SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S ACCESS AND RETENTION IN EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY, FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

GPE KIX Scoping Study Working Paper

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ACRONYMS

AEP	Accelerated Education Programme
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EMAP	Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
FCV	Fragility, Conflict or Violence
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KIX	Knowledge Innovation Exchange
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
OOSCY	Out-of-School Children and Youth
PCFC	Partner Countries affected by Fragility and Conflict
RODO	[Children who are at] Risk Of Dropping Out
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SRGBV	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is one of a series of working papers commissioned by the [Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)](), a joint endeavour with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), to inform its applied research and knowledge exchange activities. GPE KIX works through four hubs, comprising 85 countries worldwide: [Africa 19](), [Africa 21](), [Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Pacific (EMAP)](), and [Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)]().

This paper summarises key priorities surfaced through consultations with relevant education stakeholders in GPE partner countries and the review of selected country documents and literature related to children and youth who are out of school and children who are at risk of dropping out of school in emergency contexts and countries impacted by fragility, conflict or violence. It begins with a review of key terminology to describe these populations, and then presents the countries of focus for the study, along with brief methodological notes to detail data collection for the study. The paper goes on to present the three primary sub-themes related to these populations, namely challenges and solutions for re-enrolment and retention, the training and support of teachers working with these groups, and the impacts and approaches to addressing the negative impacts that these children experience on their socio-emotional wellbeing. For each sub-theme, the paper elaborates on specificities across the four KIX regions. The paper concludes with suggestions for research on each of the sub-themes.

2 BACKGROUND

To understand education in emergency contexts, it is important to define both **education in emergencies** (EiE) as a programming approach and what constitutes so-called emergency contexts and those impacted by fragility, conflict or violence (FCV). Children in these contexts face particular challenges, often layered on top of existing inequalities, and thus need special supports to ensure they are engaged in learning.

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) defines EiE as 'quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis', able to provide 'physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives' (INEE, 2010). Common **emergency contexts** in which EiE is an essential response include the following:

- **Violent conflict**, including terrorist attacks, violent civil demonstrations, armed conflicts between state and/or non-state actors, inter-identity group violence, sexual violence used as a weapon of war, attacks against learning environments, recruitment into armed forces, forms of attack, abuse and harassment of education personnel and students, and forms of gender-based violence.

- **Health hazards**, including viruses (e.g. Ebola, SARS, COVID-19), non-communicable diseases (e.g. malaria, dengue), hunger and malnutrition, waterborne diseases (e.g. cholera, diarrhoea), and dehydration.
- **Natural disasters and disasters related to climate change**, including severe weather, hurricanes, earthquakes and aftershocks, typhoons, droughts, flooding, fires, windstorms, volcanoes, landslides, storms, and cyclones (Save the Children, 2017a, p. 5).

When emergencies occur, the restoration and continuity of education is crucial for ensuring dignity and protecting lives, particularly for children and youth (Educo, 2023). It provides safe spaces for learning and helps identify and support those who need additional assistance. Quality education offers physical protection from the dangers and exploitation prevalent in crisis environments. For instance, it significantly reduces the risk of sexual or economic exploitation, forced or early marriage, recruitment into armed forces or organised crime, and exposure to other risks (Islam et al., 2023; McAlpine et al., 2016; UN, 2023). It plays a key role in contributing to the social, economic and political stability of societies, especially in reducing the risk of violent conflict by enhancing social cohesion and supporting conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It also provides learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for their future livelihoods and reconstruction post crisis. Education is often vital in conveying life-saving information, such as how to avoid contaminated water or landmines, protect oneself from sexual abuse, prevent HIV infection, and access healthcare and food (Torani et al., 2019; WFP, 2022). Moreover, it mitigates the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters by fostering a sense of routine, stability, structure and hope. Education strengthens problem-solving and coping skills, empowering learners to make informed decisions in dangerous environments and critically assess political messages or conflicting information sources (INEE, 2016a). Learning spaces also serve as entry points for essential services like protection, nutrition, water, sanitation and health. It is vital that education during emergencies and recovery periods is appropriate and relevant and is focused on teaching both basic literacy and numeracy and also other relevant curricula that include socio-emotional learning and critical thinking, thereby building a culture of safety and resilience.

Within this scoping study, the primary focus is on countries designated by GPE as partner countries affected by fragility and conflict (PCFC) in 2023.[1] Countries in this grouping also appear on classification lists from the World Bank (as Fragile and Conflict-Affected[2]) and UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (as conflict-affected countries).

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[1] See https://assets.globalpartnership.org/s3fs-public/document/file/2022-08-GPE-list-partner-countries-fragile-conflict.pdf?VersionId=qwEzH9BmXcrmx_vWlZxpFKYrJe5s8sAC

[2] See https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations

2.1 Why is EiE needed? The impact of emergencies on children's education

The frequency of humanitarian emergencies worldwide is on the rise, with indications that this trend will continue to escalate (UN OCHA, 2023). The impact of these emergencies on education is varied and many have resulted in an increasing number of children being denied their right to education, along with their wellbeing and opportunities for achieving literacy and numeracy skills. During emergencies, disruptions to education occur at multiple levels, including student, school community and system levels. Save the Children (2017a) provides examples of disruption for each level. At the **student level**, children are often the victims of conflict, suffering death, injury, displacement and forms of psychological distress; girls especially can face increased rates of early marriage, gender-based violence, early pregnancy or increased domestic work (Girls Not Brides, 2022). Damage to school buildings, loss of face-to-face instructional time and lack of technological supports for online modalities or access to other learning materials can impact learning (Angrist et al., 2023). More detail on the individual challenges and barriers facing children who are out of school or at risk in emergency contexts is provided in Sub-Theme 1; Sub-Theme 3 examines socio-emotional impacts.

Disasters and conflicts can devastate the educational infrastructure at the **school community level**, including the school buildings, learning materials and administrative systems needed to return to a normal state of operation. School buildings are often attacked or used for military purposes, with more than 510 cases of schools being repurposed for violent conflict in 2022, an increase from 450 in the previous year, and 6,700 children and education personnel were killed or otherwise harmed in attacks on schools (Human Rights Watch, 2023b). School buildings and resources are often repurposed during health hazard and natural disaster events as well: during the 2013–2016 Ebola crisis in West Africa, many schools were repurposed as medical facilities and isolation centres, leading to fear and distrust in the safety of the buildings afterwards (Sieff, 2015). During natural disasters—as with extensive flooding in Bangladesh—schools left standing often become emergency shelters for displaced populations, which can result in community tension, overcrowding and competition for the few available resources (Save the Children, 2017a). Teachers themselves are impacted in times of crisis: they may suffer death, injury and other forms of harm, or be recruited into armed forces, or, as seen during Ebola and COVID-19 responses, take on medical or community support roles. In many cases, they experience pay disruptions and must balance their own family needs with the demands of their jobs. More exploration of teachers' role in supporting out-of-school and at-risk children in provided in Sub-Theme 2, where the supports that teachers need are also considered.

Finally, there are significant impacts on education that occur at the **system level** during emergencies. Across the entire system, the loss or displacement of teachers and the inability of governments to replace teachers and provide adequate training and support can result in large class sizes and many children being left behind (Save the Children, 2017a). An influx of refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs) within certain regions can further strain capacity. There are knock-on effects for teacher recruitment, training and management, with gaps in

procedures around payroll, quality control and safeguarding. Education management information systems (EMIS) and other administrative databases can be damaged, suffering data loss and impacting governments' ability to track learner progress and issue certificates and records; they may also need to be revised or remobilised to collect additional data to address emergency conditions (UNESCO, 2021b). Education funding can be redirected, either to repair school infrastructure or through being reallocated to humanitarian needs beyond education. Humanitarian emergencies may also introduce a new set of political actors, including aid agencies, and create new policy demands on the education sector.

2.2 What does EiE programming look like?

The INEE (2010) Minimum Standards Handbook contains 19 standards which act as a foundation for the EiE sector and detail how EiE programming should 'look' within emergency contexts. At the most basic, programmes should promote a holistic, contextualised and appropriate response to learners' needs. Learning environments should be safe and accessible and linked with other social supports, including health, water and sanitation, nutrition, and shelter, all of which ensure their security, safety and wellbeing. Teaching and learning processes should include effective, contextualised curricula, materials and assessments, and effective teacher training, professional development and support mechanisms. Teachers and other education personnel are selected and recruited, held to conditions of service, and supervised and supported in order to enable them to address the needs of learners. Finally, all these areas are supported by the writing, enacting, planning and implementation of policy. These standards align with GPE's focus on restarting education quickly, whilst building back a better education system (GPE, 2022). The standards are referenced throughout this report, particularly in the background sections for Sub-Themes 1–3.

2.3 Two populations within this scoping study: OOSCY and RODO

As of 2022, UNESCO (2023) estimated that around 250 million children are out of school, which was an increase from the previous year, attributed to the education crisis in Afghanistan. Globally, the largest numbers of out-of-school children and youth (OOSCY) are found in sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly 20% of primary- and 33–37% of secondary-school-aged children and youth are out of school. Some of the largest populations of OOSCY are found in countries from the PCFC list, including Pakistan (20.7 million OOSCY), Nigeria (19.7 million), Ethiopia (10.5 million) and DR Congo (5.8 million; see UNESCO UIS, 2022). In addition to these numbers, there are populations of learners who are at a heightened risk of dropping out due to the impacts of emergencies and FCV; they are known as children who are at risk of dropping out (RODO). To capture both populations, formal definitions for both groups from the UNESCO and UNICEF (2023) Operation Manual are briefly summarised here.

OOSCY are defined as those who are just below the official primary school entrance age or those who are not enrolled. Children who are not enrolled include those who have never been enrolled and those who have attended at some point but had to leave school; those children

may return to education or, as with many children in protracted crisis situations, may never return to formal education. If they do return to school, they will likely have suffered learning loss and may be enrolled in grade levels where they are over-age. Further, the OOSCY group includes children who are pre-primary age but are not enrolled: as indicated in another KIX scoping study on [Early Childhood Care and Education](#) (D'Angelo et al., 2023), SDG 4, with target 4.2, calls for children to have access to at least one year of free pre-primary education to ensure school readiness.

Children who are classified as RODO (UNICEF, UNESCO, & ILO, 2023) are those who are currently enrolled but may be forced to drop out, either during the course of their current education level (e.g. in the middle of their grade) or through not transitioning to the next level of education (e.g. completing primary but not enrolling in secondary). These children are often over-age for their grade level and are often not achieving minimum proficiency levels for that grade. They may encounter 'push' factors which could drive them to leave school, such as forms of discrimination within the school or poor treatment from teachers or staff, or they may experience 'pull' factors from the external environment, which pressure them into leaving school earlier, such as when emergency situations combine with socio-economic pressure, family responsibilities, early marriage or pregnancy, or other factors. These push and pull factors, which create challenges and barriers for both re-enrolment and retention, are discussed in Sub-Theme 1.

