



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What Ministries Can Do to Protect Education from Attack and Schools from Military Use

A Menu of Actions

Every child has the right to education. States, and by extension their Ministries, are obligated in accordance with international law to uphold the right to education for all, including children and young people living in crisis-affected contexts. Yet, schools, universities, and their students and staff are directly targeted for attacks and violence, and hundreds of schools are used by armed parties as bases, barracks, weapons caches, detention centers, and for other military purposes, detrimentally impacting students' right to education and placing the schools at risk of attack by opposing forces.

The Menu of Actions is intended as a resource to empower personnel of ministries responsible for education (hereafter 'Ministries' or 'Ministry') to better prevent attacks on education or protect schools from military use, mitigate the impact of attacks when they do occur, and respond to attacks. The actions are drawn primarily from publications by GCPEA and its member organizations.

Although the focus of the paper is on schools, many of the recommendations may be considered for universities or other educational institutions (hereafter inclusively referred to as schools).

The suggested actions for Ministries to protect education from attack have seven components:

1. Analyze the situation and monitor the attacks
2. Secure the schools
3. Ensure education continuity
4. Support communities
5. Be conflict sensitive
6. Systematize the protection of education
7. Advocate for support, including for state endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration¹ and implementation of the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*²

Users are encouraged to:

1. Select the actions that are relevant to the situation
2. Adapt them to the country context
3. Take action at national, provincial, district, and school levels
4. Add any actions found to be useful from the local experience

Users are also encouraged to note that each component has opportunities and risks that must be considered during development and implementation.

1. Analyze the situation and monitor the attacks

One of the first activities Ministries can do to begin protecting education from attack³ and schools from military use⁴ is to analyze the current situation. In this sense, to analyze means to: identify gaps in knowledge; collect information; examine the nature, scope, and scale of the problem; and use the information to inform protective measures. Monitoring should follow the initial analysis. Consistent, standardized information collection helps to identify new areas of need and areas where existing responses should be adapted.

How to do it?

Conduct a data gap analysis; create an analysis and monitoring plan; engage the local community; conduct a conflict analysis; monitor incidents of attacks and military use; and coordinate with other actors to build the evidence base about both attacks and protection measures.

2. Secure the schools

Securing schools refers to providing physical hardware to protect students, education personnel, and schools, such as: school boundary walls, razor wire, lighting, and entrance blockades. Physical protection can shield potential education targets from attack, minimize damage caused by attacks, and provide a means of self-defense. Physical protection measures have particular risks to consider during development and implementation (e.g. posting armed guards at a school, or arming teachers, could make the school appear “militarized” and thus make it a target for attack; reinforcing school infrastructure may make schools more attractive for security forces or armed groups to use for their own operations).

How to do it?

Assess the risk and make an appropriate plan; establish secure school boundaries; select safe school sites, designs, and construction; reduce risk of attack *en route* to school; appoint armed or unarmed guards; provide relevant safety and security equipment; provide physical protection for teachers and other education personnel; and, if attacks occur, secure the school area before allowing re-entry.

3. Ensure education continuity

Ensuring education continuity means delivering education in a different way so that students have access to education in spite of the normal system being disrupted. Methods may include, but are not limited to: changing learning sites, accelerated learning classes, temporary learning spaces, or home schools. Alternative delivery of education is important because it minimizes the disruption of learning and can provide structure, routine, and peer support that can help students recover from psychological distress or trauma.

How to do it?

Make contingency plans to continue education; weigh the pros, cons, and feasibility of alternative education delivery mechanisms, such as: alternative learning sites (e.g. low profile community spaces, neighboring schools); distance learning (e.g. television, radio, internet); shifts (e.g. double shifts—morning and afternoon); summer schools or evening classes; and temporary learning spaces (e.g. tents).

