

Educaid – Conférence internationale Education dans les conflits

rapporteur – closing session Learning Lab D

Ladies and gentlemen,

I had the privilege of serving as rapporteur for Learning Lab D, which focused on classrooms as safe spaces and the critical link between education and mental health and psychosocial support in crisis settings. We had the opportunity to discover how Unicef is addressing the Gaza's Education emergency.

Five key messages emerged from the discussion.

First, protracted crises fundamentally reshape the challenge we face.

We are no longer dealing with short-term emergencies, but with crises that last for years. In these contexts, children are not only missing out on education, but they are also facing continuous stress, displacement, and disruption of routines and relationships. This means that what we are facing is not only an education crisis, but a mental health and psychological crisis at scale. Therefore, MHPSS cannot be treated as a temporary response—it must be embedded as a long-term, structural system-level function.

Second, MHPSS is crucial for education itself. It's about brain development, emotions, cognition and social skills... and it can be critical for education if we don't care of MHPSS.

Third, education systems are uniquely positioned to deliver MHPSS at scale.

In many crisis contexts, schools are one of the few remaining structures that provide continuity, stability and social connection for children.

They are not only places of learning, but protective environments where routines, relationships and a sense of belonging can be rebuilt.

We mentioned the importance of teacher's and caregiver's mental health and how it is important to embed MHPSS across education system components. We also discovered that there are a lot of resources and inspiring examples.

Fourth, impact depends on a truly multi-sectoral, nexus-based approach.

Education alone cannot address children's mental health needs.

Effective responses require strong connections between education, child protection and health systems, working together towards shared outcomes.

Finally (5th), a cross-cutting message:

scaling up requires deliberate system choices. This includes policy alignment, sustainable financing, and investment in the education workforce and support services.

In conclusion, this Learning Lab calls for a shift in mindset: MHPSS should not be seen as an add-on to education, but as an essential condition for ensuring meaningful, safe and continuous learning in times of crisis.

Thank you.