As indicated in the KIX scoping study on [Gender Equality and Social Inclusion](#) (GESI; Cameron et al., 2023), marginalised groups face a greater risk for drop-out, especially in emergency contexts. Girls, children with disabilities, children living in rural, remote or other deprived geographic areas, children who are migrants, refugees or IDPs, and children who are living in poverty face challenges in accessing education due to distance, safety (both in terms of travel to school and within the school setting), household responsibilities, opportunity costs and social norms (UNESCO IIEP, 2022). For example, only 48% of refugee children have access to primary education (UNHCR, 2020) and refugee girls with disabilities, who face double discrimination because of their gender and their disability status, experience even greater barriers in accessing education and basic services such as hygiene, food, water and shelter during crisis situations (Rohwerder, 2017). Attention to these intersecting inequalities features in our discussion of the sub-themes later in the paper.

Finally, it is important to note that children who are outside of formal education—and thus 'counted' as OOSCY—may still be accessing some form of education. They may be enrolled in non-formal literacy programmes, such as early grade reading programmes, or those for peace education, life skills, economic empowerment, rural development or other subjects which are outside of the formal curriculum, or they may be in community, indigenous or religious education. As we note later in the paper, non-formal alternative routes to formal education are still providing aspects of the education experience and, when improved and provided with curricular support, can fill gaps in formal provision.

3   METHODOLOGY

This study is the fourth and final working paper in a series which has included our previous papers on [GESI](#) (Cameron et al., 2023), [teachers](#) (D'Angelo et al., 2023), and [early childhood care and education](#) (D'Angelo et al., 2023). For this series, the previous three themes and their related sub-themes were identified across the four KIX hubs, where three strands of data collection were undertaken: survey, focus group discussions (FGDs) and literature review. Within that data, education in emergencies and the needs of children in FCV contexts appeared as a consistent theme, leading to its selection for this final working paper.

For this study, the three sub-themes were identified ahead of thematic data collection. The literature was re-reviewed for issues related to out-of-school and at-risk children, and additional materials were consulted to ensure coverage of the topic. As with the other studies, we prioritised education sector plans and other government documents as representing national priorities, along with reports from United Nations agencies (e.g. UNESCO, UNICEF), multilateral organisations (e.g. the World Bank) and non-government organisations, especially those with regional expertise. We also undertook key informant consultations: KIX Country Focal Points identified key informants with knowledge of the theme, and those individuals were contacted and asked to participate in an interview, or, when multiple contacts were provided for one country, an FGD. Annex 1 presents PCFC countries which participated in data collection.

Data for each sub-theme is presented in subsequent sections. There is extensive national variance and the challenges for education in emergencies look different according to the country, and for some sub-themes they may not relate to every PCFC country. The examples provided in the data presentation are also not comprehensive, but they provide an illustration of some of the distinct challenges that countries face, as surfaced through the data collection activities.

4   SUB-THEME 1: RE-ENTRY FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND RETAINING AT-RISK LEARNERS

In PCFC contexts, emergencies and FCV can have significant impacts at the student level, preventing a child from accessing school or putting them at risk of dropping out. Disruptions at this level are many and interlapping: the loss of family members and peers can have significant impacts on a child's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, impacting their socio-economic stability as well as their mental health (Save the Children, 2017a). Disruptions to education timetables impact the time that they have for learning, which means that they are unable to take scheduled tests, such as high stakes exit exams, or pursue credits and certificates. Children suffer a loss of routine, structure and stability, impacting their ability to focus on learning when it is available, and physical damage to schools can impact their access to learning materials and

classroom furniture. Some lose access to school entirely and many face increased vulnerability and exposure to the forms of harm referenced earlier in the paper.

For this sub-theme, we examine many of these challenges in PCFC countries and present some of the efforts from national governments, non-government organisations, international agencies and other organisations to support children's re-engagement with education. Given the complexity inherent in emergency settings, the interventions referenced may be operated by governments or external partners, or a combination of both.

4.1 Background

At the system level, there are multiple ways in which a government and its partners can address and respond to emergency- and FCV-related challenges (UNICEF, 2017). They can ensure safe, well-equipped schools are accessible, with quality teachers, a relevant curriculum and learning materials, and positive, child-friendly environments. Supports for impoverished families can encourage enrolment; these include fee waivers or subsidies for materials, uniforms, transportation and school meals, which support other efforts to ensure parents are aware for the importance of education. Data systems can be updated, as highlighted in KIX scoping studies on data systems and use in Africa (Arnott et al., 2023) and EMAP (Rodriquez, 2023), to ensure linkages between national EMIS humanitarian education data sets so that children are not left behind.

Quality of teachers is a leading factor in the decision for learners to attend schools in FCV contexts, particularly when they are faced with risks and opportunity costs incurred in an emergency (Dryden-Peterson, 2009). Consequently, programmes have focused on **teacher training and teacher professional development** (TPD) to ensure that teachers have the skills needed to tailor curricula and materials to learners' actual needs. Teachers may implement strategies such as Teaching at the Right Level (TARL), which supports students with remedial learning activities in upper primary grades, based on their levels of literacy and numeracy, and this has been used in conflict-affected contexts (Banerjee et al., 2017). Another approach is structured pedagogy (Bolton, 2018), a comprehensive set of interventions that include TPD, teaching and learning materials, formative assessment, and parental/caregiver engagement, and demonstrates large and consistent positive effects on learning (Snilstveit et al., 2015). The nature and content of training programmes is described in more detail in Sub-Theme 2.

Curricula can also impact re-entry and retention of students, in terms of both delivery and content. With regard to re-entry, protracted crises can interrupt students' education over a number of years, and in some contexts, children and youth may not be allowed to re-enter school where they left off if over-age. Various non-formal programmes have sought to catch up these students through the use of a **condensed curriculum and flexible approach** so that students can re-enter the formal system. Though the terminology and nature of these can differ, a common approach is an Accelerated Education Programme (AEP), which typically halves the length of time required to complete primary schooling for children aged 10–18 years.

The degree to which **curricula** are appropriate can impact children's decisions to attend school. Research indicates that curricula that are not in a students' mother-tongue language can inhibit enrolment and/or full participation and lead to drop-out (Pinnock, 2009). Being relevant to the context is also important. In protracted crises, the integration of refugees in host-state schools allows students to follow a curriculum and take assessments that provide certification necessary for work (UNHCR, 2015b), which can motivate students to attend (UNESCO IIEP, 2009). Where the school curriculum fails to prepare youth with relevant skills and knowledge for their future or current context, OOSCY may become alienated and resort to alternative income-generating activities, including military enrolment (Nicolai, 2009; UNICEF, 2019b). Curricula can provide psychosocial support (see Sub-Theme 3), content for social cohesion and peacebuilding, and act as an important mitigation strategy in emergencies, especially for developing **disaster risk reduction (DRR) knowledge and skills** (Selby & Kagawa, 2012). In health emergencies, such as COVID-19 and Ebola, WASH-related (water, sanitation and hygiene) curricula can help mitigate the spread of communicable diseases (Save the Children, 2017b) which can prevent students from attending school.

Schools are also meant to be safe spaces and where this is true, students may be more inclined to attend (Meyer et al., 2015). As such, school programming demonstrating **child-friendly practices** such as addressing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) are vital. One common toolkit used in conflict-affected contexts is the IRC's Healing Classrooms toolkit, which provides training and resources to support positive discipline, child-friendly classes and socio-emotional learning (IRC, 2011). Likewise, UNICEF's (2009) Child-friendly Schools Manual provides guidance for educational stakeholders including teachers and administrators. Save the Children's (2017b) EiE Toolkit also highlights that WASH-informed practices that focus on health, dignity and safety also contribute to a child-friendly environment. WASH implementation guides assert the importance of preparedness planning for WASH in emergencies, with strategies that consider how schools might ensure safe sanitation and water (without which students, particularly girls, may not attend; see Abdel, n.d.).

4.2 Regional specificities: Barriers and challenges

This section details some of the particular barriers that both prevent learners from re-enrolling in school after dropping out and 'push' existing enrolees to the point of exclusion. Here, emphasis is on the data provided by key informants, but literature has been provided in some contexts where informants were unavailable.

Barriers cited for Africa 19 and Africa 21

OOSCY and RODO face **multiple, intersecting barriers** in many of the contexts of Africa 19 and 21. In many countries, there are populations who lack access to infrastructure and/or are unable to enrol due to cultural or economic constraints, but there are also populations who cannot attend school due to emergencies—or when emergencies exacerbate existing challenges. In Nigeria, for example, one in five children are out of school, and nearly 50% of that population are

found in the northern region, which is severely impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency (Oyekan et al., 2023), where an estimated 1,200 schools have been damaged and another 1,700 closed entirely. Similar problems of infrastructure were highlighted by FGD informants from Somalia and South Sudan: in both contexts, IDP populations may be forced into areas with long travel distances to schools, curtailing access. In Ethiopia, compounding crises also impede access, particularly in the Afar, Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions due to recent conflict and severe droughts (ECW, 2022). The combination of ongoing armed group violence with natural disasters, including volcano eruptions in North Kivu, erosions and landslides, have increased the population of out-of-school children in DR Congo (UNICEF, 2023a). In Niger, as reported by a key informant, ten years of conflict have seriously impacted social sectors, including education, with 936 schools closed and nearly 900,000 children out of school as of late 2023. Conflict between state forces and terrorist groups has resulted in widespread displacement, and children can be targeted for recruitment into armed groups.

Barriers can also increase as emergencies intersect with **cultural practices and values**. The challenges facing nomadic populations were referenced by informants from South Sudan and Somalia, where there are barriers in shifting community beliefs around the importance of education for all children. In Niger, a key informant noted that families may not see the value—or, as they called it, the 'credibility'—of school and instead send their children for labour or early marriage. As seen in the literature, discrimination against girls in DR Congo means that schools prioritise enrolment of boys, and many girls are married young (UNICEF, 2023a). In Cameroon, girls are vulnerable to attack en route to school, which means that their parents may keep them at home (Government of Cameroon, 2019). The situation of adolescent mothers was particularly highlighted for Zimbabwe. As noted by informants, while policies allow for girls to re-enter school after giving birth, there are myriad cultural and practical challenges, not least amongst them the attitudes of teachers, school leaders and community members, who may struggle to adapt to the new identity of the young mother.

Finally, across the continent, **poverty** remains a key driver of exclusion, as highlighted for every country within the PCFC grouping. In contexts like DR Congo and Cameroon, the cost of school fees keeps many children out of school, especially in emergency situations where family finances are needed for survival (Government of Cameroon, 2019; UNICEF, 2023b). Children may be forced to work, as highlighted by informants for Central African Republic, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. As reported by key informants in Zimbabwe, primary school is well-attended, but dropouts are particularly concerning at secondary level. With high inflation, youth turn to work, especially in the mining regions of the country, where gold panning and mine work appear as quick ways to earn a living, whilst education does not have the same guaranteed economic return. Those regions exhibit the highest rates of drop-out, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and sexual exploitation and abuse of young girls (TEPE, 2022).

