violent extremist groups. Building resilience among students and youth is one of the key measures that can be implemented by the education sector to prevent the spread of violent extremism (UNESCO 2017, 20) [...] the role of education of education is, therefore, not to intercept violent extremists or identify individuals who may potentially become violent extremists, but to create the conditions that build the defences, within learners, against violent extremism and strengthen their commitment to non-violence and peace (UNESCO 2017, 22).

In sum, education's effectiveness in countering violent extremism is linked to its ability to promote social cohesion through relevant and equitable education provision (UNESCO 2017, 24), its important role in disengagement, rehabilitation and reintegration (Ibid.)[24] More broadly, education through curriculum and pedagogy is expected to strengthen inclusion, diversity, resilience and constructive engagement (UNESCO 2017, 29-36) while school referral mechanisms are identified as crucial with teachers expected to play a leading role (UNESCO 2017, 41-44).

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[23] See also Living Safe Together (2016).

[24] Also suggested by the Recommendations of the Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders adopted by the Global Counterterrorism Fund

Conclusions of the section

This section has analysed the incorporation of education in terrorism and counterterrorism dynamics in conflict-affected contexts. In particular, education has become a central area of engagement, intervention and contention for foreign and domestic strategies aimed at countering violent extremism and radicalisation in conflict zones. This trend has intensified in the last years (2015-2021). Evidence from Iraq and Afghanistan suggests that education as part of counterinsurgency strategies has been underpinned by a security logic aiming at winning the war without addressing the root causes of the conflict: this has politicised the education sector, putting it right in the middle of the conflict and has transformed it into a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Novelli 2017: 9).

In recent years, education has been incorporated in countering violent extremism and counter-radicalization agendas and national plans beyond EU states. Education for counterinsurgency and countering violent extremism risks undermining long-term development planning, which is usually required for efficient educational assistance, as well as the transformational potential of education. A soft-approach at co-opting a number of NGOs and humanitarian actors involved in educational assistance and made part, consciously or not, to the broader counterinsurgency, counter-terrorism and CVE has undermined and delegitimized their educational imperatives and credibility at the same time weakening trust bonds with local communities and putting them at direct threat toward insurgent forces.

In policy-related debates about the role of education in countering violent extremism, de/radicalisation and terrorism no engagement can be found with how education may and should contribute to social justice and social change. The main focus is mainly on a less radical and more co-opted concept such as that of *resilience* and on how education can foster it within youth and the broader society, and how in turn a more resilient society via education can prevent violent extremism and radicalisation.

The concept of ‘anti-radicalisation’ in education and the rise of an anti-radicalisation agenda across schools and educational institutions, originally in the West and increasingly across conflict-affected contexts, is seen by some as diverting “attention from the analysis of structural root causes of social problems, opposes the use of education for fundamental social change, and stigmatises transformational educational practices that many would argue are now vitally important in helping us collectively address a range of contemporary global social, economic and environmental crises” (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015, 22).

5. THE RISE OF PHILANTHROPY, (NON-) FOR-PROFIT EDUCATION FOUNDATIONS AND LOW-FEE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Venture and corporate philanthropy or 'philanthrocapitalism', i.e., "the strategic application of market methods and motives for philanthropic purposes," (Haydon et al. 2021, 1) or "the use of private resources – treasure, time and talent – for public purposes" (Phillips and Jung 2016, 7) has become prominent in the areas of international development, education, healthcare and agriculture (Barkan 2013; Haydon et al. 2021; Williamson 2016). Depending on the type of actor, one can identify individual philanthropists, foundations, non-profit organizations and corporations. It is with the 2008 financial crisis that the 'new philanthropy' or 'philanthrocapitalism' has gained traction in opposition to more traditional forms of philanthropy deemed inefficient (MacAskill 2015). However, a closer look to the latest version, suggests several commonalities and continuities with the New Public Management doctrine dating back to the 1980s such as the emphasis on private sector management practices, the focus on professionalization and performance standards as well as measurement, control and impact-oriented output (Jung and Harrow 2019).

Lato sensu, 'philanthrocapitalism' is interpreted by key proponents as "the growing role for private sector actors in addressing the biggest social and environmental challenges facing the planet" (Bishop and Green 2015, 541). However, critics point out to the fact that philanthrocapitalism, underpinned by neoliberal ideals, enhance and exacerbates wealth and power inequalities and thus exacerbates the very problems it proposes to address and solve (Amarante 2018; McGoey and Thiel 2018). As a result of the decline in governmental budgets, international aid has been increasingly provided by private actors and foundations (Valencia-Fourcans and Hawkins 2016). Philanthropic interventions in international development have often focused on the importance of women and girls, including female education, in international development (Haydon et al. 2021). Central to philanthrocapitalists' ideas and solutions to the problems in the developing world is the education of girls and their employment (Aruyunova 2012). Women and girls are presented as a panacea to the complex socio-economic problems, as economic actors with market potentials and as profitable investments (Valencia-Fourcans and Hawkins 2016). While potentially disrupting existing gender-based power relations within communities this is done within a capitalist framework, thus reinforcing capitalist dynamics (Calkin 2017).

At least three cultural frameworks have dominated policy discourses and practices on the nexus between philanthropy and the four above-mentioned areas: framing developmental challenges as scientific problems; framing beneficiaries as productive entrepreneurs; and framing philanthropy as social investment (Haydon et al. 2021). The 'scientification' of development

challenges by philanthropists leads to their commodification, i.e., such challenges are transformed into an opportunity for business, thus legitimizing the role of private actors to offer market-based solutions (Ignatova 2017). Furthermore, development challenges are both objectified and depoliticised and their solutions identified in standardizable solutions (Haydon et al. 2021, 15). A second shift concerns the framing of beneficiaries as entrepreneurs rather than victims; in other terms, as economic agents or investment opportunities. A third shift concerns the framing of philanthropy as investment that expects social and financial measurable returns. This pressure to measure may exclude those most in need as they are the hardest to reach, including in the education sector (de Souza Leao and Eyal 2019).

