REPORT ON THE SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Sustainable Peace and Education

27 MAY 2016, COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
Millions of children are affected by violent conflict and insecurity worldwide. With increasing levels of protracted crises, UNICEF is committed to helping children live in peace, free from violence and fear, and to realizing their rights, including their right to education.

To raise awareness of the role of education in peacebuilding, the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) and UNICEF Sri Lanka in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, organized a high-level ‘South Asia Symposium on Sustainable Peace and Education’ on 27 May 2016. The event, a first in a region prone to high levels of conflict, brought together more than 100 participants from eight countries of the South Asia region, including policy makers, high-level government officials, eminent academics, journalists and civil society.

A major aim of the symposium was to promote discussion and identify approaches on how education can promote peace, social cohesion and resilience in a region that is home to the largest numbers of out-of-school children worldwide, many of whom reside in conflict-affected zones.

The symposium, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, focused on four key themes:
• Theme 1: Peace and Education: Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals agenda
• Theme 2: Education and Peacebuilding: Education policy, systems and practices
• Theme 3: Life-cycle Approach: Education for young children and adolescents in conflict and post-conflict settings
• Theme 4: Way Forward: Panel discussion

The structure of the report follows the four key sessions, and presents the main points and observations made by the speakers and participants.

The symposium is a clear example where UNICEF has been bold in advocating for the rights of children in the most fragile and insecure parts of the region, resulting in a number of commitments made by countries to translate the agenda for sustainable peace and education into practice. Experience has shown, including in the host country, Sri Lanka, that political will can bring social cohesion and education together and at all levels – policies, systems and schools.

Urmila Sarkar
Regional Education Advisor
United Nations Children’s Fund
Regional Office for South Asia
I ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South Asia Regional Symposium on Sustainable Peace and Education was a result of the efforts of many:
We would like to thank our co-host, the Ministry of Education, Government of Sri Lanka, for their contribution in making the symposium a success. We would like to thank especially Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education, Sri Lanka, for his support and guidance and W. M. Bandusena, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.
We would like to express our deep appreciation and thanks to Una McCauley, UNICEF Representative in Sri Lanka, and to Paula Bulancea, Deputy Representative, Christian Stoff, Chief, Education, Luxmy Sureshkumar, Education Officer, and all UNICEF Sri Lanka colleagues for their unstinting support in the organization of the symposium.
We would like to thank Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF ROSA, for all his encouragement and support from the start despite the political sensitivities of this subject in South Asia.
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Many thanks to all the participants, speakers and chairpersons, who enriched the discussions and contributed to the success of the symposium.
We are grateful to the Government of Netherlands, donor of the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme, under which the symposium was held.

Please visit the website created for the symposium, which includes the concept note, experts’ profiles and agenda, and which we are using as a knowledge platform for academics and practitioners to exchange information and experiences:
http://sustainablepeaceandeducation.org

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Education and conflict have a very fraught and contradictory relationship. When we talk of conflict we tend to focus on the third world countries, where conflicts are much more evident and violently open, but we have to recognize the global complicity in those conflicts and what they are doing to children around the world. We should also recognize that like conflict affects the most vulnerable countries, they affect the most vulnerable communities, it is the education of the marginalized children that gets affected the most.

– Farida Khan, Professor and Dean of Educational Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

MESSAGE FROM THE HON. PRIME MINISTER

In the aftermath of the war, I am pleased to note that the Sri Lankan Government remains firm in its commitment towards building a process of sustainable peace and reconciliation.

As a nation, we have lived in perfect harmony as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic people. As history bears witness, short sightedness motivated by political and other agendas, tore that peace apart.

Yet, today, we are once again rising to the challenge as a people who celebrate and acknowledge our cultural and religious diversity. We are restoring a process of healing in the minds and hearts torn by war. As a society, we are discovering that we are bound together in cords of cultural, religious and ethnic multiplicity that enriches us and stimulates us at the same time.

I firmly believe that it is timely and relevant to view sustainable development goals, social development, reconciliation and co-existence through new educational mechanisms. Such processes will serve to enrich and enliven the future generations.

I would like to offer my sincere wishes to the South Asian Regional Conference on Education for a Sustainable Peace.

Ranil Wickremesinghe
Prime Minister

25th May 2016
I BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and UNICEF Sri Lanka, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Sri Lanka, organized a high-level symposium on ‘Sustainable Peace and Education’ in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 27 May 2016. A first of its kind in a region prone to conflict, the event brought together more than 100 participants from eight countries of the South Asia region, including policy makers, high-level government officials, eminent academics, journalists and civil society. The aim was to promote discussion and identify approaches on how education can promote peace, social cohesion and resilience.

