

11 May 2010, - Children and school buildings are increasingly becoming targets in conflicts across the world, warns Save the Children as one of the key findings of a report published today.

The organisation finds that the risks of violence to schoolchildren in conflict-blighted areas are on the rise as schools are increasingly used as symbolic, easy targets by armed groups. These risks to children will continue to grow unless the international community takes urgent action to protect them from attack.

The report - The Future is Now - points out that civilians now make up more than 90% of casualties in the world's conflicts and about half of those are children.

It warns that education is under attack by armed militias, criminal groups and even governments through the bombing of schools and is threatened by military interference in humanitarian work - all of which put children's lives in danger.

The number of active conflicts in the world is on the rise, up from 32 in 2006 to 39 in 2008 and one in every three children in a conflict-affected area does not go to school, the report says.

- Among the most dangerous countries is Afghanistan where between 2006 and 2009 there were 2,450 attacks on schools - in recent weeks, 50 schoolgirls in northern Afghanistan were reportedly left unconscious and sick after poison gas attacks by the Taliban. In the war-torn Helmand and Badghis provinces 80% children are out of school.
- In Bunia, in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Lord's Resistance Army kidnapped 50 children from a primary school and 40 children from a secondary school in September 2008.
- In Liberia 73% of primary-aged children are out of school.
- In Somalia, 81% of school age children have no access to education.

Katy Webley, UK Head of Education, Save the Children said: "It's outrageous that children and teachers are becoming more vulnerable to manipulation and attack. They can and must be protected - in Nepal, where schools were being targeted by armed groups, Save the Children's introduction of schools as 'Zones of Peace' directly led to a rise in attendance.

"Children in conflict zones should not have to forgo an education. Their schooling is crucial not only for their personal health and development but for the future peace of their communities - with every additional year of formal schooling, a boy's risk of becoming involved with conflict falls by 20%.

"Save the Children's experience shows that with innovative thinking, the right resources and the political will, children in conflict areas can still get a good, quality education."

Save the Children's report says that countries affected by conflict account for 60% of funding needs for education, but only one-tenth of this has been pledged and even less actually given. The children's charity urges the international community to provide this urgently needed money

and ensure that any attack on a school should trigger an in-depth investigation by the United Nations Security Council.

Katy Webley added: "As the numbers of children caught up in conflict rises, more money is urgently needed to deliver them the safe, quality education that is their right."

Save the Children says it is possible to get all children an education even in these most dangerous areas.

Save the Children launched its Rewrite the Future Campaign in 2006 to get children in conflict-affected countries into school. Since then its work has helped 1.4 million children into school and improved education for over 10 million children in countries including Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Overall, the number of primary-age children around the world who can't go to school has fallen from 115 million to 72 million since the campaign was launched.

Source: [Save the Children](#)

See [The Future is Now report](#)