5.1 *Philanthropy and education*

Education has become a key sector of philanthropy and examined in the literature in relation to policymaking, activism and curricula setting (Allen and Bull 2018). Scholars have pointed out that philanthrocapitalism has been used to influence and direct education policies (Klees 2017) and prioritize business values and objectives (Hursh 2017). The dominant geographical focus among studies on philanthropy has been on the USA, with the UK, Canada and India of emerging interest, while most of the studies have been non-empirical (Haydon et al. 2021). Most of the studies on the philanthropy-education nexus have focused on US education, in particular the Common Core Standards Initiative (CCS) [Haydon et al. 2021]. The CCSI, funded and supported by the Gates Foundation along with governmental funding, was launched with the aim to save the US education system from its crisis, a crisis defined as the failure to produce a competitive workplace for the global market (Baltodano 2016). It aimed to standardize school curricula according to a set of universal standards and lessons plans regardless of the school or state and despite teacher autonomy.

In the US context, these venture philanthropies[25] have consolidated their control over educational policies by lobbying legislators “to enact school friendly legislation, expand the proliferation of charter schools, and negatively shape social perceptions about public education,” by funding policy think tanks and by incorporating their staffers into government agencies (Baltodano 2016, 1; Lipman 2014) Their neoliberal agenda aims “to restructure education to serve economic competitiveness and to open up the public education sector to capital accumulation.” (Lipman 2014, 1) Beyond the US context, Klees has found out that a limited number of philanthropists have become central actors to education policy making across the world

[25] The most powerful US foundations are the Broad Foundations, the Walton Family Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has been successful in advancing the privatization of public education (Baltodano 2016).

influencing policymakers to redesign school curricula privileging business-oriented values such as professionalism and leadership (2017).

> These corporate-inspired initiatives are designed to benefit business and the economy, moving schools away from a place of social participation and activism that encourage schoolchildren to consider, challenge and change the status quo, and towards the training of future market participants who may further reinforce the capitalist system in place (Brown 2012 cited in Haydon et al. 2021, 12).

Venture philanthropy has to be located in "the nexus between urban disinvestment, neoliberal governance, wealth concentration, and economic crisis," using the fiscal crisis of the state to shape education policy and governance (Lipman 2014, 1). As a matter of fact, the "dialectic of disinvestment and concentrated wealth is at the heart of the venture philanthropy project" (Lipman 2014, 2). Following the Covid-19 pandemic, for-profit philanthropic foundations have increased their power and influence in education development, leading scholars such as Lara Patil to argue that we are now witnessing the emergence of "disaster philanthropy" (Patil 2021, 1). In the context of globalization, disasters and crises have always created the conditions for the privatization of education (Verger et al. 2017). In response to the global education emergency post-Covid-19, technology and Internet philanthropists have expressed their commitment to support the global recovery (Grabois 2020).

Grants provided by these foundations to public education are defined as investments or strategic giving, impact is defined as social return or return on investment (Barkan 2013). Moreover, depending on whether they are positioned as non-profit or for-profit organizations, some of them receive tax subsidies or tax-exempt capital to expand charter school franchises, privatize public schools and create for-profit enterprises (Baltodano 2016).

The Gates Foundation is the largest philanthropic organization in the world that manages around $66 billion, and provides massive funding to thinks tanks such as Education Trust, Education Sector and the Aspen Institute's Commission (Baltadano 2016). The Foundation has funded initiatives aiming at replacing public schools with school choice options (Klonsky 2011) but also supporting the proliferation of for-profit educational ventures in the US context and beyond (Dillon 2011; Olmedo 2017) An examination of the educational agendas of venture philanthropists suggests that they are dismantling public schools and "replacing them with private schools choices and charter schools that follow a managerial and military model. [...] they all have in common a classic military and corporative style that is translated into fierce discipline, zero tolerance policies, a strict uniform code, back to basics curriculum, rigid academic standards, longer academic years,

and rigorous contracts with students and their partens" (Saltman 2009, 2010 cited in Baltodano 2016, 12).[26]

While most of the studies as mentioned above focus on the US context, few studies have focused on the power of philanthropic foundations to influence governments' educational policies through networked governance in the cases of Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon and Zambia (Adhikary 2019). Networked governance refers "to a mode of governing policy through networks of grantees, wherein foundations determine policy goals at the outset and then fund and mobilize grantee organizations to pursue these policy goals by influencing top political and bureaucratic elites" (Adhikary 2019, 1). While the main philanthropic foundations are territorially based in the US they move globally and influence education policy-making in the developing and least-developed world (Adhikary 2019). Foundation-grantee relationships are now globalized and localized; a case in point in this regard is the Teach for All Network.[27] Bangladesh exemplifies how bilateral and multilateral donor involvements in education policy has paved the way to transnational influences in national education policy-making and created the structural condition for the involvement of philanthropic foundations in education policy and governance (Adhikary 2018).

5.2 *The rise of low-fee schools and for-profit foundations*

A major global trend in education has been the proliferation of private schools that are directed at the poor, otherwise known as low-fee private schools [LFPS][28] (Verger, Fontdevila and Zancajo 2017; Edwards, Okitsu and Mwanza 2019). There are at least two major factors driving their proliferation. On the one hand, in the context of globalization, international actors such as corporations, development banks, philanthropists, aid agencies and edu-entrepreneurs, "are promoting these schools as a means to make profit but also as a way to meet the excess demand for education that governements are unable to meet" (Edwards, Okitsu and Mwanza 2019, 3). On the other hand, the proliferation of low-fee private schools "is often the result of organic activity

[26] The Mulago Foundation is involved to issues related to livelihood, health, education and conservation globally: according to its website "it looks for best solutions to the biggest problems in the poorest countries. [...] our job is to find those most able to create change and get them what they need." https://www.mulagofoundation.org last accessed 26 May 2021. The Pershing Square Foundation supports of range of non-profit and for-profit organizations that are, according to the Foundation, committed to social change across a number of areas including education. https://pershingsquarefoundation.org/portfolio last accessed 26 May 2021.

