Education in Emergencies Toolkit

Inclusive Quality Education in Emergencies

Bangladesh: Promoting access to formal education for Rohingya refugee children and youth in Cox's Bazar

Context

According to late 2024 figures, over a million Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs, or "Rohingya refugees"), about 52 per cent children, find shelter in 33 congested camps. They fled Myanmar due to longstanding discrimination by the Myanmar government and a significant episode of state violence in 2017. The conditions in the camps expose children and women particularly, to violence, abuse, and exploitation, including child trafficking, child marriage, child labour, and gender-based violence (GBV). The situation is exacerbated by natural and man-made hazards, such as disease outbreaks, seasonal monsoons, cyclones, floods, landslides, and fires.

The humanitarian community remains committed to providing essential services for Rohingya refugees, but significant challenges persist. These include limited educational opportunities, particularly for adolescents, and the prevalence of protection risks that continue to threaten the safety and well-being of children and young people.

Education in Cox's Bazar , the largest refugee settlement in the world, faces numerous challenges, inadequately trained and inexperienced teachers contributes to a high turnover rate compounded by language barriers, short-term funding cycles, and the lack of a robust data monitoring system. Restrictions on the use of the national curriculum[1] meant that until recently the curriculum used in the camp was an informal competency-based curriculum developed by education actors working in the camps. Advocacy to allow Rohingya learners to study a recognised curriculum led in 2021 to the authorities granting the right for humanitarian partners to provide the Myanmar Curriculum up to grade 10. Through the "Promoting access to formal education for Rohingya refugee children and youth in Cox's Bazar" programme, SDC supported 126 Learning Centers, the only form of schools in the camps.

How has SDC supported Quality Inclusive Education in Emergencies for Rohingya refugees?

Five approaches adopted by the programme have significantly contributed to responding to the specific challenges facing children and youth in accessing quality education services in the Rohingya Camp context:
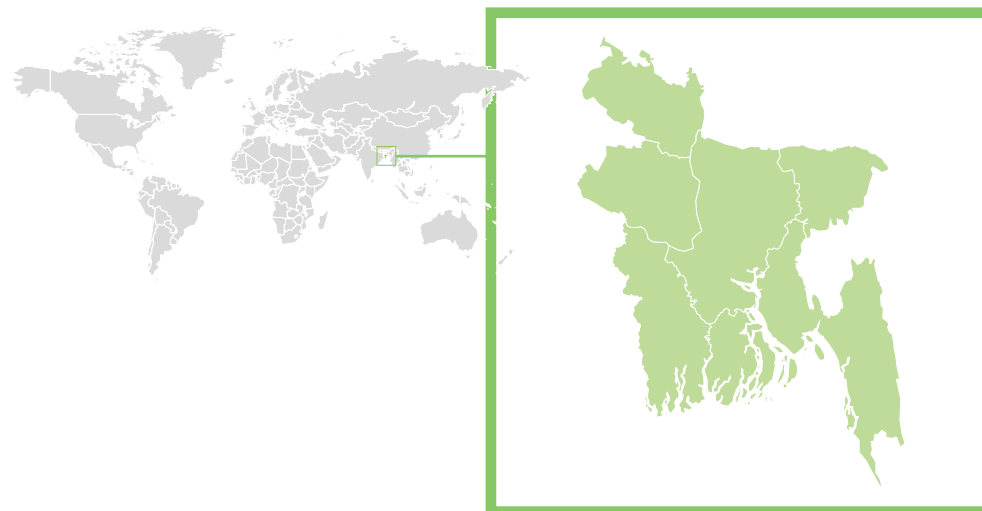
Caption: Rohingya children engaged in learning at a camp-based education centre in Cox's Bazar, following the Myanmar curriculum. Despite challenges, education remains a vital source of hope and stability for refugee children.
Photo credit: Priyanka Mazumder, Programme Manager, Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh.

1. INEE. (2024). Policy Brief "Implementing the Myanmar Curriculum in Rohingya Camps: Overcoming Challenges and Barriers"

Focus on Teacher Professional Development

In order to best respond to the identified needs, SDC has chosen to refocus its support: rather than supporting the development of the Myanmar curriculum, it now focuses its support on teachers, recognising the central role they play in quality, inclusive education for Rohingya children and young people. The programme provided teacher professional development, ensured teachers' employment in Learning Centers, and monitored their performance.

