

EDUCATION IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS IN 2035

Twelve trends and five
scenarios for how the
future might unfold



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IDRC is part of Canada's foreign affairs and development efforts. It champions and funds research and innovation within and alongside developing regions to drive global change. We invest in high-quality research in developing countries, share knowledge with researchers and policymakers for greater uptake and use, and mobilise our global alliances to build a more sustainable and inclusive world.

About EdTech Hub

EdTech Hub is a global research partnership. Our goal is to empower people by giving them the evidence they need to make decisions about technology in education. Our **evidence library** is a repository of our latest research, findings, and wider literature on EdTech. As a global partnership, we seek to make our evidence available and accessible to those who are looking for EdTech solutions worldwide.

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If you have any questions, please contact hello@edtechhub.org.

What's in this deck

An introduction to this strategic foresight study

Approach & thinking behind the work

What we're seeing: from clear signals to early signs:

- Nine more certain trends
- Three less certain trends

Five scenarios for education systems in 2035

AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS STRATEGIC FORESIGHT STUDY

Join us in imagining education
10 years from now

An introduction to this strategic foresight study

The next ten years will see big challenges for education systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

IDRC and EdTech Hub believe that two drivers of change will fundamentally shift national education systems: developments in artificial intelligence (AI), and the increase in conflict and crisis around the world.

To support governments and education stakeholders, we have embarked on a multi-year programme of work, aimed at answering the following research question:

*What will be the key challenges facing national education systems over the next ten years, with a specific focus on **artificial intelligence** and **education in conflict and crisis** settings...*

*... and how can governments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) **build capacity** to successfully overcome those challenges?*

To understand how governments in LMICs and education stakeholders can build capacity, we need to better understand the shifts that might take place in education systems.

This is what this strategic foresight study aims to do. Our goal is to explore possible futures for education systems in LMICs. This exploration will go on to conduct research on how governments in LMIC contexts might adapt and build capacity, in light of such futures.

This document shares Part 2 of our strategic foresight study: 12 trends and 5 scenarios for the impact of conflict and crisis on LMIC education systems.

Part 1 of our study, which includes 12 trends and 5 scenarios for the impact of developments in AI on education systems, [is available here](#).

An introduction to trends

The first step in the strategic foresight study was to identify trends. A trend is a general tendency or direction of development or change over time ([Save the Children UK & School of International Futures, 2019](#)).

This document begins by capturing 12 trends in education, conflict, and crisis that might affect the development of education systems over time. Each trend is illustrated by insights from expert interviews.

After identifying trends, we combined them to sketch concrete, tangible scenarios for education systems in 2035, given the increase in conflict and crisis.

Our methodology for identifying trends

EdTech Hub identified trends through two key methods:

1. Rapid literature review: To establish an initial set of trends, EdTech Hub reviewed the extensive existing literature on education in conflict and crisis (EiCC) / education in emergencies (EiE). Particular emphasis was placed on more recent literature, while also reviewing existing literature reviews.

2. One-to-one expert interviews: To build on the trends identified in the rapid literature review, EdTech Hub undertook semi-structured interviews with 11 key stakeholders, including funders, government officials, and EdTech startups. Five of those stakeholders were based in LMICs. These interviews were 60 minutes long, and gave participants the opportunity to articulate trends regarding AI and education systems from their vantage point. Quotes from these interviews are shared in blue call-out boxes throughout.

APPROACH & THINKING BEHIND THE WORK

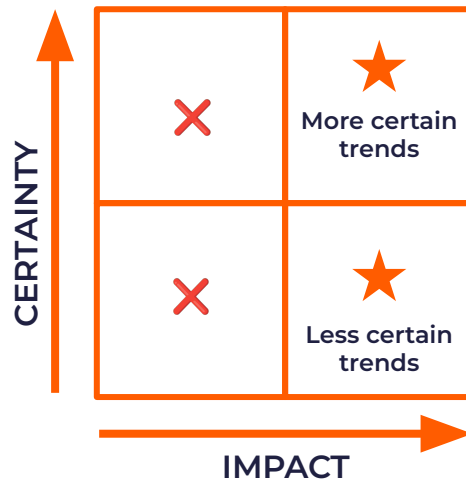
How we explored possibilities to
imagine the future of education

High-impact trends

This document focuses on high-impact trends, which, we believe, have the potential to significantly change education systems. We cluster high-impact trends into two categories:

More certain trends: Trends that are high impact and have higher certainty. These trends, reinforced by a relatively large number of signals and emphasised frequently in interviews, have a higher likelihood of changing education systems.

Less certain trends: Trends that are high impact and have lower certainty. These trends were emphasised less frequently in interviews and/or reinforced by fewer, weaker signals. Additionally, the trends in this section often had opposing or contradictory counter-trends.



There is increasing use *and* scepticism of EdTech in conflict and crisis settings

Our work found two contradictory patterns relating to the role of EdTech in conflict and crisis. The extent to which these trends accelerate/decelerate will define possible futures at the intersection of tech, education, and conflict/crisis in 2035.

Increasing use of EdTech in conflict and crisis contexts

Several reviews highlight the role EdTech can play in providing access to education resources when physical schools are inaccessible or unsafe (↑Hallgarten et al., 2020; ↑Barnes et al., 2025). According to a systematic review by ↑Crompton et al. (2021), mobile SMS study tools, video-based lessons, preloaded tablets with educational resources in both offline and online formats, and interactive voice response systems for basic mobile phones have all shown potential in various crisis contexts.

Six interview participants highlighted the increased role of EdTech in EiCC. Increased infrastructure, the potential of adaptive learning (discussed later), cost-effectiveness and development of offline tech with low device requirements were cited as reasons for growing adoption.

Resistance to use of EdTech in conflict and crisis contexts

Reviews also highlighted several challenges, including lack of necessary infrastructure, need for contextualised content, security concerns, barriers to sustainability particularly where cost-effectiveness and future financing has not been taken into account in design, and the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities if not carefully managed (↑Crompton et al., 2021; ↑Dahya, 2016; ↑Barnes et al., 2025; ↑Proctor, 2019)

Three interview participants expressed scepticism about the role of tech in EiCC, and two participants separately expressed that there is considerable scepticism from teachers and donors on the impact EdTech can have in such contexts.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING: FROM CLEAR SIGNALS TO EARLY SIGNS

A look at the trends we're more certain about and those that are still emerging

The twelve trends

More certain trends

1. Funding for education in conflict and crisis is insufficient and inequitably distributed
2. More displaced learners are being transitioned into government / formal education systems (rather than kept in separate education systems).
3. Targeted programming (especially accelerated education programming) is becoming increasingly prominent in EiCC contexts.
4. Foundational literacy and numeracy are becoming increasingly prominent in conflict and crisis contexts
5. Tech enabled adaptive learning is supporting children to continue and accelerate learning in crisis and conflict contexts.
6. Hybrid learning is increasing, as children have more 'transitions' in and out of school
7. There are a growing number of initiatives to improve data collection and analysis to inform programming and decision-making
8. Parents and community members are increasingly enrolled into supporting education in conflict and crisis
9. There is increasing emphasis on anticipatory action to promote resilience in education systems during conflict and crisis.

Less certain trends

10. Conflict and crisis responses are continuing to focus on mental health and psychosocial support
11. There are greater efforts to reach marginalised groups, especially girls and children with disabilities
12. Underfunding for education in conflict and crisis is being addressed through new funding mechanisms

NINE MORE CERTAIN TRENDS

Trends emerging with clarity
across contexts

1. Funding for education in conflict and crisis is insufficient and inequitably distributed

A foundational trend, highlighted by almost all interview participants, is that the **growth in conflict and crisis** around the world is outpacing funding availability. Global conflicts doubled between 2019 and 2024 (↑[Armed Conflict Location & Event Data](#), no date). The number of people facing food insecurity and malnutrition has risen by 152m since 2019, to between 713m and 757m (↑[World Health Organization](#), 2024). These trends lead to longer, more frequent school closures and disruption to education systems.

Humanitarian education **funding is not keeping pace** with the scale of conflict and crisis. Between 2014 and 2023, demand for humanitarian education funding has increased sevenfold, but expenditure has only increased fourfold (↑[Educo](#), 2024). In 2023, humanitarian education aid funding decreased by 4%, the first annual decrease since 2012 (↑[GGHEE](#), 2024).

In particular, interview participants highlighted **inequality** in the distribution of resources for EiCC. Certain countries have been favoured for geopolitical reasons, or because they are able to more effectively lobby for funding (e.g. Ukraine). Additionally, short-termism among donors leads to grant funding reducing drastically after the first 1 to 2 years. In the words of the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, “many neglected crises occur beyond the global media headlines and are in contexts of little strategic interest to donor governments. As a result, they are more underfunded than high-profile crises” (↑[GGHEE](#), 2024, p. 4).

“I can confidently predict that crises will grow that displacements will grow, and can't see an uptick in the funding landscape to match this.”

— Quote 1



“We either need to find more resources through funding and lobbying. Or become more effective and efficient.”

— Quote 2



2. More displaced learners are being transitioned into government / formal education systems (rather than kept in separate EiCC programmes)

Interview participants highlighted a trend of **increasing collaboration with governments**. For example, in responses relating to Syrian refugees and the war in Ukraine. Examples of alignment into government systems include:

- Developing education responses that can be rolled out together with governments.
- Curriculum alignment (of learning content provided to displaced children and content in host countries).
- Humanitarian education funding provided to governments to provide education services.
- Integrating displaced learners into government education management information systems (Uganda's integration of refugee learners was highlighted as emblematic of this trend).

"We must not divide education in emergencies from education systems. Emergencies should be a part of the national education system; not a separate system."
— Quote 3



The central role of **education qualifications** in this trend was emphasised by participants, as well as the literature (↑Brugha et al., 2021; ↑UNHCR, 2019). Ideally, credentials should be applicable in the host country, although participants emphasised the value of credentials that could be used in children's country of origin as well as 'third countries'.

Participants highlighted a growing recognition of the need for displaced children to have **pathways to formal education** and certification, which may include certifications relevant beyond the host country (↑Brugha et al., 2021; ↑Shah & Choo, 2020; ↑UNHCR, 2019).

3. Targeted programming (especially accelerated education programming) is becoming increasingly prominent in EiCC contexts

Accelerated education and catch-up education programmes are becoming increasingly prominent (†[Shah & Choo, 2020](#); †[UNHCR, 2019](#)), including as mechanisms to transition displaced children into formal education ([see Trend 2](#)).

Catch-up programmes are designed to help students who have missed significant amounts of schooling due to displacement, natural disasters or conflict. They provide tailored support to bring learners up to speed with their peers in formal education settings (†[AEWG, 2021](#)).

Accelerated education programmes (AEPs) were highlighted by interview participants as a key strategy for EiCC. AEPs are structured to deliver equivalent, certified competencies in a shorter time frame. They are designed to be flexible and age-appropriate, accommodating diverse learning needs and backgrounds. EiCC contexts where AEPs are integrated in national systems include Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (†[AEWG & INEE, 2022](#)).

Participants highlighted several trends driving an increase in AEPs. The increasing prominence of ‘teaching at the right level’ (TARL) as an evidence-based approach is driving AEPs to support children based on their individual learning levels. [Increasing use of EdTech](#) in conflict and crisis contexts also enables AEPs that harness EdTech or hybrid models.

“I have seen a growth in alternative pathways for people. We can focus on the modalities that work for young people. Stronger interest and better research into these models, and much more interest from selected stakeholders.”
— Quote 4



“Accelerated education has taken off in the last 4 years. AEPs are now on the agenda in every country I go to.”
— Quote 5



4. Donors are connecting funding to foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes in conflict and crisis contexts

Interview participants emphasised the increasing prominence of foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) outcomes in conflict and crisis contexts, by donors.

Reasons for this trend included:

- Realisation that simply placing children in conflict and crisis contexts into national education systems isn't enough, as often that education is ineffective.
- Insufficient funding (see Slide 9), resulting in a greater need to provide evidence of learning gains. This pressure comes from donors, who wish to see more improvements in learning for every dollar spent, and from implementers, who need to prove value to attract grant capital from a shrinking base of funding.
- The trend towards affected people spending more and more time in conflict and crisis contexts, or displaced from their country of origin. Keeping children in a 'holding pattern' for extended periods of time is no longer tenable.
- The growing demands for high-quality education for children and households in crisis and conflict contexts. Participants emphasised this often went beyond FLN, towards foundational skills.

"The emphasis on foundational learning is a huge shift in the sector."

— Quote 6



5. There are a growing number of initiatives to improve data collection and analysis to inform programming and decision-making

Interview participants acknowledged that EiCC organisations are focusing on data collection and analysis. Primarily, this data is targeted to support donors, NGOs, and implementers in understanding what works at scale, and make better programmatic decisions.

One example of this is UNESCO and the International Institute for Educational Planning's 'Conceptual Framework for Education in Emergencies Data', which seeks to build the EiCC sector's shared understanding of EiCC data and align existing data management and collection efforts ([↑UNESCO-IIEP, 2023](#)).

Participants emphasised the growing importance of data on learning outcomes for EiCC interventions (see quote), connecting this to the trend of increasing focus on FLN ([see Trend 4](#)).

The role of tech in supporting data collection and analysis was also highlighted by several participants, including mobile phones and tablets. To give one example: the World Bank has supported the introduction of data collection via tablets in Chad. This has led to more accurate and timely data collection and contributed to school census quality improvements ([↑World Bank, 2024](#)).

“There was a time when we would focus on access to education in emergencies. Now, we’ve come to the conclusion that access doesn’t mean learning. Quality matters too. Access isn’t enough.”
— Quote 7



“The sector has become more mature around measurement, which has really helped.”
— Quote 8



6. Tech-enabled adaptive learning is supporting children to continue and accelerate learning in crisis and conflict contexts

Adaptive learning (tailoring a learning experience to individual students' needs) is increasingly emphasised as delivering strong learning outcomes in LMIC contexts (†Major & Francis, 2020).

In conflict and crisis contexts, **Can't Wait to Learn*** is an example of a platform, co-created with communities and national education stakeholders, that offers placement tests and digital (online and offline) content to enable children to progress at their own pace. It has been implemented in Sudan, Chad, Ukraine, Jordan, and other crisis contexts.

Interview participants emphasised that adaptive learning can play a key role in accelerated education programming (see Trend 3) and rapidly transitioning children into formal education systems (see Trend 2) by helping develop foundational skills.

*See <https://www.warchild.net/intervention-cwtl/>. Retrieved 3 July 2025

7. Hybrid learning is increasing, as children have more ‘transitions’ in and out of school

Hybrid learning is the integration of face-to-face and digital learning strategies. Interview participants emphasised its increasing use as learners faced prolonged conflict and crisis contexts, where face-to-face learning was disrupted frequently over a longer period of time.

For example, in Ukraine, hybrid learning is a response to the complexity of providing access to education to Ukrainian students in different regions, as a result of the war.

8. Parents and community members are increasingly enrolled into supporting education in conflict and crisis

Interview participants highlighted that including parents and community members is increasingly seen as central to ensuring continuity of education in crisis and conflict contexts. Covid-19-related school closures were highlighted as a catalyst, strengthening the trend of involving parents in children's learning during a crisis.

To give two examples, EdTech Hub [supported the #KeepKenyaLearning campaign](#),* provided caregivers in Kenya with the confidence and resources to become teachers at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. EdTech Hub also [supported Mango Tree Literacy Lab to implement community-based listening centres](#),** where community members use radio to facilitate local language literacy lessons for primary-age learners out of school. Participants highlighted an increase in working with community members as teachers, including in temporary environments (such as [‘pop up schools’ in Gaza](#)).***

Participants highlighted that working closely with community members, including co-design where possible, is a key enabler of any education intervention in EiCC contexts.

*See <https://edtechhub.org/sandboxes/helping-caregivers-foster-learning-at-home-in-kenya/>. Retrieved 3 July 2025.

**See <https://edtechhub.org/sandboxes/making-radio-work-better-for-children-in-uganda/>. Retrieved 3 July 2025.

***See <https://theirworld.org/news/conflicts-climate-crises-and-discrimination-have-battered-education/>. Retrieved 3 July 2025.

9. There is increasing emphasis on anticipatory action to promote resilience in education systems during conflict and crisis

Interview participants emphasised the increasing importance of anticipatory action as a component of building resilient education systems.

Anticipatory action can be both specific to the education sector, through actions like pre-positioning learning materials, establishing mobile classrooms, and developing remote learning options (↑[Monserez & Hodgkin, 2024](#)). More broadly, it can include pre-positioning funds and resources. Examples include:

- Education Cannot Wait (ECW) has committed USD 5m to two anticipatory action pilots, in Somalia and Pakistan. These grants will support communities to proactively reduce the devastating impact of future climate hazards on children's education by putting in place anticipatory measures that will keep children learning (↑[ECW, 2024](#)).
- In Madagascar, various donors have embedded emergency preparedness policies and procedures in national systems. The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (↑[DG ECHO, no date](#) b) funded the strengthening of early warning systems, community and school preparedness activities, and early activation activities. UNICEF Madagascar has implemented a parametric insurance initiative which supported children's faster return to school after cyclones and storms (↑[UNICEF, 2024](#)).

"I've definitely seen an uptick in early warning system programmes."

— Quote 9



THREE LESS CERTAIN TRENDS

Ideas gaining traction, but still evolving

10. Conflict and crisis responses are continuing to focus on mental health and psychosocial support

Children in conflict and crisis contexts face multiple adversities and stressors, putting children at higher risk of mental health problems, emotional difficulties, and developmental disruptions ([†]Brown et al., 2024). As conflict and crises increase (see Trend 1), interview participants highlighted a growing emphasis on looking at the 'whole child' and ensuring psychosocial support.

Participants emphasised the role technology could play in providing psychosocial support. For example, the Children and War Foundation has developed a remote phone-based cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approach, which aims to improve caregiver mental health and is delivered by teachers ([†]El-Khani et al., 2021).

At the same time, participants expressed some degree of scepticism as to whether the focus on psychosocial support would continue. Particularly, they felt that an increasing emphasis on evidence of learning outcomes meant there was less focus on mental health interventions.

The International Rescue Committee's (IRC) **Healing Classrooms Intervention** integrates classroom practices that support socio-emotional learning with reading and mathematics focused training for children ([†]Aber et al., 2021).

“There is a very strong interest in psychosocial support, and lots of interest in the school or learning centre as a site for psychosocial support.”

— Quote 10



“When it comes to that aspect: integrating mental health, is it taking away from learning, or enhancing learning?”

— Quote 11



11. There are greater efforts to reach marginalised groups, especially girls and children with disabilities

There is some recognition that inclusion considerations, such as gender and disability, are affecting programming and funding decisions (↑INEE, 2023a; ↑INEE, 2023b). For example, donors such as the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the (FCDO) is placing greater priority on disability inclusive education programming, and commitment to girls' education (FCDO 2023).

Part of this effort relates to efforts to improve data collection and analysis (see Trend 6), including data on marginalised groups. For example, EiCC experts have called for further rollout of the Washington Group Questions developed to identify disability status (↑DG ECHO, no date a; ↑INEE, 2023a).

This trend was highlighted by a minority of interview participants. At the same time, there is acknowledgement that the EiCC sector struggles to consider inclusion in its intervention design (↑INEE, 2023b).

“We’re really paying a lot more attention to kids with disabilities — this has definitely increased.”
— Quote 12



12. Underfunding for education in conflict and crisis is being addressed through new funding mechanisms

Given the context of insufficient resources to match the educational needs in conflict and crisis contexts, there are some trends for new mechanisms to mobilise resources:

- Interview participants emphasised **private sector partnerships**, leveraging companies' interest in supporting crisis response. For example, Google and Microsoft are providing funding and in-kind support for distance learning in Ukraine (†Salzano & Perrier, 2024).
- The use of **cash transfers** is growing in humanitarian contexts, following increasing evidence that they keep children in school, supporting inclusion of vulnerable groups and reducing harmful coping mechanisms, like child labour.
- Pooled funds, such as Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) are increasingly prominent as catalysts for mobilising additional funding for EiCC. Since its establishment in 2016, ECW has raised over USD 1bn to support educational initiatives (†ECW, 2022).

Some participants spoke about the minimal impact of these trends, in light of diminishing resources from governments.

"I don't believe cash transfers and financial mechanisms are that important — it is more important to focus on the resources that governments have."

— Quote 13



"Public-private partnerships might be a key driver of progress."

— Quote 14



FIVE SCENARIOS FOR EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN 2035

Scenarios provide a **consistent and coherent description** of a hypothetical future, that reflect different perspectives on past, present and future developments, which can **serve as the basis for action**

↑Think Scenarios, Rethink Education OECD, (2006)

"Scenarios are not forecasts because they are **not aiming to be accurate, but to be useful**"

↑Tim Harford, *Financial Times* (2025)

An introduction to scenarios

Imagine it's 2035...

A combination of key trends identified so far has developed over the last 10 years.

We have sketched five scenarios, indicating how these different combinations might lead to different versions of the future. Think of the trends as ingredients, like flour, sugar, and butter. The scenario is the cake, once you put those ingredients together.

These scenarios provide an overview of an LMIC education system, focusing specifically on the impact of increasing conflict and crisis.

They are designed to be distinct and provocative, to stimulate reflection by LMIC governments and education stakeholders.

Our methodology for sketching scenarios:

Once the trends had been identified, EdTech Hub led the creation of scenarios through a series of workshops.

The first workshop included 5–6 participants from EdTech Hub and IDRC. Through prompting questions, it encouraged participants to take a cluster of trends, and imagine a 'headline from 2035' based on those trends.

The second workshop included 15–20 participants, with the invite extended to those who took part in expert interviews. In this workshop, participants reflected on and iterated the scenarios.

In the third workshop, the same participants ranked the scenarios based on:

- Which scenarios were most likely to occur (**likelihood**).
- Which scenarios LMIC governments and education stakeholders most need to strengthen capacity for (**urgency**).

List of scenarios (ranked based on likelihood)

#	Scenarios for 2035	Trends that lead to this scenario			
1	Systemic funding drops, so crisis-affected countries turn to public relations / bilateral alliances	Funding for education in conflict and crisis is unequally distributed and insufficient to match the growing scale of the problem.	Underfunding for education in conflict and crisis is being addressed through new funding mechanisms.		
2	Hybrid learning becomes increasingly normalised	Tech-enabled adaptive learning is supporting children to continue and accelerate learning in crisis and conflict contexts.	Hybrid learning is increasing, as children have more 'transitions' in and out of school.	Parents and community members are increasingly enrolled into supporting education in conflict and crisis.	There is increasing emphasis on anticipatory action to promote resilience in education systems during conflict and crisis.
3	Crises pivot and blur the role of a teacher	Conflict and crisis responses are continuing to focus on mental health and psychosocial support.	Tech-enabled adaptive learning is supporting children to continue and accelerate learning in crisis and conflict contexts.	Parents and community members are increasingly enrolled into supporting education in conflict and crisis.	
4	The holistic crisis response framework — we know what works, but it's available unequally.	More displaced learners are being transitioned into government / formal education systems (rather than kept in separate EiCC programmes).	There are a growing number of initiatives to improve data collection and analysis to inform programmes and decision-making.	There are greater efforts to reach marginalised groups, especially girls and children with disabilities.	Foundational literacy and numeracy are becoming increasingly prominent in conflict and crisis contexts.
5	Borderless accreditation: systematic learning for children on the move	Targeted programmes (especially accelerated education programmes) are becoming increasingly prominent in EiCC contexts.	More displaced learners are being transitioned into government / formal education systems (rather than kept in separate education systems).		

Systemic funding drops, so crisis-affected countries turn to public relations and bilateral alliances

Likelihood (rank)	1st (out of 5)
Urgency (rank)	3rd — joint (out of 5)
Scenario	It's 2035. Global mechanisms and systems for funding education in conflict and crisis (EiCC) have collapsed, with individual countries making decisions about where to allocate aid. These decisions are based less on data or supporting the most marginalised learners, and more on the international/domestic politics of donor countries. Crisis-affected countries invest increasing amounts in lobbying and PR to key decision-makers. In this future: ■ Regional coalitions replace global coordination, based on spheres of influence. This gives new, regional players the chance to exert influence in their region (as demonstrated by Turkey / UAE in the Middle East), and a greater emphasis on regional cooperation (as demonstrated in the Sahel region and East Africa). ■ Local actors (e.g. civil society organisations, grassroots organisations), emerge as resilient, durable providers of education in crisis contexts. However, a fragmented funding landscape caps their ability to scale solutions. ■ Increasing numbers of EdTech products market themselves directly to consumers in crisis contexts (bypassing traditional aid models), facilitated by tech-enabled B2C payment models. ■ Crisis-affected countries try to attract private sector EdTech corporations into delivering services, offering a PR opportunity and potential future market for government contracts. Additionally, gaining access to user data, including children's data, is the 'payment model' used by these private sector providers. ■ Equity and debt funding models have gained significant traction, as grant-based aid funding has diminished. Commercial investors, including 'impact investors', try to marry social and financial return.
Where is it most likely?	Middle-income countries of strategic interest and/or resources of interest to high-income countries will be better able to attract support. Countries suffering protracted crises, or in less strategic parts of the world (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa) will not.

Hybrid learning becomes increasingly normalised due to conflict and crisis

Likelihood (rank)	2nd
Urgency (rank)	1st
Scenario	It's 2035. Conflict and crisis have become regular, predictable disruptors of education. Since Covid-19 related school closures, further pandemics, climate-related crises and protracted conflicts mean that children are increasingly in and out of school, for longer periods. In response, national education systems are integrating hybrid learning models. This includes providing increased training and support to parents and community members to become educators at home. At home, governments are providing tools, including EdTech platforms, to enable adaptive learning. Every learner at home has a structured pathway to continue learning at home, centred on government curriculums, and through a mix of digital and physical content. Teachers have the tools and autonomy to support hybrid learning approaches, best suited to their context. In this scenario, effective hybrid learning models remain limited to certain contexts, where learners have a safe, effective environment for learning at home, and the infrastructure to harness EdTech platforms (connectivity, devices, digital literacy, reliable energy, etc). Even where hybrid learning is effective, it misses components of school that can't be replicated at home, such as peer learning and socialisation with other learners. Governments and donors are better able to forecast crises, including natural disasters, extreme weather, and conflict. Adapting school timetables and opening hours in advance has now become widespread practice around the world, having proven effective in regions such as the Pacific. These approaches combine to minimise learning loss, preserving foundational learning outcomes in particular.
Where is it most likely?	This scenario is likely to take place in countries with a history of educational disruption, high government capability for adapting their education, and digital infrastructure to ensure hybrid learning (e.g. Vietnam, Philippines).

Crises pivot and blur the role of teachers

Likelihood (rank)	3rd
Urgency (rank)	5th
Scenario	It's 2035. Prolonged crises have made it increasingly difficult to sustain traditional models of teaching. In this scenario, the definition of 'teacher' has expanded to include caregivers, community educators, and EdTech interventions. In some countries, governments have formalised 'reserve teacher' programmes, creating networks of educators to step in when schools shut down, or learners/teachers are displaced. In other countries, education systems have doubled down on using bots, which deliver content directly to learners. Given a drop in systemic funding, many governments maintain bots or community members throughout or even after long-term crises, as it is cheaper to do this than training and paying teachers. The impact of these new 'teachers' on learning outcomes is mixed. In countries with strong support programmes for educators at home and high-quality EdTech products, they ensure learning outcomes hold strong in the short term. Even in these instances, evidence shows this approach gets much less effective over time. The 'de-professionalisation' of the teaching profession has other negative consequences, including greater influence for EdTech companies. This scenario might improve teacher and learner mental health and wellbeing. If caregivers, peers and EdTech/AI interventions deliver routine instruction, teachers in crisis contexts can support learners' psychosocial wellbeing. Teachers' own wellbeing has improved, with less burden than was placed on them during previous crises. Alternatively, this scenario might reduce the mental health and wellbeing of community members and caregivers. Asked to become educators, they suddenly had to master a complex range of skills, without adequate support and as an additional burden in a crisis context.
Where is it most likely?	This scenario is likely to take place in a country affected by prolonged crises, with large numbers of displaced learners and/or teacher shortages (e.g. Yemen, South Sudan, Syria).

The holistic crisis response framework — we know what works, but it's available unequally

Likelihood (rank)	4th
Urgency (rank)	3rd — joint
Scenario	It's 2035. Following repeated, protracted crises, governments and institutional actors have designed and iterated a holistic response framework for education in emergencies. Developed to counter short-term, reactive EiCC responses, it has now become part of the operating manual and budgets of several ministries of education in LMICs, who adapt it to ensure alignment with their national education systems. For displaced learners, policymakers hope this framework serves as a stepping stone to integration into the host country's mainstream education systems. The framework, based on data collected across various crises, includes: ■ Adaptable 'crisis curriculums' with a focus on foundational learning, that anticipates where learning loss is most likely to occur, based on learning outcome data from previous crises. These curriculums are most well received where they take crisis-affected communities' perspectives into account. ■ Support and training to deliver trauma-informed teaching, actively helping children recover. ■ Full inclusion for children with disabilities, including through assistive technologies. Unfortunately, the framework has also cemented a 'two-tier' system. Governments with the will and funding (from their own revenue / the humanitarian system) to provide education during crises, including to displaced learners, harness this framework. Whether learners can benefit from this framework is a lottery, dependent on the incentives, interest, and resources of the country they are in. Where the framework seeks to make use of adaptive and personalised learning, outcomes are mixed and unequal. Access to devices, connectivity, and energy remains a barrier, and effectiveness remains mixed even where usage is high.
Where is it most likely?	Some countries that have the will and resources to implement the framework may include Ukraine. Other countries (e.g. Sudan) can access the framework, but lack the ability to implement it holistically.

Borderless accreditation: More systematic learning for children on the move

Likelihood (rank)	5th
Urgency (rank)	2nd
Scenario	It's 2035. More children are displaced, either in their own or another country, for longer periods. In response, after many years of trying, progressive governments, private sector partners and international NGOs have come together to create the world's first, global accreditation system for displaced learners. This digital set of certifications, covering pre-primary through to tertiary education, allows holders to enter the education system or the workforce across countries. In particular, global, web-based organisations increasingly employ workers based on these certifications, across borders. The system remains highly imperfect and fragile. In an increasingly isolationist world, many countries reject the certifications in their job markets. The potential of skilled workers in ageing societies in Europe and East Asia holds the system together — but only just. Countries remain fundamentally committed to national curriculums, national language instructional content, and national competencies, and often feel that those are not adequately reflected in global certifications. Regional certifications are strongest, where variation in educational systems (language, curriculums, competencies) is least significant. Alongside this, large EdTech players (including Google and Microsoft) have come together with institutional actors to create digital accelerated and catch-up programmes that guide learners towards these qualifications. These programmes are available even while children move between several locations. However, they remain unregulated, with 'Big Tech' players using them as a way to extract data from desperate populations. They also remain inaccessible and costly for displaced learners in lower-income countries/groups.
Where is it most likely?	Countries which have hosted large numbers of refugee or displaced learners, and have the political will and resources to seek to integrate them into national education systems (e.g. Colombia, Uganda, Jordan)

Where do we go from here?

We have shared twelve trends and five scenarios, based on expert insight and real-world signals of change.

We're using this window into the future to design a programme of research on capacity-strengthening for governments in LMICs and education stakeholders. We hope this work also support you, to design and stress-test strategies for education given the increase in conflict and crisis around the world.

Our accompanying foresight study explores trends and scenarios for education, given developments in artificial intelligence. You can read that [here](#).

This foresight study was part of the IDRC and EdTech Hub's partnership, under IDRC's EmpowerED programme. For more information or to get in touch about our findings, contact hello@edtechhub.org

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