Reconsidering Partnerships in Education in Emergencies

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Abstract: International actors increasingly advocate for partnerships in education in emergencies (EiE) to address the dire educational opportunities of school-aged children in sites of disaster, armed conflict, forced migration, and other humanitarian crises. This study explores the nature of partnerships in EiE. We examine the impetus behind an expansion of partnerships among diverse global actors and key characteristics, relationships, and dynamics within these partnerships. Using data collected from key informant interviews and documents from organizations involved in the Syria refugee education response (2018-2021), we detail two emerging characteristics of partnerships in EiE: (1) market-based principles in rhetoric and practice; and (2) a rise in private sector participation. While partnerships aim to improve coordination between agencies, our study uncovers the counterintuitive finding that competition characterizes the EiE partnership space more often than coordination. Furthermore, despite the education and humanitarian community's promotion of a "localization agenda"—prioritizing full participation of affected local communities as partners in education policy and implementation—our research points to a maintained hierarchy where international actors hold most influence in EiE. We discuss the practical implications of this power

asymmetry within the broader context of marketized humanitarianism, and raise concerns regarding equity within unchecked partnerships.
Keywords: education in emergencies; humanitarianism; partnerships; private sector; refugee education

Reconsiderando las alianzas en educación en situaciones de emergencia

Resumen: Los actores internacionales abogan cada vez más por alianzas en educación en emergencias (EiE) para abordar las terribles circunstancias educativas de los niños en edad escolar en sitios de desastre, conflicto armado, migración forzada y otras crisis humanitarias. Este estudio explora la naturaleza de las asociaciones en EiE, el ímpetu para una expansión de las asociaciones entre diversos actores globales y las características, relaciones y dinámicas clave dentro de estas asociaciones. Usando datos recopilados de entrevistas con informantes clave y documentos de organizaciones involucradas en la respuesta educativa de los refugiados de Siria (2018-2021), detallamos dos características emergentes de las asociaciones en EeE: (1) principios basados en el mercado en la retórica y la práctica; y (2) un aumento en la participación del sector privado. Si bien las asociaciones tienen como objetivo mejorar la coordinación entre las agencias, nuestro estudio revela el hallazgo contraintuitivo de que la competencia caracteriza a las asociaciones de EiE con más frecuencia que la coordinación. Además, a pesar de la promoción de una "agenda de localización" por parte de la comunidad educativa y humanitaria, que prioriza la plena participación de las comunidades locales afectadas como socios en la política y la implementación de la educación, nuestra investigación apunta a una jerarquía mantenida en la que los actores internacionales tienen la mayor influencia en la EeE. Discutimos las implicaciones prácticas de esta asimetría de poder dentro del contexto más amplio del humanitarismo comercializado y planteamos preocupaciones sobre la equidad dentro de asociaciones sin control.
Palabras-clave: educación en emergencias; humanitarismo; asociaciones; sector privado; educación para refugiados

Reconsiderando parcerias em educação em emergências

Resumo: Atores internacionais cada vez mais defendem parcerias em educação em emergências (EiE) para lidar com as terríveis circunstâncias educacionais de crianças em idade escolar em locais de desastres, conflitos armados, migração forçada e outras crises humanitárias. Este estudo explora a natureza das parcerias na EiE, o ímpeto para uma expansão das parcerias entre diversos atores globais e as principais características, relacionamentos e dinâmicas dessas parcerias. Usando dados coletados de entrevistas com informantes-chave e documentos de organizações envolvidas na resposta à educação de refugiados na Síria (2018-2021), detalhamos duas características emergentes de parcerias em EiE: (1) princípios baseados no mercado em retórica e prática; e (2) um aumento na participação do setor privado. Embora as parcerias tenham como objetivo melhorar a coordenação entre as agências, nosso estudo revela a descoberta contra-intuitiva de que a competição caracteriza as parcerias da EiE com mais frequência do que a coordenação. Além disso, apesar da promoção da comunidade educacional e humanitária de uma "agenda de localização" – priorizando a participação plena das comunidades locais afetadas como parceiros na política e implementação da educação – nossa pesquisa aponta para uma hierarquia mantida onde os atores internacionais detêm mais influência na EiE. Discutimos as implicações práticas dessa assimetria de poder dentro do contexto mais

amplo do humanitarismo mercantilizado e levantamos preocupações sobre a equidade dentro de parcerias não controladas.

Palavras-chave: educação em emergências; humanitarismo; parcerias; setor privado; educação para refugiados

Reconsidering Partnerships in Education in Emergencies

Partnership is the only way forward.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay on the global
COVID-19 education crisis (International Commission, 2020)

Humanitarian organizations have long sought ways to address the dire educational opportunities of students in sites of disaster, conflict, and other emergencies. Yet underfunding, disjointed responses, and logistical barriers have plagued the education in emergencies (EiE) sector, leaving approximately 128 million children and youth out of school in crisis-affected countries (UNICEF, 2020, p. 4). In recent years, however, a growing chorus of organizations has begun to advocate for a particular solution: *partnership.*

Through this study, we seek to understand the engagement of international and national actors in partnerships that address education in emergencies. Focusing on the Syria refugee education response, we further explore key characteristics, relationships, and dynamics within EiE partnerships. By examining key informant interviews and institutional documents, we find that a growth in partnerships reflects a wider expansion of actors in the EiE arena, including a notable rise in private sector participation. While partnerships aim to improve coordination between agencies, our study uncovers the counterintuitive finding that competition characterizes the EiE partnership space more often than coordination. And although the education and humanitarian community has consistently promoted a "localization agenda"—prioritizing full participation of affected local communities as partners in all aspects of education policy and implementation—our research points to a maintained hierarchy where international actors hold most influence in EiE. Within this hierarchy, organizations headquartered in the Global North have promoted an effectiveness agenda grounded in market principles. Our findings indicate that enacting these market principles have reinforced inequities between international actors who demand results and the local partners obligated to respond.

