



**EDUCATION  
CANNOT  
WAIT**

The global fund for education in emergencies



# IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Advancing gender equality and girls' education in emergencies  
and protracted crises — a call to action to *Empower Her*

#### ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This Call to Action was elaborated under the direction of the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Secretariat, with contributions from ECW Executive Committee, grant recipients and constituents of the ECW Gender Reference Group.

It was written by Natalia Villalpando Paez, Kate Anderson, Anna Pettee and Daniela Ukuni, with valuable contributions from Madge Thomas, Jihane Latrous and Veronique Mistycki.

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Education Cannot Wait, March 2022

👉 **Going to school is important for girls because if a girl is educated, she can do the same things that her brothers do in the future. If she doesn't go to school, life will be hard, as she will only work at the market selling things. I want to be educated so I can become a lawyer like my older sister. I want to enjoy my life like my older sister who can buy what she wants without asking anyone for help. I hope we can continue receiving support so we can stay in school and keep learning. I want a better future where there will be no poverty. A future where schools are made of bricks and not mud like this school.** 👉

—ABUK, 13, SOUTH SUDAN



# CONTENTS



# 1.



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▲ Students focus on their writing in Bangladesh – where ECW investments are positively impacting the learning and well-being of primary and secondary school-aged Rohingya children in the world’s largest refugee camp. Programs in Cox’s Bazar focus on holistic education. This includes providing mental health and psychosocial support, parenting education courses and supporting the construction of learning centers.

## FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought on a global learning crisis resulting in 1.6 billion out-of-school children at the height of school closures. Yet, the children and adolescents affected by social exclusion and discrimination, and especially girls living in crisis situations, have been hit the hardest. Today, an estimated 20 million girls, particularly adolescent girls, may never return to school. These girls are at heightened risk of child marriage, female genital mutilation, adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence – all of which have devastating impacts on girls’ safety, wellbeing and empowerment to reach their full potential.

Without education, girls cannot reach their full potential, and the cycle of poverty cannot be broken. Educating girls, especially those left behind in crises, is critical to the COVID-19 recovery plan, to mitigating climate change, and to ensuring equal and prosperous societies. This is precisely the mission of Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises (EiEPC), which follows the most marginalized children and youth wherever they are, to uphold their fundamental right to education.

ECW works together with strategic partners to ensure equal access to inclusive, gender-responsive, quality, relevant and safe learning opportunities. This means putting gender equality at the forefront of advocacy and resource mobilization efforts to increase financing for education in emergencies. This also means working in close collaboration with a range of partners, donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, civil society actors, as well as local women and girls' organizations to fund, design, implement, monitor and evaluate tailored gender-targeted interventions to meet the differentiated needs of girls, boys, men and women in their diversity.

In five years of existence, ECW and its partners have demonstrated the centrality of gender equality to achieve quality learning in crisis. Since the Fund's inception, 95% of ECW-supported programmes have shown improvement in terms of equal access for girls and boys to education in crisis-affected communities. Additionally, in 2020, ECW reached 51% girls through its COVID-19 interventions despite the heightened risks of girls dropping out. Finally, ECW launched the EiE GenKit together with United Nation Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), a resource package tailored to the needs of education practitioners on the ground.

The road to success is still long. ECW's objective to support gender responsive investments with gender equitable access for all children and youth in all country investments will require renewed political will and financial commitment from public and private sector donors so we can continue supporting global commitments for girls' education – such as the G7 objective of getting 40 million more girls into school and 20 million more reading by the age of ten in low and lower-middle income countries by 2026.

National governments and international donors must spend enough money in the right places to reach Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030. Together, we can advance gender equality and girls' education in emergencies and protracted crises. Because if not now, when?



**Yasmine Sherif,**  
Director  
Education Cannot Wait (ECW)



**Svenja Schulze,**  
Minister for Economic Cooperation  
and Development, Germany

“ **Educating girls, especially those left behind in crises, is critical to the COVID-19 recovery plan, to mitigating climate change, and to ensuring equal and prosperous societies.** ”

# 2.



© Omid Fazel

▲ ECW Director Yasmine Sherif leads the first all women UN delegation to Afghanistan to advocate for girls' right to education. During the mission, she met with primary school students in a school in Kabul.

