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**Peacebuilding Commission—
Promoting the involvement of non-
state actors in education**

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Forum: Peacebuilding Commission

Issue: Promoting the involvement of non-state actors in education

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Position:

Introduction

Recognizing the fact that the 26th article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to education, it can be definitely agreed that its equal access and disposition should be maintained even at the most difficult circumstances. Moreover, ensuring inclusive quality education for all and promoting learning is the fourth of the Sustainable Development Goals. Education is the most efficient way to eradicate poverty and to look forward towards development; it is also used to maintain stability and provide protection in violent conflicts. Nowadays, though enrollment on primary education in developing countries has reached 91 per cent, there are still 57 million children remaining out of school. Globally, 103 million youth lack basic literacy skills, and more than the 60 percent of them are women. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the fact that more than 50 percent of out-of-school children at primary school level are living in conflicted areas.

Although some progress has been done throughout this century, it has clearly been not enough. There are many more things that can be done on this issue. Improving the educational systems and availability will require sharper increases in funding and a greater amount of financial and humanitarian aid; regarding the fact that many regions do not have the possibility on fully depending on their governments to develop, such as the sub-Saharan Africa, where more than half of the world's out-of-school children live.

All of these are reasons for the involvement of non-state actors in education, which can be non-profit institutions run by NGO's or foundations, for-profit schools that operate as enterprises, aid agencies, and multinational corporations. Non-state actors may represent an enormous support, both for a country's government and for its population, as they may provide

the skills and resources needed to accelerate the process towards an equal and more inclusive global education. Still, non-state actors need the cooperation of the international community to be able to work in a safe environment while, at the same time, effectively reach the most affected areas and populations.

It is essential to understand education as a global, common, and public good; as an undeniable right deserved by everyone. We are living in a context of globalization where educational non-state institutions and efforts are starting to partially interact beyond national boundaries and to work together to achieve the common aim of the right of education for all.

Definition of key-terms

Non-state actors

They are entities with an influence in the sphere of international relations or in local issues, which have an active participation in a number of multilateral processes, especially in the Human Rights Council. They do not exist as a state structure or an established institution of a state; they are independent both economically and politically.

Cotonou Agreement

It is the most comprehensive partnership agreement between the European Union (EU) and 79 countries from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) up to now. It was signed in Cotonou on 26 June 2000, and concluded to a 20-years period. Some of its aims include an equal partnership and ownership of development strategies, constant dialogue and mutual obligations between the EU and ACP states. This agreement is of vital importance since it also recognizes the complementary role of non-state actors and their potential for contributions to the development process, particularly at regional and national levels.

Peacebuilding

Global education and advocacy initiative to develop social cohesion, resilience, and security through the strengthening of the establishment of educational practices and policies in conflicted areas. It is usually carried out by non-state actors or organs of the United Nations with the assistance of different countries.

Conflicted Areas

Region that has suffered violent experiences or war in its territory, provoking economic underdevelopment, damaged assets, and reduce the capacity for effective functioning and progress. Not only many lives are lost, but also the civilians that are left are affected by a post-traumatic war mentality and also lack their basic needs and rights.

General Overview

Importance of education for peacebuilding

For children living in conflicted areas, education is lifesaving. Institutions such as schools provide them with stability and structure; a safe and soothing environment is essential to help them deal with the traumatic experiences they have suffered. Moreover, educative institutions represent a refuge from the possible threat of physical aggression on the region, such as violence, all types of abuses, and even massive killings. In many of these cases, schools end up granting children basic needs such as food, water, health care, and sanitation. Education in conflicted areas can bring long term solutions to the conflict. It can prepare young generations to, in the future, boost economic growth, reduce poverty and unemployment, end inequality and, therefore, restore peace and stability to the area. Surprisingly, education development counts with less than 2 percent of the total international humanitarian aid despite the circumstances. Even at this moment of crisis, it is the first service to be suspended by local governments and the last one to be restored. This is normally related to funding problems and the lack of qualified teaching staff, materials, and a physical place for the service to be developed. It is in this context that non-state actors are needed in order to deal with these obstacles.

