

RECOMMENDATIONS

The gains made in protecting education from attack since 2013 are laudable, yet there is still significant work to be done to protect learners, educators, and educational institutions from attacks on education and military use. To better protect education, GCPEA makes the following recommendations to be followed by states, non-state armed groups, UN and international agencies, and civil society actors:

Overarching recommendations

- Endorse, implement, and support the Safe Schools Declaration to ensure that all students and educators, male and female, can learn and teach in safety.
- Avoid using schools and universities for military purposes, including by implementing the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.
- Strengthen monitoring and reporting of attacks on education, including disaggregating data by type of attack on education, sex, age, and type of schooling, in order to improve efforts to prevent and respond to attacks on education.
- Systematically investigate attacks on education and prosecute perpetrators.
- Provide nondiscriminatory assistance for all victims of attacks on education, taking into account the different needs and experiences of males and females.
- Ensure that education promotes peace instead of triggering conflict and provides physical and psychosocial protection for students, including by addressing gender-based stereotypes and barriers that can trigger, exacerbate, and follow attacks on education.
- Where feasible, maintain safe access to education during armed conflict, including by engaging with school and university communities and all other relevant stakeholders in developing risk-reduction strategies and comprehensive safety and security plans for attacks on education.

National governments, including ministries of education, higher education, and defense, as well as national security forces, should take the following steps, considering the gender-specific needs and experiences of affected populations:

International Commitments

1. Endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.
2. Implement the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.
3. Support GCPEA's Principles of State Responsibility to Protect Higher Education from Attack.

Military Operations

4. Refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes, including by integrating the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* into domestic policy, operational frameworks, and training manuals, as far as is possible and appropriate.
5. Abide by the laws of war and never target students or teachers who are not taking direct part in hostilities. Never attack buildings dedicated to education – such as schools and universities – that do not constitute military objectives.
6. Engage gender specialists to review military policies and doctrines and hold regular trainings on implementing protections for education that account for the specific needs of males and females.
7. Strengthen efforts to recruit women officers, both in the military and in law enforcement, and if officers are stationed near or at schools, ensure gender parity among them.

Monitoring and Reporting

8. Work with the UN, international agencies, and civil society to strengthen and support existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and report attacks on education and military use of schools and universities to the UN-led MRM, Education Cluster, or other monitoring partners, as relevant.
9. Ensure that monitoring systems collect and report data that is disaggregated by type of attack on education, sex, age, and type of schooling.
10. Ensure that reports of child recruitment and conflict-related sexual violence specify where it takes place, including at schools and universities and along school or university routes, so they can be tracked as attacks on education.
11. Work with legal, medical, and psychosocial service providers to establish referral mechanisms that allow victims of attacks on education to consent to sharing anonymized information with monitoring systems.
12. Support the creation of a mechanism for reporting attacks on higher education. In the absence of a specialized mechanism, strengthen and systematize procedures for reporting attacks on higher education; for example, reporting to the relevant UN or regional rapporteurs or human rights bodies.

Assistance for Victims

13. Provide nondiscriminatory, contextually appropriate legal, medical, and psychosocial assistance to male and female victims of attacks on education, including sexual and reproductive health services, and engage in outreach to ensure that victims have access to such services.
14. Establish, or contribute to the establishment of, child-friendly and gender-specific safe spaces, such as formal or informal community centers or women's centers, for victims of attacks on education where they can receive legal, medical, and psychosocial information and services; learn how to continue their education during conflict; and participate in developing and contributing to response and protection measures.

Legal Mechanisms and Accountability

15. Reform or promulgate domestic laws and policies in accordance with international law to enable the effective, systematic, and transparent investigation and prosecution of allegations of attacks on educational facilities, students, and teachers, including gender-based attacks.
16. Effectively and transparently investigate alleged violations of applicable national and international law, prosecute perpetrators where appropriate, and ensure that cases of attacks on educational facilities, students, and teachers are brought to existing national courts or establish ad hoc mechanisms to address such cases.
17. Support and cooperate with criminal accountability mechanisms through international channels, such as the ICC, and support the establishment of internationalized or hybrid courts.
18. Pursue broad accountability by mandating that transitional justice mechanisms, such as domestic special courts or truth commissions, explicitly recognize attacks on education and redress victims of such attacks, including through dedicated reparations efforts and programs for these victims.
19. Support national consultations to assess the needs and desires of affected communities and individuals, particularly with respect to justice and reparations for attacks on education and consequent gender-based harms.