Peace is dynamic, the social fabric is delicate and can change in no time. It is essential to understand the social mosaic and the dynamics within the various communities on an ongoing basis. We cannot take peace for granted, peacebuilding efforts need to continue. Also essential is to work with out-of-school children and youth – they are the most vulnerable to agents of conflict and criminal gangs like drug peddlers.

– Laxman Jayatilleke, Chairman, National Education Commission, Sri Lanka

The symposium was flagged off with inaugural speeches by Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education, Sri Lanka, W. M. Bandusena, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, and Una McCauley, UNICEF Representative in Sri Lanka. The inaugural session was followed by a keynote speech, ‘The South Asia Context: Issues and Challenges for Education’, by Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.

The symposium featured three thematic sessions and a final session on the ‘Way Forward’, moderated by Urmila Sarkar, Regional Education Advisor, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.

RATIONALE

South Asia is a conflict-affected region, where some countries are suffering directly from protracted internationalized and internal armed conflicts, while others are either susceptible to conflict or experiencing the impacts of post-conflict/civil strife realities. Social and economic factors, such as inequities, poverty, discrimination and poor governance, underlie grievances that promote separatist movements as well as ideological armed struggles.

There are 36 million out-of-school children in the age group 5 to 14 years who live in South Asia, many of whom are in conflict or strife-affected zones. Over the years, UNICEF has evolved its approach considerably to working in conflict-affected areas. The global Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy (PBEA) Programme, funded by the Government of Netherlands, operates in 14 countries, including Pakistan in South Asia. It works towards understanding and establishing the relationship between peacebuilding and education.

The emergency response approach of providing services and safe spaces and establishing minimum standards in education has progressed to a more nuanced conflict-sensitive approach based on in-depth analysis of underlying causes of conflict. The focus now is on understanding the complex interrelationship between education and peacebuilding. This requires exploring new approaches and investing in programmes that address underlying risks and build resilience to reduce children’s vulnerability to violent conflict.

2. Education and Peacebuilding: Education policy, systems and practices
3. Life-cycle Approach: Education for young children and adolescents in conflict and post-conflict settings
4. Way Forward: Panel discussion

SYMPOSIUM OBJECTIVES

• To generate awareness amongst stakeholders on the interrelationship between education and sustainable peace.
• To identify approaches and activities for quality education to reach children affected by conflict.

SYMPOSIUM THEMES

1. Peace and Education: Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals agenda
I INAUGURAL SESSION

The inaugural session began with the traditional lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries from Sri Lanka and representatives of countries in South Asia. The speakers at the inaugural session lauded the holding of the first-ever event on the theme of education and peacebuilding in the region.

Speakers acknowledged the rise in conflict globally, including in South Asia, and emphasized the need for quality and relevant education to reach affected children. The linkage between Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education and SDG 16 on Peace and Justice was highlighted, in particular the speakers urged participants to reflect on the transformative role of education in building social cohesion and peace.

The symposium makes a case for investing in peace through education. School can shape how a child grows and how a child perceives the world and others around her. The school can give opportunities to interact with those from other backgrounds, other beliefs, rather than constraining them to learn in a segregated environment.


A major initiative has been undertaken with SAARC [South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation] where member states have formulated a proposed SAARC Framework for Action for Education 2030, which aims to institutionalize regional coordination, partnerships and networks, and monitoring of SDG targets on education in the South Asia context. We must all strive not only to get all children to school but also support an education system that promotes peace, social cohesion and resilience

– Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia.

The present symposium on Sustainable Peace and Education is a timely event for the countries in South Asia, where education and peaceful coexistence are hampered by violence, displacement and use of children in armed conflict.

– Akila Viraj Kariyawasam, Minister of Education, Sri Lanka.

Education for Sustainable Peace is one of the most important global objectives. Our countries need to put education reforms and education policy centre stage. In Sri Lanka, this process is endorsed and guided at the highest level by the Ministry of Education.

– W. M. Bandusena, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka

1 Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
I THEME I PEACE AND EDUCATION: MEETING THE SDG AGENDA

ChAIR: Abid Aman Burki, Professor of Economics, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS).
SPEAKERS: Mario Novelli, Professor in Political Economy of Education, University of Sussex.
Sameena Imtiaz, Executive Director, Peace Education and Development (PEAD) Foundation.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a global commitment for a better, just and equitable life and a better world for all. For the first time, nations have realized the centrality of peace and security for both human life and the environment.

There is a close linkage between SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 16 on Peace and Justice. SDG 16 is about nations collectively promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Education is fundamental in building peaceful and inclusive societies and, at the same time, peace is crucial for education.

KEY SESSION POINTS

Understanding drivers of conflict
Inequality or perceived inequality is a prime cause of most contemporary conflicts. Inequities are often economic, social, cultural and linguistic, or about political voice and representation. It is a classic case of greed versus grievances. The tussle is between groups that want to garner or control resources and groups that feel and remain alienated. Redressal, therefore, is not just about economics but about being inclusive.