As we write this paper, the world faces the largest and most sustained education crisis in history: COVID-19 presents a collective, global education emergency. National COVID-19 education responses may vary, but one refrain echoes through most rhetoric on mass school disruptions: "we are in this together" (*New York Times*, 2020). Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, families, and individuals must cooperate in order to address this crisis. We can only face this challenge together, as partners (Brookings, 2020; GBC-E, 2020; International Commission, 2020).

Yet a push for partnership in response to educational crisis is neither new nor isolated to the pandemic response. As we untangle the impetus behind and nature of partnerships in the EiE sector, we raise concerns as to their efficacy and ask whether partnerships contribute to equitable and participatory practices.

Contextualizing Partnerships in EiE

Education in emergencies falls under the umbrella of the international humanitarian sector, which covers responses to contexts of crisis, for instance armed conflict, epidemic and pandemic, forced migration, and disaster (Davey et al., 2013). Humanitarian organizations historically worked primarily alone, siloed from one another. And when engaged in joint work, a clear hierarchy emerged where United Nations (UN) agencies directed policy and activities (Davey et al., 2013; Fiori et al., 2016). Yet over the past quarter century, humanitarian action has increasingly embraced notions of inter-agency collaboration through which humanitarian actors seek to enable greater coordination between agencies in order to avoid duplication and competition (ODI, 2020). Moreover, in addition to traditional actors—UN agencies, multilateral banks, bilateral donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—the private sector, including businesses and foundations, has become engaged in humanitarian response (Barnett, 2005; OCHA, 2013; Scott-Smith, 2016).[1]

Humanitarian action also now prioritizes a "localization agenda" where actors and communities affected by crisis—or "beneficiaries"—are meant to engage in crisis response at every step of the process (Fiori et al., 2016; IASC, 2020). For instance, several global education agencies have signed onto the "Grand Bargain," an agreement between donors and aid providers that commits to localizing humanitarian efforts through "respect for the role of local actors" and "re-conceiving of the humanitarian sector from the bottom up" (IASC, 2020). Humanitarianism now rarely involves one or two agencies, but instead looks increasingly like a system that includes an array of actors and organizations working in partnership (ODI, 2020).

The EiE arena reflects this wider shift to partnership. As the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) notes in its Minimum Standards, organizations ought to prioritize collaboration in order to achieve the goals of coordination and local participation (INEE, 2010). Organizations that include a mandate to support EiE have joined together in several partnership arrangements, such as global partnerships that bring together state and non-state actors to collaborate on advocacy, policy-making, implementation of activities, and sometimes pool funding in order to directly respond to educational crises (Menashy, 2019). For example, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Education Cannot Wait Fund (ECW), the INEE, Elevate Children, Global Business Coalition for Education, the Global Partners Project, and others each support initiatives directed at improving educational access and quality in contexts of emergency. Some partnerships, such as the Global Education Coalition for COVID-19 Response, have been established to target specific crises (International Commission, 2020). Many of these partnerships include private actors within their governance bodies.

At regional and country levels, partnerships between local and global actors have also grown more commonplace in humanitarian and education response. Collaboration through, for example, country level education clusters embrace the "principle of partnership [being] at the core of the cluster approach" (GEC, n.d.a). Regional partnerships such as the Whole of Syria response and No Lost Generation Initiative represent the response of country level education actors in partnership with international actors to improve access and quality of education (GEC, n.d.b; NLG, n.d.),

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[1] By "private sector" we refer to both corporate entities and foundations, acknowledging these to be different in structure; corporate entities are "for-profit" while foundations are ostensibly "non-profit." Yet because many foundations hold affiliations to companies, were established through business profits, and contribute indirectly to the associated companies' fiscal success (see McGoey, 2012), we apply the umbrella term "private sector" to both. While we acknowledge that not all private actors are corporate entities or foundations, the majority of our respondents conflated business and foundations when describing private participation in EiE.

through for example programs that address school feeding, educational technologies, psychosocial support and socioemotional learning, and teacher professional development.

Although a relatively recent field of study, a robust scholarship on EiE focuses on a range of areas such as education during and after armed conflict (Burde et al., 2017; Novelli & Cardozo, 2008; Smith, 2005; Zakharia, 2017), crisis impacts on marginalized groups (Burde, 2014; Zakharia, 2013), education for refugees (Bellino, 2018; Dryden-Peterson, 2016, 2022; Kirk & Winthrop, 2007; Mendenhall et al., 2015; Shohel, 2020; Menashy & Zakharia, 2020), and post-disaster schooling (Brundiers, 2018; Shah & Lopes Cardozo, 2014). A strong body of scholarship offers country-level analyses of crisis and schooling (Akar & van Ommering, 2018; Hamadeh, 2019; Taskin & Erdemli, 2018; Pherali, 2011; Zakharia, 2013). And scholars have begun to study the emerging roles of private actors in education crisis response, often criticizing private sector activities through uncovering the impacts of profit-oriented motivations (Jabbar, 2017; Le, 2019; Verger et al., 2016; Williamson & Hogan, 2020; Zakharia & Menashy, 2020).

Scholarship on educational partnerships has grown in recent years as well. For instance, studies analyzing global partnerships have documented existing power asymmetries and the increasingly central role of private actors as decision-makers within them (Faul, 2016; Knutsson & Lindberg, 2020; Menashy, 2019). Country-specific research on partnerships in education has drawn attention to the relatively new participation of private actors in partnership arrangements (Au & Ferrare, 2015; Ball, 2016; Ball & Junemann, 2012; Hogan et al., 2016). A small number of studies have also looked at specific partnership-based responses to education in crisis contexts, noting for instance the complexities of partnership in Liberia's education reconstruction efforts (Talbot & Taylor, 2015) and the potential of global partnerships in higher education for peacebuilding in Somaliland (Pherali & Lewis, 2019).

The above bodies of scholarship, however, have not adequately dovetailed to examine the cross-cutting themes we explore in this research. To our knowledge, no research has examined the rationales behind partnerships in the EiE sector including the implications of the principles and values that drive them. This study therefore bridges and expands scholarship in the areas of EiE, educational partnerships, and private actor participation in education.