Approaches included paying teacher allowances, taking account of their living conditions. As part of ongoing professional support, teachers participated in subject-knowledge training areas such as Burmese, English and Mathematics, lesson planning, disaster risk reduction, child safeguarding, classroom administration, blended learning and the use of EdTech. Teaching guides were developed, and a Teacher Competency Framework was defined. Volunteer mentor teachers provided in-classroom support to other teachers, giving feedback and guidance in the context of practice.

In partnership with the Asian University for Women (AUW), the programme certified teacher training on Myanmar Curriculum subject-knowledge, subject-specific pedagogies and other essential teaching skills and knowledge including engagement with parents, relationship building with learners and inclusive education. The programme partnered with Cambridge University to develop an assessment framework on the Myanmar Curriculum, identifying learning indicators. This enhanced teachers' understanding of key assessment concepts, allowing them to support placement tests, develop end-of-year assessments, and keep formal records of children's learning assessments.

Child protection interventions

Central to inclusive quality Education in Emergencies (EiE), the programme combined Education and Child Protection objectives through two complementary outcomes: improved learning outcomes and supporting children to benefit from robust social services. The programme supported the Department of Social Services (DSS), by enhancing the capacity of social services workers to provide case management for children and improving the Office of the Registrar General's capacity to address birth registration issues. In parallel, community-based Child Protection Committees played an essential part in child protection. They complemented the role of social workers, caseworkers and other frontline personnel in identifying, referring and responding to child protection concerns. Teachers were trained on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and child safeguarding.

Inclusion of children with disabilities

The programme placed a significant focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities in education, sharing capacity with Education sector partners and education service providers to identify and refer children with disabilities. Trainings focused on understanding referral pathways to disability-specific services in camps, and applying 'reasonable accommodation' guidelines to identify and address barriers faced by children with disabilities. For example, physical adjustments such as ramps, instructional support such as visual aids, scheduling flexibility and behavioral support.

Appropriate equipment and devices were distributed to learners with disabilities and teachers were trained on identifying and referring children with disabilities. The programme conducted clinical assessments and volunteer teachers supported these children in Learning Centers, through adaptations such as adjusted seating arrangements, peer support, and the application of disability-friendly teaching techniques. Field visits were conducted to assess the knowledge and continued application of inclusive education pedagogy among teachers.

Community engagement in education for gender equality

Through its support to Community Education Support Groups, the programme encouraged parental engagement to address the root causes of barriers to education, especially for adolescent girls and out of school children. Gender action plans were developed, and a mobilisation strategy was developed and implemented.


Caption: Rohingya children engage in joyful learning at a community-based learning center in Cox's Bazar – a safe space where education brings hope, smiles, and a sense of belonging.
Photo credit: UNICEF Bangladesh.

For example, the programme encouraged mothers to attend parent meetings, fostering stronger support for girls' regular attendance. Girls' Education Volunteers engaged Rohingya women to mobilise families to send their daughters to Learning Centers. These volunteers chaperoned adolescent girls to and from the facilities and remained with them during classes. Separate classes for girls and boys were introduced for grades 6 and above to address community concerns about adolescent girls and boys mixing. The programme conducted community sensitisation meetings to raise awareness on the importance of girls' education and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). Teachers participated in training about engaging with communities and religious leaders on adolescent girls' education.

As a result of these efforts, the number of girls enrolled in secondary education increased by 38%. They represented 23 % of total secondary learners in the 2023-2024 academic year, compared with 16,5% the previous year.

2022-2023 academic year	2023-2024 academic year
16,5% of total secondary learners were girls	**23% of total secondary learners were girls**

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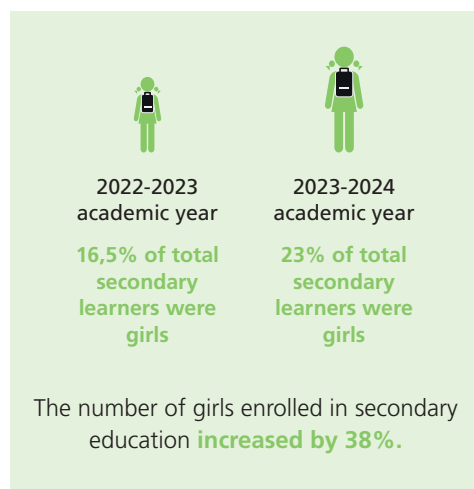
Sector coordination for advocacy

While not the largest donor in terms of funding, SDC played a significant role in pushing for changes in education services for the Rohingya community. This was achieved through coordination, advocacy with the Government, and strategic use of programme funding.

