



**Convention on the Rights
of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Forty-ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PART (OPEN) OF THE 1352nd MEETING*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 19 September 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. LEE

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* No summary record was prepared for the first part (closed) of the meeting.

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The second part (open) of the meeting was called to order at 5.20 p.m.

DAYS OF GENERAL DEBATE (agenda item 7) (continued)

The right of the child to education in emergency situations (continued)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the rapporteurs to report on the discussions in the two working groups.
2. Ms. AIDOO (Rapporteur of Working Group I on continuation and/or reconstruction of the education system) said that, according to Ms. Anderson, Director of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, children in emergency situations were perfectly well aware of the importance of education for them, arguing that knowledge was something which they could take with them when they had to flee their home regions, that education was a right and that they must be heard and participate in the taking of decisions affecting their education.
3. The Working Group considered therefore that greater account should be taken of children's views and that States should be urged to ensure that all children had access to education, irrespective of the nature and scope of the emergency situation in which they found themselves. That need was all the more pressing since, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a third of the 72 million children who were prevented from going to school by emergency situations in their countries suffered that fate repeatedly, chiefly as a result of recurrent natural disasters.
4. Conflicts lasted for an average of 10 years, and refugees and persons displaced within their own countries spent an average of 17 years in camps, a period representing for the children in question the whole of their childhood and adolescence; hence the importance of ensuring that all their rights were protected and respected.
5. It was important in that connection for the States concerned, as well as their development partners, not to establish any hierarchy among rights and, in particular, not to give precedence to the right to life over the right to education and not to neglect certain categories of children, such as children with disabilities.
6. All stakeholders should therefore reflect on ways of according education priority status in emergency situations, be it with regard to funding or to the formulation and evaluation of the relevant programmes, and the States concerned should take care to make the right to education a right which could not be abrogated, even in emergency situations.
7. Studies had shown that education helped to protect children against several dangers, for children who went to school were less likely than their fellows to fall victim to trafficking and were more capable of overcoming their trauma. Moreover, such children seemed to be better aware of factors affecting the transmission of HIV/AIDS and better able to avoid risk behaviour.
8. One of the great advances in education had been the recent adoption of the initiative for the accelerated implementation of the "Education for All" programme, with particular support from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and UNICEF. The Working Group had also welcome the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund to help countries confronted by crises.
9. The Working Group wished to draw attention to a number of points which should not be overlooked in emergency situations, such as the care of small children, the establishment of

psychological and social support centres for adolescents, and the formulation of programmes to train them in income-earning activities, the identification, evaluation and dissemination of best practices, the need for transparency in resource allocation, and the importance of international cooperation and collaboration.

10. The Working Group recommended that States should strengthen their education systems, ensure that their legislation guaranteed children access to basic education services in emergency situations, enable children to take part in the planning and implementation of education policies at the grass-roots level, draw up in cooperation with the international community programmes to prepare for emergency situations as part of their overall education policy, ensure that early childhood development was made an integral part of such programmes, together with the question of the education of persons living with HIV/AIDS, disabled persons and girls, in accordance with the relevant minimum standards of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, and boost their education budgets, especially in times of crisis. The Working Group invited the international community to classify as a war crime the damage or destruction of educational institutions and to advocate that the question of the right to education should be addressed systematically in the peace agreements between the parties to a conflict.

11. The Working Group suggested the Committee should draft a general comment on the right to education, in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies and other partners, welcome the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund and the initiative for the accelerated implementation of the "Education for All " programme, and request States parties to describe their education plans and activities in their periodic reports.

12. Mr. POLLAR (Rapporteur of Working Group II on the content and quality of education provided for children in emergency situations) said that in emergency situations it was essential for children to have access to quality education. They must in fact receive the same education as they would have received if the emergency had not arisen, especially with regard to the subjects taught, so that they would be able to rejoin the traditional education system once the crisis was over or peace had been restored. They must also be made aware of a number of principles of particular advantage to them in their special situation, including principles relating to hygiene and sanitation, and they must learn how to protect themselves against exploitation, recruitment into the armed forces, HIV/AIDS, and the other dangers to which they were exposed. It was also important to educate them in a culture of peace and reconciliation.

13. States should ensure that children with special needs, girls and young children were not excluded from the education programmes and that all children had access to recreational and leisure activities, which were just as important as instruction for their personal development. They should involve children in the formulation of school curricula and consider introducing accelerated education programmes (two years in one, for example) and catch-up courses to enable children who had not been able to attend school for a while to make up the lost ground and reach the educational level which they should have achieved at their age.

14. Lastly, the curricula should provide for at least five years of instruction in the mother tongue and for a choice of the other languages taught in the light of the jobs market in the region of settlement or the region of origin.

15. Mr. KRAPPMANN (Rapporteur of Working group II on the content and quality of education provided for children in emergencies) said that, in order to guarantee the full exercise of the right to education in emergency situations, it was important to take into consideration very

young children, provide post-primary education, include children from minorities in the education system, ensure that education certificates were recognized, and facilitate the transition to regular schools.

16. Ms. KHATTAB said that it had emerged from the discussion that children must not be deprived of their fundamental right to a high standard of education, even in emergency situations, that education was a relief measure which must form an integral part of every humanitarian response from the outset, and that it was imperative, regardless of the circumstances, to comply with the minimum standards of education. Education had a vital role to play, for it protected children against death, exploitation and violence, including abduction, recruitment by armed groups, and sexual abuse. It equipped them with essential knowledge about hygiene, land mines and HIV/AIDS. Education was also a vital factor in dispute settlement, social reconstruction, the establishment of peace and democracy, and the rehabilitation of child victims. It was thus impossible to allow education, as sometimes happened, to be relegated to the bottom of a hierarchy of rights.

17. The right to education in emergency situations had two main aspects: access to education (art. 28 of the Convention) and quality of education (art. 29). In order to guarantee access to education, every possible effort should be made to predict emergency situations and take steps to prevent them or, when necessary, to prepare for them. It was necessary, amongst other things, to establish partnerships, to help Governments to consolidate the school system to ensure its viability in an emergency situation, strengthen legal frameworks and institutional capacities, and ensure the participation of parents, children and local communities in pre- and post-disaster activities. In armed conflicts, it was essential for schools to be declared zones of peace and for corridors to be established to enable children to go to school. In addition, the right to education must be included systematically in peace agreements. It was necessary to adopt a strategy of inclusion to ensure that all children, especially girls, children with disabilities and poor children, had access to education.

18. In order to guarantee the quality of education, curricula must be suitable, flexible and non-discriminatory. Simplified programmes backed by measures of psychological support should be formulated and new models of schooling, such as decentralized education, should be devised. It was also essential to ensure sustainable and reliable funding for education. The formulation of minimum standards by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies and the creation of the global education cluster should facilitate the attainment of those objectives.

19. The Committee welcomed the many recommendations made by participants, which it would take into account in its future work. States and humanitarian organizations should continue to work closely together to ensure that all children in emergency situations could exercise the right to education without interruption or discrimination.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.

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