Across the EMAP region, violent conflict, natural disasters, increasing poverty and the lingering impacts of COVID-19 act as significant drivers for curtailing access and imperilling existing school enrolments. Since the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the combination of legal barriers, cultural barriers, poverty, lack of infrastructure, terrorist activity, military offensives and the impacts of emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and other natural disasters all combine to result in situation where 3.5 million children are out of school, which includes nearly 80% of school-aged girls (Sobhan & Haqpal, 2023). In Myanmar, nearly 50% of children remain out of school, with troubling reports of children being abducted and recruited for armed conflicts, imprisoned on suspicion of taking part in protests, being held hostage, and, particularly for Rohingya children, suffering torture and ill-treatment (OHCHR, 2022). The UN has recorded 320 cases of schools being commandeered by armed groups and 260 damaged in the conflict. In Ukraine, the Russian invasion has resulted in damage or destruction of more than 3,790 education facilities, as reported by Human Rights Watch (2023a); where infrastructure is undamaged, cuts in heating, electricity and internet, along with continued air raids, further interrupt schooling (Snyder, 2023).

Key informants from across the region highlighted the impacts of **conflict** on education. In Sudan and Yemen, key informants pointed to ongoing armed conflicts which displace children and limit access to learning resources. Tribal conflict in Papua New Guinea can last for multiple years, resulting in students suspending their schooling, having to repeat grades or never returning; as noted by one informant, 'the whole community is displaced, so children are unable to attend school.'

In many contexts, access—due to **limited supply and distance to existing schools**—remains a barrier for all children, cited by informants from Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan, Yemen and multiple Pacific Islands states. In Sudan, key informants noted the lack of financial resources being allocated to education at the government level, with rural areas particularly under-funded and under-staffed. Likewise, in Egypt, informants commented on the lack of schools available for economically and socially marginalised groups, particularly in remote and border areas. Similarly, across the islands of the Pacific, some of the most vulnerable children are those living in remote and rural areas with few schools available. Key informants from Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste noted that these children often live in areas impacted by flooding or heavy rains, which create further security risks for those walking long distances to school. As such, these young people are more at risk of being absent or discontinuing their education once a disaster hits. Existing schools also need modifications to become more resilient to climate change and environmental disasters.

Girls remain marginalised across the region, especially for continuing education past primary age, which was cited in FGDs for Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen. Boy preference in families and limited seats in secondary schools, combined with cultural practices for early marriage, limit girls' ability to continue with education. A key informant from Papua New Guinea noted that girls

who are displaced or relocated due to an emergency are especially at risk, as they often have to live in 'makeshift accommodation without proper hygiene or sanitation.' Other marginalised groups specified for the region include **ethnic minorities and nomadic populations**, as highlighted by informants from Sudan and Yemen: those populations often lack access to education and ministries struggle to develop solutions which align with the needs of those communities. Language was cited as a key factor for Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and other countries in East Asia and the Pacific, where there are multiple indigenous languages. In Papua New Guinea, the curriculum has recently shifted the language of instruction from bilingual to only English, which can be the third or fourth language for many students (NORRAG, 2021), creating a 'push' factor for students who may struggle to engage with learning and thus leave school.

Families in rural and remote areas also often live in **poverty**. Key informants from across the region pointed to a variety of economic factors that hinder children's access to schooling in EiE settings, including a loss of income or employment, and food insecurity, as well as 'less visible' school fees such as transportation, uniforms, school meals or other costs. Poverty also leads to other challenges, such as increased rates of child labour or domestic work. As a key informant from Timor-Leste noted, 'parents need kids at home to pick coffee, sell things in the market, or help take care of younger children.' The informant also mentioned the issue of malnutrition: in Timor-Leste, 50% of young children are stunted, with a direct impact on their ability to learn. Further, students who are malnourished often get sick and miss out on schooling. Poorer children also experience discrimination and bullying from peers and teachers, who mock them for their clothes or appearance. After disasters, when schools reopen or upon re-enrolling, parents may choose to invest their limited funds in their sons' education, resulting in girls from poorer families suspending their education or dropping out altogether, as reported by informants. In Pakistan, an informant noted that when children, especially those from rural, impoverished families, have domestic and financial obligations, they struggle with rigid school schedules and are often excluded because of tardiness policies.

Informants also highlighted the situation facing **older students** as a marginalised group. Over-age learners may face discrimination, as reported for Pakistan, where rigid school policies do not allow them to enrol in their actual grade levels. There, as with other contexts, secondary schools are in short supply, and places are further reduced in times of emergency, as in the Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan provinces where recent flooding has caused severe destruction and displacement. The lack of opportunity beyond primary school can demotivate learners, especially girls, who see no future education opportunities beyond primary. A key informant from Kiribati also identified students at the secondary level as more vulnerable since many of them attend boarding schools. In an emergency, these schools close and students must return to their homes, which are often in rural and remote areas with limited access to technology or other forms of remote learning. Likewise, age was mentioned by a key informant for Marshall Islands, who indicated that the trend was due to the limited support that older students receive:

'due to low exam scores, students who do not do well or feel that they are not learning and drop out.'

Often, it is difficult to know who is out of school, and **data collection and use** are critical in order to identify learners who are at risk, or track learners who leave or change schools due to an emergency. In Egypt, it is difficult to know the extent of the situation for out-of-school children, as noted by an informant: there is no system to follow up on children who have left school, and there is no clear state policy for supporting their re-enrolment. Likewise, in Timor-Leste, for example, a government official noted, 'there needs to be better tracing of these [out-of-school] children, to understand who is going back and who is staying out, and why.' Without this data, there are evidence gaps around *what works* to keep students in school, or to get students back in school after dropping out. There seemed to be general agreement about the need for more evaluative evidence to assess the impact of various policy and programmatic efforts.

Finally, informants highlighted the 'push' factor of **educational quality**. Across the region, there is a need for curriculum in general to be made more relevant to students' lives: where parents and children can see the value of school, they will be more encouraged to enrol their children or support their continued engagement even when impacted by emergencies or poverty. As highlighted for Pakistan, formal education offerings which exist may be too inflexible to engage the learners most in need. Key informants from Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Sudan and Pakistan called for broad curricular improvements to make learning more fun, interesting and relevant, with more attention to extracurricular activities such as sports and art highlighted for Sudan. Challenging school and classroom conditions, including a lack of teachers, high student-to-teacher ratios, and multigrade or heterogeneous classrooms, were also identified as challenges. When students do not receive adequate support, 'they [become] lost in the ocean, disengage, and eventually drop out,' as reported by an informant from Solomon Islands.

Barriers cited for LAC

Within the LAC region, there is one PCFC country: Haiti. There, 'nearly all children' are **vulnerable**, as noted by a key informant. Gang violence has caused many schools to close or be repurposed, and students, teachers and community members face myriad safety risks, resulting in feelings of distress fear, or traumatisation. A key informant indicated that parents and families are sending their daughters away from these areas as a means of protecting them from rape or sexual violence; this often results in girls dropping out of school. Gang violence also inhibits efforts by the state and other development partners, who are unable to access communities to collect important data or provide critical services. Earthquakes and landslides have also destroyed schools, meaning that the closest available schools for young people often require long travel distances, and a lack of electricity can mean that they face additional safety concerns when travelling in the dark. Poverty and malnutrition remain barriers as well: nearly one in four children suffers from chronic malnutrition or stunting, which can have long-lasting

consequences on their physical and cognitive development (UNICEF, 2023d), and many children who are unable to pay fees drop out of school.

Distance learning mechanisms (e.g., through radio or broadcast media) have been explored, but key informants agreed these are difficult to implement in rural and remote areas, and those impacted by gang violence: there are high disparities in technology, and parents and caregivers often have low levels of education and therefore struggle to provide academic support to students. Additional challenges include limited access to teaching and learning materials, and overcrowded classroom conditions. With limited education financing, informants commented on how the government will prioritise students in exam classes, namely those grades with a standardised exit exam, usually to transition to another grade or education level.

4.3 Solutions cited across all regions

Despite the diverse EiE contexts described above, many countries across the regions are focusing on similar strategies to prepare for or respond to emergencies. As the data for this section goes on to demonstrate, there are also efforts to plan for and curb *future* drop-outs, which are particularly important in the Pacific Islands states, where the impacts of rising sea levels and natural disasters caused by climate change are projected to increase.

Building safe and resilient **infrastructure** that can withstand damage or harm caused by conflict or environmental disasters is a vital part of EiE. It helps to ensure schools stay open during emergencies and is an essential form of planning to prevent future drop-outs. Various governments in the region are building more and stronger schools as part of their DRR strategies, as seen in policies for Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Tuvalu, all of which mention the importance of building safe and resilient school infrastructure or environments. Key informants from Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands all mentioned infrastructure in their interviews. A government stakeholder from Kiribati, for example, explained how the government is now building school infrastructure with higher and stronger foundations, to avoid flooding and other damage caused by rising sea levels. Where needed, temporary infrastructure can support the continuation of learning in the short term. Temporary spaces set up by organisations during crisis situations, including mobile schools, have supported learning in Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Mali and Niger (Guiryanan et al., 2021; Strategie Cluster Education, 2019). Temporary school kits, such as the 'school in a carton' approach used in Comoros following the destruction of Cyclone Kenneth, provide some protection to support the continuation of learning when schools have been damaged or destroyed (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2019).

Overall strengthening and improvements to infrastructure—beyond climate resilience—are needed to ensure that all children can access schooling. Indeed, as with supporting access outside of emergency settings, data on which was captured in other KIX scoping studies on GESI (Cameron et al., 2023) and Early Childhood Care and Education (D'Angelo et al., 2023), the

provision of health, nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities through schools are significant mechanisms to re-enrol and retain learners. In emergency settings, those supports are even more critical (Burde et al., 2015). Informants from Marshall Islands and Timor-Leste referenced programmes to improve WASH infrastructure and raise awareness about safe health and hygiene practices and the effects of climate change. Provision of nutrition was also mentioned by informants from Timor-Leste and Sudan and in the literature on school feedings in Burundi (UNICEF, 2022a), Ethiopia (ECW, 2022), Haiti (UNICEF, 2020b) and Niger (Boly, 2023b). An informant from South Sudan commented on the need for support for schools that would enable them to create their own sustainable agriculture initiatives, such as through cultivating plots and raising poultry to provide school meals.