4. Support communities

Ministry support of the community’s role refers to identifying, acknowledging, ensuring capacity for, coordinating with, and/or providing resources to community-based actors to protect education from attack, and schools from military use. The community’s role in protection is important because community members often have the ability to respond quickly, necessary knowledge of the local context, and commitment to protecting education for their children. Stakeholders perceive community-based measures to be one of the most powerful mechanisms to protect education from attack.

How to do it?

Include communities in the monitoring of any local protection measures and in the Ministry’s analysis; establish a grant program that provides funds to local offices for prevention, preparedness, and response to attacks on education; support school protection committees to prepare and implement school safety and security plans that include attacks and military use of schools; build community capacity to protect education from attack (e.g. student and teacher accompaniment to and from schools); and support community negotiations to protect schools.

5. Be conflict sensitive

For a Ministry to be conflict sensitive involves reforming policies and programs so that they minimize contributions to conflict and maximize contributions towards peace. Education instills knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors and can be a powerful force for social transformation towards peace—or war. Establishing conflict sensitive education policies and programs can contribute to building peace, thus hopefully reducing the likelihood of attacks on education and military use of schools.

How to do it?

Review existing education policies and programs for conflict sensitivity to determine whether and how they contribute to conflict, peace, or both; build trust between the Ministry and school communities; integrate conflict sensitive curricula that does not contribute to intergroup tensions, promote a culture of violence, or perpetuate stereotypes; establish conflict sensitive language of instruction and analyze existing language policy in light of the needs of diverse learners; establish conflict sensitive programs and policies to address inequitable access to education that can cause tension between groups and between citizens and the state; recruit, select, and deploy teachers in a conflict sensitive way (e.g. establish a selection committee that represents diverse social groups); and adopt conflict sensitive financing policies, including implementing a transparent and accountable financial reporting system.

6. Systematize protection of education

To systematize protection of education means to incorporate it into the Ministry's standard administrative and operational processes, including: education sector analysis, planning, programming, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation. Integrating protection of education into administrative and operational processes ensures that protective measures will be adequately planned for and resourced at the system level.

How to do it?

Appoint Ministry staff for protection of education; represent the Ministry's interests to protect education on existing coordination mechanisms by participating in education-specific networks (e.g. the Education Cluster) and non-education specific committees (e.g. peacebuilding); develop Ministry education protection plans; build capacity of Ministry personnel on protection topics (e.g. the *Guidelines*); determine the cost and financing of programs and policies to protect education; and allocate resources to programs to protect education from attack and schools from military use in the education sector budget.

7. Advocate for support

Protecting education involves many actors, including: legal, military, and political personnel. Ministry officials should know how to advocate for and what to ask of these other actors, in order to create an enabling environment for protecting education. Each Ministry's advocacy strategy will be unique, based on resources available for such activities and the context.

How to do it?

Advocate for review of, and where needed reformation of, the national legal framework to align with international law that protects education from attack and criminalize all elements of attacks on education; advocate for military, including United Nations and regional peacekeepers, to: incorporate the *Guidelines* into military doctrine, military manuals, rules of engagement, and operational orders; and advocate for the government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

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- ¹ The Safe Schools Declaration provides states the opportunity to express broad political support for the protection and continuation of education in armed conflict, and is the instrument for states to endorse and commit to using the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*.
 - ² The *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* provide concrete guidance to states and non-state armed groups for the planning and execution of military operations with the aim of better protecting schools and universities from use by armed groups for military purposes.
 - ³ The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack defines "attacks on education" as any intentional threat or use of force—carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious, or criminal reasons—against students, educators, and education institutions.
 - ⁴ The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack defines "military use" as the broad range of activities in which an armed party may engage with the physical space of an education institution, whether temporarily or on a long-term basis. See *Lessons in War 2015* (GCPEA, 2015). Available at: http://protectingeducation.org/lessons_in_war_2015.pdf.

For the full report, please see: http://protectingeducation.org/what_ministries_can_do.pdf

For more information about GCPEA please see:

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