“ENSURING SAFE EDUCATION FOR ALL: FROM COMMITMENT TO PRACTICE”

4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION
ABUJA, NIGERIA 25-27 OCTOBER, 2021
Overview

The Government of Nigeria, together with the Governments of Argentina, Norway, Spain, African Union Commission and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack are hosting the Fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration. The Abuja conference is a biennial conference with the overarching aim of taking stock and reviewing progress in implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict (Guidelines), as well as encouraging commitment and action in protecting education from attack. The Conference is a forum for states, and multilateral and civil society organizations, to exchange experiences and learning, and to present their strategies, progress, as well as challenges, in making the promise of safe education into a reality. The Conference is also an opportunity for states to accelerate implementation of the SSD.

While the Abuja Conference will have an international focus, as it is the first to be held on the African continent, and in a country and region severely affected by attacks on education, the experiences of Nigeria and the Sahel region in addressing attacks on education, will be highlighted. Promising practices by the African Union itself, as well as countries across the continent, and across the globe, will be drawn upon to facilitate a comparative perspective and cross-country and cross-regional learning and exchange.

The Conference will provide an opportunity for states to announce new endorsements and showcase progress in implementation, providing an impetus for states to join the SSD and strengthen implementation ahead of the Conference. Co-hosts and multi-lateral and civil society partners will mobilize to encourage states to take this action in the months preceding the Conference, including through demarches, and briefings with missions to the United Nations (UN) in Geneva and New York, and meetings with relevant ministries in capitals.

Objectives

The overarching objective is to strengthen implementation of the SSD by achieving the following specific objectives:

1. Share good practice in implementing key commitments in the Declaration to inspire other states to adapt the practice within their own context. In particular, share promising practice in achieving the following SSD commitments: a) Use the Guidelines and bring them into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate; b) Seek to ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict; c) Investigate allegations of violations or applicable national and international law and, where appropriate, duly prosecute perpetrators; and d) Provide assistance to survivors.

2. Forge global cooperation and strengthen coordination in protecting education and deterring military use of schools and universities by bringing together education, defence, justice and foreign affairs ministries, and multilateral and civil society organizations, to discuss prevention and response measures.

3. Identify actions governments can take to better achieve accountability for attacks on education and justice for survivors, by building and strengthening international and national legal mechanisms.

Panels and Sessions

Panel 1: Use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. This panel will examine how the Guidelines have been used by states and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations to better protect education and save lives. Concrete examples of how military use of schools has been reduced as a result of implementing the Guidelines will be highlighted.

Panel 2: Ensure continuity of safe education in zones of conflict. This panel will highlight good practice in enabling safe education to continue during armed conflict. Distance learning and other alternative education programmes utilized during the COVID-19 pandemic will be examined to explore how they might be applied to the context of attacks on education. In addition, the panel will consider how the SSD, by keeping schools safe, can be a tool to prevent other forms of grave violations, such as recruitment, sexual violence, and abductions, and how the SSD can better protect women and girls in conflict.

Panel 3: The Way Forward: Investigating allegations of violations, prosecuting perpetrators, and providing assistance to survivors. To achieve justice for survivors of attacks on education, perpetrators must be prosecuted but survivors must also receive services and support to enable them to recover. This panel will address how international and national legal systems can address both these elements of ensuring justice for persons and communities impacted by attacks on education, including through reparations.

In addition to the three panels there will be two sessions that will not focus on a particular commitment as the panels do, but instead consider the experiences of implementing the SSD more holistically, first from a military perspective, and second from a regional perspective.
Session hosted by the Nigerian Ministry of Defence: The Nigerian armed forces will explain how they are working to protect education in the North-East of Nigeria where schools are being targeted for attack by non-state armed groups. Other ministries of defence and armed forces will be invited to discuss their own experiences and challenges in preventing and responding to attacks on education.

Session entitled Reflections on Protecting Education from Attack in the Sahel: This session will include representatives from relevant ministries and multilateral and civil society organizations involved in preventing and responding to attacks on education in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali. Speakers will present the challenges faced and lessons learned for countries in other regions to draw on.

Target Audience

All UN member states will be invited to the Conference. Speakers on panels will be government, multilateral, or civil society organization representatives with experience in implementing the good practice being presented. Other participants will be invited at the ministerial and director-general level from ministries of defence, foreign affairs, education, and other ministries that invited states deem relevant. Affected persons, international organisations, international non-governmental organisations, and civil society practitioners will also be invited.

Participation of Children and Affected Persons:

Children and young people will participate meaningfully by sharing how attacks impact educational opportunity and providing recommendations to decision-makers, particularly in the opening and closing session. There will also be a dedicated in-person side event for children to express how attacks on education have affected them and an opportunity for them to present their demands for increased involvement in governance, decision-making, and participation in implementing the SSD to safeguard their future. Some children will participate in-person and others will join virtually. The voices of other persons who have been directly impacted by attacks on education, such as teachers, will also be incorporated into the conference.