Traditional peacebuilding approach and marginalization of education
The traditional, dominant peacebuilding approach believed in the establishment of security as the first priority, followed by political and market reforms that would promote economic growth. Focus on quality social services was low priority.

The framework of security first often equates peace as mere cessation of violence, also understood as ‘negative peace’. In this approach, the education community remains in the margins. On the other hand, a positive peace framework acknowledges that although security is important, it is more important to address the key drivers of conflict.

Transformative role of education
Education is dominated by the larger global agenda in which the concerns are economic productivity, the human capital perspective and promotion of reforms, such as decentralization and privatization. The focus is not on building socially cohesive and inclusive human societies, whereas the need of societies experiencing conflict is for education to address inequalities, promote social cohesion and bring peace.

Capacity of education personnel
Education professionals have a strong background in education, but they are not trained to see the relationship between education and conflict. There is a near lack of training and confidence in engaging in debates and decisions around peacebuilding and education.

Limitations of traditional peace education
The traditional peace education approach largely emphasizes engendering change in interpersonal relationships, attitudes and behaviours of students and teachers. It has little to do with broader analysis or structural barriers. This approach underplays the potential of education and the significant systemic and structural opportunities that exist within education systems to promote positive peace.

ISSUES OF CAPACITY

Privatization and decentralization when imposed on unequal contexts and systems exacerbate differences, often becoming the basis of conflict.

EDUCATION MATTERS

A major quantitative study showed inequalities in education increased the probability of outbreak of conflict.

A decade after the conflict had ceased in Sierra Leone, communities were asked: “What has peace brought to you?” The response was: “There is no difference to our lives.” Communities expect tangibles in terms of improved health and education systems.

Only if legitimate grievances and their reasons are understood, will solutions and strategies be developed accordingly.

WHY DO WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND DRIVERS OF CONFLICT?

When legitimate grievances are not understood, the tendency is to treat them as a law and order issue, ignoring the underlying causes.

Often the government and other stakeholders prioritize retraining the military, streamlining police and reorganizing prisons. This has a role to play, which has been largely ignored.

This, the transformative role of education has a role to play, which has been largely ignored.

Capacity of education personnel
When capacities and sensitivities to adopt a conflict-sensitive education and peacebuilding approach are limited, the tendency is to revert to what one knows, which is the generic, global agenda, which includes a range of issues like gender, special education, decentralization and privatization.
Context-specific planning
Pakistan as a case in point is illustrative of the need to understand the context of conflict at both macro and micro level. Pakistan has multiple streams of schooling, such as government and private schooling, and religious schooling through madrasas.

The Peace Education and Development Foundation (PEAD) has attempted to bridge the gap between the madrasas and schoolchildren, introducing sports for development and peace, calligraphy, critical discussion forums, child-centred education and disaster risk reduction.

Core argument for a new approach to education and peacebuilding
• A sustainable approach to peacebuilding works on root causes
• Education has significant contribution to support transformation
• Education promotes four ‘R’s
  – Redistribution, Recognition, Representation and Reconciliation.

Education cannot be neutral as it is about the society you want to create, education needs to be politicized for a more humane and inclusive education. The history of Afghanistan is a case in point where education was right at the centre of the conflict, but in other contexts education brought different groups together like the ‘Schools as Zones of Peace’ in Nepal.

– Mario Novelli, Professor in Political Economy of Education, University of Sussex
I REFLECTIONS FROM THE FLOOR I

Education can be a catalyst for both conflict and peacebuilding, the example of textbooks developed by the University of Nebraska encouraging refugees from Afghanistan to join the jihad against the Soviet Union is an example of politicization or militarization of education. History shows that schools can be a training ground for the military – a training for aggressive behaviours as well as peaceful behaviour. But we cannot say that education can be neutral, how can education be neutral against a military regime?
– Mario Novelli, Professor in Political Economy of Education, University of Sussex

Schools face different kinds of violence, there is the external violence where schools get attacked and then [there are] schools themselves that practise violence, for example, competition and comparisons, harsh disciplining methods. Why are we losing the human aspect of education? Also, can education be neutral in conflict zones? Why introduce peacebuilding now?
– Anita Haidary, UNICEF Afghanistan

I work in an area affected by left wing extremism, [but] people prefer pens to guns, even those who hold guns want to send their children to schools.
– Binay Pattanayak, UNICEF, Jharkhand, India

