



Global Coalition to **Protect
Education from Attack**



2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN

Mid-Term Summary of Achievements

October 2022

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BACKGROUND

In 2020, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) adopted a five-year strategic plan to guide its work for the 2020-2024 period. At the time of its inception, GCPEA had already played an instrumental role in securing over 100 endorsements for the Safe Schools Declaration and had supported the organization of three international conferences on safe schools hosted by Norway, Argentina, and Spain. GCPEA had also published the 2014 and 2018 editions of its flagship report series, *Education under Attack*. Since 2018, GCPEA has been the official data source for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 4.a.3 which tracks attacks on schools, students, and teachers.

Building on the advocacy and research expertise cultivated during its first decade, the plan set forth a framework to realize GCPEA's vision that "all students and educators, and schools and universities, are protected from attacks during armed conflict, including through prevention and response measures."

The 2020-2024 Strategic Plan's overarching goal is **the universal endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration**.

Guiding this strategic plan are three Strategic Goals:

- 1 ***Military use of education institutions is significantly reduced;***
- 2 ***Governments and non-state actors are deterred from attacking education institutions, their students and staff;***
- 3 ***Prevention of and response to attacks on education are strengthened.***

Each of the three strategic goals is driven by three change objectives; it is through these change objectives and their accompanying outcomes, activities, and indicators that progress towards the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan is measured. Since the plan was adopted in 2020, GCPEA has conducted biannual reviews. In June 2022, GCPEA also conducted a comprehensive mid-term review of the strategic plan, during which several change objectives were re-assessed and revised in relation to GCPEA's own internal capacity as well as external factors affecting the organization's work, including Covid-19.

Through this mid-term review, GCPEA identified major advancements towards each of the strategic goals, with significant advances in a number of change objectives. This document highlights some of GCPEA's key accomplishments in the first half of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

GCPEA'S TOP ACHIEVEMENTS FROM JANUARY 2020 - JUNE 2022

Strategic Goal 1: Military use of education institutions is significantly reduced

GCPEA planned to work towards this goal through i) promoting the adoption and upholding of stronger international standards, ii) advocating for UN and regional peacekeepers to refrain from military use of education facilities, and iii) increasing the number of states which restrict the military use of educational institutions in their military doctrine. GCPEA made significant progress towards achieving this goal. Two key achievements in the period were the adoption of a United Nations Security Council resolution on attacks on education and the African Union (AU) Peace and Support Operations banning the military use of schools. These, and other key achievements towards Goal 1, are detailed below:

- In 2020, the African Union (AU) [Doctrine on Peace Support Operations](#) stated that AU Peace and Support Operations must protect children while carrying out their mandates to ensure full compliance with international law and ensure that schools are not attacked and used for military purposes. The long-term goal of the AU banning military use of schools was thus achieved within the first half of the strategic plan instead of at the end of 2024.
- In October 2021, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted resolution 2601 (2021) on the protection of education, the first thematic UNSC resolution on this topic. The resolution, which references the Safe Schools Declaration in the preamble, was another long-term goal that was achieved within the first half of the Strategic Plan.
- GCPEA co-hosted the 4th International Conference on Safe Schools in Nigeria, together with Norway and other champion states. At least 400 delegates from 27 States and 1,930 delegates from 124 States attended in-person and virtually, respectively
- In May 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/74/275) establishing the International Day to Protect Education from Attack.
- In September 2020, GCPEA played an instrumental role in the adoption of a Presidential Statement on attacks on education in the UN Security Council. GCPEA was invited to brief the Council during the open debate in which the statement was adopted.
- In June 2021, Human Rights Council regular session 47 adopted resolution A/HRC/47/L.4/Rev.1 on the right to education, referring to the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict (Guidelines)* for the first time.
- A UN Security Council [Arria-Formula Meeting](#) was held on December 6 to discuss concrete steps for implementing Resolution 2601, including by implementing the Safe Schools Declaration.
- Several countries have included references to the Safe Schools Declaration in their military doctrine or have otherwise restricted the military use of schools and universities. For more details, see GCPEA's [Factsheet on the Practical Impact of the Safe Schools Declaration](#). In one example, in Mali, the Safe Schools Declaration Technical Committee launched an Action Plan with concrete activities to disseminate the *Guidelines* and incorporate protection of schools and universities into national legislation.