SDC carefully coordinated with other donors funding the education sector, as well as with implementing organisations. Through the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISG), led by ECHO and SDC in 2024-2025, SDC and its partners addressed school and community-level issues and relayed concerns to the Government. For example, the government initially restricted Rohingya children to learning only Rohingya and Burmese languages. Advocacy by the ISG led to the inclusion of English, although Bangla remains prohibited in the camps. Similarly, after two years of advocacy, the government allowed livelihood activities within the camps, to address the impact of potential ration cuts. Donors also collectively urged the government to address forced recruitment concerns and stop children from crossing the border into Myanmar.

Outstanding questions

The programme recognises the pivotal role of teachers in delivering inclusive, quality education in emergency contexts. It implemented a series of interventions aimed at strengthening teachers' capacity to provide effective instruction while also supporting children's protection needs. However, more focused efforts are needed to support the well-being of teachers themselves. This includes exploring avenues such as psychosocial support to help them manage stress and build the emotional resilience needed to facilitate psychosocial support (PSS) and social-emotional learning (SEL) among learners. What additional measures could be introduced to enhance teacher well-being? How can advocacy be strengthened to ensure regular and adequate salary payments? What other practical strategies could be implemented to improve teacher motivation and, by extension, the quality of education provided?

Another critical area for reflection concerns the operationalisation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus - responding to immediate needs with a view to long term interventions that can support a more peaceful future. This remains highly complex in the Bangladeshi context, particularly due to government restrictions on formal education for Rohingya refugees. While SDC and its partners continue to engage in strategic advocacy, the space for concrete action remains limited. What lessons can be drawn from SDC's experience in other contexts with similar constraints, and how might these be adapted to navigate the challenges in Bangladesh more effectively?

Burkina Faso: Project to support the resilience of the Burkinabe education system (PARSEB)

Context

In 2023, Burkina Faso had a population of approximately 22.6 million, 52% are women, 78% under the age of 35, with a literacy rate of 36%. At that time, the country had more than two million internally displaced persons, 6,150 closed schools, and more than one million students affected by insecurity. The conflict has led to the closure of 25% of educational facilities, significantly impacting education and child protection, with an increase in school dropouts and a decline in educational quality and access indicators since 2018.

To address this, Burkina Faso, with the help of partners such as the Swiss government, has implemented a National Strategy for Education in Emergency Situations. Although the situation has improved in the last two years with the reopening of many schools, some areas remain difficult to access. Structural challenges persist, particularly in areas with low educational provision, where some classes accommodate up to 300 students.

The "Project to Support the Resilience of the Burkinabe Education System (PARSEB)", supported by SDC, aims to improve access for children and young people aged 6 to 17 years to quality education and protection services.

The project operates in three regions with high security challenges.[1] The ultimate aim is to promote a climate of peace.

How does SDC support inclusive and quality education in crisis situations?

The approach adopted by the project in this crisis context combines complementary interventions ensuring the educational continuity of students.

Provide educational alternatives to leave no one behind

The project targets vulnerable students who have been displaced and have fled conflict zones. These include children and adolescents who have dropped out of school or are not enrolled in school, children with disabilities, and girls who are survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). Students from host communities are also included, in order to mitigate the risk of tension between displaced people and their hosts.

Access to inclusive quality education is supported by raising awareness among communities about education, encouraging school enrolment, strengthening the reception capacities of existing schools (rehabilitation, new rooms), and creating bridging and non-

1. Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Ouest, Hauts-Bassins.
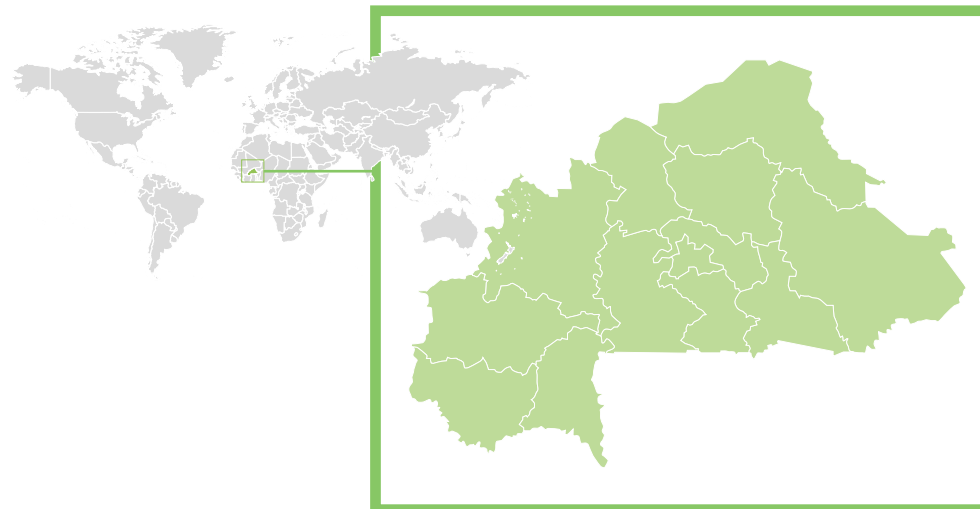
Caption: Drilling reception at the school in sector 10 A in Koudougou, Burkina Faso
Photo credit: Educo.

formal education centers focused on careers, life skills, radio listening clubs and the use of digital curricula. The project incorporates a food ration for families, support services for access to birth registration, and referrals to psychosocial care for children who are identified as requiring specialist support.

In this way the program offers comprehensive educational services that include important protection dimensions. Inclusion is reinforced by the provision of non-formal and formal education, aiming to maximise educational continuity in safe environments.

The central role of teachers

As the critical players in the provision of inclusive quality education teachers, life skills facilitators

Caption: School canteen at the Toéga school in Koudougou, Burkina Faso.
Photo credit: Educo.

and educational supervisors participate in training on topics including protection, conflict-sensitive education and gender equality. Trainings strengthen pedagogical skills and the ability to create dynamic, engaging and protective learning environments in a "safe school" approach. This includes psychosocial support for affected people. Pedagogical and administrative supervision are strengthened, combined with the provision of teaching and learning materials that allow teachers to use appropriate resources, enriching the learning process.

Improving the quality of education also relies on the distribution of school kits to students, and catch-up courses at home or at school. Special monitoring, and support for children who have got behind or have missed school, help students to overcome their learning difficulties.

Protection, essential for quality education

The evaluation of the first phase of the program implemented by UNICEF from 2018 to 2022 showed that Education in Emergencies must integrate child protection in a "do no harm" approach, requiring a multidisciplinary and comprehensive response. Bridging and non-formal education centres allow children to continue their education, while providing them with food and psychosocial support. In a triple nexus approach – which seeks to respond coherently to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs – they promote learners' reintegration into the community with the aim of enhancing social cohesion and education for peace, particularly in areas hosting internally displaced persons.

Responding to the specific challenges of girls in vulnerable situations, the program establishes or strengthens complaint management and

support mechanisms to combat exploitation, sexual abuse, GBV, and child abuse in schools. Stakeholders from local authorities and decentralized education structures are trained on risk and vulnerability assessment tools.

Improving management to serve the triple Nexus

Central and decentralised structures are supported to effectively carry out their missions of guiding the management and quality assurance of educational services, thus strengthening the triple nexus at the local level. Actors from central and decentralised structures participate in training on Education in Emergencies data collection tools, including risk and vulnerability assessment. Equipment and IT materials are also provided. These activities are

complemented by consultation frameworks for better coordination and visibility, including local citizen education monitoring committees.

The Education Cluster – the main coordination body for education in emergencies – was established in Burkina Faso with support from SDC under a previous program. By fostering synergy and complementarity among EiE actors, it ensures the coordination of support in crisis contexts while strengthening the capacities of the EiE Technical Secretariat attached to the Ministry of Education. This mechanism fully illustrates the humanitarian-development nexus, which takes shape through the consultation and concerted efforts between the Education Cluster and institutional as well as government actors within the education system.