Welcome Reception and Side Events:

On the first day of the Conference there will be a civil society side event organized by the Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria, and led by UNICEF and Save the Children. This will be followed by a welcome reception hosted by the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the second day there will be a children's side event that will be organized by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Save the Children. Details of these events will be provided by the agencies organizing them.

A schedule of the event is below. All times are in Abuja local time. All events are available for virtual participation unless stated otherwise.
# EVENT TIMELINE

**DAY 1**

**Monday 25th October 2021**

**Arrival for in-person attendees**

**15:00 - 17:00**

**TOPIC**

Civil Society Event Organized by the Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria

This opening event, organized by civil society, will hear from individuals directly affected by attacks and activists working in communities experiencing conflict first-hand. It will spotlight promising and innovative practices, as well as identify gaps and challenges in implementing the Declaration, taking stock of how the Declaration is making a real difference in people’s lives.

**Video: Children’s Perspectives by Save the Children Norway**

**Opening Remarks**

- Mr. Passy Amani, Education Sector Coordinator, Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria (EiEWGN)

**Keynote Address**

- Ms. Gayathri Butler, Director, Advocates Programme, Malala Fund

**Panel conversation: How SSD is making a difference**

- Moderator: Ms. Zama Neff, Co-chair, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

**Panellists:**

- Ms. Yasmine Sherif, Director, Education Cannot Wait
- Ms. Inger Ashing, Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children International (SCI)

**Hearing it from the Children**

- Intervention by child rights activist (Columbia)

**Interventions by affected, activists and practitioners**

- Ms. Joy Bishara, Survivor, Nigeria
- Ms. Deisy Apiricio, Student and Activist, Colombia
- Mr. Ahmad Turki Arafat, Child Rights Activist, Syria

**Civil Society Statement**

**Closing remarks**

- Ms. Zama Neff, Co-chair, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

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**18:00 - 20:00**

**TOPIC**

Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Welcome Reception

**Welcome Address**

- H.E. Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria

**Goodwill Messages:**

- H.E. Dr. Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed, Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Arch Sonny S.T Echono, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Ms. Zama Neff, Co-chair, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

**Keynote Address:**

- Ms. Helen Grant MP, UK Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Girls’ Education

**Recognition of new endorsing states:**

- H.E. Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria

**Introduction to Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflicts, Italy and the Virtual Concert**

- H.E. Dr. Stefano Pontesilli, Ambassador of Italy in Abuja

**Virtual Concert**

- Universities Network for Children in Armed Conflicts, Italy

**Dinner and Cultural Troupe**

**Vote of thanks**

- Amb. Zubairu Dada, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria
Opening Ceremony

Voices of children by Save the Children Norway and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)
- Video of voices of conflict-affected children across the globe (Guatemala, Colombia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Nigeria)

Welcome Address
- Arit Okpo, Host CNN African Voices Changemakers (Master of Ceremonies)

Role play by children from Borno State

Welcome Speech
- H.E. Malam Adamu Adamu, Minister of Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Goodwill Messages
- Mr. Ziauddin Yousafzai, Co-founder, Malala Fund
- Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
- Mr. David Beckham OBE, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

Special Address
- H.E. President Felix – Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo & Chair, African Union

Keynote Address
- H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria

GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS & TEA BREAK

Day 2
Tuesday 26th October 2021

11:30 - 12:30

SIDE EVENT: Children’s Event
Organized by Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & Save the Children International (SCI)
A dedicated event for children to express how attacks on education have impacted them and how implementation of the commitments protects them and ensures education continuity

12:30 - 1:30

LUNCH

13:30 – 14:30

Ministries of Defence Experiences Protecting Education: Challenges and Responses
(The Ministry of Defence will also host an exhibition featuring a model of a school that has been attacked and a prototype of a safe school for participants in Abuja)

Objectives
- To critically present how militaries have supported education continuity in armed conflict by protecting education
- To share experiences of militaries in using the Guidelines, and in preventing and responding to attacks on education

Outcomes
- To better understand the challenges of protecting education from attack from a military perspective, highlighting good practice and difficulties.

Speakers
- Ms. Zama Neff, Co-chair, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)
- Major General Salihi Magashi (Rtd), Minister of Defence, Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Colonel Volodymyr Liamzin, Deputy Chief of CIMIC Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, Ukraine
- Q & A

Video:
Nigerian military activities to safeguard education in the North-East
Moderator:
Ms. Zama Neff, Co-chair, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)
Military Tatoo performance by the Nigerian military band

**Panel 1: Using the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities during Armed Conflict**

**Objective:**
- Share good practice in incorporating the Guidelines into national legislation, military doctrine, and in practice, highlighting how this has resulted in reduced military use of schools.
- Learn from the UN’s experiences in banning military use of schools in international peacekeeping and discuss the possibility of including a protection mandate for schools.

**Outcome:**
- Increased understanding of how the Guidelines can and have been used to stop schools from being used for military purposes, both at the international peacekeeping and domestic levels.