Including **EiE and DRR topics in the curriculum** helps ensure students and teachers are prepared when a disaster or crisis strikes. Various countries have turned to curricular efforts to ensure students, teachers and other education stakeholders are equipped with key knowledge and skills on how to prevent or respond to emergencies and build awareness of the factors that may push children out of school or leave them seriously at risk. An informant from Haiti, for example, commented on efforts to integrate better understanding of climate change, water safety and hygiene through improved curricula and conferences organised by schools and youth clubs. Climate change content has been integrated into national curricula in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Timor-Leste and Comoros.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spearheaded government efforts to enhance **remote and distance education**, including through the use of technology. The literature includes examples of programmes that have been successful in emergency and FCV contexts. The Can't Wait to Learn initiative collaborated with education ministries in multiple conflict-affected contexts, including Chad and Sudan, in the delivery of educational games on tablets; activities were co-designed with children, aligned with national curricula and reflective of the national cultural environment, with game characters having nationally appropriate names, jobs and clothes (UNESCO, 2021a). In Ukraine, provision of laptops, tablets, smartphones and other technology to teachers and learners has supported online classes, with additional lessons and resources available through an online literacy platform, YouTube and lessons broadcast on TV channels (GEM, 2023).

Likewise, from our data collection, an informant for Kiribati highlighted the success of UNICEF's Learning Passport, developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Education during the 2020 phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital learning platform provides online and offline access to locally developed video lessons and quizzes, and it has reached approximately 3,000 children in Kiribati—with potential for implementation in Timor-Leste. As reported by an informant for Pakistan, hybrid delivery of AEPs (discussed further below) combines distance learning and twice-weekly face-to-face sessions with community teachers to reach those learners not able to attend school regularly. In Haiti, key informants also pointed to the need to improve connectivity and schools' access to digital technology, as remote and distance education can help foster more safe and resilient schools in times of crisis.

While technological solutions have potential in improving access, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that already marginalised children can be further excluded when such solutions do not take into account their access to devices, electricity and data connectivity. **Low-tech solutions**, which rely on existing technology like radios and mobile phones, have some potential to provide stop-gap education access when other options are unavailable, especially where access to power and internet connectivity is limited. Representatives from South Sudan and Somalia both referenced national radio programmes which were particularly influential in supporting pastoralist and IDP learners. A key informant from Niger highlighted the importance of interactive radio programmes with listening clubs to encourage out-of-school children to continue learning. Radio was also highlighted in the literature as a key strategy for Burkina Faso (Boly, 2023a), Central African Republic (Ministère de l'enseignement supérieur, 2020) and Niger (Boly, 2023b), and other low-tech initiatives captured in the literature include curriculum-aligned, crowd-sourced videos in Egypt (Koomar et al., 2020) and provision of radio and television community-based education broadcasts in Afghanistan (Girls' Education Challenge, 2021).

Like the aforementioned remote learning approaches, **alternative education approaches** can reach marginalised children, especially those involved in child labour or with domestic responsibilities, those in insecure territories, or those displaced by conflict or crisis who are otherwise unable to consistently access formal schooling. In Pakistan, informants reported on the work of accelerated primary curriculum programmes which specifically target over-age out-of-school learners. These accelerated education programmes (AEPs) have flexible timings, duration and regulations (such as uniform codes) and they use students' prior learning as a bridge to ensure that their previous experience in education and the academic skills learned and used in their daily lives are integrated and recognised. In Afghanistan, the lack of access to formal education for many learners demonstrates the importance of community-based education approaches, which rely on multi-grade and cluster classrooms, allowing one teacher to work with a broad range of grades and abilities (Afghanistan Education Cluster, 2022). These alternative programmes can target the recruitment of girls, including those who are married or have young children, and emphasise recruitment of female teachers to encourage parents to enrol their girls, as seen in Burkina Faso (Shah & Choo, 2020). They can be tailored to support particular marginalised groups—like youth searching for work and young parents, as an informant from Solomon Islands noted—by delivering skills-focused, accessible and high-quality curricula in a short period of time.

Catch-up programmes to support learners who have experienced learning disruptions were also referenced across the data. In Timor-Leste, a key informant commented on the importance of the country's 'recurrent education' programme, as it provides catch-up classes for children who are out of school for prolonged periods. Catch-up and 'speed school' programmes appear in the literature for Burundi (UNICEF, 2022a), DR Congo (UNICEF, 2023a), Mozambique (UNICEF, 2023c), Nigeria (UNICEF, 2019a), Central African Republic (Strategie Cluster Education, 2019), Chad, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (Fitzpatrick, 2020).

Informants mentioned programmes where schools are working alongside communities to **shift attitudes and cultural norms** around school attendance, build resilience, and reduce absenteeism and drop-out. Approaches that target parents were mentioned throughout. For example, to encourage impoverished families to send children to school instead of work, financing grants and conditional cash transfers were mentioned by informants from Zimbabwe and Timor-Leste. Back-to-school campaigns to improve community awareness of the importance of education were referenced by informants from Kiribati and Timor-Leste, and in the literature for Central African Republic (Strategie Cluster Education, 2019), Niger and Burkina Faso (Boly, 2023b, 2023a), where activities focused on mobilising communities and addressing parents' fear around safety. An informant for Marshall Islands described programmes that engaged with school counsellors and parents to address issues of absenteeism and flag those at risk for drop-out. In Pakistan, AEPs that target over-age learners also directly address adult learning needs: to ensure that parents understand the importance of education for their children, they include programmes for adult literacy and life skills, as an informant noted.

A clear area of interest in our data emerged around **adolescent mothers**: in many of these contexts, girls do not return to school after giving birth, often because of personal circumstances, cultural norms or policies which prevent their re-entry. This is a particular concern in emergency and displacement scenarios, where girls face increased exposure to harms, such as rape, sexual assault, transactional or coerced sex, and forced marriage (Neal et al., 2016) which may result in pregnancy, and the misguided 'protective' approach of early marriage, as in Mozambique (Simione, 2021). The importance of supporting adolescent parents was referenced by participants from Haiti, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. According to an informant from Timor-Leste, back-to-school campaigns have particularly focused on this population of girls.

Policy has been an important driver for ensuring that adolescent parents and refugees have the right to attend school and obtain formal credentials. Informants from Zimbabwe referenced a decree that initially barred girls from attending schools: while it was overturned in 2018, there is persistent belief that those learners do not 'belong' in education. A representative from South Sudan indicated that policies are in place to ensure that girls can continue to access education and sit for national exams. From the literature, there are other examples where policies and programmes have supported marginalised groups in returning to education: in Chad, creches have been established to provide adolescent mothers with support in returning to school (Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la promotion civique, 2020). In both Burkina Faso and Niger, advocacy is underway to support refugee learners' access to national school environments (Boly, 2023a, 2023b). In Niger, school examinations have been organised for refugee pupils to allow them to access national certifications and there is support for certifying the diplomas of refugee pupils (Boly, 2023b), and in Chad, all refugee camp schools have been included in the national education system since 2014, and there are measures in place to facilitate refugee students' access to examinations (Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la promotion civique, 2020).

Our data also indicated the importance of policy for ensuring the sustainability of options which reach OOSCY and formalising national strategies. In Pakistan, informants who discussed AEPs indicated the importance of **institutionalisation**: these programmes have been recognised by the government as equivalent to traditional primary schooling and integrated into ministry bodies, and they have EMIS, teacher frameworks and the other policy apparatus needed for scalability and sustainability. From the literature, especially for West and Central Africa, policies ensure that governments are attending to the challenges that OOSCY and at-risk learners face. Key strategy documents include the National Strategy for Education in Emergencies in Burkina Faso, and, in Niger, a national strategy for responding to vulnerabilities in the education system ensures that national education clusters and regional sub-clusters are supervised by government ministries to report on implementation of EiE policy and communicate changes and gaps (Boly, 2023b; Guiryanan et al., 2021). In Comoros, a national coordination unit is focused on risk reduction and disaster management and is housed within the national education ministry (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2019).

5   SUB-THEME 2: TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR WORK WITH OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND AT-RISK CHILDREN

In PCFC contexts, a lack of trained teachers (as a result of displacement, death, inability to work, etc.) presents a major hurdle to providing safe, quality education that attracts and retains students (Nicolai, 2009; UNHCR, 2015a). With many teachers leaving the profession, overcrowding has compromised safe learning environments, leading to student drop-out (Maalim, 2018). Where teachers are well-supported, they can motivate students and lower drop-out rates, as seen amongst Palestinian refugee learners in Lebanon (Al-Hroub, 2015). Across contexts, though, better training and support are needed to ensure that teachers can attend to the needs of at-risk children and prevent them from dropping out, and better reintegrate those who have been previously excluded.

While teacher training is the focus of this section, teacher management, wellbeing and school leadership are also discussed, as understanding and addressing challenges facing teachers are vital to increasing the pool of quality teachers and, subsequently, the number of classes available to children. Failure to address teacher wellbeing and management can also result in good teachers leaving the profession, lacking the motivation to work well or failing to turn up for work (UNESCO & IICBA, 2017). Where there are teacher shortages, there can be few or large classes, particularly in rural areas, and communities may resort to employing under-qualified teachers, which can result in poor-quality education and drop-out (Nicolai, 2009; UNESCO, 2014).

5.1 Background

Teacher training and **teacher professional development (TPD)** are amongst the greatest factors impacting the quality of education. TPD can support untrained teachers in acquiring content knowledge, delivering foundational educational knowledge and improving their skills in classroom management, assessment, pedagogy and lesson planning. Existing teachers can acquire the skills needed to attend to classroom-related challenges arising from emergencies, including working with large classes containing students of mixed age and ability (UNHCR, 2015a). Training can also be specific to the emergency, such as how to provide psychosocial support for students, DRR and gender-focused training (i.e., preventing military recruitment and SRGBV)[3]. While teachers have exhibited creative efforts to address the unique demands in FCV contexts and shared these amongst themselves, teachers who lack training, resources and professional networks may not have the capabilities to teach well, which can lead to poor learning outcomes and subsequent doubt experienced by learners over the benefits of attending school (Vega & Bajaj, 2016). Training specific to OOSCY in emergencies can also coincide with many of the best practices described in the section above (Sub-Theme 1). For instance, where AEPs have been successful, these interventions often had training included, though the type and nature differ depending on teachers' experience (Baxter et al., 2016).

There is need to consider not only the content of the training, but also its relevance, design and delivery. Ensuring training considers resources and restraints of context and is culturally appropriate is equally vital (Richardson et al., 2018). In terms of design, research suggests that it is important to conduct needs assessments to inform training. These should include the use of student assessment data (Obeidat & Dawani, 2014) and an assessment of the needs of teachers (Bengtsson et al., 2021). These assessments can ensure that training is contextualised correctly to meet the needs of teachers and target students' learning gaps. As for delivery, in refugee contexts, training delivery can benefit from partnerships with existing national teacher education bodies, such as education ministries, teacher training colleges, universities, UNICEF and local and/or international non-government organisations (UNHCR, 2015a). Challenges can also exist where teachers live in remote areas or are unable to attend TPD due to restrictions stemming from the emergency, as was seen during the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic when travel was limited. Virtual training can be used in these contexts, but teachers can also face constraints in technological accessibility (infrastructure, software and hardware), and research in this area is scant.