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The importance of putting gender equality at the forefront of financing for Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) is well established. While an increasing proportion of aid to education in crisis-affected countries has been focused on gender equality and women's empowerment in recent years<sup>1</sup>, much remains to be done to ensure equal access and retention of girls and boys to education during humanitarian crises, especially for adolescent girls and refugees.<sup>2</sup>

Education Cannot Wait, the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, aims to galvanise and increase financing and political commitment to ensure that children and youth affected by conflict, climate change and COVID-19 receive a quality, inclusive and gender equitable education.

The ECW Call to Action on Gender equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls builds on the ECW Case for Investment, launched in May 2021<sup>3</sup>, to shed light on and articulate the urgency to advance gender equality for girls and boys left furthest behind in crises in order to reach both our financing and programmatic goals.

This Call to Action illustrates the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls, especially adolescent girls living in crises. It highlights the urgency of investing in gender equality and girls' education as part of COVID-19 response plans, to mitigate both climate and human made crises, and to ensure peacebuilding, recovery and social cohesion. It also focuses on the intersection of gender with other forms of discrimination, focusing on the most marginalized girls, such as girls with disabilities and girls in displacement.

While the challenges are immense, ECW and partners have demonstrated that success stories do exist. All of ECW's investments aim to be gender-responsive at a minimum and, since its inception, 95% of ECW-supported programmes have improved gender parity in access to education in targeted communities (71% for the Multi-Year Resilience Programmes and 100% for the First Emergency Responses).<sup>4</sup> The Call to Action highlights several good practices that can be built on to further advance gender equality in EiEPC, as well as how ECW is contributing to standard setting and developing tools at the global level with partners such as INEE and UNGEI.

Finally, looking forward, the Call to Action suggests ways to work collaboratively with donors and partners to improve programmes, increase financing, and accelerate results for the most marginalized girls, boys, and youth affected by social exclusion and discrimination, ahead of the new ECW Strategic Plan 2022-2026 and ECW's replenishment campaign.



**“ Education is a powerful tool to break down inequality, fight poverty, create opportunity and cope with emergencies, including the climate crisis. Through quality education, women and girls can shape the world according to their aspirations and create positive change that ripples throughout their communities. Let's all work together towards tangible actions to tackle long-standing inequalities for girls and women in order to build a more just and resilient world. ”**

**—H.E. DR. TARIQ AL GURG,  
CEO OF DUBAI CARES**

1 INEE, Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Crisis and Conflict, 2021

2 Plan International, Left out, left behind, 2019: Adolescent girls' secondary education in crises limited investment at secondary level, for adolescent girls and for refugees is especially problematic. As of 2018, only one in four adolescent refugees made it to secondary school and for every 10 refugee boys in secondary education, there were fewer than seven girls. Children in 'forgotten crises' are in even more precarious situation. For example, girls living in the Lake Chad Basin receive, on average, about two years of schooling in their lifetime, just over three times less than the average across Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

3 <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/cfi/>

4 ECW Annual Results Report 2020

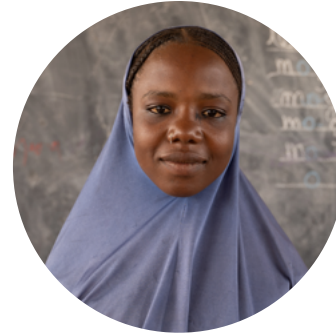
## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND DIGNITY FOR CHAD'S GIRLS

Across the Lake Chad and Logone Oriental regions of Chad, adolescent girls are no longer missing school on the days they have their period.

With funding from ECW, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Chad – in consortium with ACRA and CELIAF, and the support of UNICEF – has participated in the production and distribution of Menstrual Health Management (MHM) kits. These kits are manufactured at the local level by the Tchad Helping Hand Foundation.

In addition to kits, JRS has been holding MHM teacher trainings and different awareness-raising activities within schools and communities to combat stigma around menstruation. Access to these trainings and kits is essential in protecting young women from public shame, missing classes or dropping out of school altogether. It's especially powerful in this region, where as many as one in ten girls misses school during their menstrual cycle, according to UNESCO.

More than 6,000 refugee and internally displaced students attending the local schools are now receiving these services as the project continues to promote girls' access to education.