- Since 2017, GCPEA has not identified reports of military use by UN peacekeepers.
- Several countries created Safe Schools Declaration Technical Committees or plans to implement the commitments of the Declaration. GCPEA also supported countries to make these plans, such as in November 2020, when it organized an inter-ministerial meeting with the Afghan government and Coalition members to encourage their work on gender-responsive implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.
- GCPEA supported Spain to organize the first online global training on gender-responsive implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration in 2021.
- The Safe Schools Declaration has been highlighted by Member States during UNSC Open Debates on Children and Armed Conflict; Women, Peace, and Security; Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Protection of Civilians - most recently in relation to the Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas agenda. In 2019-2020, GCPEA estimated that at least 82 states delivered statements positively referencing the Declaration and calling on other Member States to join.

Strategic Goal 2. Governments and non-state actors are deterred from attacking education institutions, and their students and staff

GCPEA aimed to achieve this goal through i) securing more endorsements of the Safe Schools Declaration, ii) raising awareness about the scope and gendered impacts of attacks on education, particularly through its research and iii) encouraging greater accountability for attacks, by both state armed forces and non-state armed groups. GCPEA made significant progress towards this goal through its sustained advocacy on the Safe Schools Declaration and the publication of two *Education under Attack* reports and several thematic papers. GCPEA raised awareness with journalists and began to develop workplans related to accountability and non-state armed groups.

These, and other achievements towards Goal 2, are detailed below:

- Since the beginning of 2020, 15 countries endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.
- GCPEA published [Education under Attack 2020](#) and [2022. Education under Attack 2020](#) was covered approximately 124 times in the media including in *Forbes*, *The Telegraph*, *Al-Fanar*, *Vice*, *BBC Afrique*, and *El País*. The 2022 version of the report was covered dozens of times, including on *BBC* radio and *VOA Myanmar* radio and in *University World News* and *UN News*, and GCPEA published an [op-ed](#) ahead of the release.
- In September 2021, GCPEA co-hosted an event with the Right to Education Initiative on promoting journalist and civil society collaboration on monitoring and reporting of attacks. Around 13 journalists and members of civil society organizations discussed how to improve collaboration on the topic of attacks on education.
- GCPEA data was published annually on UNESCO Institute for Statistics' data portal as well as on UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX) portal.
- In 2022, GCPEA provided technical support and data for the new Track Attacks on Education (TRACE) Data Portal, where users can interact with GCPEA data and explore the impacts of attacks on education.

- During 2022, GCPEA conducted extensive advocacy on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) and its impact on education; in April 2022, the final text of the new Declaration on EWIPA referred to attacks on schools.
- In 2022, GCPEA began drafting a scoping paper on non-state armed groups and abductions; GCPEA also began work on an exploratory paper on accountability for attacks on education.

Strategic Goal 3. Prevention of and response to attacks on education is strengthened

GCPEA planned to achieve this goal by i) strengthening data collection and analysis to inform prevention and response measures, ii) increasing the ability of Ministries of Education and national actors to protect education, particularly through improving risk assessments, and iii) facilitating knowledge sharing of good practices to prevent and respond to attacks on education. GCPEA made significant progress towards this goal. In particular, it published a working draft of the *Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education* and disseminated it broadly with key stakeholders. GCPEA facilitated the sharing of good practices by building out the state-led Safe Schools Declaration Implementation Network with Norway. These, and other top achievements towards Goal 3, are detailed below:

- GCPEA published a working draft of the [*Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education*](#) in early 2021 and updated the guidance in 2022. GCPEA conducted orientations on the *Toolkit* with governments, international organizations, and civil society in Colombia, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Ukraine, and the West and Central Africa Regional EiE Working Group in 2021 and 2022. Nigeria, Colombia, and Ukraine have reported using the *Toolkit* for data collection or analysis.
- GCPEA published three case studies using the *Toolkit* to inform analysis. The papers covered the impact of attacks on education in [Afghanistan](#), [Palestine](#), and [Myanmar](#). These case studies received media attention; GCPEA also published op-eds linked to the [Afghanistan](#) and [Myanmar](#) studies and shared findings from the Myanmar study via letter to the UN Special Representative on Human Rights in Myanmar.
- GCPEA prepared a guidance note on conducting risk assessments for the purposes of prevention and response. To support this area of work, GCPEA joined the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector in mid-2022.
- GCPEA has developed a community of practice for state representatives from endorsing states through the online platform of the state-led implementation network, where states can actively share good practice. GCPEA supported Norway in establishing this network which was launched during the Abuja Conference in October 2021.
- GCPEA established a Resource Bank of Good Practice in Implementing the Safe Schools Declaration on its website.
- GCPEA met with the Global Partnership for Education to discuss future areas of collaboration around prevention and response to attacks on education within education sector planning mechanisms. GCPEA also provided an analysis of attacks on education and Safe Schools Declaration endorsement for countries in their grant pipeline in June 2022.

ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROGRESS ON CHANGE OBJECTIVES, 2020-2022

It is worth highlighting some internal and external developments that occurred during the first half of the strategic plan. First, GCPEA membership changed during this period. In 2020, the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) stepped down from the Coalition, and in December 2021, Amnesty International joined the coalition. Amnesty International's membership presents new opportunities for GCPEA's advocacy and research.

Second, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the ability to hold in-person meetings for much of 2020 and 2021; however, GCPEA capitalized on opportunities for advocacy, trainings, and other activities in the virtual space. GCPEA was also able to organize some hybrid and in-person events in late 2021 and in 2022, including the hybrid Fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration in Abuja, Nigeria, which was attended virtually by over 1,930 delegates from 124 States.

Since the strategic plan was adopted, GCPEA has also contributed to broadened opportunities and mechanisms through which to promote the protection of education and the Safe Schools Declaration, including the UN Security Council Resolution 2601 and the UN International Day to Protect Education from Attack. GCPEA will continue to adapt the change objectives to incorporate these avenues in its advocacy work.

Unfortunately, conflict escalated in several regions of the world during the pandemic, including the Sahel, Myanmar, and Ukraine, leading to a dramatic increase in attacks on education. GCPEA also noted increases in military use during this period, potentially due to school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. High rates of attacks on education and military use around the world indicate the ongoing need for GCPEA's research and advocacy on the issue, and the importance of its unique position, as a Coalition of civil society and UN agencies, to galvanize awareness and action towards ending these violations.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023-2024

Since June 2022, GCPEA has continued to build on the above achievements and has made plans to achieve its remaining goals within the period of the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. Since GCPEA was able to achieve its long-term goals of the AU banning military use of schools and the UN Security Council adopting a resolution on protecting education from attack ahead of schedule, it can now proceed with the next level of advocacy on protecting education, namely, ensuring that regional mechanisms like ECOWAS also ban military use and that the Resolution is operationalized.

GCPEA will also continue targeted advocacy for endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration and will explore new avenues for advancing its implementation. GCPEA will continue to collect good practices and examples of reductions in military use by signatories to the Safe Schools Declaration. In the coming year, GCPEA will co-organize the 5th International Conference on Safe Schools, hosted by Malaysia and other champion states. GCPEA will also continue to organize trainings and workshops on the Safe Schools Declaration, leveraging its past experience and strong networks established in the first half of the Strategic Plan.

In addition, the coalition will publish the final version of the *Toolkit for Collecting and Analyzing Data on Attacks on Education* in 2022 and continue to disseminate it with key partners. GCPEA will use the innovations from the *Toolkit* to research and write the forthcoming *Education under Attack 2024* report. Finally, GCPEA will more fully develop its work on non-state armed groups, accountability, and strengthening national-level prevention and response measures, during the remainder of the 2020-2024 period, based on research that is underway in the final half of 2022.

CONCLUSION

The past two and a half years have constituted a significant period of growth and accomplishment for GCPEA. While much work remains to be done to end attacks on education and the military use of schools and universities, the Coalition has leveraged the strengths of its diverse membership to enhance the protection of students, educators, schools, and universities, from attack during armed conflict.



Global Coalition to **Protect Education from Attack**

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Secretariat

350 5th Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, New York 10118

Email: GCPEA@protectingeducation.org

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GCPEA is a coalition of organizations that includes: Amnesty International, Education Above All Foundation, Human Rights Watch, Plan International, Save the Children, UNESCO, UNHCR, and UNICEF.



(front cover) Students from different classes playing during their break in the schoolyard in a school in Homs City, Syria, in September 2022.

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