Investing in Education in Emergencies: Good for Society, Good for Business

Investing in education is smart not only for society, but for business as well. Education builds sustainable societies, improves long-term economic growth, contributes to the development of a healthy workforce, expands business opportunities, and boosts wages. Research shows that for every $1 invested in a child’s education, there is a $53 return to the company at the start of employment.

In times of emergency and protracted crisis, investment in education is even more critical.

The Business Case for Investing in Education in Emergencies

In times of emergency and protracted crisis, education provides a life-saving intervention with short and long-term consequences for children and their families, crucially impacting how they are able to rebuild post-disaster. Without safe opportunities to complete their education in crisis contexts, children too often fall prey to harmful alternatives like child labor, early forced marriage, and recruitment into armed groups with lasting consequences for generations to come. Therefore investing in education in these contexts, is critical for rebuilding societies in ways that impact the business operating environment, enabling business to proactively strengthen their longer-term operations; improve brand visibility, reputation, and customer loyalty; strengthen trust amongst customers, political leaders and communities; manage operational risks; and develop goodwill with local communities.

Preparing for and engaging throughout emergencies and protracted crises can also improve risk management and strengthen long-term operations, enabling business to protect their employees and sustain their investments.

The Need

With an estimated 80 million children and youth affected by crisis globally and the average length of refugee displacement being 17 years, the need to provide education in emergency contexts is urgent. Current financial architecture is complex, uncoordinated, and inadequate to tackle this need, with an estimated $9 billion per year funding gap. A Common Platform to better coordinate and strengthen financial architecture to deliver education in emergencies is needed. The private sector can play a critical role in the development of innovative education solutions for children living in emergency settings, while at the same time strategically aligning investments to create shared value and promote sustainable development and economic growth.
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What Business Can Bring to the Table

• **Leadership.** Business can provide the thought, political, and community leadership critical to jump-starting and accelerating progress.
  
  *Example:* In response to the kidnapping of 276 girls in Chibok, Nigeria, a coalition of Nigerian business leaders launched the first Safe Schools Initiative, challenging the government and international community to take action. The initial $10 million contribution from business catalyzed over $35 million in funding that has supported the education of 450,000 internally displaced children.

• **Expertise.** The private sector can offer specialized expertise in the delivery of critical services and assets.
  
  *Example:* McKinsey & Company is offering support and advice around efficiency savings and long-term sustainability to the UK Department for International Development, the international community, and the public sector in Lebanon on a non-formal education system framework for Syrian refugees to ensure that all refugee students have the quality learning experience that they deserve.

• **Innovation.** Business can help to catalyze innovation and foster entrepreneurship, increasing efficiency and reach.

  *Example:* Through its Every Child Learning program, Pearson delivers innovative, effective education solutions for Syrian refugees, developing mobile education platforms that enable continuity of learning, and creating a condensed and modified curriculum that can be delivered without shipping textbooks or extensive teaching materials.

• **Core business.** Companies can address education challenges through core business operations, including the development of products and services as well as human resources.

  *Example:* NRS International has pledged its support to Syrians and the region by donating temporary learning spaces and child-friendly products for refugee education. To date, NRS International has provided healthcare to 7,800 Syrian refugees in eastern Lebanon camps, and is now focusing its efforts on education.

• **Finance.** In many emergencies, cash contributions allow responders greater flexibility to address shifting needs, further the efforts of existing, proven programming, or to strengthen partnerships with implementation organizations.

  *Example:* RELX Group, as part of its partnership with the International Rescue Committee to support second language skills for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, has made a financial donation to target a key barrier to accessing quality education. Vitol Foundation’s financial contribution to support its partnership in Lebanon has allowed a successful, low-cost, high-quality education model for Syrian refugees to be taken to scale.

• **Influence.** By actively engaging in the conversation, business can help bring education to the forefront of emergency response, making it a priority for donor governments and humanitarian actors.

  *Example:* At the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in February 2016, the private sector and partners committed $75 million to support the delivery of quality education to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, and for the first time, education received a prominent spotlight in the humanitarian response.
Five Ways GBC-Education is Working to Accelerate the Delivery of Education in Emergencies

1. **Leading the private sector.** GBC-Education is the leading organization representing the private sector’s engagement in education in emergencies.

   **Example:** GBC-Education holds the sole private sector seat on the Technical Strategy Group charged with delivering recommendations on how the Common Platform will be operationalized and providing members with a direct link to share feedback and coordinate a technical response that best allows the private sector to have an impact on the Platform’s creation.

2. **Coordinating expertise.** GBC-Education is the go-to authority to convene and coordinate private sector engagement on education.

   **Example:** Our coalition has twice been invited by the Inter-Agency Network on Education and Emergencies to lead the private sector consultation on the development of a Common Platform to strengthen the response to education in emergencies. GBC-Education provided feedback and a policy brief in the lead up to the Oslo Summit on Education for Development in July 2015, informing a background paper that was instrumental in securing political and technical support for the Common Platform’s development. In February 2016, GBC-Education collected, synthesized and submitted feedback on three proposed options for the creation of the Common Platform that will inform the selection of a final platform to be announced at the World Humanitarian Summit in May.

