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Action for Reducing
Inequalities in Education

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Policy Road Map for Education During Disasters and Emergencies

Türkiye

Istanbul, 2023

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During Disasters and Emergencies

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List of abbreviations

CCRI	Children's Climate Risk Index
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
SES	Socio-economic status

Background

The national coalitions in ARISE [1] (Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education) project aim to comprehend the challenges faced by children with low socioeconomic status (SES) in accessing education and to propose recommendations for addressing these issues.

The specific focus of Türkiye's national coalition was to discuss and propose recommendations regarding Dom and Abdal children's access to education. However, emergencies are the new normal of our lives, and preparedness for various types of disasters, such as earthquakes, wars, pandemics, and climate and biodiversity crises, is crucial for maintaining a functional and sustainable education system.

The earthquakes that struck Türkiye on February 6th, 2023, starkly revealed the education system's lack of readiness for such disasters, highlighting significant room for improvement and shifting the focus of Türkiye's national coalition.

Following an extensive consultation process with education and child protection stakeholders, this policy document was developed to offer recommendations for establishing a robust education system during emergencies.

The recommendations within the document first underscore the importance of preparedness before emergencies occur. This includes a focus on developing relevant curricula and ensuring the availability of well-equipped educational facilities.

Subsequently, the document shifts its focus to the post-disaster period, presenting recommendations for safeguarding children, especially those at risk, supporting educators, monitoring the migration routes of affected populations, and setting standards for volunteers.

[1] ARISE: Action for Reducing Inequalities in Education is a four-year Action launched in March 2020 and funded through Instrument for the EU Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) implemented by the NGOs and research institutes from Western Balkans and Turkey. All national strategies of IPA beneficiary countries, in one way or another, specify as one of their priorities poverty reduction and inclusive education in relation to various categories of children, including those with low SES background, increasing participation in education and preventing school drop-out.

Studies indicate that children constitute the most vulnerable group and are profoundly impacted by various crises, including the climate crisis [2].

According to the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI), nearly all children are projected to face hazardous situations in the future, such as heat waves, storms, air pollution, floods, and drought [3]. Given the ongoing climate and biodiversity crisis, the number of emergencies is anticipated to rise and intensify [4].

Education serves not only as a platform for learning but also as a preventive and protective tool for children against both physical and psychological risks during emergencies. It plays a pivotal role in helping children mitigate the psychological effects of disasters and empowers them to envision a hopeful future [5].

Consequently, the uninterrupted continuation of education holds immense importance in ensuring child protection, providing psychological support to children, curbing the exacerbation of inequalities, and restoring normalcy. For that reason, prioritizing a child-centered education policy that upholds children's rights and combats discrimination should be the priority of the post-disaster era.

Türkiye has faced numerous crises in the recent past, leading to the development of emergency policies in education. In the immediate aftermath of the February 6th earthquakes, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) released psychosocial support documents aimed at students, teachers, and parents, assigning psychosocial support teams to affected areas and establishing centers to provide these services.

[2] UNICEF Türkiye (2021). Bilgi notu: 26. BM iklim değişikliği konferansı (COP26), çocuklar ve iklim değişikliği.

[3] UNICEF (2021). The climate crisis is a child rights crisis.

[4] Pörtner, H. O., et. al. (2022). Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Summary for policymakers.

[5] INEE (2010). Minimum standards for education: Preparedness, response, recovery.

These documents encompass a wide range of activities, ranging from psychological first aid and stories in different languages to grief and loss support [6]. Additionally, first aid courses were developed for teachers, with over 68 thousand teachers having completed the courses (7). To increase the students' awareness of crises, the curriculum now incorporates an elective course titled "Environment Education and Climate Change", for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders [8].

While it is difficult to overlook the efforts put by the MoNE to prepare the education system for emergencies, the February 6th earthquakes demonstrated that these efforts thus far have proven insufficient to render the education system resilient to crises and emergencies.

Consequently, we have shifted the focus of the ARISE national coalition towards emergencies and their impact on education. The goal is to devise a concrete solution and a comprehensive road map for fully equipping the education system.

To this end, we have organized 20 meetings with stakeholders in education and child protection since the February 6th earthquakes. These stakeholders come from diverse backgrounds, ranging from organizations directly involved with children in the field to experts, academics, and education-focused think tanks. These meetings foster discussions among stakeholders, enabling them to comprehend each other's work and identify shortcomings in their interventions.