Conceptualizing the Marketization of Humanitarian Response

The education in emergencies sector is embedded in the wider humanitarian system—a group of agencies predominantly headquartered in the Global North, which endeavor to help crisis-affected populations mainly located in the Global South. EiE includes refugee education, a field that aims to address gaps in education provision in contexts of forced displacement, while also providing a conduit for delivering humanitarian aid. While the overarching goal of action within this humanitarian system—to aid those experiencing crisis—has not changed, the system, norms, and modalities have altered in recent years to include market-like characteristics (Chimni, 2009; Fiori et al., 2016). We conceptualize these characteristics as indicative of the increased marketization of humanitarian response.

Up until the early 2000s, the humanitarian sector was predominantly a top-down bureaucracy and criticized for an overemphasis on process rather than results. In response, humanitarian agencies began to advance an "effectiveness agenda" (Fiori et al., 2016) that embraced the introduction of market principles into humanitarian practice. A rise in results-based-management approaches, with a focus on efficiency, accountability, and value-for-money (Richey, 2018), contributed to what Currion (2018) describes as "the extension of market mechanisms into an endeavour that historically was not seen as a marketplace" (p. 5). Donor support to humanitarian

activities now oftentimes requires evidence of quantifiable outputs, creating a transactional culture that resembles typical business arrangements. This marketized environment pressures humanitarian agencies to produce and/or implement new innovations, such as technological solutions (Currion, 2019; Menashy & Zakharia, 2020; Sandvik et al., 2014).

The marketized humanitarian arena compels increased competition among agencies; it has become a market-place (Richey, 2018; Fiori et al, 2016). This competitive culture, however, directly contrasts widespread calls to better coordinate responses. The humanitarian sector has advanced initiatives and established organizations that aim to coordinate actors and activities in order to avoid duplication, share knowledge and expertise. However, when agencies aim to gain scarce resources as well as to innovate at a fast pace, humanitarianism tends to embody fierce competition. As Fiori and colleagues describe: "a quest to have greater impact than others, or not to be left to look retrograde as others evolve – has accelerated the reforms of the humanitarian effectiveness agenda. And, in turn, this agenda, with its focus on results, has spurred competition between humanitarian NGOs" (Fiori et al., 2016, p. 44).

The growing participation of new and "nontraditional" private actors in the humanitarian space, including businesses and foundation, has further promoted a marketized environment (Agier, 2011; Burns, 2019; Currion, 2018; Scott-Smith, 2016). As discussed above, private actors have joined several partnerships to support EiE and have also taken on humanitarian causes in other sectors, advancing new innovations and aligning their operations with business-oriented ways of working; namely, via marketization (Burns, 2019; Currion, 2019). For example, private actors have spearheaded the design and implementation of new educational technologies for students in crisis settings (Menashy & Zakharia, 2020).

Critics, including both scholars and humanitarian actors, draw attention to issues that have arisen since the industry adopted market principles and begun to promote an effectiveness agenda. For instance, within this marketized environment, members of affected communities are treated in an instrumentalist way, perceived as "consumers rather than rights-bearers" (Currion, 2018, p. 5). Scholars have described how, through humanitarian agencies' competitive need for media attention, "beneficiaries" become "commodities" (Richey, 2018). Cases of what Naomi Klein labels "disaster capitalism" reveal this instrumentalist conception of affected communities, through which a crisis is framed as a business opportunity. In education, this has been seen in such contexts as post-Katrina New Orleans (2005) and post-earthquake in Haiti (2010). This market-place of humanitarian action, where affected people such as refugees are envisioned as consumers or commodities and a means to gain a competitive advantage, increases the potential for exploitation (Klein, 2007; Menashy & Zakharia, 2020; Sandvik et al., 2014; Verger et al., 2016).

The humanitarian market-place moreover embodies and reinforces power inequities between actors in the Global North and Global South. The ideas, goals, and mandates of humanitarian action overwhelmingly travel from the Global North to the Global South and market principles in particular reflect the norms and value of Northern-based organizations, in particular those that mobilize and hold resources, such as donors and businesses (Burns, 2019; Currion, 2018, 2019; Fiori, 2013). Actors in the Global South who directly work with affected communities must adapt to these business-derived ideas in their everyday work. In this way, the top-down nature of humanitarian policy continues, yet through a market lens (Fiori, 2013; Fiori et al., 2016).

The effectiveness and results-based strategies and activities reinforce this North-South hierarchy. As Fiori (2013) explains:

> Mainstream humanitarianism recognises only one "humanitarian system"… with
> power concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of Western donor
> states, NGOs based in their big cities, and UN agencies sponsored by them…. And

> so funding, coordination, and accountability mechanisms that have been developed to improve the effectiveness of the "humanitarian system" often end up reinforcing its hierarchical model of governance. (p. 9)

As an example, mandates toward coordination tend to reinforce such hierarchies, although present increased coherence amongst agencies as unproblematic and positive. As Fiori et al. (2016) state: "every attempt to strengthen coherence is itself an expression of power. That the old guard of the humanitarian sector (big NGOs, the Red Cross, the UN and OECD donor governments) can define and disseminate common standards and principles is an indication of its normative, and indeed coercive, power" (p. 49).

The growing participation of private actors, representing businesses and foundations predominantly from the Global North, further reinforces power asymmetries in humanitarian action. Researchers have critiqued the ways in which companies view their engagement in humanitarianism as "a public relations strategy, a way of carrying out corporate social responsibility, and a commercial strategy aimed at spearheading access to new markets" (Sandvik et al., 2014, p. 12). Scholars of refugee education have shown the ways in which technology companies in particular have entered the education in emergencies space, but seek to advance their bottom-lines via this participation through increased brand awareness, market hold, and testing of products (Le, 2019; Menashy & Zakharia, 2020). Critics therefore see private actor participation in humanitarianism as serving their company's fiscal interests rather than those of affected communities.

Operations based on results-based management principles, such as efficiency, accountability, and value for money; increased competition among agencies to gain resources, to innovate, and to have greatest impact; instrumentalist treatment of beneficiaries as consumers or commodities; reinforcement of North-South inequities; and growing participation of private actors across the sector all point to the ways in which humanitarianism has undergone a process which we conceptualize here as the marketization of humanitarian response. Partnerships in EiE have been promoted and advanced within this wider marketized arena.