Outstanding questions

- Security challenges cause significant and incessant population displacements; emergency needs have to be covered while continuing to respond to structural challenges. An alert system and contingency budget line combined with decision-making and alert management mechanisms that guarantee transparency and accountability, would allow for better rapid response to emergencies.

- How can educational technologies promote access to and the quality of education in emergency situations, and under what conditions? For the impact of educational technologies to be positive, it is crucial, in emergency situations even more than in other contexts, to prepare the conditions for their implementation. Regulation, the training of teachers and supervisors, ensuring the security of personal data, the relevance and adaptation of content, maintenance of equipment, the power source, access to the internet combined with offline or, monitoring and evaluation, all need to be taken into account.

- In a context of security-related forced and precipitate displacements of populations, who abandon everything of their usual life, how to put in place an adequate civil documentation system to provide children with the birth certificates necessary for their school enrolment? Such a complex system, involving for example mobile hearings and supplementary judgments, would require coordination of the justice and education sectors, local authorities, and community leaders of the host populations and displaced people. The aim would be to guarantee transparent civil status documentation.

Ukraine: Decentralisation for Improved Democratic Education (DECIDE) project
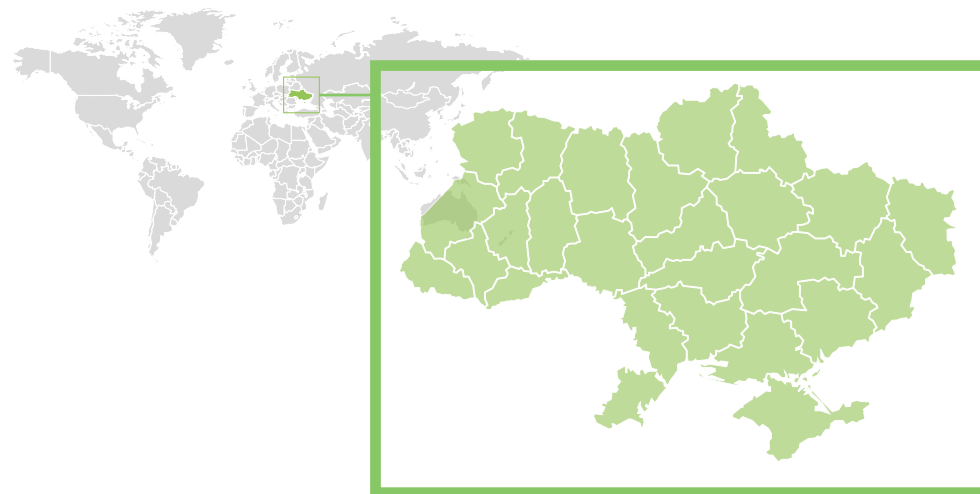

Context

The interruptions in schooling caused by COVID-19, combined with the ongoing conflict, have severely impacted children's ability to access quality education in Ukraine. The war has led to the displacement of both teachers and students, with over 3 million children forced to leave their homes since February 2022. Over 3,000 educational facilities have been significantly damaged or destroyed, with school-level damage representing over 45% of all affected educational institutions. The constant threat and reality of air raids and the persistent security risk has disrupted learning[1]. While online and blended learning options are available, learning gaps continue to widen, particularly in rural areas where children are falling four to five years behind their peers in urban areas. This situation affects academic performance and also has a profound impact on children's social, emotional, and mental well-being. In response, the Ukrainian government and local self-governments (LSGs) have made the recovery and reform of the education system a priority for 2023 and beyond.

SDC-supported "Decentralisation for Improved Democratic Education" (DECIDE) project started in 2020. It assisted LSGs in the establishment of decentralised education management units, and the roll-out of innovative tools during COVID-19. In a clear example of a nexus approach – coherently combining humanitarian, development and peacebuilding responses – after the invasion in February 2022, the project was repurposed to cover the emergency needs of the partner communities, while the overall project goal remained unchanged: that citizens of amalgamated territorial communities, including vulnerable groups and internally displaced populations (IDPs), contribute to and benefit equally from democratic governance and high-quality education. The two project outcomes also remain the same: (i) National, regional and local authorities effectively implement sectoral decentralization with a focus on deregulated and digitalised databased education governance, and (ii) Schoolboys/girls and their parents benefit from inclusive democratic school governance and active civic engagement in amalgamated territorial communities.

How has the DECIDE project supported Quality Inclusive Education in Emergencies?