Additionally, these meetings aid organizations in discovering innovative solutions to various problems, whether bureaucratic or organizational, that may arise during emergencies. This policy document stands as the culmination of these extensive deliberations, built upon the insights gathered from the participants in these meetings.

[6] MoNE (n.d.). Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı deprem sonrası psikososyal destek eylem planı.

[7] MoNE (2022). 10 ayda 68 binden fazla öğretmen ilk yardım eğitimi aldı.

[8] MoNE (2022). Okullardaki sıfır atık, iklim değişikliği ve enerji çalışmalarında hedef büyütüldü.

Objective of the Guidelines for Educational Policy in Emergencies

The guidelines for educational policy in Türkiye have a crucial **objective**: preparing the education system for imminent emergencies. This entails increasing the capacity and responsiveness of education stakeholders in dealing with emergencies.

The **vision** of the policy road map is centered on maintaining the education process, even in the face of emergencies. This is pivotal for several reasons. First, education serves as a fundamental tool in reducing societal inequality. A study analyzing the impact of COVID-19 and online learning on educational outcomes predicts that students from lower SES are more likely to achieve poorer results in the upcoming PISA test compared to their peers with more privileged backgrounds [9].

Thus, a well-functioning education system during emergencies becomes imperative to prevent the exacerbation of inequality by supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Furthermore, educational institutions, including schools, play a crucial role in child protection, preventing child labor, child, early and forced marriages, and abuse. The monitoring mechanisms within schools enable tracking children's trajectories and timely intervention if necessary.

Additionally, the policy document recognizes the importance of teachers during emergencies as essential education stakeholders. This policy document aims to establish a road map that ensures the continuity of education activities. This policy framework stems from consultations with stakeholders in education and child protection, designed to meet the requirements of an education system adequately prepared for emergencies.

[9] Development Analytics and UNICEF (2023). Documentation of education response in Türkiye during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on children's access to and retention in education.

The **implications** of this policy road map are far-reaching, promising a more equitable and just society achieved through providing equal opportunities to all children, with education as the starting point. As children with low SES are disproportionately affected during emergencies, this policy document outlines pathways to ensure the continuity of education and societal equality as a result.

Implementation Recommendations and Guidelines

Based on the literature review and collected data through consultation processes with stakeholders in education and child protection, the subsequent recommendations have been formulated to enhance the education system's preparedness for emergencies and to increase the capacity of education stakeholders.

Overall Policy Goal

Prepare the education system in Türkiye for emergencies in the short, medium, and long term and increase the capacity and responsiveness of all education stakeholders.

Specific goal 1

Identify the education system needs for emergency preparedness and increase the resilience of the education system.

- ### Recommendation 1:

Increase the capacity of teachers and school leaders is crucial for identifying different needs and finding unique solutions for their local spaces.

Stakeholders involved: Teachers, school leaders, students, parents, local authorities, civil society organizations.

Level of implementation: Regional and local.

- ### Recommendation 2:

Curricula for faculties of education and K-12 schools should be transformed to provide advanced toolkits for teachers and students and foster their preparedness for emergencies.

Based on the needs and assessments of teachers and school leaders, faculties of education's curricula should be restructured and redesigned in a way that will increase the capacity and responsiveness of teachers and school leaders in times of crisis.

Stakeholders involved: Teachers, school leaders, faculties, and experts on education in emergencies.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

K-12 curricula should undergo a redesign to enable children to comprehend the concepts and nature of disasters and emergencies. At the same time, the revamped curriculum will prepare students for the occurrence of disasters, the immediate aftermath, and the subsequent recovery phase. Curricula should be designed in accordance with concepts that are age-appropriate and aim to prevent ecophobia.

Stakeholders involved: Students, teachers, school leaders, parents, experts on education in emergencies, and experts from MoNE.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

- **Recommendation 3:**

Solid, ready, healthy, and safe education facilities are key in the preparation process.

Education facilities, serving as havens of support and protection for children, must remain operational or adaptable during emergencies. For that reason, education facilities should be constructed to be resilient to different types of emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, pandemics, wildfires, etc.

Stakeholders involved: MoNE, teachers, school leaders, public health professionals, civil engineers, architects, city planners.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

- **Recommendation 4:**

Psychological support content, and tools for skill development should be ready before an emergency.

It is evident that the amount of content related to psychological support skyrockets after an emergency. However, it is hard to understand and evaluate which content is beneficial. In order to hinder possible delays in delivering psychological support to children and teachers requiring assistance, it is vital for the education system to proactively prepare and distribute such content in advance.