Planning for and Mitigating the Impact of Attacks on Education

20. Ensure that education continues during armed conflict by collaborating with local civil society and community members to develop early warning systems, contingency plans, comprehensive safety and security plans, and other initiatives to prevent and mitigate the impact of attacks on education at the school and university levels that respond to the specific needs and experiences of males and females and vulnerable groups.
21. Develop educational policies and practices in accordance with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards for Education, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, among other international standards on education in emergencies and gender-based violence in emergencies.

22. Consult affected and at-risk populations, including women and girls, about their needs, risks, and envisioned protections, particularly with respect to their education, and incorporate their input into service provision and protection plans.
23. Engage and educate communities on the importance of educating women and girls, keeping them in school or university, and not stigmatizing victims of rape and sexual violence or child recruitment.
24. Contribute to deradicalization efforts by raising awareness of the societal and developmental benefits of protecting education in order to deter ideologically targeted attacks on education, particularly on women and girls.
25. Ensure that schools remain politically neutral spaces. In contexts where there is a pattern of attacking schools used as polling centers, refrain from using them as such.

Non-state armed groups should take the following steps, considering the gender-specific needs and experiences of affected populations:**International Commitments**

1. Sign and implement Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict, including as it relates to educational spaces.
2. Sign and implement the Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment to prohibit sexual violence and gender discrimination, including in relation to attacks on education and those targeting women and girls.

Military Operations

3. Refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes, including by integrating the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* into domestic policy, operational frameworks, and training manuals, as far as is possible and appropriate.
4. Abide by the laws of war and never target students or teachers who are not taking direct part in hostilities. Never attack buildings dedicated to education – such as schools and universities – that do not constitute military objectives.
5. Engage gender specialists to review military policies and doctrines and hold regular trainings on implementing protections for education.

UN and international agencies should take the following steps, considering the gender-specific needs and experiences of affected populations:

International Commitments

1. Advocate for states that have not endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration to do so.
2. Support states in implementing the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.

Operations by International Peacekeeping Forces

3. Abide by the laws of war and never target students or teachers who are not taking direct part in hostilities. Never attack buildings dedicated to education – such as schools and universities – that do not constitute military objectives.
4. Refrain from using schools and universities for military purposes, in keeping with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations' 2017 child protection policy and the UN *Infantry Battalion Manual*, and integrate the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* into operations, as far as is possible and appropriate.
5. Engage gender specialists to review state security force policies and doctrines and hold regular trainings on good practices to protect against attacks on education that account for specific experiences, such as conflict-related sexual violence that appears to disproportionately affect women and girls.
6. Strengthen efforts to recruit women officers into peacekeeping missions and, if officers are stationed near or at schools, ensure gender parity among them.

Monitoring and Reporting

7. Establish, strengthen, and systematize monitoring and reporting partnerships between the UN-led MRM, Education Cluster, ministries of education, and civil society.
8. Ensure that monitoring systems collect and report data that is disaggregated by type of attack on education, sex, age, and type of schooling.
9. Ensure that reporting on child recruitment and conflict-related sexual violence specifies where it takes place, including at schools and universities and along school or university routes, so they can be tracked as attacks on education.
10. Support the creation of a mechanism for reporting attacks on higher education. In the absence of a specialized mechanism, strengthen and systematize procedures for reporting attacks on higher education, such as reporting to the relevant UN or regional rapporteurs or human rights bodies.
11. Work with legal, medical, and psychosocial service providers to establish referral mechanisms that allow victims of attacks on education to consent to sharing anonymized information with monitoring systems.

