



2020–24 Strategy Summary

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) was established in 2010 by a number of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations who shared a concern about ongoing attacks on educational institutions¹, students, and educators, in countries affected by conflict and insecurity. Such attacks can cause death and injury and can have a devastating impact on the right to education. A core concern of GCPEA is military use of schools and universities by armed forces and groups. In addition to increasing the risk of attack by opposing forces, military use of educational institutions also makes students vulnerable to recruitment and violence, including sexual violence, and often prevents them from attending and disrupts their education.²

Over the past ten years, GCPEA has played an instrumental role in creating and promoting the [Safe Schools Declaration \(SSD\)](#), now endorsed by over 100 states. This Declaration and the associated [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict \(The Guidelines\)](#) have become a primary vehicle, nationally and internationally, for addressing attacks on education, and will continue to provide the foundation for GCPEA's work.

The 2020-24 strategy focuses on protecting education from attack in situations of armed conflict exclusively.

Our vision is that all students and educators, and schools and universities, are protected from attacks³ during armed conflict, including through prevention and response measures.

Our mission is to protect education from attack through advocacy that leverages the strengths of our diverse membership.

Over-arching goal:

Universal endorsement and implementation of the SSD

Strategic goals, 2020-24

- 1 Military use of educational institutions is prohibited and significantly reduced
- 2 Government forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) are deterred from attacking education institutions, their students, or staff
- 3 Prevention of, and response to, attacks on education is strengthened

* GCPEA is grateful for the generous support of its donors, past and present, including Columbia University's Program on Forced Migration and Health, Education Cannot Wait, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NoVo Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC), a project of the Education Above All Foundation, UNESCO, UNICEF, and an anonymous donor.



Children play outside a temporary school during a mid-day break, near Mbuji Mayi, Kasai region, Democratic Republic of Congo on January 27, 2018.

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Our theory of change

The SSD lies at the heart of GCPEA's 2020-24 strategy. In the coming years, our focus will continue to shift to *implementation* of the Declaration, through national strategies driven by governments but supported by GCPEA and its member organizations. In turn, evidence of effective implementation will encourage more states to endorse the Declaration. Further endorsements will then serve to strengthen the global consensus on the need to protect education from attack.

Research and data collection will represent a significant element of GCPEA's added value. Our biennial *Education Under Attack* reports, for example, and our thematic reports will continue to provide the critical evidence to demonstrate the pressing need for action. As well as improving its own data collection and analysis, GCPEA will advocate for better data collection, analysis, and disaggregation by partner organizations and governments.

Strategic advocacy: Alongside data collection and analysis, GCPEA will undertake strategic advocacy to realize the goals of this Strategy. Our own advocacy will be coordinated with Champion States (especially Norway, Argentina, and Spain) who are often better-placed than GCPEA to engage and encourage other governments to take necessary action.

A focus on engaging states whilst strengthening advocacy on ending attacks by NSAGs: GCPEA recognizes that NSAGs are responsible for a significant proportion of attacks on education but engaging with them directly can pose significant security risks and GCPEA has limited capacity to do so. GCPEA will thus retain its focus on influencing states and inter-governmental bodies to end attacks; however, it will continue to advocate with states that may have influence over NSAGs to encourage these NSAGs to end attacks, and will strengthen cooperation with organizations that have expertise in working with NSAGs.

Gender and inclusion. Recognizing that attacks on education and the military use of schools and universities can affect girls and women differently from boys and men, our Strategy will actively seek to ensure that all research and measures for preventing and responding to attacks are gender-responsive, and data collected is gender disaggregated. We also recognize that students and teachers with disabilities are affected differently to their able-bodied peers and that an inclusive lens needs to be applied to all protection and prevention strategies.

Our strategy for achieving each strategic goal:

Strategic Goal 1 – Military use of educational institutions is prohibited and significantly reduced. We will urge governments to train their military personnel to adhere to the *Guidelines*, to issue military orders that include prohibiting their armed forces from using educational institutions, and to amend their military manuals so that they include explicit protections for educational institutions. As well as mobilizing governments to make changes to doctrines and practice, GCPEA will provide evidence of good practice in the use of the *Guidelines* to help convince countries to refrain from using educational facilities for military purposes. We will also leverage our influence to strengthen international standards on this issue.

