



Around the world, children are returning to school. For many, the classroom provides structure and routine. But for those whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, natural disaster or any crisis, school has also become a place to heal.

The impact of disaster affects all aspects of a child's life—their family, their sense of safety, their access to learning, and their development of life skills to cope and prosper as adults. And the ripple effects can be long-lasting.



CRS Country Representative Dina Refaat with a group of students at a refugee community school in Giza, Egypt, where CRS works to foster resilience among refugee children and young people whose education has been interrupted. Through an accelerated learning and life skills program, students receive educational, financial and psychological support. This holistic approach to well-being and learning helps boost academic success. *Photo by Rebekah Lemke/CRS*

AROUND THE WORLD

Education plays a vital role in providing a sense of normalcy. But the challenges are diverse from place to place and require assistance that is locally led and tailored for that context.

In some countries, like **Afghanistan**, government schools might not be accessible in extremely rural areas. Catholic Relief Services uses a community-based education model to provide quality education to girls and boys, especially those who have had no access to education while living in remote or conflict-affected areas or during displacement.

Elsewhere, like **Bangladesh**, children might be living in a refugee settlement, where access to formal learning in public school is limited. Over their years of stay, children need to keep up with their education or catch up on years lost.

In countries like **Poland, Lebanon and Jordan**, children who have arrived as refugees from conflicts back home might face language

“You see the telltale signs of trauma among these children: stuttering, bed-wetting, the fear of things they did not fear before. If they hear a simple thing, they panic—thinking it is an explosion or someone coming to get their dad.”

—Randa Zoumot, Caritas Jordan counselor to Syrian children

Children are gathered to learn and play at a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh. CRS is assisting Caritas Bangladesh with providing 265,636 Rohingya refugees with comprehensive support including child-friendly spaces that provide structure, normalizing activities, safety and socialization.

Photo by Ismail Ferdous for CRS



barriers, long distances from government schools, or lack the papers needed for enrollment because they fled quickly. Or students might have had their school

falling behind in their educational and social development, it is not uncommon for children in crisis situations to experience a diminished sense of well-being and belonging.

For children to learn, they must be emotionally ready and open to the learning environment. CRS creates safe spaces and opportunities that allow children to ease their fears, loneliness and insecurities, and start to heal, communicate and trust. CRS' counseling and social activities are aimed not only at children and young adults, but also parents and caregivers. CRS support is tailored to local contexts and needs among children and families, as well as to the capacity of local partners and systems.



Young girls laugh and play at a shelter site where CRS helped establish child-friendly spaces for families who fled their homes when violent conflict erupted in Marawi City in the Philippines. More than 360,000 people sought refuge from the violence. CRS provided counseling and play services for children to work through their experiences.

Photo by Tiffany Tsang for CRS

destroyed in an earthquake, like in **Turkey**, or rendered unsafe to attend, like in eastern **Ukraine**.

Across many parts of the world affected by conflict or displacement, CRS is working closely with our local partners and institutions to provide comprehensive support for communities and families, including education, counseling and care for children.

COUNSELING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Children caught up in turmoil have unique emotional and psychological vulnerabilities, with the potential to suffer lifelong damage from trauma and lost opportunities. Many children have limited access to education, few safe spaces to interact with others and heightened stress within families. After

CRS AND PARTNER SUPPORT

CRS is working with families, our local partners, communities and institutions to prioritize safe access to education according to local contexts and needs. Our education, counseling and social support is holistic, designed to address the whole needs of the person.

The range of activities can include any of the following, tailored and adapted for local context:

- Informal schools with education materials and skilled teachers.
- Training for teachers and other staff members.
- Improvements to public and private classrooms and support to local communities in need of an educational space.

Madelyn Sofia Mendez Mateo is a first grader in Planes de Rio Grande, Intibuca, Honduras. Here, she plays with her fellow classmates after eating their school meal. Sofia's family home was damaged during Hurricanes Eta and Iota and her family's food stores were lost. Even though times are tough at her house, Sofía enjoys being with her friends at the school's playground. "I like to play with my friends, to run, play around the trees and other games," says Sofia. "If a child comes happy, he will want to learn. While if he is hungry, this does not allow him to concentrate," says teacher Elda Sánchez.

Photo by Oscar Leiva/
Silverlight for CRS



- Facilitation of kindergarten classes.
- Child-friendly spaces that provide a safe place for children to play and receive support.
- Tutoring to prevent dropping out.
- Safe transportation to and from school and educational activities.
- Food and healthy snacks to help children focus in school and thrive.
- Parent-teacher meetings.
- Support—counseling, social services, instructional and other forms—for parents and caregivers.
- Recreational activities and exercise games that allow children to express themselves and have freedom of movement.
- Comprehensive counseling—including trauma counseling—and referrals for specialized care.
- Individual and group therapy sessions to help children with common issues they face, such as family relationships and feelings like fear, anger, jealousy and shyness, and how to express those feelings. Sessions also specialize in adolescence, social skills, self-confidence and self-care.
- Support and inclusive education for children with disabilities.

A range of these programs are currently taking place for children and their families around the world, including in **Ukraine, Moldova, Bangladesh, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq** and **Afghanistan**.

“Each time I walk through the camp, what strikes me is I see little children. And I see a whole generation of children that are being denied the joyful environment, or the safety that they deserve. Being a father of a 10-year-old daughter, I look at those children and think, ‘What have they done wrong? Or what have they done not to deserve a life that a child is deserving?’ That really hurts me.”

—Ferdinand Pereira, protection manager for Caritas Bangladesh



In the Central African Republic, children participate in a trauma healing workshop. Penina Ngoessate, animator of the workshop says, “These are children who have been traumatized. We undertake these trainings so that they can grow up without this trauma. There are children who have lost their parents, they are brought up by the extended family. They are often unhappy, stressed. We try to host them in a safe environment without stress.”

Photo by Sam Phelps/CRS