Assistance for Victims

12. Provide nondiscriminatory, contextually appropriate legal, medical, and psychosocial assistance to male and female victims of attacks on education, including sexual and reproductive health services, and engage in outreach to ensure that victims have access to such services.
13. Establish, or contribute to the establishment of, child-friendly and gender-specific safe spaces, such as formal or informal community centers or women's centers, for victims of attacks on education where they can receive legal, medical, and psychosocial information and services; learn how to continue their education during conflict; and participate in developing and contributing to response and protection measures.

Legal Mechanisms and Accountability

14. Provide financial or expert support for investigations of alleged violations of applicable national and international law.
15. Support criminal accountability measures through international channels such as the ICC and the establishment of internationalized or hybrid courts.
16. Request that existing and future mechanisms of the HRC, such as commissions, fact-finding missions, and investigations, identify attacks on education and the perpetrators with a view toward holding them accountable in transitional justice processes, including criminal trials.
17. Highlight attacks on education through UN human rights treaty bodies (including the CRC, the CESCR, and CEDAW; UN country and thematic special procedures of the HRC, such as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women; and relevant special representatives, such as for children and armed conflict and on sexual violence in conflict), identify such violations as attacks on education, and recommend that UN member states investigate, prosecute, and otherwise hold accountable the perpetrators of attacks on education, relative to their mandate.
18. Support broad accountability through transitional justice mechanisms, such as domestic special courts or truth commissions, that explicitly recognize attacks on education and redress victims of such attacks, including through dedicated reparations efforts and programs for these victims.
19. Support national consultations to assess the needs and desires of affected communities and individuals, particularly with respect to justice and reparations for attacks on education and consequent gender-based harms.

Planning for and Mitigating the Impact of Attacks on Education

20. Support ministries of education and higher education in preventing, mitigating, and responding to attacks on education by collaborating with local civil society and community members to develop early warning systems, contingency plans, comprehensive safety and security plans, and other initiatives to prevent and mitigate the impact of attacks on education at the school and university levels, which will respond to the specific needs and experiences of males and females and vulnerable groups.

21. Support educational policies and practices in accordance with the INEE Minimum Standards for Education, IASC's Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, and UNFPA's Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, among other international standards on education in emergencies and gender-based violence in emergencies.
22. Consult affected and at-risk populations, including women and girls, about their needs, risks, and envisioned protections, particularly with respect to their education, and incorporate their inputs into service provision and protection plans.
23. Engage and educate communities on the importance of educating women and girls, keeping them in school or university, and not stigmatizing victims of rape and sexual violence or child recruitment.
24. Contribute to deradicalization efforts by raising awareness of the societal and developmental benefits of protecting education in order to deter ideologically targeted attacks on education, particularly on women and girls.

Civil society, as well as school and university communities, should take the following steps, considering the gender-specific needs and experiences of affected populations:

International Commitments

1. Advocate for states that have not yet endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration to do so.
2. Support states in implementing the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.
3. Advocate for state authorities to demonstrate a commitment to GCPEA's Principles of State Responsibility to Protect Higher Education from Attack, including by advocating for and assisting in the review of relevant national policies and laws.

Monitoring and Reporting

4. Work with national governments, the UN, and international agencies to strengthen and systematize monitoring and reporting partnerships, and report attacks on education and military use of schools and universities to the UN-led MRM, Education Cluster, or other monitoring partners, as relevant.
5. Ensure that monitoring systems collect and report data that is disaggregated by type of attack on education, sex, age, and type of schooling.
6. Ensure that reporting on child recruitment and conflict-related sexual violence specifies where it takes place, including at schools and universities and along school or university routes, so they can be tracked as attacks on education.
7. In the absence of a specialized mechanism, strengthen and systematize procedures for reporting attacks on higher education, such as reporting to the relevant UN or regional rapporteurs or human rights bodies.

8. Work with legal, medical, and psychosocial service providers to establish referral mechanisms that allow victims of attacks on education to consent to sharing anonymized information with monitoring systems.