Effective TPD is contingent on the larger structures in which it is situated and can be inhibited by poor **teacher management** (i.e., teacher recruitment, pay, allocation, retention, access to TPD and other supports) (Albán Conto, 2021; UNESCO & IICBA, 2017; UNHCR, 2015a). Teacher

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[3] Toolkits and guidance books for training teachers in these areas include the IRC's Healing Classrooms, UNICEF's (2011) teacher training guidebook for WASH in emergencies, the EiE Genkit by UNGEI, ECW and the INEE (2021), and the INEE's (INEE, 2016b) Introductory Training Pack.

management is plagued by several issues in conflict-affected contexts, including destroyed records and qualifications (and subsequent validation or recognition of credentials), coordination issues between stakeholders (Paradies et al., 2020), unequal or inconsistent pay (Bengtsson et al., 2021), and inefficient financial and management systems and auditing mechanisms (Dolan et al., 2012; Golden, 2012). These issues can cause gaps in delivery, leaving children and youth with fewer educational options. Moreover, conflict zones also tend to have high turnover, as teachers move away from conflict-affected areas or take prolonged absences (Marchais et al., 2022). In certain contexts, systemic barriers can inhibit the recruitment and/or retention of female teachers, which can subsequently inhibit female student enrolment as female teachers are often an important part of safeguarding (Rose et al., 2021).

The International Task Force on Teachers for Education[4] has collated a number of resources that can help support effective teacher management in crisis contexts, including reports on best practices. Additionally, UNESCO and Education Development Trust offer a series of papers on teacher management in refugee contexts (e.g. Bengtsson et al., 2020, 2023). Key themes emerging from these resources are the importance of **school leadership** and attending to teacher **wellbeing**, and the intersections these areas have with teacher training.

The INEE (2022) report on promising practices in teacher wellbeing, management and school leadership points to the importance of leaders in creating a positive school environment during challenging times. Like their students, teachers in conflict-affected contexts can experience trauma or hardships that inhibit their ability to teach. In some contexts, teachers can face dangerous journeys to school or be the target of violence. As such, they may quit the profession or be unable to teach. Once more, these challenges can limit the number of teachers available to teach, reduce the quality and availability of learning, and lead to low enrolment and retention. Initiatives are therefore paying closer attention to teacher wellbeing and developing tools and supports in this area. The INEE Teacher Wellbeing Toolkit (INEE, n.d.), for instance, comprises tools and resources that address teacher wellbeing in emergency settings, with contextualised guidance notes. Likewise, a review of teacher wellbeing in low-resource, crisis and conflict-affected settings outlines some of the key considerations to improving job satisfaction and mitigating against stress and burnout (Falk et al., 2019).

5.2 Barriers: Regional specificities

Across data collection exercises, key informants provided less content related to teachers, especially in comparison to the amount of data available on challenges, barriers and solutions for Sub-Theme 1. In many cases, informants focused on teachers' general needs, regardless of the status of their learners: broadly, many systems need more teachers who are better trained, incentivised to work in less desirable areas, and who are skilled in delivering academic content and supporting the psychosocial needs of learners. In many cases, this data overlapped with

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[4] See https://teachertaskforce.org/topic/teacher-management-crisis-and-emergency-situations

the findings presented in another KIX scoping study working paper, [Supporting Teachers to Improve Teaching and Learning](#) (D'Angelo et al., 2023).

Barriers cited for Africa 19 and Africa 21

Greater numbers of teachers are needed across much of the African continent, and they are in particular demand to provide support within emergency and FCV contexts. They can be lost as victims of war: in Ethiopia, the conflict in Tigray resulted in the death of 1,700 teachers (Tikuye, 2023) and nearly 3,000 were reported killed by Boko Haram in Nigeria (Agedigba, 2018). Teacher shortages can also be related to chronic under-funding of education, as noted by an informant from Somalia. There, the **underfunding of education** and resulting low salaries of teachers mean that they are paid half of what is needed for a family to survive. As a result, many take on additional work, which de-professionalises the workforce as a whole and can lead to exhaustion and less focus on the needs of the classroom. In Nigeria, as noted by an informant, more female teachers are needed, particularly in areas impacted by conflict and disasters, where other vulnerabilities increase, and parents balk at sending their daughters to school. Strengthening **teacher management** becomes a key aspect in these contexts.

Teachers need a broad constellation of skills in order to support the unique needs of children who are re-entering school after being away and to ensure that existing at-risk learners remain enrolled. As discussed later in Sub-Theme 3, **training** in providing psychosocial support is necessary for teachers working with children who have undergone traumatic experiences. In contexts like South Sudan and Somalia, existing teachers may lack basic skills training, especially when they have been recruited from the community. Ongoing TPD in South Sudan, reported by a key informant, is increasingly focused on safeguarding and appropriate codes of conduct, along with capacity building on how to take care of vulnerable children.

A gap strongly highlighted in the literature is around teacher pay (D'Angelo, Cameron, Sheria Nfundiko et al., 2023; Education International, 2020; FOZEU, 2021; Teacher Task Force, 2020). Teachers working in refugee-hosting areas (either refugees themselves or national teachers) and those working in FCV settings regularly experience low rates of compensation and/or inconsistent pay distribution.

Barriers cited for EMAP

Teachers face a variety of challenges in supporting learners in emergency and FCV EMAP countries. Common challenges found in primary and secondary data include limited access to quality pre-service or in-service teacher education and **training**. A key informant in Yemen reported that teachers need a diverse skillset: when children who were previously out of school return, teachers need to know how to evaluate their current level and design appropriate lessons. They may also have to deal with diverse multi-grade classrooms and ensure the provision of socio-emotional support. Many have received only limited training for dealing with emergency settings. According to the informant, teachers most need economic security and

quality training for digital literacy and learner-centred methodologies to better support the needs of their students. In addition, key informants mentioned that EiE topics are rarely included in pre-service teacher education curricula (for Papua New Guinea and Yemen), and that national training efforts are not always relevant to 'what's going on down on the ground' (for Timor-Leste). In Timor-Leste, a key informant described the need for more school-based training, on-the-job support, and follow-up through the support of qualified coaches or mentors.

Where **community-based education and AEPs** are implemented, for example in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, special attention needs to be focused on training and supporting teachers. While they may lack formal teacher training, community-sourced teachers often share the cultural and life experience of the children they teach. In Pakistan, key informants noted that AEP teachers can understand their local context and bond well with their students, building a relationship of trust and familiarity that can be missing in rigid, formal education settings. With adequate training, community teachers can recognise the academic skills that children use in other parts of their life and connect those with classroom tasks. However, as highlighted by key informants, those teachers often receive **low pay** with high expectations to produce better outcomes with diverse and sometimes traumatised student populations. Also, community and AEP teachers may need additional support, as seen with the use of transportation stipends and other incentives which allow teachers to come from other communities within Afghanistan (Afghanistan Education Cluster, 2022).

Key informants identified **various subjects or skills** that are important to enhance through teacher education and training curricula. They especially identified ways that teachers could make learning more inclusive or fun, given that many students who drop out do so because they feel they are not learning or enjoying school. Foundational skills in literacy and numeracy were identified as critical to ensuring school readiness and student success in later grades by informants for Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands and Timor-Leste. A key informant from Timor-Leste noted that the majority of donor-funded programmes focus on the pre-primary level, and that remedial support for literacy and numeracy needs to be expanded to include at least the primary level (e.g., Grades 1–4). Other key informants described the need to enhance teachers' skills in learner-centred pedagogy (Solomon Islands), multi-grade instruction (Timor-Leste), lesson planning (Solomon Islands) and formative assessment (Timor-Leste, Solomon Islands). Various key informants from Haiti mentioned teacher training as a country priority, emphasising the need to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Barriers cited for LAC

Key challenges for teachers in Haiti include the **limited access to training and support**, as well as **safety risks** due to gang violence and environmental disasters. A key informant from Haiti noted that 'there is no specific training for teachers' and a second estimated that only half of all teachers are trained. Others described the poor quality of teacher training programmes, describing them as outdated or irrelevant. They referenced a number of broad challenges

related to teaching, including poor quality of instruction, limited access to quality professional development, especially in topics such as technology or mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS; discussed later in Sub-Theme 3), low teacher salaries, overcrowded classroom spaces, and limited access to teaching and learning materials or technologies.

5.3 Solutions cited across all regions

Across the regions, informants highlighted approaches to ensuring that teachers can better support vulnerable children, including those at risk of dropping out and those re-entering education after being out of school. From the data, four key areas emerged: approaches to recruiting more teachers, improving content of teacher education and training, diversifying the modalities and structures for *how* teachers learn, and supporting teacher wellbeing.

As noted, many contexts need **more teachers**, with several strategies referenced to fill gaps and improve access. An informant from Nigeria cited the previous success of scholarships to encourage women to get into teaching, including the Female Teacher Trainees Scholarship Scheme, which ran from 2008 to 2015. In that scheme, women from rural villages were supported to obtain teaching qualifications on the condition that they returned to teach in their home village for at least two years (Humphreys et al., 2020). In Central African Republic, for example, an informant commented on ongoing efforts to recruit and train community teachers to work in temporary learning spaces. Community teachers, called *maitres parents*, are recruited at the college level, which provides a broad candidate pool for recruitment. As can be seen from the literature, policies to support the use of refugee teachers, especially in camps and other refugee-hosting settings, can help alleviate teacher shortages. In Uganda, though not a PCFC for the purposes of this study, implementation of the Djibouti Declaration and its Plan of Action on Refugee Education mean that refugee teachers from DR Congo, South Sudan, Somalia and Burundi can take on teaching positions if they possess teacher qualifications from other systems that have been validated in Uganda (Bengtsson et al., 2023).

Training teachers on **inclusive practices,** remedial support, differentiated instruction or teaching at the right level were common topics in the primary and secondary data. In Haiti, for example, the Ministry of Education has introduced the topic of 'learning compensation' to help teachers provide remedial support to learners to help them catch up on the curriculum, as reported by an informant. A government official from Timor-Leste highlighted the need to help teachers identify students who fall behind, due to learning difficulties, disabilities or health problems. Both key informants from Timor-Leste described various efforts. Teachers are being trained to identify learning levels according to benchmarks and to provide tailored support to children, including through after-school programmes, small-group reinforcement or tutoring. They are also being informed of back-to-school policies for girls and other marginalised young people. For Zimbabwe, key informants highlighted the ongoing need to support teachers in how to conduct remedial lessons, especially for learners with different forms of disability.