[27] TfA is a network of social enterprises that is reshaping the definition of both education and being a teacher through new model of teacher training; tt operates in 38 countries and is supported by a plethora of international banks, international consultancy firms and retail companies (Olmedo 2017).

[28] "[a] school is defined as private if it is established, administered, and controlled by a private entity; where the state plays no or little part in the management and governance of the school; and where the major source of school income is from user fees. [...] private schools are 'low-fee' if they serve economically and socially disadvantaged groups while also charging fee that are substantially lower than those paid at elite private schools. [...] this definition is necessarily context-dependent and relational, since no absolute or universally applicable definition exists for identifying private schools as 'low-fee'" (Edwards, Okitsu and Mwanza 2019, 10)

at the local level, where enterprising individuals respond to the lack of government service" (Edwards, Okitsu and Mwanza 2019, 3; Härmä 2019). In a study on low-fee private pre-primary schools in the capital city of Zambia, Lusaka, Edwards J, Okitsu and Mwanza reflect on the ways in which these types of schools combined with local contextual features exacerbate marginalization (2019, 4). These schools generally operate in slum contexts and thus require welfare sacrifices from the families (Ashley et al. 2014 cited in Edwards, Okitsu and Mwanza 2019).

In a study on low-fee schools in Jamaica, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana, Indonesia and Pakistan, Heyneman and Stern (2014) investigate what public policy is appropriate with regard to low cost private schools for the poor and why low-income families choose to send children to low-paying schools if a place in a free public school is available (Heyneman and Stern 2014). The authors identify several reasons such as: inadequate public supply (Kenya, Chad, Malawi, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bhutan), low-quality public schooling (Kenya, Tanzania, and Pakistan); differentiated demand for religiously affiliated non-governmental schools (Pakistan, Tanzania, Venezuela, Sierra Leone, DRC, Bangladesh and Nigeria) [Heyneman and Stern 2014, 5-6]. The authors state that the state should remain the main provider of public schooling as often low-fee schools fail to reach the poorest (Heyneman and Stern 2014).

A number of studies that have researched the proliferation of LFPSs in the Global South have identified several challenges related to their modality such as limited labor rights and the low teaching quality (Edwards, Klees and Wildish 2017) or the standardization of curriculum with relevant implications for their quality (GCE 2016). Moreover, low-fee schools are often also low-quality schools, and this reproduces school segregation (Macpherson 2014). Other studies have highlighted the role played by international actors for the promotion and diffusion of LFPS in low-income countries (Verger et al. 2018). Powerful international actors have included the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (Baum 2012 cited in Balarin et al. 2019, 6). However, a recent trend includes the development of public-private partnerships between local governments and local and international LFPS in countries such as Pakistan, India, Uganda and Liberia (Verger et al. 2016).

The need to restructure the provision of public services through the participation of private actors such as philanthrocapitalists and business groups is also reflected in Cameroon's English Big Society and the Musseveni's Ugandan National Development Plan (Olmedo 2017, 70). As part of the Ugandan National Development Plan, the government has launched the Universal Secondary Education programme that is part of the broader Universal Postprimary Education and Training, both underpinned by the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) model. The government pays a fixed per-capita fee to private secondary schools, which has more than doubled compared to public schools. One of the biggest private providers operating in Uganda is PEAS (Promoting

Equality in African Schools) which is a UK charity running 24 secondary schools on a non-for-profit basis (Olmedo 2017).

Different from PEAS, the Bridge International Academies (BIA) is a private equity-owned company that aims to provide high-quality and low-cost private primary schools through a 'school in-a-box' model that costs less than $4/month per student and that includes a scripted curriculum, teacher training and educational facilities (Heyneman and Stern 2014). BIA runs 414 schools in Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. Among the investors of BIA are a combination of different private actors such as single individuals (Gates and Zuckerberg); edu-businesses (Learn Capital and RethinkEducation); international financial institutions; philanthropic foundations (Omidyar Network); venture capital firms (Khosla Ventures, Novastar, PanAfrican Investment Co.); government agencies (UK Department for International Development [DfID], US government's development finance institutions) (Olmedo 2017, 82).

In Jordan, Pearson and Save the Children have expanded their 'Every Child Learning' partnership to a pilot education project in collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry of Education that aims to deliver quality education for Syrian refugees and local children affected by the Syrian war (Pearson 2017). The project consists in the development of a maths learning app 'Space Hero' developed by Pearson to "support a broader Save the Children led in-school programme focusing on teacher professional development, enhancing school-community relations, after-school learning and psychosocial support".[29]

5.3 *The global aid architecture, for-profit philanthropy and education*

The connection between for-profit philanthropy and education has to be seen in the context of the global commitment to education and the international agendas that are shaping it, in particular, the gradual increase in emphasis on the role of non-state, private actors in achieving internationally agreed upon development goals (Patil 2021). To achieve SDG4, Education 2030 Framework for Action outlines:

> The private sector, philanthropic organizations and foundations can play an important role, using their experience, innovative approaches, business expertise and *financial resources* to strengthen public education. They can contribute to education and development through multi-stakeholder partnerships, investment and contributions that are transparent, aligned with local and national priorities, respect education as a human right and do not increase inequality (UNESCO 2015b, 59).