Methodology and Data Collected

This paper draws from a larger research project (2018-2021) that aimed to generate evidence on the nature and impact of partnerships in education in emergencies. To bound our study, we examined partnerships in EiE and their response to the Syria refugee crisis, with a focus on Lebanon. In this paper, we seek to uncover (1) the impetus behind an expansion of partnerships in the global educational response to the Syria refugee crisis; (2) the key characteristics, relationships, and dynamics of partnerships in EiE; and (3) the implications of these partnership dynamics for EiE.

Study Context and Focus

Spanning nearly a decade, the war in Syria (2011-present) has prompted mass displacement on an unprecedented scale. What began as Arab Spring protests against the Assad regime in 2011, quickly escalated into violent suppression and all-out war between various parties, supported by a number of regional and world powers with interests in the region. The conflict has displaced over

5.5 million people from Syria to date, largely to neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2020).[2] With approximately half of all Syria refugees under the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2019b) and an estimated 1.2 million school-age Syria refugee children in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt (3RP, 2019), the Syria crisis has been a catalyst for partnership-based interventions in education in the Middle East region. The proliferation of partnerships directed at Syria refugee education, involving a variety of international, regional, national, and sub-national organizations, makes the Syria response context an appropriate case to examine the nature and impact of partnerships in EiE.

In this article, we examine a component of a three-year vertical case study (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009) that focused on partnerships that respond to the Syria crisis at both the global and local levels within Lebanon. Through a simultaneous commitment to understanding macro-phenomena and micro-level processes, the vertical case study design enables researchers to situate localized action and interpretation within broader social and political phenomena by tracing vertical linkages and interactions across local, national, and global scales and horizontal linkages across interconnected sites of inquiry, in our case multiple entities engaged in Syria refugee education. We limit the localized component of the study to the Syria response within Lebanon in order to anchor the vertical case within a country context that hosts the greatest per capital refugee population in the world (3RP, 2019).[3]

In this paper, we examine two primary datasets to capture partnership arrangements and offer illustrations of dynamics and effects: (1) Key informant interviews *(n*=113) with actors involved in partnerships in EiE that work within Lebanon; and (2) published reports (*n*=227) from organizations with global and Middle East regional scope.

Key Informant Interviews

We conducted 113 key informant interviews between October 2018 and February 2021 with actors based in the Global North and South who identify as stakeholders engaged in partnerships that address EiE. Interview participants considered "global" (*n*=55) comprised representatives of international NGOs; bilateral donors; UN agencies; foundations; companies; and secretariats of global partnerships. Of these, 22 also had oversight of EiE partnerships in Lebanon. Interview participants at the country level of the study (*n*=58) comprised representatives of local and Syrian-led NGOs; foundations; and companies engaged in partnerships to support Syria refugee education. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on an established set of criteria, including experience in EiE partnerships and professional seniority. Interviews were conducted in English and Arabic, took place in-person, over the phone, and virtually, and lasted on average one hour each. Interviews elicited views on the functioning, goals, and challenges of EiE partnerships.

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and translated into English, where necessary. Interview transcripts were analyzed through an iterative coding process using both deductive and inductive codes. Deductive or a priori codes included broad categories related to types of partnerships, means of engagement, impetus for partnership, roles within partnerships, and reference to coordination, community participation, and private actors. Inductive codes emerged from the interview transcripts and were applied to the entire dataset through an iterative coding process. These included specific partnership characteristics and practices (e.g. results-based management; accountability structures; competition), patterns in rhetoric (e.g. efficiency; innovation), and references to power. From these codes, we developed broader thematic categories

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[2] The total number of Syria refugees registered with UNHCR in November 2020 was 5,580,396 (UNHCR, 2020). Since not all displaced persons register with UNHCR for a range of reasons, it is likely that the number of individuals displaced by the Syria crisis exceeds this figure.
[3] Approximately one in five individuals in Lebanon are Syrian refugees.

that guided our write up of findings. In doing so, we integrated what we identify as representative quotes, selected because they articulate the various perspectives of interview participants and illustrate the breadth of issues raised.

Published Reports

We also collected and analyzed 227 reports from 24 global organizations or partnerships and their MENA regional counterparts to better understand the broader policy context and how international agencies conceptualize partnerships in EiE within their institutional publications. This dataset comprises strategic plans, annual reports, and other documents published since 2010 by such organizations as UNICEF, UNESCO, ECW, Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-E), Global Education Cluster (GEC), and GPE. The documents were identified through keyword searches relating to education in emergencies and cross-references to the following four areas: coordination; partnership; private sector; and participation.

The findings of this search resulted in a textual dataset, which was further coded through an iterative process, using similar deductive and inductive codes that emerged from our interview analysis. This allowed us to triangulate our findings from different sources and to identify overarching themes and an emerging conceptualization of partnerships from an organizational rhetoric perspective.

Triangulation, Limitations, and Reporting of Findings

We draw primarily from key informant interviews to organize our findings around the impetus and key emergent characteristics of partnerships. We support this data with findings from our organizational document analysis. A final round of analysis involved the comprehensive application of our conceptualization of marketized humanitarianism across the datasets to triangulate our findings and to amplify processes by which various global entities have established their presence in EiE, in partnership with each other and with other entities at the country level. The conceptualization of marketized humanitarianism foregrounds the findings that emerged from interviews and documents based on inductive codes.

We acknowledge the limitations of our study, given the rapidly evolving nature of the Syria crisis and the educational response within the Lebanon focal case. Furthermore, the datasets only include those actors who have been engaged in the Syria response within Lebanon. Still, we believe the study provides a lens to understand EiE partnerships more generally, anchored within a complex, albeit single country case, allowing us to bridge interview responses about the broader EiE sector to a national context. Another limitation stems from the possibility that, despite assurances of confidentiality and data protection in line with Institutional Review Board requirements, key informants may have been reluctant to critique partnerships, due to concerns related to competition for resources and future funding. However, the findings we present are substantiated by various sources and types of data, which enables us to draw reliable conclusions.