**Moderator:**
- H.E. Amb. Federico Villegas, the Permanent Representative of Argentina to the International Organizations in Geneva

**Panellists:**
- Dr. Jerome Marston and Dr. Marika Tsolakis, Senior Researchers, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)
- Mr. Anis Chouchane, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations (UN)
- Mr. Charles Fomunyam, Child Protection Adviser, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)
- Mrs. Tabitha Bonney, Senior Lawyer, Operational and International Humanitarian Law Team, Ministry of Defence, Central Legal Services, United Kingdom
- Mrs. Beatriz Sierra, Senior Advisor at the Humanitarian Action Office, Spanish Development Cooperation Agency (AECID)
- Q and A

**Panel 2: Ensure continuity of education in zones of conflict**

**Objective:**
- Highlight good practice in ensuring continuity of safe education during armed conflict, such as through alternative education programmes.
- Consider how distance learning and other programmes utilized during the Covid-19 pandemic can be applied to the context of attacks on education.
- Highlight how the SSD is a tool for reducing other grave violations, such as child recruitment and sexual violence, and protecting women and girls in conflict.

**Outcome:**
- Concrete examples of how to deliver safe education when there is a risk of attacks on education and other grave violations against children.

**Moderator:**
- Ms. Cathrine Andersen, Special Representative for Protection of Civilians, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Panellists:**
- H.E. Ms. Marina Sereni, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy
- H.E. Dr. Pauline Nalova Lyonga, Minister for Secondary Education, Cameroon
- Dr. Andreas Snildal, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- Ms. Charlotte Berquin, Education Officer, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Regional Bureau for West & Central Africa
- Ms. Inger Ashing, Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children International (SCI)
- Mr. Graham Lang, Chief of Education, Education Cannot Wait (ECW)
- Q and A

**Interviewer:** Arit Okpo, Host CNN African Voices Changemakers (Master of Ceremonies)

**Discussant:** Mr. Alain Delétroz, Director-General, Geneva Call
Reflections on Protecting Education from Attack in the Sahel Region

Objective:
- To examine how Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have approached the challenge of attacks on education and implemented key commitments in the SSD.

Outcome:
- To share experiences of implementing different commitments within the SSD in a coordinated way, both domestically and through regional collaboration, highlighting successes and challenges.

Video: Protecting Education in the Sahel Region by Plan International on behalf of the Secondary Education Working Group (SEWG) and partners

Moderator: Mrs Cristina Gutierrez, Director of the Humanitarian Action Office, Spanish Development Cooperation Agency (AECID).

Panellists:
- H.E. Mr. Chukwuemeka Nwajiuba, Minister of State for Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Mr. Mamadou Kanté, Chair of National Safe Schools Follow-up Committee, Ministry of National Education, Mali
- Mr. Clement Traoré, Education Programme Advisor, Plan International Burkina Faso / Country Office
- H.E. Dr. Rabiou Ousman, Minister of National Education, Republic of Niger
- Q and A

Panel 3: Way Forward
Investigating allegations of violations, prosecuting perpetrators, and providing assistance to survivors

Objective:
- Understanding of how to bring perpetrators to account at the international and national level, and provide assistance to survivors of attacks on education through legal systems, such as with reparations.

Outcome:
- Encourage the adoption of legal measures at the international and national level to better ensure justice for survivors of attacks on education, through stronger investigations, prosecutions, and reparations.

Video: Education Above All #UniteToProtect Film 2021
Moderator: Mr. Anthony O. Ojukwu Esq, Executive Secretary, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Panellists:
- “Mohammad”, Survivor, Palestine
- Dr. Cécile Aptel, Deputy Director, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)
- Dr. Robert Doya Nanima, Special Rapporteur on Children in Armed Conflict, African Committee Rights and Welfare of the Child
- Ms. Mona Rishmawi, Chief Rule of Law, Equality and Non-Discrimination Branch, Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- Ms. Tirana Hassan, Deputy Executive Director and Chief Programmes Officer, Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- Q and A

Q and A Video:
- Mr. Janez Lenarčič, Commissioner for Crisis Management, European Commission
Closing Ceremony

Launch of the Implementation Network by Norway
- H.E. Mr Knut Eiliv Lein, Ambassador of Norway in Abuja

Children’s Manifesto

Closing statements
- Mr. Forest Whittaker, UN SDG Advocate & UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace & Reconciliation (video)
- H.E. Mr. Santiago Cafiero, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, Argentina
- Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict
- Mr. Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Rt Hon Gordon Brown, United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Abuja Conference:
- H.E. Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Closing Speech
- H.E. Dr. Mrs Aisha Muhammadu Buhari, First Lady, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Performance by children

Day 3
Wednesday 27th October 2021

15:30 – 16:30

Topic

Closing Ceremony

Speakers

H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari
- GCFR, Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Federal Republic of Nigeria

H.E. Felix Tshisekedi
- President of the Democratic Republic of Congo & Chair, African Union

Ms. Virginia Gamba
- Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict

H.E. Dr. Mrs Aisha Muhammadu Buhari
- First Lady, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Mr. Gordon Brown
- UN Special Envoy for Global Education

Ms. Audrey Azoulay
- UNESCO Director-General

Ms. Henrietta Fore
- Executive Director, UNICEF

Ms. Zama Neff
- Head, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

H.E. Malam Adamu Adamu
- Minister of Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria

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