Emerge of Non-state actors in education

Though it is the states' responsibility to provide citizens their basic human rights; nowadays, different non-state actors are starting to fill in the gaps that are not being covered by local governments or institutions. If education is understood as a global or common good, the division between private and public education becomes blurry. This is even stated in the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since it proclaims that every organ in society, being this the state or non-state actors, should contribute to an atmosphere of respect for human rights. Primary non-state actors enrollment between 1990 and 2012, rose by almost 5 percent; in contrast to 2015 that was 16 percent in low-income countries and 12 percent in lower income countries. Non-state actors are becoming more popular since they are starting to provide services that help to reinforce a country's educational system. They teach democratic values that also contribute to development and to the building of democracies. Last but not least, some of them even carry out teacher training, they strengthen the capacity of school inspectors, and work with parent-teacher associations and school management communities.

Role of non-state actors in education

The main advantage that non-state actors have is probably the fact that, as independent institutions, they have the possibility to move an act with much more freedom. The flexibility of non-state actors allows them to reach different population groups that were thought to be inaccessible by governments. They have more independence when it comes to hiring teachers, organizing educational institutions and introducing innovation programs. These advantages are of extreme importance in education for peacebuilding considering that the extreme conditions of a certain conflicted area may need instant measures to be taken, something that would not be done as quickly by the local states. Some of the most well known non-state actors that work on education are: **Barefoot College, Room to Read, Pratham, Tostan, Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE), CARE Education, and Reach Out To Asia (ROTA)**. All these are **NGO's** or intra governmental organizations (**IGO's**). What they have in common is that most of them work and concentrate their efforts in developing countries or conflicted states, where education is needed the most. They try to look for solutions to specific problematics such as but not limited to: rural access, gender inequality, illiteracy, underdevelopment, and violence.

In addition, other non-state actors that have started to provide support and aid for education development are transnational corporations. In an era of privatisation, a closer link between business and human rights has started to grow. Private companies, since in many cases they take over the businesses that used to be under public administration, should take in the responsibilities and the role the state used to cover. Transnational corporations represent economic growth to local states and are also an important source of employment. Companies get involved with the right of education by, for example, teaching and capacitating workers from conflicted or underdeveloped and afterwards incorporating them to the companies' staff. In this manner, corporations provide support to the development of education for peacebuilding, while at the same time they are improving their own personnel.



Possible problems for non-state actors in education

The benefits of the involvement of non-state actors in education is still being discussed. Some parties argue that there is lack of clarity over distinctions such as ownership, delivery, and financing of education. Also, there is lack of data of the potential success of their involvement, which do not let to draw clear conclusions and comparisons so as to analyze whether if the involvement of non-state actors on the issue is actually effective. Moreover, there is another discussion regarding the fact that, since non-state actors are proliferating and starting to assume state functions, they should be obligated to hold state-like obligations. Who do these non-state actors answer to? In the same manner as states are regulated by international entities, so should non-state actors that have an equal or even bigger influence on the matter. Though these new responsibilities may stop them from acting as freely, some parties believe it is important to control them in case of misconduct. Also, some parties argue that there are for-profit actors with personal interests that can maximize profit in teaching different ideologies, which can be a threat for the educational system. This is why some countries prefer to keep the influence from non state actors out of their territories.

Major parties involved and their views

United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)

It is a program of the United Nations that works to assist interrupted learning in regions affected by humanitarian crisis. It provides suitable space, teaching staff, and materials in order to carry out their goal. Actually, the initiative on Peacebuilding is a partnership between UNICEF and 15 other Member States.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

This organization is responsible for coordinating international efforts on education, culture, science, and communication. It strengthens ties between nations to work together for these issues and has as a main motto: "Building peace in the minds of men and women". It is the only United Nations agency that is supposed to cover all aspects of education; and it has also lead the Global Education 2010 Agenda.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

It is a United Nations programme aimed at assisting and protecting refugees, in the process of leaving their countries and in their inclusion in the new states. It has education as its main tool to ensure the insertion of refugees; advocating its access for all ages, providing structure and stability, and also educating about refugees to hosting societies to help their inclusion.