Findings

In describing the impetus for a rise in partnerships, our data revealed two key characteristics of partnerships in EiE that reflect a growing marketization of the humanitarian response: (1) market-based principles in rhetoric and practice; and (2) a rise in private sector participation. We describe these areas of market-based humanitarianism, as exhibited in the refugee education response, in the sections that follow. In addition, our findings suggest that this marketization of education in emergencies, as

manifested in partnerships, hinder localization goals and reproduce hierarchical power relations in humanitarianism and education.

Impetus for Partnering

Organizations that focus on EiE widely advocate for partnerships, and rhetoric relating to partnerships has grown more prevalent in recent years. For example, in their published documents, global organizations working in the EiE sector cite the need to seek "new partnerships" among their areas for future growth (e.g., ECW, 2018; UNICEF, 2019a). Interview respondents who have engaged directly in EiE partnerships explained that although the education space has always included relationships between different organizations, where "theoretically partnerships have underpinned education and emergencies work for a long time" (interview, INGO, July 2019), formalized partnerships are relatively new: "I would say over the past three, four years there's definitely been a shift [to establish formal partnerships]" (interview, INGO, Sept 2019).

In discussing the impetus behind partnerships, several respondents based in organizations headquartered in the Global North referenced the Syria refugee crisis as a catalyst and the grave need for "resources" and "capacity" to respond in the Middle East region, which has presented an insurmountable challenge for single organizations to tackle: "We can't do it alone" (interview, bilateral, Nov 2018). Working together in partnership allows agencies to build on one another's expertise and resources, and it spurs collective advocacy: "The need is increasing and the number of people displaced just continues to increase. There's a general sense that funding is gradually decreasing… so all organizations are looking at how do we actually meet the needs and ultimately on the ground to be effective; it means working together" (interview, INGO, June 2019b); "It's just more sustainable. You can leverage; your voice is bigger; [and] it's a group of you saying the same thing" (interview, INGO, Jan 2020).

Market-Based Principles

Our findings revealed that a key characteristic of partnerships in EiE involves widespread manifestations of market-based principles, both globally and in Lebanon. These principles include the application of results-based activities, stressing effectiveness and accountability. As well, we found a push towards coordinated action among partners and between organizations; however, within this marketized environment, we found more competition than coordination.

This passage from a UNICEF report about partnerships reflects the widely referenced market values of efficiency and innovation exhibited in a range of organizational documents: "In 2017, UNICEF was called upon to do more for children – to be more efficient, more agile and more innovative. By partnering with the private sector and deepening public-sector cooperation, UNICEF accelerated programmatic interventions and advocacy while driving new research, development and innovation" (UNICEF, 2018, p. 8). In a related vein, Education Cannot Wait promotes their "optimized and results-driven approach" (ECW, 2019a, p. 18) and seeks to "incentivize partners to deliver results" (ECW, 2016, p. 14), reflecting the organization's embrace of such market principles as incentives, optimization, and result-based approaches. Organizational documents also indicate the belief that partnership contributes to effectiveness. For instance, UNESCO states that "partnership and coordination are vital for more efficient and effective response to crisis" (UNESCO, 2017, p. 5).

Respondents, in particular those within Lebanon, also discussed results-based and data-driven approaches enforced by an international partner: "You have to work in a very tight system. [The international organization] supported the purchase of, for example, a system that's allowed us to track whatever we're purchasing, to the time that we are paying. So [that includes] all the information system tracking" (interview, local NGO, August 2019).

Another respondent within Lebanon explained the focus on data, numbers, and targets along with a demand for regular reporting that puts local actors under pressure to meet externally-defined goals:

> With [the international organization] they also focus a lot on numbers and targets because they have certain targets that they have to meet. So we are pressured to meet their targets. For [the international organization], we have monthly reports. We used to have weekly also, but now they go for monthly and quarterly, and every detail of all the implementation is mentioned within the reports. (Interview, local NGO, September 2019)

Interviews show that results-based approaches impact the relationship between local and international partners, characterized by conditions, reporting, evaluation, and a focus on targets. For instance, a local NGO actor described the international partner's conditions, saying: "One of their conditions was to have an external evaluator to accompany us from the time we recruit teachers, train them and coach them, to the time we recruit the children and put them in classes and engage their parents" (interview, local NGO, January 2019).

In terms of coordination as contributing to efficiency, a representative of an international NGO explained that partnerships allow for a "streamlining of approaches, standardization of approaches" (interview, INGO, Jan 2019a). This streamlining, however, while thought to improve coordination through "much more efficiently identify[ing] places of overlap" (interview, foundation, Oct 2020), creates pressures and additional work on local actors: "We have approximately four coordination meetings per month in different regions because we work across different regions" (interview, local NGO, September 2019).

Although organizational rhetoric and some global interviews indicate the belief that partnerships will improve coordination, speed and efficiency take priority. Coordination issues arise frequently because "stuff gets in the way. If you have to do a very, very quick response, people will go in there, respond and maybe think about [coordination] later. Definitely that's the reputation… the disaster management team, the cowboys, they just roll in" (interview, INGO, Jan 2020).

Respondents described how, even in the context of increased partnership, competition tends to characterize the sector, rather than coordination, leading to reduced transparency and collaboration: "In an emergency specifically, there's really not a lot of support in terms of financial support, so there's this natural competition between agencies. Coordination is trying to help that, but it's challenging for folks to share information when they have yet to secure funding to operate" (interview, INGO, Jan 2019c); "when you have all this fragmentation, and all this influences [the work], of course, [then] you have the issue of competition among agencies for research, for resources and so on" (interview, INGO, Feb 2019).

Competition appears to manifest from each agency seeking to ensure its own survival: "I think the issue is, everybody wants to have a reason to exist, in a way. Everybody wants to implement and everybody wants to get funding, and then you can't really stop some ... I mean, you see a lot of groups or agencies working on the same things, or some things that are done and done again" (interview, UN, Aug 2019b). Another respondent described the sector as "a tug of war" (interview, INGO, July 2019). Despite an expansion in partnerships, the EiE funding environment "naturally creates incentives for competition… There's always a race to get out the flash appeal and then a race to get in funding proposals… the urgency is really about, 'I need to get there first before the other contrasting partners, so that I can get the funding.' It's not the urgency of the children who are out of school" (interview, foundation, Oct 2020); "everyone is very territorial of what they're doing, everyone's competing for funding" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019).