Education has never been neutral, if one sees examples of curriculum and textbooks in the region, most often the content is ideologically and politically driven. The Nebraska approach for decades glorified violence and war. The question why are we using education for peacebuilding has one response – why not? If for decades we have given them [students] a totally negative agenda, then it is time that we give them learning experiences to unlearn this. We have given learners no idea how to coexist in this very diverse world. We are not addressing the issue of inclusiveness vis-à-vis minorities, gender or disability.
– Sameena Imtiaz, Executive Director, PEAD Foundation
I THEME II EDUCATION AND PEACEBUILDING: EDUCATION POLICY, SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES

CHAIR Farida Khan, Professor and Dean of Educational Studies, Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi, India.
SPEAKERS Alan Smith, UNESCO Chair in Education, Ulster University, Northern Ireland.
A. S. Hewage, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.
Lynn Davies, Emeritus Professor of International Education, University of Birmingham.
Friedrich Affolter, Manager, Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (PBEA), UNICEF, New York.

Recent paradigms acknowledge that education can play a critical role in peacebuilding. Efforts are needed from policy formulation to school-level implementation to achieve this. There is a need to understand the transformative role of education, while at the same time to be conscious of the harm that education could do.

Presentations in this session highlighted the actions needed to develop peacebuilding and education policies, the challenges of inter-twinning education and peacebuilding, and the efforts needed at different levels for implementation.

KEY SESSION POINTS

Education and peacebuilding policies
Two critical characteristics define peacebuilding and education related policies. One, they should address some of the underlying causes of conflict, and two, they should be based on the principle of ‘do no harm’. Education cannot be part of the problem. Education is not merely a basic right or an essential social service but contributes to positive societal transformation.

Developing policy: A complex process
The primary question is ‘What does a policy do?’. Is it a document of existing practices or will it bring about change? Will it contribute to transformation?

It is essential to build an acceptable vocabulary around peacebuilding amongst stakeholders. Preference for terminology is very often contextual. Policy development is not a linear process, rather it is cyclic in a policy-practice-policy sequence.

Policy development needs commitment from the highest political level, and, at the same time, needs to be developed through an inclusive process with involvement of stakeholders at different levels.

There is no single entry point for policy development. It is essential to be sensitive to the context and identify an appropriate approach. For example, Sri Lanka in its policy review process had the following four options: (i) review the existing policy (2008) and adjust each component to the changed conditions; (ii) begin afresh with the question ‘What are the current and future problems that an Education for Social Cohesion and Peace policy is trying to solve in the new Sri Lanka?’; (iii) start with existing research on what works in promoting social cohesion and peace (and what works less well); and (iv) request provincial education authorities to draw up their own action plans in a decentralized Sri Lanka.

The answer may be all four activities simultaneously – plus others.

Education governance and sustainable peace
Education governance plays a key role in building sustainable peace. However, it can be detrimental to peacebuilding if governance arrangements of education, such as allocation of resources, starting of new schools, teacher selection and deployment, are seen as being politically influenced.

Moreover, decentralization needs
Education governance has to ensure representation of all stakeholders and communities at the centralized and multiple decentralized levels, right down to the school level.

**Education components in peacebuilding**
- Creating safe learning environments
- Addressing education inequalities
- Contributing to social cohesion
- Promoting reconciliation

**Systematizing peacebuilding and education**
The PBEA programme gave an opportunity to innovate and develop programmes on education and peacebuilding. The four-year PBEA programme, covering 14 countries, established that education and peacebuilding interventions need to be based on a robust conflict analysis and identification of conflict drivers, which inform the theory of change and implementation strategies.

Monitoring and building evidence should be integral to the approach, as in other programmes. The PBEA programme also emphasized the need to work for transformation at different levels – policy, systems, institutions and individuals.

**Building trust is crucial**
Education interventions are most effective when they build trust between the state and communities (vertical cohesion), as well as trust between communities (horizontal cohesion).

Education interventions are particularly suitable to address social cohesion risks, such as inequitable administration of social services, youth marginalization, ethnic and religious intolerance, irrelevance of education services in making a livelihood, intolerance, violence, migration and displacement.

**Classrooms and peacebuilding: Bringing religion or reconciliation in classrooms is difficult. The approach should be to leave the boundaries aside and concentrate on commonalities – a common value system, find creative ways of bringing children together.**

– Lynn Davies, Emeritus Professor of International Education, University of Birmingham.
Working on peacebuilding is not easy, there’s backlash and resistance is possible. In PBEA, we found that where partners consult, collaborate and do things jointly with consensus, things have more chance to work. We not only need democracy in schools where children actively participate, but democracy is also needed in administration, teacher management and recruitment. We need diversity in the teacher cadre.

– Friedrich Affolter, Manager, PBEA, UNICEF, New York

The question of backlash, I would agree that is an issue. Yes, it is an issue, that is why the focus on finding an appropriate entry point. There are different entry points, and (this) needs to be done sensitively. Life and contexts are not linear.