Civil Society

This term makes reference to the voluntary participation of citizens. Some observers believe that it only includes political activity related to a non-state actor; and others sustain that it is about all forms of voluntary participation, being this is the public or private sector. It is essential for strengthening democracy and enabling conflict resolution.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's)

They are nonprofit and voluntary citizen's entity that can be organized in a local, regional, or global level. In order to perform their services and humanitarian actions, they usually establish relationships with the different organs of the United Nations so as to work together to achieve their

common aims. It is necessary to clarify that they do not work alone, regarding the fact that there are donor agencies, for example, that can fund the projects and therefore be an intermediary between the NGO's and the governments; becoming a partnership facilitator.

Middle-Range Leaders

They are citizens who occupy leadership positions in the education, business, agriculture, and health sectors. They are important regarding the fact that peacebuilding needs to be dealt with in all sectors of society, and Middle-range leaders represent the middle, which is essential for the connection between top and bottom levels. They are also ethnic and religious leaders, academics, and leaders of various NGO's. Regarding peacebuilding, they mostly work on problem-solving workshops, conflict-resolution training, and peace commissions.

Timeline of important events/Documents

1946: UNICEF is created

1948: General Assembly Resolution 217 A was passed, stating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

1961: UNICEF expands its efforts to education

2000: Cotonou Agreement was signed

2000: The UNHCR recreated the position of Senior Education Officer, which is going to support strategic UNHCR's directions and education programming

2002: The UNHCR agenda for protection and its action plan stated that "education is a tool for protection"

2005: Peacebuilding Commission was set up in the United Nations.

2015: Sustainable Development Goals were set up, with an Agenda by 2030

UN involvement

Measures taken on education

To start with, the fact that to “Ensure inclusive and quality Education for all and promote lifelong learning” is one of the Sustainable Development Goals means that the UN sees the issue of education as something that definitely needs to be tackled urgently. Moreover, within that big goal there are certain aims settled for 2030 which involve equitable access to quality education, the learning about sustainable development and peace, and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Moreover, through the passing of resolutions, such as *A/RES/S-27/2* (2002) and *A/RES/27/254* (2002), which promote Education for all and for Sustainable Development, it can be shown how the UN is dealing with the matter. The efforts carried away by the UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNESCO also demonstrate the efficiency and compromise of the UN’s programs in education.

Possible Solutions

Once a state agrees on non-state actors having a role on education, there are many possible ways to promote their involvement. Firstly, financial assistance should be given to non-state actors in order to let them carry out their programs; this can be from private donors or from economic developed states that are interested in investing for education.

Secondly, there should be a formal recognition of all non-state actors to allow them to work in each state by their own means. In the case they are recognized as such and that their peaceful intentions have been clarified, it is important to highlight that they should be able to move around freely into and inside the region where they are working. Flexibility is what makes the course of action of these organizations so efficient; they should be allowed to get into any region they considered that should be tackled by their programs, without disrupting the privacy and rights of civilians and respecting the country's laws and sovereignty.

Thirdly, a contribution on behalf of civil society towards non-state actors as encouragement and support for the development of these organizations. This can be done, for example, through the use of media and propaganda so that these programs may be visible to more potential donors. Moreover, to use these modern techniques to publish detailed reports on the situation of education in conflicted areas so as to have concrete evidence of the amount of help needed.

Last but not least, special security measures should be guaranteed to non-state actors due to the fact that in education for Peacebuilding they may probably face the need to enter a region that is in the middle of an armed conflict. This potential danger may stop non-state actors from getting into a certain region; however, if safety measures are ensured for them, this will be a way of promoting their involvement to education.

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