Assistance for Victims

9. Provide nondiscriminatory, contextually appropriate legal, medical, and psychosocial assistance to victims of attacks on education, including sexual and reproductive health services, and engage in outreach to ensure that victims have access to such services.
10. Establish, or contribute to the establishment of, child-friendly and gender-specific safe spaces, such as formal or informal community centers or women's centers, for victims of attacks on education where they can receive legal, medical, and psychosocial information and services; learn how to continue their education during conflict; and participate in developing and contributing to response and protection measures.

Legal Mechanisms and Accountability

11. Support criminal accountability by providing documentation on attacks on education to criminal investigators and prosecutors.
12. Hold national consultations to assess the needs and desires of affected communities and individuals, particularly with respect to justice and reparations for attacks on education and consequent gender-based harms.
13. Support broad accountability through transitional justice mechanisms, such as domestic special courts or truth commissions, that explicitly recognize attacks on education and redress victims of such attacks, including through dedicated reparations efforts and programs for these victims.
14. Highlight attacks on education through UN human rights treaty bodies (including the CRC, CESCR, and CEDAW; UN country and thematic special procedures of the HRC, such as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women; and relevant special representatives, such as for children and armed conflict and on sexual violence in conflict), identify such violations as attacks on education, and recommend that UN member states investigate, prosecute, and otherwise hold accountable the perpetrators of attacks on education, relative to their mandate.

Planning for and Mitigating the Impact of Attacks on Education

15. Support the continuation of education during armed conflict and the development of risk-reduction strategies, comprehensive safety and security plans, and other initiatives to prevent and mitigate the impact of attacks on education at the school and university levels that respond to the specific needs and experiences of males and females and vulnerable groups.
16. Support educational policies and practices in accordance with the INEE Minimum Standards for Education, IASC's Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, and UNFPA's Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, among other international standards on education in emergencies and gender-based violence in emergencies.

17. Consult affected and at-risk populations, including women and girls, about their needs, risks, and envisioned protections, particularly with respect to their education, and incorporate their input into service provision and protection plans.
18. Engage and educate communities on the importance of educating women and girls, keeping them in school or university, and not stigmatizing victims of rape and sexual violence or child recruitment.
19. Contribute to deradicalization efforts by raising awareness of the societal and developmental benefits of protecting education in order to deter ideologically targeted attacks on education, particularly on women and girls.

Donors should take the following steps, considering the gender-specific needs and experiences of affected populations:

International Commitments

1. Support the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration at all levels of education.
2. Support GCPEA's Principles of State Responsibility to Protect Higher Education from Attack.

Monitoring and Reporting

3. Support efforts to establish, strengthen, and systematize monitoring and reporting partnerships between the UN-led MRM, Education Cluster, ministries of education, and civil society.
4. Support the creation of a mechanism for reporting attacks on higher education. In the absence of a specialized mechanism, strengthen and systematize procedures for reporting attacks on higher education, such as reporting to the relevant UN or regional rapporteurs or human rights bodies.

Assistance for Victims

5. Provide financial support to ensure that victims of attacks on education can access legal, medical, and psychosocial assistance, as well as child-friendly and gender-specific safe spaces.
6. Provide financial assistance for the establishment of child-friendly and gender-specific safe spaces, such as formal or informal community centers or women's centers, where victims of attacks on education can receive legal, medical, and psychosocial information and services; learn how to continue their education during conflict; and participate in developing and contributing to response and protection measures.

Legal Mechanisms and Accountability

7. Provide financial or expert support for investigations of alleged violations of applicable national and international law.

Planning for and Mitigating the Impact of Attacks on Education

8. Provide financial support for the continuation of education during armed conflict and the development of risk-reduction strategies, comprehensive safety and security plans, and other initiatives to prevent and mitigate the impact of attacks on education at the school and university levels that will respond to the specific needs and experiences of males and females and vulnerable groups.
9. Support educational policies and practices in accordance with the INEE Minimum Standards for Education, IASC's Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, and UNFPA's Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, among other international standards on education in emergencies and gender-based violence in emergencies.
10. Consult affected and at-risk populations, including women and girls, about their needs, risks, and envisioned protections, particularly with respect to their education, and incorporate their input into service provision and protection plans.



Students play together on the playground of a damaged school in eastern Aleppo's countryside, Syria, in September 2017.

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