– Lynn Davies, Emeritus Professor of International Education, University of Birmingham.

Private schools will be increasingly under scrutiny. There are two sides to it, if we look at the way the World Bank categorizes it – private schools include faith-based schools as well those funded through the state. You need to look at it in two ways based on the wealth-differential, and to what extent that is driving potential conflict. We see walls and fortress going up and children bussing into these schools, where will it lead? The other is private schools based on ideology; who runs these schools? What are the values they are promoting? Are these values encouraging public good? It is a difficult debate, and the state needs to define where the boundaries lie.

– Alan Smith, UNESCO Chair in Education, Ulster University, Northern Ireland

If we believe that education has a space for social cohesion and has a socio-political function in that it interrogates or critiques structures of oppression or inequality, the moment you begin to do that, there is a backlash as it does not go well with established structures. Also, as we talk of peacebuilding and education, there is a need to understand the relationship between democracy and education.

– Sheshagiri Madhusudhan, Education Programme Officer, Chhattisgarh, India
I THEME III  LIFE-CYCLE APPROACH: EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS


SPEAKERS Dr. Pratibha Singhi, Professor and Head, Department of Pediatrics and Pediatric Neurology and Neuro-Development, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, India.
Chembra Raghavan, Education Specialist, UNICEF Regional Office for East Asia and the Pacific (EAPRO).
Mieke Lopes Cardozo, Assistant Professor, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam.
R. Venkat Reddy, National Convener, M. V. Foundation, Hyderabad, India.
Bahirullah Wayaar, Education Advisor, Save the Children International, Afghanistan.

Infancy and adolescence are two stages of profound accelerated development. It is critical to understand these age groups in contexts of conflict. Research in early childhood development and education shows the impact of severe deprivation and violence on young children is grave, long lasting and intergenerational. Moreover, adolescents, particularly when out of school, are often highly vulnerable to indoctrination and violence.

There are implications for South Asia based on the fact that the region is witnessing the largest youth bulge globally as well as large numbers of out-of-school children, with substantial numbers coming from conflict-affected zones.

EPIGENETIC CHANGES
Experiences over a prolonged period cause changes in the genes, not directly but by affecting how they function and express themselves. These epigenetic changes affect the development of the brain. Genes influence the way our brain and body function. Early experiences leave lasting chemical signatures on these genes and affect the regulatory proteins. These in turn leave epigenetic signatures, which mean certain processes in their function are either stimulated or blocked. The epigenetic signatures turn the gene on and off, thereby transmitting it to the next generation.

The amount of developmental delays and adverse effects is proportional to the risk factors the child is exposed to. A few risk factors have a mild effect, but as risk factors increase so does the adverse impact on the child.

KEY SESSION POINTS
Importance of early brain development
Experiences in the first two years of life are crucial as they determine how language and higher cognitive abilities develop. For optimal child development, children need early sensory stimulation in a nurturing and protective environment. The experiences children have influence their brain architecture and function. Brain development determines behaviour, whether it is adaptive with healthy coping styles or maladaptive. This in turn determines a child’s experiences, continuing the circle, not in one generation but across generations.

Impact of toxic stress
Prolonged stress causes changes in the child’s brain architecture, often making the brain maladaptive to stress, leading to toxic stress, which, if prolonged, leads to intergenerational impact.

Possible interventions
Field practices have demonstrated wide-ranging strategies that can be implemented at the level of family, community and education centres and policies. In fact, family-level interventions show that programmes need to move beyond parents to caregivers and beyond parent education to family support – with better interventions or services aimed at improving parenting interactions, behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and practices. It is essential to ensure a supportive, stimulating, healthy and protective environment.

Understanding youth
The concept of youth is very contextual and culture specific; a broad definition adopted acknowledge that youth are people in their second and third decade of life. Youth is not a homogenous group. In conflict contexts, there is an overwhelming tendency to see youth as either the victim or the perpetrator. It is essential to develop a nuanced understanding of youth, listening to them as part of the broader conflict analysis, and placing them in the broader, social, political and cultural context.

CHALLENGES YOUTH FACE
High levels of unemployment; exclusion from decision-making processes; alienation from the state – policy makers, police, justice machinery; apparent irrelevance or absence of formal education; widespread experiences of direct and indirect violence; structural gender inequalities.
Need to study youth
The argument of the youth bulge stands as youth comprise the largest population constituency in many conflict-affected contexts. Often, youth are implicated in violence, almost being viewed as drivers of conflict. However, there are youth who are constructively involved in positive community-led initiatives for peacebuilding and other welfare activities.

Education and youth
Youth in a four-country study expressed their disappointment with formal education. Education not only failed in getting them meaningful employment, but also did not help them in understanding the larger socio-political context. Language and the presentation of history remained contentious. The youth also mentioned the presence of direct and indirect violence, both within and outside school.