[29] https://www.pearson.com/news-and-research/announcements/2017/09/pearson-and-save-the-children-launch-new-project-to-deliver-effe.html last accessed 30 May 2021; See also https://plc.pearson.com/purpose/learning-for-everyone/ last accessed 30 May 2021

In the context of the broader shift toward private sector engagement in international development and global governance (Gorur 2020) the UN signed in 2019 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the corporate-led World Economic Forum (WEF), outlining increased levels of cooperation in the fields of women, education, climate change and financing (Gleckman 2019). The establishment of 'multi-stakeholder governance groups', comprising multinational corporations suggests the transformation of "the United Nations itself into a giant Public-Private Partnership, with business being formal partners in global governance" aiming to further shift power from the public to the private spheres (Klees 2020, 46). The MoU has been met with resistance and critique by 400 civil society organizations and 40 international networks, which asked for its termination (End the United Nation/World Economic Forum Partnership Agreement 2019).

The power and role of for-profit philanthropy during pandemic times is linked to the unprecedented challenges that governments are facing in delivering equitable education. Moreover, the emergence of philanthropic mechanisms and funding during Covid-19 has to be understood in the context of existing shifts in the world order, global governance and aid architecture that had been taking place before the Covid-19 pandemic (Mundy 2020). The global aid architecture is fundamentally changing as it increasingly includes the participation of billionaire philanthropists. Kumar has identified four key developments:

1. A new era of open competition, in which along the traditionally few big foreign aid agencies and established philanthropists, new players include "hard-charging billionaire philanthropists; for-profit businesses and investors aiming to make money and do good; 'pure' social enterprises, 'buy one, give one' companies; online crowd-funding sites; and many small start-up initiatives working through-out the world" (Kumar 2019, 2);
2. A shift toward seeing "aid recipients as 'customers' of aid instead of nameless, voiceless 'beneficiaries'" (Kumar 2019, 3);
3. A shift to so called grand projects, aiming to address some of the world's biggest problems, such as child marriage (Kumar 2019);
4. In the new aid industry, providing aid or giving is not gauged against the goodness of the intentions but by outputs and results.

A key trend emerging from the pandemic is the main contributions to the Covid-19 pandemic has been provided by the technology corporations and individual technology philanthropists from China and the United States: their combined contributions accounted for 90 percent of all pledges and 79 percent of total dollar value (Grabois, 2020). To put numbers in a comparative perspective, philanthropic flows to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa received $363 million over 6 months as opposed to $980 million reached through philanthropic funding in the first five weeks following

Covid-19 outbreak (Grabois, 2020). The creation of financial flow monopolies and thus the huge mobilization of resources following Covid-19 pandemic raises questions and increases tensions concerning the inclusion of the private sector and for-profit philanthropy in achieving SDG 4.

The dilemma is even more exacerbated by the expected massive cuts in development aid by national governments expected in the coming years. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office has declared that it would not meet the 0.7 percent target in the coming year and cut spending to foreign aid to 0.5 percent its national income (reduction of around £4 bn).[30] In a joint statement, 200 charities and international non-governmental organizations, among which Save the Children and Oxfam, have defined expected cuts to humanitarian aid by the UK government by more than £500m, as a "tragic blow for many of the world's most marginalised people".[31] In 2020, Official Development Assistance (ODA) rose to $161.2 billion, recording a 3.5 percent increase from 2019, boosted by spending mobilised to support development countries cope with Covid-19 crisis (OECD 2021b). However, total ODA amounted to approximately 1% of the overall amount countries have mobilised for their own economies as part of economic stimulus packages for Covid-19 (OECD 2021b).[32] Furthermore, the rise of 2020 ODA was in part affected by an increase in loans by some donors, as 22 percent of gross bilateral ODA was in the form of loans and equity investments (OECD 2021).

In the area of Education in Conflict Affected Contexts, beyond those actors already noted, we have also seen the rise of engagement from Middle East based philanthropic foundations. For example, Education Above, founded in 2012 by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Qatar, has become an important actor and funding agency in the field. Similarly, the Queen Rania Foundation, set up by the Queen of Jordan, similarly has an explicit focus on education in contexts of conflict, and in particular on refugees. Dubai Cares, set up by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Prime Minister and Vice-President and Ruler of Dubai, in 2007, also has a central focus on Education. Over the last twenty years, Kosovo has been penetrated by different Islamic foreign foundations either funded and backed by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states or Turkey: Each of them has sought to introduce in Kosovo different forms of Islam through a combination of militant missionaries, imams and informal governmental and non governmental organizations (Selenica 2019). This shift in the geography of philanthropy, may also reflect a more

[30] BBC. (20121). "Foreign Aid: Government decision to cut budget 'unlawful', says peer" March 21, 2021 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-56473067 last accessed 29 May 2021

[31] BBC. (2021). "UK aid budget: Charities call £500 million cut a tragic blow," April 21, 2021 https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-56836430 last accessed 29 May 2021

[32] ODA rose in 16 DAC countries with the following countries increasing aid budgets to support developing countries' responses to Covid-19: Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and Switzerland (OECD 2021b). By contrast, ODA fell in 13 countries, with the following countries that decreased their foreign aid budgets to developing countries: Australia, Greece, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom (OECD 2021).

multi-polar world. How this affects the content, focus and nature of support to education in conflict-affected state is an area worthy of further investigation.

Conclusions of the section

The prioritization by philanthropists of market-based solutions for challenges in the fields of education and international development often implies the overlooking and the disregard of the plurality of local voices, experiences and knowledge (Fejerskov and Rasmussen2016). Moreover, the technical framing of educational challenges overlooks the broader political and economic context in which education is embedded. The role and power of venture philanthropy in setting education agendas across the world has to be seen as part of the broader neoliberal governance that includes also the devolution of state authority to non-state actors such as PPPs, CSOs, experts and private actors (Lipman 2014). As argued by Naomi Klein, crisis, human-made and natural disasters are often exploited by neoliberalism to accelerate free-market policies and extract profit (2007). The Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 crisis provided opportunities to neoliberally re-structure education, with philanthropists as key actors (Lipman 2014). To what extent this is also the case of education in conflict-affected contexts, contexts that are permanently at the fulcrum of crisis, instability and fragility? These actors' presence in the field of education in conflict contexts also reflects the increased divergence of funders, the rise of private actors as agents of 'development' and the complex governance networks that increasingly shape educational practice in these contexts, particularly where state power and resources have been depleted due to conflict and crises.

6. Education, Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to remote/digital learning

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, by April 2020, 1.6 billion students were left out of their pre-primary, primary and secondary education in 190 countries across the world (UNESCO UIS 2020; UN 2020).[33] Since then, schools in some countries re-opened while in other countries never re-opened again. By September 2020, 872 million students were still outside classrooms, 463 million of which had not been reached by any form of alternative learning distance education (UNICEF 2020). As of May 2021, schools have been still closed country-wide in

[33] See also UNESCO. (2020) "Covid-19 Educational Disruption and Response," 2020, https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/ last accessed 16 May 2021

26 countries and partially closed in 55 countries as a result of the Covid-19 variants and high infection rates (Insights for Education 2021).)

Governments' responses to address the spread of the pandemic have led to hundreds of millions of children worldwide shifting from in-class to remote learning. To date, as a result of the pandemic, approximately 90 percent of school-aged children's education has been disrupted globally (HRW 2021). The shift to digital learning that has characterized most of the schools globally has been unevenly felt through the world and has further exacerbated long-existing conditions of inequalities and fragilities, in particular in conflict-affected countries where the majority of children do not have access to distance learning opportunities (OECD 2021a).

More generally, it is argued that the pandemic has exacerbated structural challenges in schools across the world as a result of under-investment and under-resourced education systems over the last three decades. The pandemic has also affected the possibility to do research on how Covid-19 has affected education in the short and long-term. Some of the findings of this section are based on a just-released comprehensive report by Human Rights Watch "Years Don't Wait for Them" that has conducted 470 remote interviews with students, parents and teachers in 60 countries - of which sixteen were conflict-affected ones - between April 2020 and 2021 and which has identified general trends and patterns across countries on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on education systems (HRW 2021).

6.1 *The differential and unequal impact of Covid-19 on education systems in conflict-affected contexts*

Government-led lockdowns leading to schools closure did not affect children's access to education across the world equally, with children that were already at risk of being excluded from their right to education being the most affected (IMF and WB 2020).[34] New fragilities and vulnerabilities built upon pre-existing ones (HRW 2021, 30). One out of five children were out of school before the Covid-19 pandemic (HRW 2021). Lack of basic services such as water and toilets at schools and reliable electricity in homes further intensified in conflict zones as a result of the pandemic, together with the lack of affordable and reliable Internet connection, and broader challenges such as persistent 'brain drain', loss of infrastructure, and overall decrease in teaching quality (HRW 2021, 57; Hajir and Salem 2020).

[34] These categories include pregnant girls and/or married children (mostly girls); children living in poverty or extreme poverty and whose families cannot afford tuition fees or other types of expenses; children that are engaged in child labour; children with disabilities or other underlying health conditions; children living in rural areas; children living in areas affected by armed conflict; displaced, refugee, migrant, and asylum-seeking children; children that belong to ethnic and racial minorities in their countries of residence (HRW 2021)

The pandemic has widened the existing digital divide and the digital gender gap (Rowntree et al. 2020; World Wide Web Foundation 2020; UNESCO 2020a). According to a UNESCO estimate in April 2020, 706 million students were excluded from online learning due to lack of internet access or inequalities in access to devices (UNESCO 2020a). In particular, in low-income, conflict-affected contexts, governments did not have the resources, the human capacities and the technological infrastructure to massively convert their education systems into online learning in an inclusive way, thus exacerbating learning inequalities (HRW 2021; OECD 2021; UNESCO 2020a). In Burkina Faso, in particular in small tows affected by armed conflicts, children were unable to access government's radio- and TV-based distance learning classes due to lack of electricity (HRW 2020; HRW 2021). In Kananga, in Congo's conflict-affected Kasai Central province, students have been unable to follow government's organized television courses due to lack of electricity (HRW 2021, 57). In Bangladesh and Lebanon, students have faced similar restrictions due to power shortages (HRW 2021, 57).

Girls, who in several countries faced pre-pandemic forms of discrimination and barriers to access education, have faced additional barriers to continuing formal education through any form of distance learning. Remote schooling has made millions of girls more likely to take greater housework burden, exposed them to labour exploitation, and above all, to face more abuses and other forms of gender-based violence such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (Odhiambo 2020; UNESCO et al. 2020; UNFPA 2020). It is estimated that approximately 767 million girls were out of the school as the pandemic reached its peak and around 11 million may not be able to go back to school either because they face a multiplicity of barriers as those mentioned above or because they are prohibited from attending public schools in a number of conflict-affected zones (HRW 2018).[35]

Armed conflict has been a major driving factor for out of school children over the last three decades (World Bank 2005; UNESCO 2011; Global Education Monitoring Report and UNHCR 2016). Armed conflicts, attacks against education and pandemic-driven school closures have worsened drop-outs at unprecedented levels (HRW 2021, 43). In Garissa (Kenya), students had been deprived of education prior to Covid-19 pandemic as a result of a rise in terrorist incidents and their situation worsened following pandemic's lockdowns.[36] In North-Kivu, DRC, schools closure has left children unoccupied and exposed them to a greater risk for joining "armed groups in the forest."[37] In Cameroon's Anglophone regions, affected by an intensification of armed

[35] See UNESCO. "Over 11 million girls may not go back to school after the COVID-19 crisis," undated, https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation last accessed 16 May 2021
[36] Human Rights Watch interview with Taisha S., 16, Garissa, Kenya, June 20, 2020 quoted in HRW 2020, 44
[37] Human Rights Watch interview with father of two, Beni, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, June 10, 2020. Also with official in the bureau of secondary and vocational education inspection, Butembo, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, June 10, 2020; and caregiver to four children, Beni, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo,

conflict since 2016, an education NGO worker argued that "With Covid, the government had to restrict children's access to schools…But before the coronavirus crisis, few schools were already operating properly…It's difficult to talk about education here".[38] A girls' primary school in Kadugli, South Sudan, which was closed as a result of the pandemic and was about to re-open soon was occupied by armed paramilitary groups on June 2020, which then converted it into a training base (Firth 2020).