Strategic Goal 2 – Governments and NSAGs are deterred from attacking education institutions, their students, and staff. We will contribute to achieving this goal by: encouraging SSD endorsement and implementation; raising awareness of the scope and consequences of attacks and military use of educational institutions; and promoting accountability. GCPEA's *Education under Attack* report and other research will provide valuable evidence that can help increase accountability, for example. Our approach will hinge on collaborative relationships with states and other partners, but we will also name the perpetrators of attacks where appropriate. We will work to strengthen states' adherence to international law and support partners' efforts to use the law to hold perpetrators to account. At the same time, we will leverage human rights treaty bodies, UN Security Council resolutions, Universal Periodic Reviews, and other processes that can draw attention to, and sanction violations.

Strategic Goal 3 – Prevention of, and response to, attacks on education are strengthened. We will focus on: building a better evidence base of when and where attacks on education occur to inform protection policy and programs (and ensure these are gender-responsive); increasing the knowledge and capacity of national actors to protect education; and facilitating knowledge exchange through the collection and dissemination of good practice. These actions will help governments implement specific commitments in the SSD such as, assuring the continuity of education during armed conflict, and enhancing data collection. The achievement of Strategic Goal 3 will rely on collaborations at the national level, facilitated by GCPEA member organizations. National level efforts will be supported by a *Toolkit on Collecting and Analysing Data on Attacks on Education* and the compilation of examples of good practice in preventing and responding to attacks on education.

Strengthening GCPEA's organizational foundations to deliver the Strategy

GCPEA will continue to be guided by its **Steering Committee**, which is made up of representatives from the following organizations: Co-chairs, Human Rights Watch and Save the Children, as well as the Institute of International Education, Plan International, Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict, (a program of Education Above All Foundation), UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNICEF. As GCPEA's main decision-making body, the Steering Committee will review the progress of the 2020-24 Strategy against agreed indicators at its biannual meetings and will identify any major changes needed going forward. A small number of time-bound **working groups** will be created to deliver specific goals or change objectives within the 2020-24 Strategy. The **GCPEA Secretariat** will continue to support and provide advice to the Steering Committee and will play a key role in implementing the Strategy, primarily through advocacy, research, and data collection activities. The Secretariat will also facilitate and support GCPEA member organizations to implement specific activities within the Strategy. Secretariat staff are managed by the GCPEA Executive Director.

¹ This term includes pre-primary or early childhood education centers, primary or secondary schools, learning centers, and tertiary education centers such as universities, colleges, or technical training schools.

² Further information on the number, incidence, and nature of attacks on education and the military use of education institutions can be found in GCPEA's bi-annual *Education under Attack* reports

³ Attacks on education are defined as any threatened or actual use of force – carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious or criminal reasons – against students, educators and educational institutions. Attacks on education may be perpetrated by state security forces, including armed forces, law enforcement, paramilitary, and militia forces acting on behalf of the state, plus non-state armed groups.

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Our vision:

All students and educators, and schools and universities are protected from attacks during armed conflict, including through prevention and response measures

Over-arching goal of the 2020-24 Strategy:

Universal endorsement and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD)

Strategic Goal 1

Military use of educational institutions is prohibited and significantly reduced

Strategic Goal 2

Government forces and non-state armed groups are deterred from attacking education institutions, students or staff

Strategic Goal 3

Prevention of, and response to, attacks is strengthened

Change objectives for Strategic Goal 1:

- Stronger international standards protecting educational institutions from military use are adopted and upheld
- UN and regional peacekeeping forces refrain from any military use of educational institutions
- An increase in the number of states restricting military use of educational institutions in their military doctrine

Change objectives for Strategic Goal 2:

- More states endorse and implement the SSD
- Awareness about the scope and negative impacts of attacks on education increases
- Good practice in protecting education is shared for armed forces and armed groups to replicate
- Accountability for attacks increases

Change objectives for Strategic Goal 3:

- Educational personnel and ministries have increased knowledge and skills to prevent and respond to threats and attacks
- The barriers preventing the continuation of education after attacks are identified and removed
- National partners share knowledge and understanding of practices to prevent and respond to attacks on education

Our Approach:

Research & Data Collection • Strategic Advocacy • Partnership with States
Leveraging the Strengths of our Diverse Membership • Gender-Responsive & Inclusive