© Irene Galera - JRS Chad

“ **When girls have their period, they feel ashamed to go to school. The MHM kit helped me a lot in my daily life.** ”

—HADIZA, 14

Fourteen-year-old Hadiza was terrified the first time she got her period. In her community, where stigma exists around menstruation and many girls miss school when they have their periods, access to MHM kits and trainings on sanitary pad use are empowering young women to carry on with their schooling. With support from ECW and strategic partners, Hadiza is now able to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher.

© Irene Galera/JRS Chad





# 3.



© UNICEF Yemen/UN0462122/Alghabri

▲ Students taking their exams at Rabea'a Al-Adaweyah School in Sana'a, Yemen. For girls in the country, education means hope for a brighter future and safety in a world turned upside-down by civil war, widespread famine and other crises. COVID-19 has put further strain on Yemen's education system. ECW investments are providing safe learning spaces, supporting the development of home-based learning strategies and ensuring that teachers continue to be paid in affected regions.

## **GENDER EQUALITY IS KEY FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES**

### 3.1: GIRLS LIVING IN CRISIS FACE MORE SAFETY RISKS AND INCREASED BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Girls' learning often lags behind boys during conflict and crises due to preexisting gender barriers entrenched in gender and social norms:



Girls' learning outcomes are behind boys' in crisis-affected communities (INEE, 2021).

26%

Only a quarter (26%) of the poorest girls living in crisis affected countries complete lower secondary education (INEE, 2021).



Based on current trends, girls will not reach 100% lower secondary completion in crisis-affected countries until at least 2063 (INEE, 2021).

2.5X

Girls are 2.5 more likely to be out of primary school if they live in conflict-affected countries (UNESCO).

69 MILLION

In 2019, there were 69 million girls out of school in crisis-affected countries – 24 million at the primary level and 45 million at the secondary. This accounts for 54% of the world's out-of-school girls. Over one-fifth (21%) of primary school-age girls in crisis-affected countries were out of school, compared to 15% of boys. These rates are well over double the global averages for primary out-of-school rates (9% of girls and 7% of boys globally) (INEE, 2021).

Girls living in crises are at heightened risk of violence:

87%

87% of verified incidents of sexual violence against children are committed against girls affected by armed conflict (Save the Children, 2020).



Girls are at risk of being married early by their households due to crisis-related financial burdens and female safety concerns (Brookings Global Economy and Development, 2019).



A recent Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack report found that most girls and women were explicitly targeted because of their gender in 2015-2019 attacks (GCPEA, 2020).



School-related gender-based violence is a critical factor in adolescent girls dropping out of school (Plan International, 2020).

## 3.2: GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION INTERSECTS WITH OTHER FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

based on age, disabilities, geography, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation, displacement and statelessness

### Girls with disabilities:



**9 out of 10 children** with disabilities in developing countries are excluded from formal education, and the majority of them are girls.



Girls with disabilities living in villages, rural indigenous communities, households with no or very limited internet, or with a lack of access to digital devices with affordable data are **at greater risk of being left behind through the COVID-19** pandemic due to a lack of development support for remote learning and inaccessible remote learning materials.

### Girls in displacement:



**Enrolment rates for girls living in forced displacement are far below national rates**, and gender gaps in access, particularly at the secondary level, are larger for girls living in forced displacement than for non-displaced children in crisis-affected countries (INEE, 2021).



Educational outcomes of displaced children are significantly reduced and refugee girls are most left behind. 48% of all school age refugee children are out of school. Among refugees, 39% of primary school-age children and 77% of secondary school-age adolescents are not enrolled in education. Some 36% of refugee boys enrolled in secondary education, while **enrolment stood at only at 27% for girls** (UNHCR).



Photo: UNICEF/Adeboyo/2020

**At 6 years old, Sadiya Ali, whose family fled the conflict in Nigeria, received her first crutches. This meant that she no longer had to crawl across the ground to reach a community classroom for out-of-school children, funded by ECW and established by UNICEF in the Bakassi Internally Displaced Persons camp.**

### **3.3: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS HAD A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON GIRLS' EDUCATION**

#### **The global learning crisis was real even before COVID-19 hit:**

An estimated **617 million children and youth** around the world do not have access to a quality education that leads to basic literacy and numeracy let alone the social, emotional, and other skills they should to be building (*UNESCO, 2017*). This global learning crisis has only worsened since school closures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic – which resulted in **1.6 billion children out-of-school** (*UNESCO, 2021*), and disproportionately hit the most marginalized populations. For instance, refugees are five times less likely to attend school than other children, with **close to 50% of all school-age refugee children out of school**.