By integrating recovery efforts with reforms, and leveraging digital innovations, the project adopts a long-term vision while responding to immediate crises, in a **nexus** approach.

1. Source : Plan International. (2025). "Three years of war in Ukraine: education disruptions deepen mental health crisis for children".

Caption: Primary schoolchildren in rehabilitated bomb shelter of school No 19, Chernihiv city, Ukraine, 2025.
Photo credit: DECIDE Project

Caption: DECIDE Summer Clubs "We are at Home – in Ukraine", in Cherkasy community, Ukraine, 2023.
Photo credit: DECIDE Project.

Empowering local self-government for effective resource management

Between 2014 and 2020, the country streamlined its administrative structure, reducing over 11,000 local self-governments to 1,469, through a voluntary and then administrative amalgamation. This transformative process, supported by SDC, empowered municipalities and communities to participate more effectively in governance and decision-making.

SDC has addressed the high costs of maintaining under-enrolled schools by supporting the Ministry of Education and LSGs to optimize school networks and reallocate resources more effectively. Special attention was given to reducing urban-rural disparities, with a focus on supporting the most disadvantaged communities. The development and implementation of regional and local education sector strategies aims to improve the quality of education. Working groups have been established between local governments and educational institutions to foster collaboration. This is complemented by the creation of a community of education managers that facilitates knowledge exchange and peer learning, supported by events and media initiatives. The territorial communities also receive support to establish effective education management structures. Overall, the institutional capacity of Amalgamated Territorial Communities (ATCs) has been strengthened to ensure more sustainable and efficient education governance in the new context of the conflict.

Ensuring access to Education through technology-based options

During COVID-19, the programme contributed to the launch of the "All Ukraine Schools Online" platform, offering video lessons accessible via a website and national TV. This platform, initially a response to the pandemic, has proved very valuable during the war. Providing distance and blended learning for grade 5-11 students (aged 12-17 years), it allows Ukrainian refugees abroad to maintain ties to the national curriculum (Ukraine-specific subjects of the Ukrainian curriculum such as Ukrainian language, literature, history) while following the curriculum of the host country. It also enables children whose schools have been damaged during the war to study online. According to 2025 data, the platform benefits over 1.5 million Ukrainian children who have access to quality education from abroad, from the occupied territories, and inside Ukraine.

The DECIDE project has supported other distance learning initiatives, such as an online professional development course. The materials focus on blended and distance learning tools for teachers, school leaders, and community education managers, created in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science. More than 150,000 educators from Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, schools, and universities have enhanced their skills to organise and teach online during the lockdown in times of pandemic. Additionally, local council representatives and mayors from over 270 territorial communities benefit from a blended training course on decentralised education governance.

Beyond the emergency response, digital tools are central to Ukraine's reform efforts. DECIDE helped the Government of Ukraine establish the AICOM 2 education management system, for 25,000 users at all the governance levels. Well-informed decision-making is crucial during wartime for recovery and resilience-building of the education sector. A first-of-its-kind register of school-age children and teachers in Ukraine, a map of educational institutions, and other reporting and management modules reduce the bureaucratic burden on educational managers by 50%. Data analysis based on over 200 local education development indicators, ensures data-driven decision-making at school, community, regional, and state level.

AICOM 2 also enabled the development of MRIIA educational app (Mriia meaning "Dream") piloted in 40 schools and rolled out at national level in April 2025. A standout initiative supported by the SDC-funded Program EGAP (E-Governance for Accountability and Participation) with expert support from DECIDE, this school-management app connects schools, parents, and students, simplifies bureaucracy, supports teachers, and engages parents. It features gamification for improved student outcomes, serves as a "LinkedIn for kids", and tracks the progress of students, parents and educators' educational projects and activities. It also supports data-driven decision-making at the central level by generating anonymised educational data, for example on learning results in specific subjects and attendance .

Safeguarding issues were considered early on, particularly through the governmental platform Diia Education, also supported by the EGAP Program. The platform, used by over 2 million citizens in a highly interactive edutainment format offers education series on

various topics, including protecting children in a digital world against such issues as online bullying and cyber fraud.