Education for youth needs to be holistic. The issues of redistribution and representation have to be central in planning education for youth. The need for reforms in formal education is imperative.

Agency of youth
Youth have the highest potential in bringing about transformation, including for peace. The M. V. Foundation experience in the left-wing extremist (LWE) areas of India demonstrated how youth facilitators began work at community level, but soon developed and evolved community-based groups, which could negotiate for the rights of children with different levels of government machinery.

RELEVANT EDUCATION FOR YOUTH
Youth in all four countries of a study said that their formal education had not been helpful for employment, and was also irrelevant in the way history was taught. They made a strong demand for reforms in education. While working in conflict zones, it is essential to maintain a neutral agenda and work in neutral spaces.

The capacity building of youth also means that they are exposed to principles of democracy and humanity.

YOUTH AGENCY
Youth agency is about the space they get for influencing change from micro to macro level. The M. V. Foundation work showed that youth facilitators began work at community level, but soon developed and evolved community-based groups, which could negotiate for the rights of children with different levels of government machinery.

Alternative learning pathways:
Community-based education, Afghanistan
The concept of community-based education (CBE) has existed in Afghanistan since 1970. CBE is a recognized community-based approach to education as an alternate pathway for improving access to education. The community-based school operates primarily for children aged 7-9 years (Grades 1-3), or in a situation where no schools exist within walking distance (3 km).

Another option is the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) for out-of-school children aged 10-14 years. It enables children to complete Grades 1 to 6 in one calendar year. These initiatives are linked to a nearby hub school for support and future transition. The community-based schools follow the national curriculum, and teachers are identified by the community and trained according to Ministry of Education plans.

The community plays a significant role in monitoring and managing the CBE classes, which are established on community demand and managed through School Management Shuras (councils). The Shuras support the project and encourage the community to send children to school. At the same time, there is a Community Education Committee, which meets to resolve problems and monitor the attendance of students and teachers.

A CASE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
- Large number of out-of-school children: Estimated 3.5 million (75% are girls)
- Scattered and remote communities: 75% of the total population live in rural areas (World Bank, 2014)
- Challenges for girls: social norms/lack of female teachers/supply issues (classes)
Involving parents and care givers in social cohesion and peacebuilding can be most naturally done in Early Childhood Care and Education initiatives as the interest of the child is most important for them.

– Chemba Raghavan, Education Specialist, UNICEF EAPRO

Conflict is most often based on issues around cultural or religious identity, and this is passed on from one generation to another – through family socialization. Can education alone address this without having any strategies for the parents?

– Sugath Adikaram, Sri Lanka

How do we ensure the balance between encouraging participation of adolescents to do what we want them to do, and on the other hand, they are still children, how do we protect them given the challenges mentioned? Are we asking them to take on our responsibilities as duty bearers?

– Marilyn Hoar, Chief, Education Section, UNICEF Nepal

The M. V. Foundation experience showed that it is best to maintain a low profile and neutral agenda. When working with adolescents, one needs to balance the ‘pull and push’ factors of recruitment by non-state actors, lure of the labour market and other anti-social elements who want to trap this age group. The need is to involve them in a subtle and sophisticated manner, through wide-ranging activities, like sports, discussion forums, leadership training.

– R. Venkat Reddy, National Convener, M. V. Foundation, Hyderabad, India
I THEME IV WAY FORWARD: PANEL DISCUSSION

CHAIR Urmila Sarkar, Regional Advisor, Education, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA).

SPEAKERS Bahirullah Wayaar, Education Advisor, Save the Children International, Afghanistan.
Md. Khalid Humayun, Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Bangladesh.
Samdrup Rigya, Director, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan.
Lalita Patnaik, Education Specialist, UNICEF Odisha, India.
Fathimath Sofiya Rashheed, Coordinator, Ministry of Education, Maldives.
Bal Bahadur Karki, Under Secretary, Department of Education, Nepal.
Imran Sikandar, Baloch Special Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Punjab, Pakistan.
Jayanthi Gunasekara, Director General, National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka.
Laxman Jayatilleke, Chairman, National Education Commission, Sri Lanka.

The Chair summarized the day’s discussion and posed three questions:
• What are the key takeaways from the symposium?
• What action can we take to include a conflict-sensitive approach, peacebuilding and social cohesion in our work?
• What kind of support, partnership and network will be needed in this work?

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Millions of children are denied their right to education
Violence and conflict is rising globally, displacing millions of children from their communities and right to education. This has contributed to South Asia having the largest number of out-of-school children globally.

Bridge gap between humanitarian action and development
There is increased evidence of attacks on education institutions; efforts are constantly made to bridge the divide between humanitarian action and development in a world where risk and conflict are rising.