#### **However, girls have been the hardest hit.**

In the past 25 years, 180 million more girls have enrolled in primary and secondary education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These gains are now threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to UNESCO, **20 million girls, particularly adolescent girls, may never return to school**. Girls out of school are at heightened risk of child marriage, female genital mutilation, adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence. All of these hinder their safety, wellbeing and empowerment to reach their full potential. Emerging evidence about the gendered impact of COVID-19 highlights that girls faced additional challenges to access distance learning due to their traditional gender roles at home with child care and domestic help, including care work.

#### **The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on girls' education constitutes an unprecedented setback on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not only SDG 4 and 5, but all the SDGs.**

Without girls' education, the cycle of poverty cannot be broken. Evidence shows us that a child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to live beyond the age of 5. They are also 50% more likely to be immunized. Educating girls is therefore critical to the COVID-19 recovery plan.



**“ A joint platform like ECW bridging humanitarian and development response is critical for girls' education in crisis to enable gender responsive and gender transformative learning to bring about sustainable change in the life of millions of girls, boys and communities affected by conflict, displacement and disasters. This is even more relevant in times of COVID-19, since millions of girls may not return to classes after the school closures. ”**

**—SVENJA SCHULZE,**  
MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT, GERMANY

### **3.4: GIRLS IN CRISIS SETTINGS SUFFER A DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

During environmental disasters and the ensuing resource scarcity, women and children have mortality rates 14 times higher than men's (INEE, 2020). These factors contribute to a vicious cycle of vulnerability and poverty for children, especially girls, in emergency settings. At least 200 million adolescent girls living in the poorest communities face heightened risks from the effects of climate change.<sup>5</sup>

Although research highlights an impact on all children, there is a disproportionate impact on girls as barriers to their education are multiplied by the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, which can have long-lasting negative consequences such as reduced school attendance and school dropout as well as girls were at increased risk of child marriage.

Climate-related events will have prevented at least 4 million girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries from completing their education in 2021. If current trends continue, by 2025, climate change will contribute to preventing at least 12.5 million girls from completing their education each year.<sup>6</sup>



**“ When girls play and learn equally alongside boys, gender gaps close, economies grow, and the world is fairer, healthier and more prosperous for everyone. Evidence shows that gender identity is formed by the age of two, and thus it is critical to support ECW's efforts to provide gender-equitable playful early learning to the most difficult to reach children under five years in all its investments. Play can be a great leveler, and the most effective approach to engage young children in gender-sensitive learning. ”**

**—ANNE-BIRGITTE ALBRECHTSEN,**  
CEO OF THE LEGO FOUNDATION

<sup>5</sup> Education, Girls' Education and Climate Change, K4D Emerging Issues Report, March 2021

<sup>6</sup> Malala Fund, A greener, fairer future, March 2021

# 4.



© Save the Children/Dereje/2021

▲ ECW's multi-year resilience programme in southeast Ethiopia is addressing the critical education needs of out-of-school displaced children like Hanifa. In addition to funding the construction of temporary learning spaces and gender-segregated latrines, investments are also supporting school feeding programmes and afterschool clubs, providing school supplies and strengthening teacher training around inclusion.

## HOW IS ECW ENSURING GENDER RESPONSIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES?

ECW investments aim to be gender-responsive at minimum, to address the differentiated needs of all girls, boys, men, women and other genders, in all their diversity and intersecting vulnerabilities.

## 4.1: GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS HARDWIRED IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ECW INVESTMENTS

All ECW investment windows promote a whole-child approach for children and youth impacted by emergencies and protracted crises, including those with disabilities. This approach aims to be holistic, gender-responsive, disparity-focused, crisis-sensitive, risk-informed and target the most marginalized girls, boys and adolescents.



### 2.2 MILLION GIRLS

A cumulative total of 2.2 million girls have received continuous education support since ECW's inception, and 1.3 million girls received support through grants active in 2020.



### OVER 41,000 FEMALE TEACHERS

Over 41,000 female teachers have been recruited and/or financially supported by ECW since its inception.