Refugee and displaced school-age children that faced several barriers to educational access as a result of their socio-economic status and isolation as well as language differences before the pandemic (50 percent of them were already out of school), were confronted with worsening inequalities as a result of school lockdowns (HRW 2021, 40; UNHCR 2019, 2020).

The pandemic has also led to the closure of colleges and universities across the world (Murphy 2020). A common trend has been the introduction and shift towards "'emergency eLearning' protocols marking the rapid transition of face-to-face classes to online learning systems" (Murphy 2020, 492). The introduction of emergency eLearning programs have been also considered as a crisis-response measure in previous emergency situations such as the H1N1 pandemic (2009) or during Hurricane Katrina's landfalls (2005). However, it has never reached the application and magnitude of the Covid-19 pandemic. The introduction of eLearning platforms, while absolutely necessarily and vital to control the spread of the pandemic in the short term, may represent a first step towards the securitization of face-to-face schooling, the normalization of the exceptionality of the digital shift and thus the digitalization of schools and universities (Murphy 2020).

6.2 *The impact of Covid-19 on the quality of education and learning achievements*

The quality of education has significantly decreased worldwide as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the massive, global closure of public schools. As a result of the shift toward forms of distance learning, students have faced a number of difficulties that have hampered their learning progress ranging from being left to study on their own, to classes being resumed without teaching new subjects, to number of subjects drastically reduced (HRW 2021, 86). In countries such as Zambia, DRC, CAR, in some schools that were closed as a result of the pandemic, teachers, parents and students did not receive any instruction on how to proceed afterwards, leaving the students often to repeat what they had previously learnt in schools (HRW 2021, 86-87). Overall, the shift to online learning has implied fewer hours of instructions and fewer subjects (HRW 2021, 88-91). School closures, online teaching and reduced curricula have slowed down learning, led to regression and to an overall decrease in wellbeing.

June 10, 2020, all quoted in HRW 2021, 44

[38] Human Rights Watch interview with education NGO worker, North West, Cameroon, June 30, 2020 quoted in HRW 2021, 44.

The United Nations has estimated that "the learning crisis could turn into a generational catastrophe" (UN 2020). A study in the United States has confirmed that children' skills and knowledge acquisition have decreased and/or regressed as a result of the break from studying and schools' closure (Dorn et al. 2020). This has also been confirmed by interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch in DRC (2021). Drop-outs have increased exponentially as a result of schools closure, and are estimated to have long-term effects in learning achievements. UNESCO estimated in July 2020 that approximately 16 million students that were enrolled in schools from pre-primary to secondary education in the pre-pandemic are at risk of not returning back to formal education, with the largest percentage of drop-outs in sub-Saharan Africa, south and west Asia and children affected by conflict and migration (UNESCO 2020b).

A joint World Bank and UNESCO study published in 2021 has estimated that two-thirds of low and lower-middle-income countries have cut their public education budgets during the pandemic (WB and UNESCO 2021). In 2019, the Abidjan Principles on the human rights obligations of states to provide public education and regulate private involvement in education were adopted in Cote d'Ivoire (Abidjan Principles 2019). While it is still early to measure the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on international development assistance to education, the HRW report presents wide-shared concerns by teachers and parents on budgetary cuts on education in the coming years (HRW 2021). A UN report has reiterated similar concerns envisaging major challenges in the financing of education, exacerbating massive pre-COVID-19 education funding gaps. The gap for low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries is now $148 billion annually and it is expected to increase by up to one-third following the pandemic (UN 2020).

Conclusions of the section

Education is both a fundamental human right and an enabling right impacting the realization of all other human rights; it is also a central factor for the realization of all 17 Sustainable Development Goal (UN 2020). The disruption of education, as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, is expected to have significant effects and impact that goes beyond education, such as food insecurity, economic instability, and violence against women and girls (UN 2020, 10).

Over the last year, it has been often argued that the pandemic has provided us with the opportunity to re-consider and re-envision governments' planning and opportunities and put in place models and systems of growth that break from the past. While national economies have been put under severe financial pressure as a result of the pandemic, it is not clear whether in the medium and long-term governments will go back to approving restrictive fiscal and financial plans that have characterized governments strategies in the field of education over the last two decades.

Be that as it may, governments should put education at the centre of recovery plans, with an attempt to address pre-existing challenges and vulnerabilities with new, additional challenges on children's education that have emerged as a result of the pandemic. Above all, governments should prioritize funding for public education, and particularly address the chronic underfunding of education provision under conditions of emergency. International assistance and cooperation should continue to support the realization of the right to education through its international human rights treaties,[39] the Abidjan Principles and the SDG Agenda. Governments' back-to-school recovery plans and budgets and donors and international actors' assistance and aid should in particular target categories of vulnerable students and children to ensure that those children more at risk of dropping out or facing enormous barriers to return are able to go back to schools and catch up with learning.

7. Conclusions

7.1 A shift from the macro to the micro level, from the global to the local 'turn'

As shown in section 5, educational and broader developmental problems are often presented as 'scientific', technicised and located at the micro and local level. By shifting education developmental challenges from the macro to the micro level, their solution is seen less as the responsibility of the state or the international community and more as the responsibility of the individuals or specific communities. Beside their depoliticisation and their reduction to objectified measurable problems that require standardized solutions, this individualization overlooks the broader socio-political context and restricts the potential for collective action in addressing education challenges (Kohl-Arenas 2017).

There is a structural shift and tendency to locate both causes of and solutions to complex processes and phenomena such as conflict, peace, terrorism, violent extremism and educational challenges at the micro, local and individual level. This however might overlook the fact that they are all embedded in broader, global systems of oppression, domination, coercion, exploitation and injustice. This leads to a de-responsibilization of the international community and national states to deal with and address causes and find solutions to specific sets of interconnected challenges and issues that arise for education in conflict-affected contexts. The locals are frequently called upon as at the forefront of building peace and ensuring security, as well as essential for monitoring, reporting and protecting schools from increasing attacks. But to what extent are they sufficiently supported by the same international actors that highlight their potential?

[39] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, art. 2(1); Convention of the Rights of the Child, art. 4 & 28(3); and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, art. 32.

7.2 A changed global peace and security setting for education in conflict-affected contexts

Over the last decade, education in conflict-affected contexts has been affected by a changed peace and security global setting, with cycles of violence, fragility and conflict that have become longer and more complex and that have been exacerbated by mass displacement, humanitarian and refugee crisis, emerging threats such as climate crisis, health pandemics, increased involvement of armed groups, the rise of terrorism and counterterrorism and increased authoritarianism, state repression and violence. Achieving peace and preventing conflict or its relapse has become more necessary but also more challenging than a decade ago (UN 2015b). There is a huge gap and disjuncture between recent UN policy discourses on multi-dimensional, local pro-peace infrastructures and holistic peacebuilding approaches and UN practices on the ground, with peace operations having become more robust and muscular and increasingly focused on stabilization and counter-terrorism. In practical terms, the space for peacebuilding has been reduced and replaced by stabilization missions increasingly concerned with security and asymmetrical threat containment. Furthermore, questions of social justice and equality are significantly and worryingly absent from international agendas and discourses.

The previous Novelli et al. report (2014) highlighted the marginal role that education occupied in the peacebuilding architecture and peacebuilding missions. However, it also pointed to a potentially positive transformation within the UN peacebuilding architecture whereby an increasing focus was placed on the multifaceted and multiple role and positive potential of education for peacebuilding (Novelli et al. 2014). Eight years on, not only is education as marginal to peacebuilding as it was highlighted in the previous report, but peacebuilding itself has become more marginalised within the UN system itself, having been transformed to the more ambiguous 'sustaining peace' or 'peace as maintenance' agenda embedded in broader stabilization imperatives.

Education remains central to building sustainable, inclusive and peaceful societies and in addressing drivers of conflict and fragilities in conflict-affected contexts. However, it is not clear what role, if any, does education play in current stabilization missions. Over the last seven years, the UN has revised or launched new agendas for peace, security and development, as section 2 has shown. While education is transversal to all of them and indeed crucial for their implementation and achievement, it remains marginal to all of these reports and agendas. Below we present a number of research areas and questions that have emerged out of this review, and require further investigation on the ground.

- How do current global changes impact on education in conflict-affected countries?

- Recent scholarship suggests a redefined role for the UN, one that facilitates or accompanies the peacebuilding process, which is ultimately led by local actors and nationally owned. Practically, this means supporting the government to broaden ownership and encompass a wide range of domestic actors. How does this redefinition impact the political economy of educational reform on the ground?
- How does the rebalancing of relations between North and South, evident in peace operations, have an impact on educational interventions on the ground?
- Fourth, and related to the previous one, how does the rise of regional organizations impact educational reconstruction and reform in conflict-affected contexts?
- What informs UN and other national and international educational interventions in conflict-affected countries?
- How is the emphasis on people-centred approaches present in several UN discourses translated on educational interventions on the ground?
- In an era of prolonged, intractable conflicts and lack of interventions, how do different actors intervene upon education?

7.3 Dynamics of violence and increased securitization and militarization of education in conflict-affected contexts

While the previous report (Novelli et al. 2014) already pointed to the post-9/11 increased securitization and militarization of aid to education in conflict-affected zones (see also Novelli 2010, 2013), some of those trends have been further exacerbated as a result of both the worsening of terrorist and insurgency dynamics and the globalization of countering violent extremism policies (Kundnani and Hayes 2018). In particular, since the publication of the Novelli et al. report, the instrumentalization of education to fit counterterrorist purposes has increased and resulted in a proliferation of policies and strategies that put education at their very heart. Conflict remains crucial in understanding the magnitude and the geopolitics of attacks against education. At the same time, education has become increasingly central to insurgency, terrorism and counterterrorism dynamics. There is an urgent need to understand, investigate and question how stabilization agendas that increase militarization and securitization against proliferating insurgencies and instabilities transform schools into battlegrounds and increase their vulnerability and exposure with respect to violent attacks. Furthermore, how does the rise of authoritarianism affect the university sector and academic freedom in conflict-affected contexts? While increasing focus is placed on non-state, fundamentalist and extremist groups state violence and repression is highly overlooked both in scholarly and policy research (Del Campo et al 2021; TNI 2021).

While a critical scholarly agenda on the societal effects of CVE and counter-radicalization policies in Europe, including in education (O'Donnell 2016; Ragazzi 2017), has been developed over the last few years, a similar endeavour is missing for conflict-affected contexts. Research in EU countries has found that youth and education within CVE and counter-radicalization initiatives are framed according to a securitized logic. Youth are framed as at risk of radicalization and thus potentially risky as well as tools for preventing radicalization and violent extremism (Heath-Kelly 2012). Their agency is being undermined and denied in this representation that construct them negatively as 'at risk' and risky or positively (although instrumentally) as means to an end. Similarly, the instrumentalization of education to serve counter-radicalization goals may hamper trust and generate resentment and exclusion as well as further fuel radicalization and thus clash with education's broader transformative function (Ragazzi 2017). There is a need for more research on how terrorism and violent extremism is targeting education, how counter-terrorism strategies have an impact on education, in particular how the shift towards CVE and de-radicalization has increased (securitized) interventions in education in conflict-affected contexts and with what effects.