International partners further embody market-like values through pressures to advertise their participation in refugee education activities within the country. As a local partner described: "they require a lot of visibility within the centers… [the organization] receives funds from different donors, so we have to show every single donor within every single classroom and in the hallways" (interview, local NGO, September 2019).

As individual agencies compete with one another for resources, they hesitate to share knowledge or information on their activities, even within partnerships. A local actor described this lack of transparency, saying: "If you ask me what was one of the main challenges with [the international organization], I would say, not sharing their plans and timeline" (Interview, local NGO, August 2019). This NGO actor also described how the international partner directives would suddenly change without explanation:

> One day they told us: "You can't work in the South anymore." We used to work all over Lebanon. […] They said "No, we have another partner who's going to work in the South." […] So here they stand, and you're a local NGO who needs to be working all over Lebanon; your mandate says, "all over Lebanon," and now your funding says, "areas [of Lebanon]." […] I brought it to their attention, but it fell on deaf ears." (Interview, local NGO, August 2019)

According to a respondent from a global partnership, coordination depends on trust, information-sharing, and transparency; all rare: "I think despite all the talk about coordination, it's still very, very weak. I think it's something that I always tell our members; we can be effective in terms of coordinating, our effectiveness is very much linked to how much information they share with us. So if they're not going to share the information around where they're funding, how they're funding, we're very limited in our role in terms of how we can support coordination" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019). Another respondent similarly stated how an effort to coordinate "really easily crumbles if there isn't the goodwill and trust among partners to coordinate" (interview, bilateral, Nov 2018).

This lack of trust, transparency, and goodwill between international and local partners makes some partnerships primarily transactional. According to some local actors, international partners often take a top-down approach to their partnerships, where the international agency "does not think with you in terms of strategy for what makes sense for Lebanon… It seems to be an opportunity-based relationship" (interview, local NGO, August 2019).

Private Sector Participation

Another key characteristic relating to partnerships and relationships in EiE involves the growing engagement of private actors. Documents produced by international organizations suggest a global impetus towards increased private sector engagement in EiE, where advocacy for partnering with the private sector ostensibly links to innovation, cost effectiveness, and results. For example, in 2016, the Education Commission listed among its recommendations to "Improve partnerships with non-state actors," arguing that non-state actors "can provide capacity where the state system hits constraints and because they are well placed to innovate to raise standards, increase access, and reduce costs" (Education Commission, 2016, p.81). Similarly, UNICEF states it "will keep working to strengthen public- and private-sector partnerships for enhanced results" (UNICEF, 2018, p. 78). In its Private Sector Engagement Strategy, the Global Partnership for Education states: "The humanitarian community has partnered with the business community in delivering innovation and technology solutions to refugees, complementing host government responses" (GPE, 2019, p. 14).

Interview respondents suggested that a rise in partnerships in EiE coincides with a push to engage the private sector specifically as partners: "I guess what's new is the engagement of the private sector" (interview, INGO, July 2019); "there's been for some time, I think, attempts to figure out how to effectively engage the private sector" (interview, consultant, Feb 2019). A representative from a religious organization explained: "the role of the private sector absolutely has increased over the last few years" (interview, religious, Nov 2020).

For governments, multilaterals, donors, and NGOs, partnering with the private sector means a potential additional funding source: "I think organizations are trying to diversify their funding portfolio, to be quite honest" (interview, INGO, Sept 2019). As an INGO representative explained, "We're really trying to increase our corporate partnerships and donations from individual philanthropists or philanthropies to go toward the emergency sector" (interview, INGO, Nov 2020b); "They just see dollar signs. You know, automatically, they just think there's this big bag of money" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019). Respondents suggest that private actors hold policy-making roles based primarily on their resources: "I think they're seen as a pool of resources. Because they're a pool of resources, then they get to sit at tables with policymakers who use resources. I think it's just as simple as that" (interview, consultant, Feb 2019).

A respondent explained a widely held belief that the private sector can better produce innovations and solutions than the public: "Why do you have to go about developing something that is less efficient, more expensive, and [where you] don't have expertise in relying on the public sector, when there's already extremely, extremely efficient and streamlined solutions that the private sector could provide?" (interview, private, Dec 2020).

Despite that partnerships appear to readily embrace the private sector, respondents also voiced some reluctance to partner with private actors and expressed skepticism around private participation, especially relating to market-based profit motivations for engagement in the EiE space: "The reason is of course to get a profit, to return on whatever they do" (interview, INGO, Feb 2019); "At the end of the day, they want the market" (interview, consultant, Feb 2019); "I would say it's always, because this is their business and business is business, it's always with an eye to future profit… They want that market. That is quite an interesting spec to walk in, when you are a humanitarian and your motivations are completely different" (interview, INGO, Jan 2020); "private sector engagement in the Syrian context… to support a certain product or a certain alliance [to] companies. So, they have the face of an NGO, but in reality, they are trying to sell you a product" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019).

Moreover, some viewed private companies and foundations as less than effective partners due to lack of transparency and over-focus on innovations that may not have on-the-ground impact: "I'm still not sure if it's true partnership, to be honest. I'm a bit of a skeptic when it comes to the private sector engagement in this space… I think that for the private sector, it's been a lot of rhetoric, a lot of promises" (interview, bilateral, Nov 2018); "they kind of work in these kind of quiet and covert ways more behind the scenes" (interview, INGO, July 2019); "it's great to have the resources, capacities and innovation that the private sector can bring. On the other hand, it can actually be a bit distracting, a bit gimmicky and not necessarily really contributing to the overall response" (interview, INGO, Jan 2019a).

Yet a representative from a private sector partnership countered these sentiments through the example of technological innovations, explaining: "I mean, especially when it comes to tech, speaking of tech companies, I think there are private sector solutions that are much more efficient and effective. For instance, like data management systems. All of that is developed by the private sector anyways, so why not tap into that expertise and have companies contribute if that is their bread and butter?" (interview, private, Dec 2020).