Training teachers in **technology** for remote and distance education is particularly important in EiE settings. A government official from Kiribati described efforts to train teachers in the delivery of 'remote lessons'. Teachers have been trained to deliver these lessons through different technologies, including broadcast media, such as the radio, or online platforms and social media, such as Facebook. In Tuvalu, as reported by an informant, ICT centres are being established in schools, and teachers are trained in the use of digitised resources and other EdTech Interventions, including digital literacy, the use of educational videos, digitised gamification of literacy concepts, and phonics for emergent readers, to support struggling students in higher grades; the project is also facilitating distance professional development and training for teachers in the outer islands of Tuvalu.

Some examples of training teachers on **EiE topics** have also emerged from the literature and key informant interviews. Additional EiE teacher training topics mentioned by key informants from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste include positive disciplining, counselling and psychosocial support. Informants from Niger commented on ongoing efforts to train teachers in how to provide psychosocial support and in Egypt, an informant commented on successes in community schools, where teachers are trained in strategies for 'convincing' learners to return to school. These topics will be looked at in more detail in Sub-Theme 3 on student socio-emotional wellbeing.

FCV and emergency contexts require innovative solutions to teacher education and training. Governments are turning towards **diverse tools and modalities** to employ new in-service teacher training opportunities. However, we found limited examples of efforts at the pre-service teacher education level. Key informants also generally agreed there was a lack of evidence, and a need to evaluate the ongoing initiatives to understand their reach and impact. Various school-based and ongoing professional development efforts were identified by key informants. Marshall Islands is expanding and improving **school leadership training** for all school leaders through the Graduate Certificate in School Leadership. Through this programme, school leaders will learn how to develop school plans and better support teachers. In Timor-Leste, a **mentoring programme** called 'Alma' was identified as a promising solution by a key informant. However, the key informant also described a need to build the capacity of mentors to increase programme effectiveness. 'It's a positive, but it needs to be strengthened,' the key informant said, 'and it's getting better, [because] the Ministry of Education is putting resources into it.' From the literature it can be seen that refugee schools in Ethiopia have clustered with national schools, allowing refugee teachers to receive mentoring and peer-to-peer support from their Ethiopian counterparts (Bengtsson et al., 2020).

A key informant from Solomon Islands described the government's recent efforts to develop teachers' and school leaders' **pedagogical or instructional leadership skills**. She mentioned the importance of encouraging teachers to support each other, through lesson observation and the provision of feedback. A government official from Kiribati mentioned the importance of teacher research, in order to 'understand how to best support teachers to address climate change and to become resilient.'

Finally, a key informant from Marshall Islands identified **teacher wellbeing** as an important priority. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government realised how 'teachers were isolated and really over-stretched.' As a result, MHPSS has been provided to teachers, and related topics integrated into the teacher training curriculum. 'It's not an easy job,' the informant said, '[and] we need to encourage them to stay.' Salary increments have also been instated to support teachers. However, the key informant highlighted that monetary support is not enough.

6 SUB-THEME 3: SUPPORTING THE SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND AT-RISK CHILDREN

Within PCFC contexts, emergencies and FCV heighten the vulnerabilities of children, disrupting their social networks with peers, families and communities. The psychological and emotional distress caused by exposure to crisis situations can inhibit healthy development and learning and lead to drop-out (UNESCO, 2019b). Children at risk of dropping out are often in a similar position and face the same challenges which can hinder their ability to learn fundamental skills like reading and mathematics (Save the Children, 2018). Consequently, it is important that EiE incorporates social and psychological support for children and their parents, caregivers and teachers to ensure that OOSCY and RODO are able to successfully engage with learning.

There are several key terms which are important for understanding these impacts and the support that children—and teachers, parents, community members and others experiencing FCV—need for recovery. According to INEE (2020b), wellbeing indicates a person's holistic health: they are well in their physical and mental states, they have meaningful social roles and relationships, they feel happy and hopeful for the future, they enjoy a supportive, secure environment with access to quality services and they can cope with challenges. **Socio-emotional learning (SEL)**, then, refers to acquisition of the skills, attributes and strategies needed for wellbeing, which are integral but different from usual academic learning (Yorke et al., 2021, p. 2). SEL includes a broad range of skills: those identified by the widely referenced Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020) framework include self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. All children need support in SEL, but it is also one component of **mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)**, a broad umbrella of supports which aid a person's recovery after experiencing trauma, crisis or other adverse events. MHPSS includes a wide range of areas, including practices which promote wellbeing overall, reduce the risk of mental health challenges, and overcome mental health and psychosocial challenges (INEE, 2020b).

In this background section, we first examine socio-emotional impacts and barriers faced by children who are out of school or at risk within FCV contexts. We then look at features of effective interventions to support their wellbeing.

6.1 Background

In FCV settings, there are multiple scenarios through which children experience poor emotional and psychosocial outcomes. School environments themselves can be the cause of distress when learners can be exposed to harm through corporal punishment and physical and verbal abuse from teachers, school staff and classmates (Thompson, 2018). These factors can be exacerbated in emergency contexts, with reduced staffing, deteriorating social services and oversight, and heightened tension and fear within the broader environment, leading to relationships between teachers, learners, parents and other community members being impacted by feelings of suspicion or mistrust (Save the Children, 2017a). This distress can spiral into cycles of violence, abuse and exploitation within educational settings unless proactive measures are taken.

Conversely, when schools are damaged, destroyed or repurposed, the loss of a school environment can have profound impacts. As seen during COVID-19 school closures, simply being outside of the school environment can have impacts on children's mental health: a systematic review across global contexts found high prevalence of anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hossain et al., 2022). Along with the loss of routine and stability, OOSCY can be more vulnerable to dangers, including many of the issues covered in Sub-Theme 1 of this paper such as displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, physical violence, recruitment into armed groups, early marriage and pregnancy, and child labour, among many others. As with increasing fear and tension within schools, communities and parents may also be impacted by or perpetrate emotional or physical neglect or violence (Save the Children, 2017a). Intergenerational trauma, where years of stress have accumulated due to ongoing conflict and insecurity, can impact the mental health of children, even when they have not directly experienced traumatic situations (Devakumar et al., 2014). Taken altogether, exposure to adversity as a result of being outside of a protective education environment can lead to physical and mental health disorders, behaviour issues and learning impairments (INEE, 2018). Children who are still in school, but are exposed to these forms of harm, are at a heightened risk for dropping out.

When children experience mental health impacts due to FCV, it is harder for them to re-engage with learning, and if they remain in school, or return after dropping out, they need special supports. Those who have experienced trauma may have cognitive effects, such as difficulty paying attention, inability to process new information or problems remembering things; they may demonstrate anxiety, fear, sadness and outbursts of emotion (GEM, 2019). They may also experience physical symptoms such as stomach aches, headaches and vomiting. Many schools lack adequate mental health staff to cope with these challenges: in this absence, teachers can be trained to look out for these signs of trauma and in strategies to mitigate the effects of trauma on learning (ibid.).

Holistic interventions—which support not only learners, but their families, schools and communities—are needed to support the socio-emotional wellbeing of children who are out of

school or at risk. Example approaches, like many of the programmes cited in this background and later in the data presentation, includes forms of assessment, education, skill-building, play and community involvement. Each component—from teacher training to parental involvement—plays a critical role in fostering resilience and recovery among young learners in crisis situations. This multifaceted approach ensures that children receive the support they need to cope with adversity and thrive despite challenging circumstances.

It is important to note the strong presence of non-state actors who provide programming to support OOSCY and RODO in FCV settings. Indeed, in this review, many of the toolkits and programmes that specifically target child wellbeing in PCFCs are administered by non-government organisations. These agencies may have the resources and political will to support these learners during crises, but **national governments** can play a significant role in implementing curricula and practices which support SEL, peacebuilding and social cohesion, and ensure that teachers are trained for effective and impartial content delivery (UNESCO, 2015).

We focus primarily on school-based supports and interventions. Education environments are ideal settings for implementing SEL and MHPSS supports, since they provide routine and structure which can support a child's sense of security and normalcy. A first step is ensuring that school environments are safe spaces. **Accountability** mechanisms are a frequently used intervention that allows stakeholders to raise issues anonymously if needed. Examples of these include dedicated phone lines and complaints and feedback boxes placed in schools. Whether in existing schools or temporary learning spaces, a clear code of conduct is an important approach to set behaviour expectations, outlining acceptable behaviours and consequences for non-adherence (UNESCO, 2009). Further, addressing **bullying** within schools can prevent early drop-out and maintain positive classroom environments; approaches include the use of peer-to-peer support initiatives that improve children's resilience (UNESCO, 2019a). Resources like Save the Children's All Together Now! Toolkit[5] and the Good School Toolkit[6] provide practical guidance.

Teachers are ideal for delivering SEL content and MHPSS support when they have positive, pre-existing relationships with learners. At the school level, evidence suggests that **teacher training** on how to identify signs of distress and manage them, including referrals to local mental health services, can provide children with the support they need to stay in school (INEE, 2016b). Teachers are well-placed for delivering activities that support children in developing both emotional resilience and regulation skills; guidelines including Save the Children's (2019) Foundations of Teaching PSS and SEL training module and IRC's (2020) Safe Healing and

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[5] See https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/all-together-now-whole-school-approach-anti-bullying-practice/

[6] See https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/all-together-now-whole-school-approach-anti-bullying-practice/

Learning Spaces Toolkit provide training and sample activities for teachers to implement. They adopt positive discipline practices and create gender-sensitive learning environments, which can also promote respectful interactions in the classroom and mitigate violence, as highlighted in the KIX scoping study working paper on [GESI](#) (Cameron et al., 2023).

Finally, promoting a safe learning environment at school can be strengthened with at-home campaigns for violence-free parenting led by national agencies (IRC, 2016). Research demonstrates that a focus on the wellbeing of parents can improve their ability to support their children and reduce instances of in-home violence (GEM, 2019). As with learners, attention to the specific needs of parents and caregivers are required: flexible approaches which take into account parents' language, technological literacy and access, and work schedules and availability can be effective in ensuring collaboration between parents and schools.

6.2 Barriers cited from across all regions

For key informants, the sub-theme of supporting socio-emotional wellbeing for out-of-school and at-risk children produced limited responses, though they were broadly aware of the distress and discomfort that children could face. Conflict was linked with poor mental health and post-traumatic stress by nearly all informants participating in data collection. Informants from Haiti and Nigeria particularly referenced children feeling unsafe, with the latter informant commenting on how those children suffer low self-esteem and low self-perception from undergoing the trauma of conflict and displacement due to natural disasters. In FCV contexts, young people are more exposed to risks to their physical and emotional wellbeing, including injury and harm or feelings of distress, fear or loneliness—an issue specifically highlighted by informants from Somalia.

With high rates of **poverty and gang violence**, key challenges to children's psychosocial and broader wellbeing in Haiti include economic challenges, food insecurity and malnutrition, trauma, and harassment (Corgelas, 2023; UNICEF, 2022b). A recent UNICEF (2023d) press release reports that one in every two children and adolescents in Haiti is being supported by life-saving humanitarian assistance. In addition, young girls are threatened by abuse and sexual exploitation by armed gangs, and many children are orphaned by gang warfare (Corgelas, 2023), an issue noted by an informant for Yemen as well. Stigma or taboo around psychosocial support makes it difficult to respond to the needs of communities affected by gang violence in Haiti. According to a key informant, 'some people, particularly in remote areas, find it hard to understand that there are after-effects to a crisis.' These beliefs inhibit the work of psychosocial support specialists. This is a critical issue, given the high rates of poverty, violence and trauma in Haiti. School closures caused by gang violence, conflict or fragility exposes children to a number of risks, including demotivation, the involvement of young people in income-generating activities or the voluntary enlistment of some young people in armed groups (Corgelas, 2023).

The forms of **gender-based violence** which often accompany emergency situations have particular impacts for girls and other marginalised groups. Instances of sexual violence,

harassment and exploitation tend to escalate during emergency situations, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and prohibitive cultural norms and hindering educational opportunities (Care, 2020; INEE, 2023; KORE Global, 2022). In many contexts, including Somalia, as highlighted in our data, youth face increased risks, such as recruitment to armed groups. Additionally, young people with disabilities confront unique obstacles, with limited accessibility to protective services and a heightened likelihood of neglect or abuse.

Violence and bullying in and around schools can have a profound impact on the learning and wellbeing of children and youth. In EiE contexts, girls, especially in rural areas, often face risks while walking to or from school, as highlighted by key informants from Timor-Leste and Yemen. In Timor-Leste, a second key informant noted how there are often higher rates of corporal punishment or violent disciplining in urban schools, due to overcrowding and high student-to-teacher ratios. A key informant from the Solomon Islands also described how students' increased access to media and the internet 'enhances opportunities for children to bully each other' in virtual spaces. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that cyber-bullying and other types of risks increased, as students used the Internet more for online learning (UNICEF, 2020a).

Children also experience **violence at home**. Because Timor-Leste is a post-conflict state, a key informant described how most parents have experienced trauma, which leads to increased rates of domestic violence, and ultimately impacts the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children. Similarly, in Yemen, as expressed by a key informant, years of conflict and displacement have impacted family units, with increased rates of poverty, violence and abuse, which have resulted in high levels of isolation and delayed social development. Trends from the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, suggest that reports of cases of domestic violence in some countries increased between 20 and 30 percent in just the first few months of lockdown (UN Women, 2020).

Some students also face **displacement and other adversities**. During an emergency, displaced students or those who migrate from rural to urban areas to attend school face unique challenges to their mental health and wellbeing. They often lack social networks or support and can experience feelings of loneliness or isolation, as they often leave their family members behind or struggle to maintain themselves economically, as noted by key informants from Timor-Leste. Informants from Zimbabwe highlighted the feelings of embarrassment or distress felt by over-age children who have not accessed a basic learning foundation. Displaced girls, especially when living in temporary shelters, are more at risk of experiencing sexual violence, referenced for Papua New Guinea. In emergencies, children often lack adequate shelter, clothing, food and other basic needs, a challenge found across contexts.

Given these challenges, it is important that teachers and other education personnel are trained to mitigate and respond to violence or support students through MHPSS strategies. However, various key informants noted that teachers, school leaders, parents and other stakeholders often **lack SEL skills or positive disciplining strategies** (noted for Papua New Guinea, Marshall

Islands, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste), or the school environment might normalise harsh treatment of children (as noted for Pakistan).

6.3 Solutions cited across all regions

When asked to identify effective strategies to support socio-emotional wellbeing, key informants generally described the lack of efforts, evidence or insights from their country contexts. Many highlighted the need but could not speak at length regarding current, widespread solutions being implemented. As a government official from Timor-Leste said, 'there are no successful practices [to address the socio-emotional wellbeing of students].' Another informant from Timor-Leste noted that 'at least [people] are starting to become aware' of the topic. Others described SEL and student wellbeing as 'an emerging area' (Solomon Islands) or 'a new thing that requires new strategies' (Marshall Islands). A key informant from Haiti described the cultural taboos that come with the topic, while a key informant from Papua New Guinea said, 'not much research has been done [on SEL],' but that it is an area 'that should be looked at more closely.' For an informant from Zimbabwe, better data is needed, since 'we don't have a mechanism to dig deep into the experiences of these children.'

Despite recognising these evidence gaps, various potential solutions were offered across four key areas: creating enabling policy environments (e.g. by prohibiting the use of corporal punishment), integrating SEL in the curriculum, enhancing teacher training on MHPSS topics and using school or community efforts, such as school leadership training, counselling programmes or awareness-raising campaigns.

Enabling policy environments around school-based violence were referenced as one approach to supporting socio-emotional wellbeing. Various EMAP countries have prohibited **corporal punishment** in schools. Philippines is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations whose Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Children requires all member states to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings (Safe to Learn, 2022). Key informants in Marshall Islands and Timor-Leste all referenced this prohibition. However, informants generally described how this policy change has come with its own challenges: 'Teachers are not happy with it,' reported a key informant from Timor-Leste, 'because they do not know alternative or effective disciplining strategies; they now know what they *cannot* do" but no one is telling them what they *can* do.' As a result, the incidence of misbehaviour and bullying is increasing. Indeed, a government official from Marshall Islands said, 'we are losing a grip on students' behaviour... In the past, there was hardly any bullying in the school, but now we see more bullying, more children acting out, acting violent against each other.' Thus, there is a need to equip teachers with skills in positive disciplining or classroom management. Beyond corporal punishment, it is important to create an enabling environment to welcome students back to school. For instance, welcoming back adolescent parents (discussed earlier in the paper in Sub-Theme 1) has relevance for improving socio-emotional wellbeing.

Informants from across the regions agree that **SEL needs to be better integrated** into formal education. There are a few examples of this happening: key informants from the Pacific referred to the Family Life Education curriculum, which is being implemented in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and targets children both in schools and those out of school and in community-based learning settings. A government official from Kiribati described the curriculum's purpose as 'mak[ing] sure children feel included … are received well and supported well.' A government official from Solomon Islands identified important skills that the curriculum develops amongst children, including socio-emotional intelligence, confidence and agency. She also described the importance of developing children's digital literacy skills, so they can adequately identify and address fake news and misinformation.

Increased focus on SEL has emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One mode to support teachers' development of these skills is through SEL manuals. As part of a World Bank–funded project, the government of Timor-Leste developed and launched a 'learning loss recuperation manual' to train teachers and school leaders. The manual included testing for children's socio-emotional functioning. According to a key informant, this was the first time the country had tested children for socio-emotional functioning. The manual was also used to train teachers in recognising signs of depression or other mental health challenges, and to help children's SEL skills, including confidence. However, the informant also described this effort as 'very new.' There is a need to evaluate and assess the impact of these efforts, which may draw on existing research in Afghanistan, (UNESCO, 2023b) and Ukraine (Human Rights Watch, 2023a).

Teachers must be equipped with **skills to identify students' SEL needs** and adequately address them, as noted by informants in Timor-Leste, Egypt, Sudan and Yemen; however, the literature indicates that the government understands the importance of integrating SEL into teacher training but existing opportunities for TPD remain short term and ad hoc (Barlas et al., 2022). A researcher from Papua New Guinea suggested that the government should train teachers to provide counselling to children to address trauma and to support girls, particularly to mitigate their risks of dropping out of school. According to this informant, teachers in Papua New Guinea currently lack training in topics such as EiE, positive discipline or counselling (as discussed in Sub-Theme 2).

SEL supports in PCFCs appear to be growing in the formal sector, but there are many examples of programmes offered through donor and non-government actors. In Haiti, the project InnovEd-UniQ, overseen by the Haitian institution Université Quisqueya, was identified as a potential solution by a key informant. Through the project, webinars have been facilitated on the topics of child and family wellbeing. The webinars—targeted at children, families and educational staff—take the form of debates, and they often include a number of health professionals, such as psychologists and doctors, as well as parents, school principals and teachers. Some of the debates were even held with children, who came along to say how they felt, and what their needs and concerns were. Among other things, these debates tackle the issue of stress and provide key strategies for managing it. Researchers from the university are

working to create a webinar series more suitable—and with more age-appropriate language—for children, according to a key informant.

Various efforts ensure that the **community** has awareness of socio-emotional needs. In Burundi, via the PACASU-TUBARAMIRE programme to support returned refugees and other at-risk children, school units have been set up, with awareness-raising sessions provided to teachers, school leaders and other personnel to help them identify and support learners who are struggling and provide routes for referring more serious cases to mental health specialists (UNICEF, 2022a).

Primary and secondary data pointed to the important role of **school leaders** and the broader school community. In Timor-Leste, for example, school leaders are being supported with resources and training, and school campaigns are trying to address school violence—albeit with limited evidence of impact or effectiveness. In Haiti, a psychosocial support project was implemented by the Ministry in collaboration with the Haitian Association of Psychology. According to a key informant, this has included setting up a telephone hotline for schools in areas affected by conflict or gang violence. While some school leaders have used this line to share cases of distress, teachers have been reluctant to have psychologists on hand, telling the Ministry that this was not their most urgent need. This project is likely part of a broader agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Association, which was mentioned by a second key informant. Under this protocol, each school will also have a specialist in charge of addressing cases of trauma for students, teachers or other education personnel. Whole-school approaches which involve collaboration amongst all stakeholders can equip school leaders and other school-based staff with tools and knowledge to create safe environments in contexts of conflict or crisis (Corgelas, 2023).

Key informants and documents mentioned the importance of **school counselling**. In Yemen, a key informant called for school-based professionals who could provide psychosocial and emotional support by listening to children and allowing them to talk openly and frankly about the challenges they were facing. The World Bank (2020) is supporting Marshall Islands to develop counsellors' skills in addressing social impacts that emerged from prolonged school closures and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. A government official from Marshall Islands described the importance of enhancing school counselling programmes by training teachers and students, as well as involving parents, families and the wider community. The informant identified various strategies: 'involve parents more in the education of their children, [or] have youth-to-youth support groups so that children can talk to each other and learn from each other.' In Nigeria, peer approaches have been implemented: as reported by a key informant, the Girl for Girl Initiative brings women back into the classroom to encourage and support adolescent girls.

A key informant from Solomon Islands suggested enhancing **career counselling**, or having career discussions at school, 'so kids have a goal to reach for.' This would help not only to motivate students, but also to ensure 'students feel good about each other, [feel] part of

something, and [feel] part of a community that supports [them].' The key informant described how various efforts exist, but they are usually implemented by non-government organisations and therefore not sustained over time. There is a need for more government and donor support and investment to 'get this into the school in a more systematic way' and a more 'cost-effective way.' One potential solution, for example, would be to train teachers, and build counselling skills into teacher training programmes and universities.

Finally, in Kiribati, **back-to-school campaigns** were used to raise children's spirits following lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic. A key informant mentioned that these can be effective solutions to relieve students' fear, or address feelings of loneliness, isolation or disengagement, once students return to school after prolonged school closures. These solutions can get children 'excited to come back to school.'