7.4 Crisis and multifaceted privatization: philanthropy and for-profit education

The emergence and growing power of philanthropists in the global governance of education has to be located in the broader shifts in the world order and the global aid architecture in the pre-COVID environment, which includes the participation of private sector businesses and different types of billionaire philanthropists (Kumar 2019). Most of the studies examining perspectives and experiences of philanthrocapitalim's beneficiaries focus on US education, international development and African agriculture (Haydon et al. 2021). While several studies identify education as a key area of philanthrocapitalism's intervention, there is a serious lack of first-hand accounts and empirical/ethnographical investigation and research on whether and how education in conflict-affected contexts is affected by these dynamics and actors and how do local actors engage with or resist such interventions. More broadly, as a recent systematic review of the literature has found there are significant knowledge gaps that need stronger investigation (Haydon, Jung and Russell 2021) and that can be specifically applied to the field of education in conflict-affected contexts. Some of the questions that need further investigation are as follows:

- What are the perspectives, views and experiences of the beneficiaries of philanthrocapitalist educational projects in conflict-affected contexts?;
- What informs and underpins philanthropic commitment to education in conflict-affected contexts?;
- How does philanthrocapitalism exacerbate the neoliberalization and privatization of education in conflict-affected contexts?;

- Are there forms of resistance to the power, influence and penetration of philanthropic foundations in the education system in conflict-affected contexts?
- Are there alternatives to philanthrocapitalism in the field of education in conflict-affected contexts?
- What are the geographies of philanthrocapitalist commitment to education in conflict-affected contexts?
- If for-profit philanthropy has the potential to overtake governments and international organization in the global aid architecture, what would be the impact on education provision, quality and policy-making?
- How will the simultaneous reduction in the international commitment to education and the transformation of result-based aid affect education development and governance?

7.5 Covid-19 pandemic and education in conflict-affected contexts

The Covid-19 pandemic has worsened and exacerbated pre-existing structural challenges and deficiencies in education systems in particular in conflict-affected contexts. It is not clear whether and how the pandemic may exacerbate pre-existing dynamics in the education systems of conflict-affected contexts, such as the decreasing support for public education and the further privatization of education, in particular at the higher education level. More research is needed on how children's educational path and trajectories of learning have been hampered and disrupted in conflict-affected contexts as a result of the pandemic. In particular, research needs to unravel and identify the barriers that have hampered access to learning and education for categories of vulnerable children. As the above-mentioned HRW report has found, quality of education has also globally decreased as a result of disruptions and fewer hours of instruction and subjects (HRW 2021). Moreover, students and children have had fewer or total lack of opportunities for informal learning experiences through social interaction. Lastly, the application of exceptional measures in the education space raises questions on post-pandemic education, including higher education. Below we present a number of research areas and questions that requires further investigation on the ground.

- How have children in conflict-affected contexts, in particular children from low-income families, marginalized communities, in rural areas, or affected by disabilities and gender inequalities, been affected by the digital divide and the lack of distance learning opportunities?
- How have their pre-existing inequalities been further exacerbated by the widening of the digital divide and with what effects?

- Beyond the question of access, how has the pandemic affected the quality of education for children and students in conflict-affected contexts?
- Will the exceptional digitalization of education become the new normal and lead to a securitization of post-pandemic (higher) education space and pedagogy? Or will the digitalization provide with new ways of imagining and delivering education, particularly in conflict-affected contexts?
- What would be the effects of digitalization for education in conflict-affected contexts? Will the normalization of digital education and learning lead to the normalization of a form of education that perpetuates structural inequalities of race, class and support at the local and global level? Or will the digitalization contribute to addressing inequalities and re-distributing educational opportunities?
- How will the digitalization of education interact with additional processes and challenges that characterize education in conflict-affected contexts such as decreasing governmental budgetary support in education, decreasing international aid to education, increasing violent attacks against education?

Final Reflections

As this updated report on the Political Economy of Education in Conflict Affected Contexts (2021) has hopefully demonstrated, the last years have seen the emergence of and amplification of a number of important new challenges for education systems and communities in conflict-affected contexts, as a result of changing geopolitical relationships, dynamics and processes.

Undoubtedly the world is even less secure than it was in 2014, when the first report was written. It also appears that education in conflict affected contexts is being pushed and pulled in a number of directions, by a number of different social forces, that are increasing social polarization. The spread of authoritarianism and the targeting of education structures and communities by both state (e.g. Turkey)_and non-state actors (e.g Al Shabab and ISIS) while not new, appears to be intensifying. Clearly, the protracted nature of many conflicts, further implores us to recognise that 'Education Cannot Wait' until after peace or normality has been restored, and we have to continue to find ways of ensuring educational continuity in the midst of crises.

Ironically, the COVID 19 pandemic has extended across the whole world aspects of the type of impacts that children in conflict contexts have experienced regularly: school closures, disruptions, exam cancellations, learning loss etc. Since 2020, children and parents everywhere, many for the first time, have realised what it means to have their education disrupted and may perhaps be more empathetic to those whose lives and education are effected by wars, conflicts and crises. Unfortunately, neither the current global response to Covid 19 vaccine provision, nor international

development financial commitments (particularly from the UK) are indicating that Northern governments are increasing their empathy towards those impacted by conflict and crisis. Whilst the quantity of funding directed towards education in conflict affected contexts is not the only factor for success, it is nevertheless important, and this aspect may become more challenging in the coming years as wealthier states shift priorities toward domestic recovery.

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