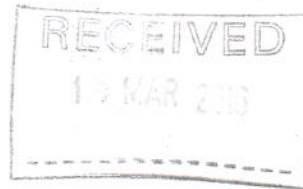




Department
for International
Development



Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
Secretary of State

The Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

8 March 2016

Dear Fiona

Thank you for your email of 2 March to the Prime Minister on behalf of your constituents, inquiring into the Government's position on the protection and education of children living in conflict zones. I am replying as the Minister whose Department leads on this issue. These are particularly important issues as we head towards the World Humanitarian Summit in May.

For the Department for International Development (DFID), the protection and education of children is a key concern in crises and evidence shows that timely and appropriate responses save children's lives, especially as we know that 59 million children are growing up in the midst of humanitarian crises and over half of registered Syrian refugees are under the age of 18.

We support international efforts in conflict-affected and fragile countries to assist children and reduce their risks of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

The Government remains committed to the protection of civilians in conflict and safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable, including children. Maintaining education is important in all crises and is essential during conflicts.

Attacks on educational facilities, students, and teaching personnel can derail education for extended periods, leaving children without a safe, stable structure to their lives. In 2015-2016, we provided £8 million of support for UNICEF, the lead UN agency on child protection and education, to be used specifically in emergency situations like wars and natural disasters this is in addition to funding given for specific crises.

With regards to education, we aim to reach all children in fragile states, to keep girls in school, and to improve learning outcomes. DFID supports children overseas to go school and continue learning even when they are forced from their homes and this includes our flagship £355 million Girls' Education Challenge that will enable up to 1 million more of the world's most marginalised girls to benefit from an education of sufficient quality and

transform their lives.

In addition, DFID is supporting improvements to how the international community provides education in emergencies, including support towards the 'No Lost Generation' Initiative (NLGI). To date, the UK's allocation of funding for the NLGI is £115 million has provided: 673,000 children with psychosocial support, such as mental health care or trauma counselling, 250,000 children with informal and formal education, and 350,000 children in Lebanon with textbooks, including 100,000 Syrian refugee children who are attending Lebanese public schools. The NLGI has allowed Syrian children to catch up on lost learning time and sit their public school examinations.

We know that conflicts result in forced and unsafe migration, putting children at risk of being separated from their families, unable to access learning opportunities, and vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. In response to the crisis in Europe, we have committed £46 million to help the most vulnerable people, including children and infants. This includes a £2.75 million contribution to UNICEF to assist 27,000 vulnerable children, including setting up child-friendly spaces at reception centres, support to education and learning programmes, and protection of unaccompanied and separated children.

The upcoming World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey provides a major opportunity to improve the lives and dignity of people affected by man-made and natural disasters and to reflect on the international humanitarian system, including how it delivers for the most vulnerable. It comes at a time of unprecedented humanitarian suffering and in the context of global trends that are expected to increase demand on humanitarian action. As the Summit presents an exercise to examine the international humanitarian system, we expect the protection and education of children are essential parts of this examination. Specifically, we consider the protection of children as an important element of our efforts to ensure strong outcomes to reinforce the importance of the protection of civilians affected by conflict and compliance with international humanitarian law.

Thank you for raising this important issue, I hope this information will be useful in response to your constituents' concerns for children affected by conflicts.

Best wishes,

Justine

JUSTINE GREENING