7 POTENTIAL RESEARCH AREAS

Globally, there is a growing body of research around the unique experiences of out-of-school and at-risk children in PCFC contexts. A review of research conducted in EiE contexts points to several key trends and evidence gaps (Burde et al., 2019):

- There has been **significant growth** in research on areas that include refugee education, girls' education, socio-emotional learning, and tertiary education for conflict-affected populations;

- **Emerging areas** of research include topics such as protecting education from attack, preventing violent extremism, inclusive education for children with disabilities, and early childhood development;

- There exists a **striking absence** of research on education and disaster risk reduction, despite the fact that the effects of climate change disasters dwarf those of conflict.

INEE (2020a) notes that a particularly critical area for research includes how best to sustainably strengthen the crisis-resilience of national education systems through greater collaboration between development and humanitarian actors.

As a part of data collection activities, we asked technical experts from across the countries and regions to indicate the research gaps most relevant to their context, with the collected results captured here alongside gaps identified within literature.

7.1 Suggested areas: Research for re-enrolling and retaining learners in PCFCs

1. **Scaling and sustaining effective efforts**: The research demonstrated a range of policies and programmes which support the re-enrolment and retainment of OOSCY and at-risk learners, including early warning systems, community campaigns and re-enrolment initiatives, AEPs and other flexible learning pathways, as well as remedial support or catch-up classes (including training for teachers). Research is needed to understand

how these initiatives can be scaled up and institutionalised, along with data on cost-effectiveness.

2. **DRR strategies, policies and plans**: Effective DRR has the potential to limit the number of children who are unable to access schooling in the event of a disaster: where children can be kept engaged with education, they will be less likely to drop out. As noted above, there are significant gaps around DRR, especially as it relates to preventing drop-out. More research is needed to understand 'what works' for DRR planning, and how the needs of regionally or nationally marginalised groups can be integrated to ensure their continuity of learning when disaster occurs.

3. **Attention to GESI**: Examples of non-formal programmes within this paper demonstrate the potential for marginalised children to be reached. However, many of these efforts are small scale and regional. At the policy level, more research is needed to understand if those learners are being recognised, and if their specific needs are being addressed. There is also a need for more 'invisible' marginalised communities to be considered: participants particularly highlighted the needs of children living on the street, away from families.

4. **Leveraging existing non-formal options**: Participants commented on the important stopgap that informal programmes provide for children who are out of school. While many of these programmes, such as madrassas and other religious schooling entities, do not use the national curriculum, they already have buy-in from parents. Research is needed to understand how existing non-formal options can be upgraded and up-skilled to improve their academic supports to learners.

5. **Curricular content**: Participants highlighted the problem of how formal education is perceived: in multiple contexts, parents and learners themselves disengage from education when they perceive that the credential provided does not lead to jobs, or the content being taught does not appear relevant for their lives. For others, the skills obtained through the labour market or domestic duties are not valued within formal education, which dampens their confidence especially when returning to school after a period of absence. More research is needed to understand the relationship between curriculum and drop-out, and how the introduction of 21st-century skills, SEL programming and other non-academic skills can support and encourage continued engagement with schooling.

6. **Data systems and coordination**: A previous KIX scoping study on [data systems and use for Africa](#) (Arnott et al., 2023) and [EMAP](#) (Rodriquez, 2023) identified significant gaps in EMIS during emergencies and regarding the capture of OOSCY and those at risk. Participants in this study noted the same gaps, and so research is needed on data systems. What are the forms of coordination and information-sharing amongst various types of implementing partners during emergencies to ensure that there are no gaps in provision and that all demographics of students can be accommodated? Are existing

national EMIS systems rigorous and adaptable enough to capture and provide information on OOSCY, and are relevant staff provided enough training to use tools effectively?

7.2 Suggested areas: Research for teacher training and support for work with out-of-school and at-risk children in PCFCs

1. **Scaling and sustaining effective TPD:** This area was similarly highlighted as a research gap in the KIX scoping study on [teachers](#) (D'Angelo et al., 2023), but as seen in this study, more research is needed to understand how TPD can be designed and deployed at scale to support the needs of OOSYC and RODO, with attention to these particular areas:

   a. **Teacher education content:** The data demonstrates gaps in national teacher training and professional development curricula to understand and support the needs of children who return after being out of school. Potential areas for research include how to train teachers for coping with diverse, multi-age classrooms, including how to assess learners' existing knowledge and how to differentiate lessons for TaRL-type approaches or forms of structured pedagogy. Other areas such as 21st-century skills, SEL, and skills for building learner confidence and treating all children with respect also need attention.

   b. **EiE content topics:** The research demonstrated the increasing emphasis on integrating EiE-specific content into teacher training and development.

   c. **Approaches**: Where teacher training for EiE and catch-up learning approaches are not already integrated into existing curricula, there is a need for training to happen rapidly after—or, as seen with the COVID-19 pandemic, during—a crisis or disaster. Similarly, teachers working in rural and remote areas with protracted crises, such as those in remote refugee settlements, need consistent, flexible options for training delivery, such as through remote modalities. Thus, more research is needed to capture what works, especially at scale, to enable meaningful remote learning. Especially for supporting refugee education, how can existing national structures, such as teacher training colleges and national schools, engage with and support refugee camp teachers?

   d. **Community teachers**: As indicated by informants, community education can be a valuable approach to reach OOSCY and RODO, especially when teachers are recruited within their communities and share their cultural understanding. While these teachers have community support, they often lack formal training. More research is needed to understand what works to up-skill community members and ensure they are prepared for the challenges of community education.

2. **Policy**: There were limited references to policy by participants when discussing the issues facing teachers. However, in the literature, several clear research areas appear:

a. **Financing**: A challenge within emergency and FCV settings exists around teacher management and ensuring that teachers are consistently paid. Payment can be delayed or disappear for periods of time, and teachers working in refugee camps, as seen in East Africa (Bengtsson et al., 2021), can receive very low salaries, making teaching a less attractive position than other options available within camps. Research is needed to understand how to ensure liveable, consistent wages for teachers, especially during emergency and protracted FCV settings.

b. **Credentialling**: Policies like the Djibouti agreement can support the use of refugee teachers in refugee camp education settings through approvals of neighbouring teacher credentials. In West Africa, the literature pointed to the recruitment of retired teachers and those who have left the profession to fill teaching gaps. Thus, for both scenarios, more research is needed to understand how to scale up and institutionalise credential recognition practices and re-skilling of teacher workforces.

c. **MHPSS and wellbeing supports to teachers**: Research demonstrates that teachers are often impacted by the same stresses and traumas that their learners face. It is especially important to support these teachers as they are often the only form of MHPSS that their students can access. More research is needed to understand what works to support teachers' mental health and wellbeing during times of crisis, especially in low-resource contexts, and how programmes can be scaled up and sustained at the national level.

7.3 Suggested areas: Research for supporting the socio-emotional wellbeing of out-of-school and at-risk children in PCFCs

1. **National governments and wellbeing**: As highlighted in the study, many of the existing programmes which provide MHPSS and socio-emotional supports are coordinated by international organisations. During times of crisis, national institutions may be focused on ensuring learning continuity. To ensure sustainability of socio-emotional supports, research is needed to understand the extent to which national governments are engaged with socio-emotional issues and prioritise teacher training and support to attend to these needs alongside academic delivery. Research could include the following:

   a. **Mapping national capacity for SEL**: Research could include mapping of national government provision, capabilities, and political will, or investigations into how national governments can take ownership and scale up existing programmes from non-state actors.

   b. **National mechanisms to understand SEL needs**: Participants also referenced the need for EMIS and other reporting systems to feed information from the school level to the national level, especially to better understand the SEL needs of OOSCY

and RODO students during and after conflict or crisis. While Timor-Leste has trained teachers to recognise SEL in students, it is unclear how this information is fed up the information pipeline and used in policymaking and decision-making at a national level. There is thus a need to better understand the nature or existence of feedback loops between practitioners, policy and evidence that can enable better SEL service provision.

2. **Shifting attitudes**: The problem of attitudes toward mental health was referenced in the data: communities may stigmatise mental health difficulties, even when they are widespread due to emergencies and FCV. Contextualised research is needed to understand how to shift community attitudes and ensure more openness for children and adults alike to talk about their struggles and seek support.

3. **School-based SEL**: There are significant gaps in the literature regarding understanding the impacts of school-based SEL, especially at scale. Several potential areas for research connected to school and SEL include the following:

    a. **Teacher training for SEL and MHPSS**: As mentioned earlier, teachers are often the first line of support for learners struggling with mental health challenges, especially in emergency and FCV contexts. What works to train teachers, to shift their behaviours, to reduce burnout and to adequately support learners' needs? What tools do they need for measuring trauma responses, and how can they be better linked with existing social supports for referrals in more serious mental health cases?

    b. **Integrating SEL into curricula**: SEL is often viewed as separate from academic skills and as something which cannot be measured, though our data demonstrates that these attitudes are starting to shift. More research is needed to understand how SEL can be integrated into national curricula and drawn out even in more 'academic' content areas. Research can also focus on tools to measure and assess SEL, including the tools that teachers need for formative assessment in their classes and more standardised tools that can be used at scale.

    c. **SEL and RODO**: Can SEL supports prevent at-risk learners from leaving school? More research is needed to explore the use of in-school SEL responses for RODO children in non-immediate crisis contexts to prevent drop-out.

    d. **Career counselling**: Career counselling was referenced as one effective practice to support children's socio-emotional wellbeing in school settings. More research is needed to explore the connection between career guidance and wellbeing, as well as on effective practices in career counselling as a psychosocial support in EiE settings.

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ANNEX 1

This annex presents data on country participation in the consultations for this theme. As a bounded study conducted in a limited time period (December 2023 to January 2024), there were constraints on ensuring that key informants from all PCFC countries were able to participate in data collection.

There were a number of factors which could have impacted participation, including the timeline for activities, which were organised with one to three weeks of notice and may have taken place during national holidays or other periods of more limited work, and the limits of each regional hub's reach in contacting and recruiting informants. Some informants were able to join data collection events, but poor internet connectivity limited their ability to join the conversation. Finally, participation also depended on a representative's ability to participate in exercises, including their willingness to share openly and, as research activities for this theme were conducted in three languages (English, French, and Arabic), their proficiency in the languages being used. As such, the countries which are more active in hub activities, and participated actively in consultations, are thus more strongly represented within this scoping study. In hubs and countries where national informants are less active, those PCFCs may be less represented in the data, or the data may be confined to desk sources.

Consultation activities were carried out with informants from the following countries:

- **Africa 19**: Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe

- **Africa 21**: Central African Republic, Niger

- **Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa, Asia, and Pacific (EMAP)**: Egypt, Pakistan, Sudan, Yemen; Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste

- **Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC)**: Haiti