Stakeholders involved: Teachers, school counselors, faculties in psychology and psychological support and guidance, MoNE.

Level of implementation: National

School counselors need to develop their skills for meeting needs during emergencies. Increasing skill-building activities and dissemination of the outcomes of these activities is an important way to develop these skills.

Stakeholders involved: School counselors, MoNE, faculties in psychology and psychological support and guidance

Level of implementation: National, local, and regional.

Specific goal 2

Monitoring children at risk is a prerequisite for child protection and hindering dropouts.

- **Recommendation 1:**

Education may be interrupted for a period after an emergency. Throughout this period, it is essential to consistently check and monitor all children, with a particular focus on those at risk. This proactive approach aims to prevent dropouts and safeguard against potential instances of abuse.

Employing social workers to identify children with specific needs and low socioeconomic status; including those who are disabled, migrants, including refugees, Roma children, and girls; is crucial. These social workers can play a pivotal role in supporting child protection processes during times of crisis.

Stakeholders involved: Children, social workers, parents, teachers, school leaders, civil society organizations, MoNE, Ministry of Family and Social Services.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

Drop-out rates are notably high among high school-aged children. However, during times of emergencies, this particular group of children is largely overlooked, and there is a noticeable lack of activities and projects aimed at assisting them. To prevent issues such as child and domestic labor, abuse, child, early and forced marriages, and eventual dropouts, child protection is imperative for decision-makers. The tracking and monitoring of these children represent essential prerequisites to ensure comprehensive and effective child protection.

Stakeholders involved: Children, social workers, parents, teachers, school leaders, civil society organizations, MoNE, Ministry of Family and Social Services.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

Studies show that children with specific needs, including girls, disabled, migrants, including refugees, and minority children are more negatively affected by crises when it comes to learning outcomes. This widens the already existing learning gap among children at the below and top. To prevent widening the gap, the MoNE should support children in need with special programs and activities.

Stakeholders involved: Children, teachers, school leaders, civil society organizations, social workers, MoNE.

Level of implementation: Regional and local.

Learning outcomes should not be the only instrument for education systems. Curricula should be designed in a way that is rehabilitative and inclusive for all children by supporting them emotionally. This will help children lower their stress to catch up on learning loss during emergencies.

Stakeholders involved: MoNE, teachers, school leaders, students.

Level of implementation: National, regional and local.

Specific goal 3

Ensuring teachers' physical and mental health should be prioritized.

- **Recommendation 1:**

Teachers are one of the most prominent stakeholders in education policy. So, their physical, and mental health as well as their satisfaction with their lives are key determinants for a healthy and sustainable education environment.

Providing solid, healthy, and safe accommodation and basic needs for teachers must be ensured by state authorities. This is the prerequisite for opening schools.

Stakeholders involved: Teachers, MoNE, Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, civil society organizations.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

The preparedness of teachers for emergencies, especially how they will react and help themselves and their students in the post-disaster process, must be prioritized. So, courses in education faculties or on-the-job-trainings must educate and prepare teachers for the aftermath of crises, more specifically for psychological support.

Stakeholders involved: Teachers, faculties, MoNE.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

Teachers working in private schools may lose their jobs after a disaster. Public authorities must ensure that the basic needs of the teachers in private schools are met and try to find ways to employ them in the post-disaster process. This would also help public schools to fill their labor shortage after disasters.

Stakeholders involved: Teachers, MoNE.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

Specific goal 4

After emergencies, monitoring and evaluation of the needs of relocated children and the right to education should be the priority.

- **Recommendation 1:**

Disasters may displace and change the population of affected regions. The number of incoming volunteers and workers and of outgoing locals increases during this process.

Volunteers and other aid workers should be educated beforehand and follow ethical principles and established codes of conduct. This is key to ensuring child protection as well as peace and serenity among affected people and volunteers.

Stakeholders involved: State authorities, civil society organizations, volunteers, and aid workers.

Level of implementation: National, regional, and local.

The migration routes of outgoing people must be monitored by state authorities. These routes may result in the intensification of people in certain areas such as villages which cannot meet the needs of an increasing number of people. This monitoring activity will help state actors to allocate resources more effectively and efficiently and identify possible needs of people (education, health, etc.) shortly.

Stakeholders involved: State authorities, civil society organizations, affected people, and communities.

Level of implementation: National, regional and local.

Network of Education Policy Centers

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