Community engagement and integration

DECIDE fosters a sense of activism and democratic citizenship through activities aimed at involving children in community life and its recovery. By strengthening community identity and helping students to learn about how to live collaboratively, it empowers them to participate in local decision-making and to contribute to the development of their communities. As part of the learning-by-doing approach to citizenship education, school teams are trained in project development and presentation, democratic voting for project ideas, and implementation in partnership with local authorities. Over 108 initiatives have successfully been carried out by school teams in 16 partner communities. Children's top priorities include the creation of convenient and modern school spaces such as recreational and sports areas, creative centres, school theatres, and bicycle parking.

DECIDE Summer Clubs 'We are at Home – in Ukraine" provide education on citizenship, human rights, first aid, and other essential topics, to support the adaptation and integration of displaced children into their new environments. Since 2022, over 30,000 schoolchildren from 83 communities across 17 regions of Ukraine have participated in these activities. For older children, materials and training sessions have been developed to introduce secondary school students to the principles of local self-governance and civic participation.

To support teachers as the critical players in the delivery of new approaches, DECIDE trains master-trainers from in-service teacher training institutes to prepare teachers for a "Learning to Live in Community" course focused on civic education and local self-governance for grades 8–9. Over 50,000 schoolchildren in 209 partner communities benefited from the course in 2022–2025 as a result of the cascade trainings.

In order for democratic participation training to be truly effective, it is also important to change approaches to school management. To this end, DECIDE supports the development of transformational strategies for educational institutions with the involvement of teachers, students and parents within the "School of Active Democracy" methodology. The project supports partner communities to elect a School Board that represents all educational institutions in the community, ensuring transparency and accountability in education management.

Safe learning environments

Because of frequent air alerts, thousands of schools all over Ukraine have been unable to offer offline schooling as they were not equipped with bomb shelters. The project provides emergency support to LSGs through grants for the rehabilitation of educational institutions and shelters, while also building LSGs' capacity to implement recovery projects effectively.

Reconstructing shelters has become essential to ensuring safe access to education, with the process actively involving local councils, school administrations, and children. Students form project teams, develop projects on how to equip certain spaces in shelters, and mobilise community support – some communities achieve up to 30% voter participation – transforming recovery into a participatory, empowering experience. These efforts not only improve infrastructure but also strengthen community ownership and hope for the future. All reconstruction projects adhere to accessibility standards to ensure inclusive access for children with disabilities.

Pilot communities receive support in developing education strategies to guide investments and school-level improvements, while small grants encourage student-led projects – such as upgrading sports facilities and creative spaces, or improving PSS and SEL – fostering engagement and active participation in school life.

The project's "Getting Stronger Together" course covers Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) strategies to help build the resilience of teachers and their students during times of war . With qualified master trainers who instruct teachers, the course has been expanded to cover 21 regional in-service teacher institutions and pedagogical colleges. The main focus is on non-violent communication, tolerance, bullying prevention, inclusion of internally displaced children, and creating supportive class environments using the Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC)/Human Rights Education (HRE) approach. Over 29,000 schoolteachers have received the cascaded training and have been certified within the course, while over 70,000 educators participated in webinars focused on supporting war-affected children, mental health, and psychosocial well-being.

Outstanding questions

The education sector in Ukraine was already undergoing reforms before the COVID pandemic hit and the full-scale war started, and was given a significant level of priority by the government. This allowed the system to adapt more quickly than in more fragile contexts, and illustrates a humanitaritan-development-peace nexus approach. The country's education response to these emergencies addresses various needs and challenges, including through the DECIDE project. To what extent could this be further improved? The below points are for reflective purposes:

- How could protection interventions be further integrated with education approaches, for the benefit of children and their families?

- Central to quality education in general, and in emergency and protracted crises contexts in particular, how could teachers' well-being be improved?

- How best to design and implement much needed education reforms against a backdrop of the ongoing war and the related demographic decline? In the process of the much needed consolidation of the school network, which is generally perceived rather negatively, how to find the right balance between the need to optimize the constrained public expenditures and increase education quality, at the same time considering the psychological well-being of all stakeholders?

- While distance learning allows millions of children to access education in the Ukrainian context, it has negatively impacted children's socialisation capacities, emotional development and mental health in the longer term. How can this be further addressed or mitigated?

If you have suggestions on how to answer the outstanding questions raised in each Case Study, or comments on the Case Studies, please send them to eenetwork@eda.admin.ch

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