Strong linkage between SDG 4 and SDG 16
There is a strong linkage between SDG 4 on education and SDG 16 on peace and partnership.

Support education systems that promote peace and social cohesion
The need is not only in working towards getting children into school, but also in supporting education systems that promote peace, social cohesion and resilience. This type of investment for peacebuilding is necessary for growth and sustainable development.

Education has an instrumental and enabling role in promoting peace and access to social services, however, it is known that the education community is often marginalized from discussions around peacebuilding. Moreover, educators are not trained or oriented towards responding to an environment of conflict.

Education is not a panacea for peace and, often, it can do good but can also do harm. The need, therefore, is to carefully approach how we program in an environment of increasing risks.

Build trust between schools and communities
Peace education is not the same as education for peacebuilding. The most effective interventions are those that build trust between communities. The innovative use of technology could increase interactions amongst schools and communities to develop understanding and trust. The need is to build trust horizontally and vertically, and to work together for the transformative role of education.

Partnerships vital in way forward
There is a rich body of global experience and the aim should be to build a bridge between theory and practice. There is a need to build evidence of what works and what does not.

The UNICEF experience shows that partnerships with academic institutions, government bodies and non-governmental organizations become important in developing a way forward, bringing policy reforms, and building institutional capacities and community resilience. These partnerships have helped in developing an approach to risk-informed programming, and creating tools to understand contexts to work towards prevention and mitigation.

Need for early interventions
The adverse and inter-generational impact of long drawn conflict on brain development highlights the need for early interventions. Equally important is to harness the energy and agency of youth in peacebuilding.

Develop alternative learning paths
Developing alternative learning pathways through formal and alternative schooling is crucial to education reaching children in fragile areas.

Address structural barriers at all levels
Education programmes for peace building should be designed to address the structural barriers at individual, systemic and community level. It is essential to build capacities of education functionaries, including teachers, to adopt this approach. Policy development and review need to be contextual, have the highest political will and commitment, and be backed by appropriate budgets and implementation plans.

We are constantly bridging the humanitarian and development divide in South Asia and we need to work towards sustainable peace and education in conflict and post-conflict societies. Education has an instrumental and enabling role in contributing to peace and access to social services. UNICEF South Asia stands committed to building the knowledge base and supporting countries to implement evidence-based policy and programmes.

– Urmila Sarkar, Regional Advisor, Education, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
Conflict started in the country three decades ago and is still going on. Conflict is part of our life, but insecurity cannot be considered a barrier to action. Afghanistan is currently in the process of reviewing its National Education Policy and there is scope to include a peacebuilding and social cohesion perspective in this policy.

The work under the Global Partnership in Education is being implemented in the 13 most insecure districts. Experience shows that a community-led approach, which takes along key stakeholders like the village elders, tribal leaders, ethnic groups is most successful. Social mobilization, therefore, is integral when working on education and peacebuilding.

— Bahirullah Wayaar, Education Advisor, Save the Children International, Afghanistan

Discussions today pointedly brought out that inclusive governance works, not extractive governance. It is essential to specify the problem, to find the solution, be it ECCE, girls’ education, or education of the mountain communities.

Four critical things to be done are:
1) Much knowledge exists in the region, the need is to develop a community of practice, where we learn from each other.
2) Cultivating objectivity, often professionals are so closely engaged with the issue and the dynamics around it that it is essential for an external agency to bring in objectivity through research and reports, for example, the Situation Analysis done by UNICEF in Pakistan.
3) Support is needed from agencies to build a disaggregated database, which helps in building appropriate strategies.
4) Similarly, there is a need to build standards in different areas of education – ECCE, school categorization, teacher training and so on.

— Imran Sikandar, Baloch Special Secretary, School Education Department, Government of Punjab, Pakistan

The early childhood years and adolescence are clearly two important age groups and, hence, important windows for interventions. This means there is a need to develop appropriate policies, programmes and capacities to address the needs of these groups.

— Bal Bahadur Karki, Under Secretary, Department of Education, Nepal

Our education policy is guided by the Gross Happiness Index, based on the four pillars of sustainable development, protection of environment, preservation and promotion of culture and good governance. In this, we would like to maintain our focus on our cultural value, which builds a sense of community, and values of interdependence – for us, that is the basis for social cohesion. An important focus will also be on enabling good governance and producing quality teachers. We will work on this through our teacher training institutions.

— Samdru Rigyal, Director, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan

Bangladesh is not facing threats that prevail in the neighbouring countries, however, there is a distinct increase in social violence. There exist tremendous inequalities in education with multiple education providers. A commitment needs to be made to build capacities of all providers for quality education. This includes all schools – formal, non-formal and religious.

