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# **School-in-a-Box Kit for Children in Crisis**

*A Global Giving Project for the  
Children of the Philippines  
December 2013*

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## UNICEF and Education in Emergencies

Cyclones, earthquakes, floods, conflicts and other emergencies wreak havoc on society and deeply affect children. Fulfilling the right to education is most at risk during such times and during the transition period following a crisis.

Education is not only a basic human right, but a tool for recovery. Past experiences have shown that it not only restores schooling and its related benefits to affected people, it also helps countries transform and rebuild or 'build back better' the institutions and systems destroyed during the emergency.

The benefits of education in crisis-stricken and post-crisis societies are far-reaching. During emergencies, children in school can be cared for, accounted for and protected from abduction, recruitment into militias, and sexual and economic exploitation. By reestablishing a daily routine and helping to restore a sense of normalcy, schools become therapeutic spaces in the midst of destruction. They help families get back on their feet by allowing parents breathing space to organize their lives.

If managed effectively, education can also act as a catalyst for peace, encouraging parties that once opposed each other to work together for the sake of their children. In the fragile wake of conflict, societies can create a more inclusive educational system with a curriculum that promotes peace and reconciliation. As such, UNICEF considers education an integral part of any humanitarian response to an emergency, equally important as food, shelter, water, sanitation, and healthcare.

### *Why school?*

The benefits of education in post-crisis societies are far-reaching. Emergencies are especially traumatic for children, and schools are safe places for them during and afterward. Children in school can be cared for, accounted for and protected from abduction, recruitment into militias, and sexual and economic exploitation. Schools create a safe environment for psychological and emotional healing. By reestablishing a daily routine and helping to restore a sense of normalcy, schools become therapeutic spaces in the midst of destruction. Through psychosocial programs, learning and play, schools serve an essential role in the healing process.

Child-friendly spaces also offer care and protection for children and young people, especially those who have lost or who have been separated from their families. With the help of community members who house them, these spaces provide vulnerable children with stability, routine, supportive relationships and emergency educational support, offering a protective environment until they are ready to return to the classroom.

Once education is restored, it provides the knowledge and skills necessary for surviving crises. **Education empowers children by disseminating information about landmine safety, HIV prevention, basic hygiene, health care, conflict resolution and peace-building.** By extension, education also helps their families and communities. For societies recovering from crisis, education establishes a foundation for development. By caring for children, schools help families get back on their feet and allow parents breathing space to organize their lives.

### UNICEF's School-in-a-Box: Overview

Even in the midst of disaster, the miracle of education is that with shelter, simple equipment and locally-trained educators, temporary classes can get up and running within **72 hours**, even if whole schools have been destroyed.

The School-in-a-Box was developed in the mid 1990's to supply all the equipment a temporary learning center needs to operate in an emergency period, replicating the color and stimulation of a normal classroom. Since then, School-in-a-Box has been at the heart of UNICEF's emergency response activities in the area of education. When combined with teachers who have been trained in the local curriculum, classes can be supported by for as long as it takes to get a new school rebuilt and running.



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The establishment of a safe and stimulating space for children, a small oasis focused on their learning and recreation, is also an important step in protecting children from the trauma experienced in a disaster, and providing them with the sense of achievement they need to tackle the future.

#### *What's in the box?*

One School-in-a-Box will meet the needs of one teacher and 40 students to carry on classes for approximately three months. All equipment is packed in one lockable metal box and its lid can be painted and used by the teacher as a chalkboard. The kit can be used in any context where children can go to school in safety and under shelter. It is appropriate for all children over the age of six.

Teachers receive a student register, exercise books, pens, chalk, markers, flipcharts, compasses, set squares, rulers, posters (alphabet, multiplication and number tables), a globe, a clock, colored cubes, tape, scissors, chalkboard paint, brushes, dusters and a solar wind-up radio. Students receive exercise books, pens, pencils, crayons, a plastic slate to write and draw on, erasers, rulers, pencils, sharpeners, safety scissors and a bag. Replenishment kits are also available wherever necessary to keep the supplies coming.

Wherever a School-in-a-Box is delivered it is complemented by teacher training and support workshops and a teacher's guide. UNICEF works with national and local education authorities to develop and translate the guide into the appropriate local languages. The kit is distributed to teachers at a teacher-training workshop.



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With a School-in-a-Box, a translated teaching guide and curriculum, teachers can establish makeshift classrooms almost anywhere and give children the continuity of learning they need.

The education tools inside have been sensitively selected and designed in order to be culturally neutral, so they can be used in most education settings anywhere in the world. The box is now in its second version, and it reflects the lessons learned from how the box has been used in emergency contexts in recent decades.

### **UNICEF in Action: Pakistan**

The devastating 2010 monsoon floods in Pakistan destroyed an estimated 9000 schools along with 1.8 million family homes. With the lives of so many young people completely disrupted, UNICEF described the situation in Pakistan as a true “children’s emergency”.

Within weeks UNICEF was able to establish hundreds of temporary learning and recreation centers across the flood-affected regions, in order to re-establish learning and encourage play, so critical for children after the often multiple shocks experienced during and immediately after the floods.

The delivery of School-in-a-Box in Pakistan at this critical time allowed classes recommence in tents or wherever safe spaces could be found. Working with government partners, UNICEF succeeded in having many of these temporary centers granted the status of government primary schools, so the school year was not interrupted.

#### *A window into a new world*

Restarting classes is just one aspect of this story. The floods had peeled back the layers of a sad picture of education in Pakistan. So many children, especially young girls, had actually never had the opportunity to go to school. They had never sharpened a pencil, or created pictures out of colored paper and glue. For many, their School-in-a-Box was the first window to a new world of learning that was about to unfold.

Since the disaster schools have been built back with greater capacity, especially to accommodate Pakistan’s young girls. UNICEF is training thousands of teachers on the methodology of child-friendly schools, so that teachers can ensure the schools they work in meet the sanitation, safety, security and learning needs of children. UNICEF is also working with mothers and church groups at the community level to help to change attitudes on the benefits of educating young girls.

## Impact of Your Investment

Education is the primary means for children and adolescents to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. Not only does a quality education provide children with the means through which to positively effect social and economic progress, but it is a fundamental right of every child. An investment in UNICEF's School-in-a-Box program would ensure that quality education is provided to some of the world's most disadvantaged children in their most vulnerable time of need, which is vital to their personal and social development as well as the well-being of their communities and future families. **Your gift of \$10,000 can provide 47 School-In-A-Box kits for 1,875 children in the aftermath of traumatic and emergency situations across the globe.**

UNICEF has proven that with strong partners and a steadfast focus, we will reach a day when all children – no matter their birthplace, no matter their circumstances – can grow up to lead healthy, happy and productive lives. Our investment in children today will produce the leaders of tomorrow.



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