**First Emergency Responses (FERs)** offer rapid funding at the onset or escalation of a crisis for time-critical interventions or to reduce the immediate impact of the crisis on education and the children the most affected by social exclusion and discrimination. All FERs are aligned with ECW's collective education outcomes – including equity and gender equality. Through continuous monitoring, ECW is committed to gathering more evidence of tailoring efforts to specifically reach girls' differentiated needs.

The first evaluation of the FERs<sup>7</sup> found out:

- Gender issues are a common thread across FERs.
- FER grantees, in general, reach more children with disabilities and girls than they target.
- The FERs that have the most tailored interventions are the most effective in reaching girls.

**Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs)** are intended to help bridge the divide between acute emergency response and longer-term strengthening of education systems. They enable experimentation and innovation and engage a broader set of actors. Since multi-year frameworks are designed to link with national education sector plans and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) they can address both recovery and development needs in a mutually reinforcing fashion, such as gender equality policies, and tackle the root causes that structure gender inequality.

**Acceleration Facility (AF)** window aims to fund strategic initiatives that will address systemic barriers to quality and inclusive education such as lack of funding, political will, policies and programmatic guidance, and data and evidence. The AF window can significantly contribute to addressing systemic bottlenecks to gender equality in EiEPC.

7 Mokoro, 2020. Evaluation of the Education Cannot Wait First Emergency Response funding modality.

## 4.2: ECW'S APPROACH TO OPERATIONALIZE GENDER EQUALITY IN ITS INVESTMENTS

ECW's approach to achieving gender equality in EiE is three-fold:



In line with this approach, ECW and partners have achieved significant progress over the past few years:

**95%**

Since inception, 95% of ECW-supported programmes have shown **improved gender parity** in access to education in targeted communities (71% for MYRPs and 100% for FERs).



ECW is committed to supporting interventions which ensure recruitment of and financial support for **female teachers**.

Since the Fund's inception, over **7,000 female teachers** have been supported to address the gender gap between male and female teachers in key contexts.

**51%**

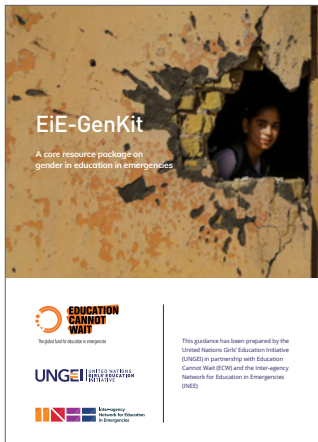
**ECW reached 51% girls through its COVID-19 interventions** in 2020 despite the heightened risks of girls dropping out.



In 2020, despite school closures related to COVID-19, **two ECW-supported multi-year resilience programmes reported increased learning for girls**.



## 4.3: ALIGNMENT WITH BEST GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS ON GENDER EQUALITY IN EIEPC



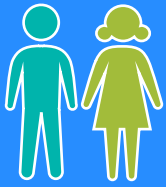
ECW works with the best practices and tools available: The Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) *Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action* (2017) and its *Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings* (2015), the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies' (INEE) *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response & Recovery* (2010) and the *INEE Pocket Guide to Gender* (2019).

More recently, ECW partnered with UNGEI and INEE to build on these global standards and tools to develop a core resource package on gender in EiE programming tailored to the needs of education practitioners on the ground. This collaborative work, developed in consultation with over 40 gender and EiE experts globally, was completed in early 2021 with the launch of the [EiE GenKit](#). Moreover, in 2022, ECW started a strategic partnership with the Global Education Cluster to strengthen gender responsive EiE and GBV risk mitigation among education clusters and working groups in MYRP contexts.

Moreover, ECW gender commitments are aligned with the IASC *Policy and Accountability Framework on the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action* (2017).



ECW is committed to ensuring the IASC Gender Age Marker (GAM) is used systematically in all its investments to ensure gender equality is a priority in EiEPC programming.




## GOOD PRACTICES AND SUCCESS STORY HIGHLIGHTS:

In **Mali**, volunteer teachers conducted community awareness meetings where parents and school management committee members were encouraged to ensure that girls were enrolled in school and continue until the final grade of primary school and transition to secondary schools, whilst equally encouraging boys to continue their education.

In **Chad**, local actors such as the Liaison and Information Unit of and Women's Groups and Associations, were part of the stakeholders involved in the design of the MYRP. In 2021, all new MYRP investments involved local gender actors such as Local Women and Girl Organizations and in-country gender and gender-based violence (GBV) coordination mechanisms to support the design and implementation of the MYRP.