— Md. Khalid Humayun, Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Bangladesh

Sri Lanka had witnessed 30 long years of conflict, which had affected all aspects of life, including social cohesion and peace amongst communities. Post-conflict, it was essential to bring cohesion and reconciliation in the society. Reforms in education involved change in curriculum, empowering teachers, second language learning for cross-cultural understanding and fostering the culture of peace in schools and communities.

— Jayanthi Gunasekara, Director General, National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka

Maldives believes in adopting a comprehensive approach to education, that means having programmes on ECCE, quality education and learning, alternative learning options for out-of-school children and use of information communication technologies. The goal and commitment is – no child is left behind.

— Fathimath Sofiya Rasheed, Coordinator, Ministry of Education, Maldives
I KEY MESSAGES AND COMMITMENTS

SDG 4 AND SDG16 OFFER STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Bring linkages between SDG 4 and SDG 16; strive not only to get children into school but also support an education system that promotes peace, social cohesion and resilience.
- Acknowledge and advocate for an instrumental and enabling role of education to contribute to peace and access to social services.
- Develop evidence-based, conflict-sensitive, risk-informed programmes, which work on the entire continuum of bringing quality and equitable education to all children.
- Support stabilization of systems, and systems that promote resilience, social cohesion and peace – all key to sustainable development and sustainable peace.
- Integrate ‘do no harm’, social cohesion and peacebuilding frameworks in relevant national and subnational policies and plans.
- Build strong partnerships to promote evidence-based programmes that contribute to social cohesion and sustaining peace. Encourage countries in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) through the proposed SAARC Framework for Education 2030 to advance sustainable peace and education.

CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH ARE MOST IMPORTANT

- Protect children from all forms of violence and ensure safe and quality learning environments for children affected by conflict and strife.
- Ensure mechanisms of care, safety and psycho-social support for young children by mitigating and minimizing the impact of violence and conflict.
- Provide relevant and quality educational options for youth, particularly out-of-school children, including non-formal education and alternative learning pathways linked to future livelihoods. Promote the participation of young people and harness their agency towards peacebuilding.
- Advocate for significant commitment at the level of national and international policy, including in the implementation of the SDGs to ensure holistic education support to empower young people’s agency for peace.

POLICIES, SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMMES

- Work at multiple levels for education that promotes quality and equity, respects diversity and adopts ‘do no harm’ practices in policies, programmes and practices.
- Build capacities of education service providers to contribute to social cohesion, resilience and sustainable peace.
- Influence curriculum frameworks, teacher training and other capacity building activities to advance the work on social cohesion and peacebuilding. This includes work on multilingual education, sports for development and effective early childhood development interventions.
- While education is an important entry point, it is important to work across sectors and develop programmes that are cognizant of structural barriers and systems and work at both levels – individual as well as systems and policies.
- Acknowledge the local context and complexities, and work within both centralized and decentralized structures.

EVIDENCE, ANALYSIS AND KNOWLEDGE BUILDING

- Bridge the gap between theory and practice, develop institutional linkages between practitioners and academicians as well as between policy, institutional capacity development and community resilience.
- Build South Asia specific evidence base on nature of violence and conflicts in the region and their impact on children.
- Develop a community of practice, including a knowledge platform, Internet-based and a live platform for knowledge building and exchange of information.
- Identify specific issues for research and advocacy in the field based on the priority themes.

The symposium concluded with a number of commitments made by countries to translate the agenda for sustainable peace and education into practice. Experience has shown, including in the host country, Sri Lanka, that political will can bring social cohesion and education together and at all levels – policies, systems and schools.
## ANNEX SYMPOSIUM AGENDA

### SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND EDUCATION - Blue, Hotel Hilton, Colombo - 27 May 2016

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<td>9.00–9.50</td>
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<td>Welcome and Lighting of the Traditional Lamp</td>
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<td>Speech by Akila Viraj Kariyawasam MP, Hon. Minister of Education, Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>Welcome</td>
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<td>Ms. Una McCauley, UNICEF Representative, Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>The South Asia Context: Issues and Challenges for Education</td>
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<td>Mr. Philippe Cori, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia</td>
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<td>9.50–10.15</td>
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<td>10.15–11.30</td>
<td>Theme I: Peace and Education: Meeting the SDG Agenda</td>
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<td>Chair: Dr. Abid Aman Burki, Professor of Economics, Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)</td>
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<td>Education and Peacebuilding: Approaches and Challenges</td>
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<td>Speaker: Dr. Mario Novelli, Professor in the Political Economy of Education, University of Sussex</td>
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<td>Importance of Peace, Social Cohesion and Education: The Pakistan Context</td>
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<td>Speaker: Ms. Sameena Imtiaz, Executive Director, Peace Education and Development Foundation</td>
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