Reproduction of Power Hierarchies

Our findings reveal that a major implication of the marketized humanitarian response relates to equity, participation, and power; namely, partnerships do not necessarily result in increased localization, but instead often appear to re-inscribe power hierarchies between actors and organizations from the Global North and the Global South.

This finding contrasts the rhetoric of global organizations engaged in EiE, which widely advocate a localization agenda through community participation in their organizational rhetoric, citing the need for local "buy in," "input," or "local ownership" as being integral to the impact and sustainability of programs. For example, the Global Business Coalition for Education states: "The response architecture must rely on the buy-in and input of local actors. Community and local-buy-in is critical to determine a sustainable investment and deploy financing in a responsible manner." (GBC-E, 2015, p.2). Similarly, Education Cannot Wait cites the need for "respect for national ownership and the resilience inherent in local capacities, including refugees, host communities and all affected populations" (ECW, 2018, p.101). And the INEE includes "community participation" as one of its foundational standards (INEE, 2010).

Respondents from global organizations widely cited a need to engage local actors as partners but overwhelmingly agreed and lamented an absence of substantive local participation or deep engagement of affected communities in partnerships: "I think the sector preaches about localization but I haven't seen much action yet" (interview, INGO, Nov 2020b). Despite a clear desire for increased beneficiary participation, structural and organizational challenges often act as barriers, at both global and country implementation levels. When asked about participation of affected communities within partnerships, we were told: "I think the true answer is, they're not represented very well. Like definitely not sufficiently" (interview, INGO, July 2019); "it's very much what [partnerships] would like to see in place, that representation, but it's also the challenge in organizing all of that" (interview, INGO, Jan 2019c). Another respondent explained that partnerships have "struggled to really partner at a more local level or have beneficiary voices represented" (interview, bilateral, Nov 2018).

Several respondents mentioned a growing acknowledgement that participatory processes need to be more strongly implemented, but explained that the marketized humanitarian environment hinders this: "I feel like [local participation] is being talked about more and more… but it's just the way that I suppose funding mechanisms are set up and where the money's coming from and where it's channeled through, and then of course who gets to be at the table for the decision making" (interview, INGO, June 2019b). As well, a push for efficiency can reduce local participation: "In the midst of the crisis and the running down that everybody's doing to come up with solutions very fast, and to spend money where money is needed in a fast way, I don't know to what extent are we really engaging people the way we should be engaging" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019).

According to some respondents, when actors from affected communities participate in partnership spaces, their participation is often viewed as merely symbolic: "The beneficiaries are rarely in the room, and oftentimes if they're in the room, it can take a very tokenistic, paternalistic lens to it" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019). As one respondent noted, "We walk a fine line of tokenism, I have to say" (interview, INGO, Jan 2020). Another further explained, "They're brought in too late in the deliberations, or after the deliberations. They're brought in at the point where it's like, okay, let's figure out monitoring. Or, okay, let's figure out the delivery, as opposed to being at the table when the partnership is established. So, they are engaged after the fact, as opposed to being a real partner from the beginning" (interview, consultant, Feb 2019).

Respondents discussed the related problem of poor contextualization of global organizations' policies, resulting from low participation: "Sometimes I feel that they are dealing with

Yemen as if they are dealing with Denmark. Sometimes they don't understand the context. And sometimes when they put their strategy, they don't give the space for those who [are] living on the ground to plan or to engage in the planning" (interview, regional NGO, Aug 2019). Another respondent echoed: "The picture that I get in terms of what's needed on the ground, is a bit skewed and it's through the lens of these bigger organizations" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019). Poor contextualization within a market-based culture, which prioritizes accountability, adds pressure on local NGOs: "If the donor who is holding you accountable is not aware of the challenges you are facing, they will have unrealistic expectations" (Interview, local NGO, Feb 2019).

 Limited local participation within partnerships relates to a lack of trust and confidence, where international actors "distrust the people on the ground. And the people on the ground feel insulted… This lack of trust creates [an] unsettled psychology for those who are active in a very difficult situation" (interview, regional NGO, Aug 2019). Respondents spoke of a need to build "that trust in that space for people to meet those shared goals and the collective missions" and to ensure "real strengthening for the voices of people of all ages who have been impacted by emergencies and humanitarian crises to themselves be not only able to access the quality inclusive education that they have the right to, but then also be able to become part of the decision-making for future crisis settings" (interview, global partnership, Nov 2020).

 Limited participation and localization reflect ongoing power asymmetries between international actors and local partners: "Localization needs to be much more meaningfully implemented… in order to shift some of the power" (interview, INGO, Oct 2020). Although certain stakeholders might present partnerships as equitable and non-hierarchical, respondents clarify that power asymmetries persist; and within the context of marketized humanitarianism, those international actors with resources tend to hold most sway. When asked which stakeholders hold most power within partnerships, we were often told what this interview asserts: "The donors definitely… because they have their red lines, which are very politically driven" (interview, UN, Oct 2019). One respondent put it this way: "It's always the big donors and the big partners. In Lebanon's case, it would be UNICEF, for sure, and its donors. So, the EU, Germany, DFID... France. These are the big donors on the table" (interview, UN, Aug 2019b). This was echoed repeatedly, as exemplified by the following statements: "Donors. There's certain donors that are super influential and really throw their weight around" (interview, INGO, July 2019); "Whoever has money" (interview, consultant, Feb 2019); "I'd say primarily donors because money talks and people who hold the purse strings are able to influence" (interview, INGO, June 2019b). An INGO actor observed these dynamics at work within global partnerships in EiE and suggested that actions need to better reflect organizational rhetoric: "If you want to really signal that this is about developing country partners and they're in the driver's seat, give them more seats at the table, because it's about them. It's not about the donors, it's about the developing country partners and what they want, not what the donors wants. So stop. It's about walking the talk" (interview, INGO, Nov 2020).

 Thus power hierarchies remain prevalent despite a push for equitable partnership: "The power dynamics in humanitarian response are fraught with problems" (interview, INGO, Nov 2020b). And while resource-wielding organizations hold most influence, local beneficiaries and recipients of funding remain skeptical of partnering with those who might not share their interests, due to these power asymmetries: "A lot of organizations do not want money from these organizations because they feel like their agenda or whatever that donor says, they're going to come in with an idea of how they should spend their money, what they think the needs are, not what the organization sees what the needs are" (interview, global partnership, Feb 2019).

Discussion and Conclusion

A recent uptick in EiE partnerships reflects a broader shift in the education and humanitarian arena, with a push for collaborations and formalized relationships between organizations. As our study found, an increase in partnerships in EiE results in part from the gravity of educational emergencies such as the Syria crisis and an acknowledgement that solitary efforts cannot meet educational needs.

We argue that this rise in partnerships and their activities is entrenched within a simultaneous rise in the marketization of humanitarianism response. Our findings expose an environment in EiE that reflects the application of market principles, as observed in other areas of humanitarianism (Currion, 2018; Fiori et al., 2016; Richey, 2018). This shift manifests in two general ways; first, through a more market-oriented approach to EiE, in terms of a competitive, results-based and data-driven environment that focuses on outputs and efficiency; and second, through increased private sector participation in EiE partnerships, where corporate-affiliated actors in particular have become more engaged. As documented for other humanitarian endeavors (Gunewardena & Schuller, 2008), private sector participation has amplified market-like ways of working and introduced business motivations to humanitarian response in education. In light of our research, partnerships that reflect this marketized environment—including an increase in private engagement in conjunction with embracing market values—spur several critiques.

For instance, local EiE actors which have partnered with and/or secured funding from global organizations, such as international financial institutions and international non-governmental organizations, described their work in-country as increasingly more output-driven, where quantitative data must be delivered on a strict schedule in order to maintain funding. Local actors also pointed to certain organizations requiring that their involvement in EiE be marketed through visibility, such as logo placement.

This marketized space has implications for equity and power asymmetries between global and local partners, with respondents noting that prioritizing efficiency has subjugated participatory practices. The output-oriented projects, which require steady responsiveness to funders, counters participation, and further entrenches power dynamics. Critical development scholars have described this dynamic as the "tyranny" of participation in which the demands of "local participation" impel the alignment of views, practices, and expectations with the interests of global organizations while systematically reinforcing inequalities (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Moreover, EiE partnerships, instead of fostering increased collaboration and coordination, appear to reinforce competition between agencies in a resource-scarce environment, a phenomenon also documented by research on broader humanitarian action (Fiori, 2013; Fiori et al., 2016). This competitive marketized environment contributes to a disjointed EiE response, countering the goals of many partnership-based activities, which seek to improve coordination. Moreover, a competitive environment has led to reduced transparency between organizations.

Organizational documents frequently point to a need for increased engagement of the private sector as a non-traditional funding source and to spur new innovation in EiE. Interviews corroborate this rhetoric, explaining that partnerships have elicited increased private sector participation due to a capacity to innovate, but also largely to secure resources. Most respondents explained how organizations have been attempting to diversify their funding portfolios and that the EiE community often views private actors as a relatively untapped source. Varied forms of private engagement denote a shift from humanitarianism as an activity under the purview of public sector agencies and NGOs to one also within the domain of corporate actors who hold market-driven aims. As several respondents explained, private actors within EiE partnerships oftentimes appear to

hold profit-oriented goals—a very different motivation from traditional humanitarian agencies—which can lead to decontextualized interventions (Menashy & Zakharia, 2020; Sandvik et al., 2014; Scott-Smith, 2016; Zakharia & Menashy, 2020).

Several respondents noted the tensions involved in profit-oriented mandates compared to humanitarian goals. The contrast in motivations between traditional humanitarian and corporate actors poses further challenges to EiE partnerships, as some express reluctance to partner with the private sector due to differences in aims. And although respondents and documents claim that private actors have a greater capacity to develop innovations for refugee education, we also found skepticism around the impact of such innovations.

We posit practical consequences of what we conceptualize as the increased marketization of humanitarianism in the EiE sector, with significant implications for localization efforts, the re-inscription of power asymmetries, and implementation of activities in EiE. Based on our analysis, we found no evidence that this competitive, marketized environment positively impacts the effectiveness of EiE programming—in fact, we posit that it hinders effective partnership practices through lack of transparency and undue pressure on local agencies. Our findings suggest that this marketized, output-driven environment hinders more flexible approaches to EiE partnerships, prioritizing efficiency over collaboration. Partnerships in education in emergencies, while seeking to engender more effective practices through formalized relationships, might in fact contribute to inefficiencies in the sector by preserving a competitive environment between organizations.

The market-based principles on which much EiE response operates have emerged from the Global North, even including mandates for coherence and coordination (Fiori, 2013; Fiori et al., 2016). As our findings indicate, the enactment of these principles reinforces North-South power hierarchies, particularly between international funding agencies who demand results and the local partners who must produce. And although the rhetoric of the humanitarian community widely promotes increased localization, we find that partnerships in EiE do not adequately prioritize the participation of local actors, in turn upholding power hierarchies in humanitarian activities. As the education in emergencies community aims to embrace more equitable practices, our research suggests that equity might not be achieved through the establishment of unchecked partnerships within a humanitarian environment aligned with market-based principles and values. With entities from the Global North retaining power; dictating processes with little opportunity for true local participation; and upholding an environment focused on competition, efficiency, and results as opposed to collaboration; we suggest that the EiE space runs counter to the participatory aims of many EiE partnerships.

We propose that attentiveness to mechanisms that promote information-sharing and transparency in partnership arrangements may serve to mitigate market-like dynamics, such as competition. Moreover, an internal process through which global and local organizations interrogate the assumptions that guide their partnership practices might engender more effective, contextualized, and participatory collaborations, driven by mutual trust and respect over the long term.

Our study coincides with a pivotal moment in global education, when every country in the world has faced an emergency. The COVID-19 pandemic spurred new partnerships, including an expanding role for private actors. As the world grapples with the profound educational challenges resulting from educational disruptions, our findings offer a note of caution about an uncritical embrace of partnerships in EiE within an increasingly marketized humanitarian environment. We hope this research might spur deeper reflection on the part of all those engaged in EiE partnerships.

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