In **Nigeria**, the Collective Income Generation Intervention aimed to increase access to education for out-of-school girls through the production and provision of school uniforms. The ongoing intervention trained female-headed households and adolescent girls recently released from armed groups in sewing skills. Through this intervention, female-headed households are being empowered with skills and income as well as an opportunity to enrol their children in school. Over 300 children have been enrolled back into school.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, training of government and non-governmental partners was held on gender equality and inclusion in the emergency education curriculum, including on data collection, disaggregation and analysis.



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In **Syria** and **Somalia**, referral mechanisms to the GBV sub-cluster were established to ensure disclosure of GBV cases were dealt with according to best practice.

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Innovative programs such as Gender Equality Movement (GEM) clubs have been funded in **Uganda**. These GEM clubs are a co-curricular activity where girls and boys meet to advance gender issues that they identify as priorities.



# 5.



© UNICEF Ethiopia/2018/Mersha

▲ Students look out from their classroom window at Makod Primary and Secondary School in the Tierkidi Refugee Camp in Ethiopia. ECW investments are reaching South Sudanese refugee students throughout the country and have significantly increased girls' enrolment in school.

## **LOOKING FORWARD: ECW'S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING GENDER IN EIEPC**

# AREAS OF INTERVENTIONS:

The new ECW Strategic Plan and Gender Corpus (2022-2026) will highlight key areas of interventions to strengthen for greater gender equality in and through education in emergencies and protracted crises. Some of these key areas include:

## Accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the triple nexus:



There is broad consensus that promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is key to achieving each of the elements of the triple nexus. ECW is committed to building resilience and strengthening a gender-responsive humanitarian-development-peace nexus through each of its investments, and through its MYRPs in particular, to address structural barriers and gender norms that prevent girls from accessing and completing their education. By doing so, ECW will contribute to support through the MYRPs, country contexts to achieve cross-sectoral outcomes related to women and girls wellbeing, safety and empowerment.

## Increase the safety of learning environments and services:



ECW will ensure the voices of women and girls are heard and gender-based violence risk mitigation measures are systematically implemented in all ECW investments and their impact measured.

## Increase partnership with Local Women and Girls Organizations:



ECW will increase the meaningful participation of Local Women and Girl Organizations in the design and implementation of its investments, particularly multi-year resilience programmes.

## Improve societies' resilience to climate change by ensuring girls' access to education:



ECW will support the integration of gender-responsive and inclusive action-oriented climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience into education through formal and non-formal interventions for children and youth in emergencies and protracted crises.

## Improve girls' access to distance learning:



ECW will invest in gender-responsive programmes that accelerate girls' digital access, skills and online learning whilst ensuring online safety standards are upheld. Evidence shows that girls tend to have less time than boys to study at home due to expectations that they will do more care work, including many of the household chores and care for other family members. However, evidence from a number of technology-facilitated distance education programs indicates that, once girls gain access to distance learning technologies, their utilization rate is often higher than that of boys.<sup>8</sup>

8 UNICEF, Reimagining Girls' Education, Solutions to Keep Girls Learning in Emergencies, 2021

# 6.



© Fouad Choufany

▲ A girl at an UNWRA school in Ein El Hilweh, Lebanon looks over her homework.

ECW supports UNWRA schools in the country to help young Palestinian refugees overcome the impact of COVID-19 to their education.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT ECW

- Increase financing for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in EiEPC
- Advocate for stronger political support together with partners

## **6.1: INCREASE FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EIEPC**

**Overall, the proportion of humanitarian aid dedicated to education has remained stagnant over the past five years, with 2.5% of humanitarian funding dedicated to education in 2021, compared to only 2.6% in 2015 (UN OCHA FTS). However, limited data and information are available for national budget expenditures and international aid supporting gender equality in emergencies and protracted crises specifically.**

Based on the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Common Reporting Standard (OECD CRS) findings analysis, the proportion of development aid focused on gender equality and women's empowerment in education in 44 crisis-affected countries has been rising steadily since 2010 (*INEE Mind the Gap, 2021*). This increase is mostly driven by the secondary and post-secondary levels, while the basic education level has remained at around 40%.

While the needs of children and youth the most affected by social exclusion and discrimination have increased exponentially with the COVID-19 pandemic, the funding gap for EiEPC in general, and for gender equality outcomes in particular, remains abysmal. ECW will launch its new Strategic Plan in September 2022 and calls for increased financial support and political commitment from the international community to support gender equitable and inclusive education in emergencies and protracted crises for children and adolescents affected by conflict, climate change and COVID-19.

At the same time, ECW is committed to contributing to address the challenge of estimating the share of humanitarian aid allocated to girls' and women's education by establishing a mechanism to track the proportion of its funding allocated to gender equality and girls' education.

Education is lifesaving for all children in EiEPC. Investing in Education Cannot Wait means that, in ten years, we could be living in a better world – with less conflict and forced migration and more peace, collaboration and innovation. A world where we respond better to natural disasters. A world where gender-based violence is not tolerated. A world where all girls and boys in their diversity have the capabilities and opportunities to achieve their dreams.



**“ The right to education is fundamental to promoting and protecting all human rights. It empowers girls to be leaders and agents of change in their families and communities. ”**

**— HON. HARJIT S. SAJJAN,  
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT, CANADA**

## **6.2: ADVOCATE FOR STRONGER POLITICAL SUPPORT TOGETHER WITH PARTNERS**

**Recognizing that ECW is not an implementing body, but a financing mechanism geared at systemic change, its strategy for advancing gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in and through education draws from system-wide development and humanitarian commitments such as the Beijing Declaration, Agenda for Humanity, United Nations Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergencies, Safe Schools Declaration and Charlevoix Declaration. As ECW targets the hardest to reach children and youth worldwide, and does so at scale, our work produces a tangible impact on the learning crisis, increasing the global community's ability to achieve international commitments and standards – in particular, SDGs 4, 5 and 16.**

ECW works closely with Government, donors and civil society partners to advocate for a stronger focus on girls' education and gender equality to achieve educational outcomes. In particular, ECW acknowledges the leadership on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment investments that its key donors (like Germany, the U.K., Denmark, Norway and Canada) have had in the last years, and is proud to have them as members of the ECW Gender Reference Group to promote and provide overall guidance on mainstreaming gender equality considerations in all aspects of ECW's work.

ECW also acknowledges G7 leaders' commitment to support at least 12 years of quality education and skills training for girl children, adolescent girls and women in fragile, crisis and conflict-affected situations – in particular, through the [Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries](#), adopted in 2018, the launch of the [Gender at the Centre Initiative](#), which commits donors to support national governments in putting gender at the center of education-sector planning in 2020, and the recent [Declaration on girls' education: recovering from COVID-19 and unlocking agenda 2030](#), launched during the G7 Foreign and Development Ministerial in May 2021 and reaffirming G7 leaders' commitment to 12 years of safe and quality education for all children and especially for girls and women, with the objective of getting 40 million more girls into school and 20 million more reading by the age of ten in low- and lower-middle income countries by 2026.





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Finally, ECW supports a number of global calls and partnerships focusing on gender equality. In 2021, ECW became a member of [The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#). Under the current leadership of the Government of Denmark, ECW made several commitments to ensure GBV risk mitigation is integrated into all its investments. ECW is also committed in all its investments to the Safe Schools Declaration, which provides a framework for action to deliver safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments – and participated in the International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration in October 2021.

Through these mechanisms, ECW seeks to strengthen global and local collaboration networks with both donors and partners to bolster advocacy efforts and enhance collective power to ensure all children, and especially girls, get quality and gender-responsive education in crisis contexts.

▲ Students return to in-person classes in Venezuela. Humanitarian, political and socio-economic crises in the country continue to threaten the education of millions of girls affected by social exclusion and discrimination throughout the country. As part of its regional response in Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, ECW and partners are helping students transition back into formal education.

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises. We support quality education outcomes for refugee, internally displaced and other crisis-affected girls and boys, so no one is left behind. ECW works through the multilateral system to both increase the speed of responses in crises and connect immediate relief and longer-term interventions through multi-year programming. ECW works in close partnership with governments, public and private donors, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and other humanitarian and development aid actors to increase efficiencies and end siloed responses. ECW urgently appeals to public and private sector donors for expanded support to reach even more marginalized children and youth. ECW is administered under UNICEF's financial, human resources and administrative rules and regulations; operations are run by the Fund's own independent governance structure.

For more information:

[www.educationcannotwait.org](http://www.educationcannotwait.org)

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