3. **Taking action.** In response to the record numbers of attacks on education and increasing emergency situations, GBC-Education has been a leader in the education in emergencies response.

   **Example:** Since 2014, GBC-Education has been working to lead the response to attacks against schools by promoting safe schools and coordinating the business response in humanitarian contexts. GBC-Education has developed and launched innovative Safe Schools Initiatives, starting in April 2014 after the kidnaping of the Chibok girls. It has expanded to include the countries primarily affected by the Syrian refugee crisis (Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey), as well as in Pakistan, the Ebola-affected countries, and Latin America. Close collaboration with implementing agencies, governments, and partners in the design of these programs provides our members with direct opportunities to influence and impact programming. These initiatives have been successfully scaled up, for example, securing education for over 660,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan; 450,000 internally displaced children in Nigeria; and assisting 1,000 schools in Pakistan assess security risks posed to them.

4. **Expanding opportunity.** Through its extensive network, GBC-Education is able to leverage successful existing partnerships, build coalitions, and identify specific opportunities for companies to engage in education in emergencies that are aligned with member interests and needs.

   **Example:** This year at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Supporting Syria and the Region conference in London, GBC-Education identified existing and created new partnerships from the private sector, announcing commitments to deliver education for Syrian refugees.
5. **Convening.** GBC-Education increases companies’ effectiveness by creating spaces for them to connect and identify cutting-edge opportunities for collaboration, leveraging economies of scale. We create avenues for cooperation with governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, foundations, and civil society organizations. We connect members with high-level policymakers to advocate for quality education and learning and expose companies to the latest initiatives spearheaded by education organizations around the world.

*Example: In the last year, GBC-Education has convened high-level meetings at the World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings, UN General Assembly, World Economic Forum in Davos, and the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference, among others.*

*For further information regarding GBC-Education’s activities in education in emergencies and ways to get involved, please contact info@gbc-education.org.*
In recognition of the need for urgent solutions, GBC-Education is mobilizing commitments from members and partners, and already announced $75 million through financing and in-kind support to improve education for Syrian refugee children at the World Economic Forum in Davos and at the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference in London. These commitments, brought together in just a few short weeks, exceed traditional corporate social responsibility pledges and demonstrate our members’ unique position for delivering impactful, strategic, and innovative solutions to support humanitarian efforts.

Tunisian Minister of Tourism and Secretary-General of think-tank Maghreb Economic Forum Dr. Amel Karboul, in highlighting the creative and disruptive role technology can play in delivering education to marginalized children, stated at the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference: “With support from the Global Business Coalition for Education, we are able to announce support for the education of Syrian refugee children through $75 million.”

GBC-Education is convening business leaders in the Middle East to support a plan to educate more than 1 million Syrian refugee children in Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon. In December, GBC-Education organized a high-level roundtable in Dubai to discuss solutions for the Syrian crisis.

GBC-Education is providing guidance on private sector delivery for education in emergencies to the US State Department and for President Obama’s high-level refugee summit during the 2016 UN General Assembly. GBC-Education contributed to two workshop sessions organized by the US State Department addressed at bridging the education gap for Syrian refugee children. We played a key role in bringing the private sector to both events by providing input on participants and shaping the agenda. GBC-Ed timed the launch of a new working paper, Exploring the Potential of Technology to Deliver Education & Skills to Syrian Refugee Youth, to coincide with the Silicon Valley event focusing on technology.

World education leaders are championing and supporting the work of GBC-Education. UNESCO’s Director General Irina Bokova, and UN Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown, contributed to the real need to reach children affected by conflict through education at a high-level roundtable event which included C-Suite representatives from business. EU Commissioner Styliandis increased financing for education in emergencies from 2 to 4% at the Oslo Summit on Education for Development following GBC-Education’s policy brief, and EU Commissioner Georgieva is working with GBC-Education to engage the private sector related to humanitarian financing.
GBC-Education’s Pioneering Efforts to Address the Syrian Refugee Crisis

- **GBC-Education brings together businesses and donor governments to discuss how to leverage the assets of the public and private sector to expand opportunity.** In Washington, D.C. in April 2016, GBC-Education will convene the private sector, donor governments, and private foundations to discuss opportunities to work together to deepen impact for children in crisis.

- **GBC-Education continues to influence global dialogue around financing education by providing examples of how innovative technology solutions can address the financing gap, especially around education in crisis.** GBC-Education has been tasked with working with technology companies to manage a tracker for the delivery of private sector commitments to report at the World Humanitarian Summit. The Coalition has also submitted lessons and recommendations from the pilot of our #Tech4Ed Global Education Platform initiative to the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity.