



**Healing, restoring
and rebuilding
through
education:
The case of the
Democratic
Republic of Congo**

- **War is not limited to disrupting classes:**
 - **It disrupts childhood, learning, relationships and future prospects.**
- **Key idea:**
- Education must not only resume; it must help to repair what the conflict has destroyed.



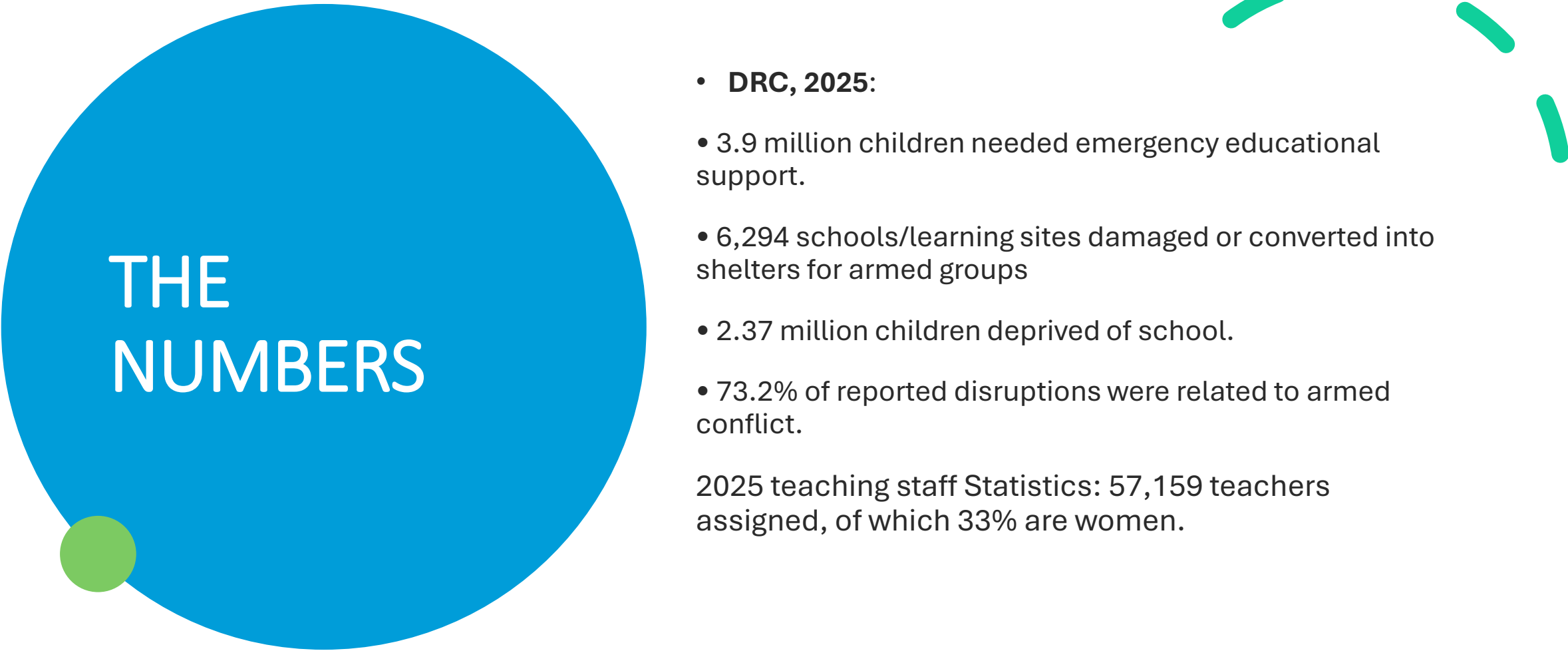
Greetings and introduction

- Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, good evening.
- I am Annie Matundu Mbambi, a Gender and Development Consultant, a member of several women's organizations, and an Honorary Regional Representative of WILPF Africa.
- I would like to thank the International Centre on Transgenerational Trauma Legacies for this initiative and for the honour of speaking today.
- This webinar inaugurates an essential series on restorative education, a topic that concerns us all, as it touches on how we rebuild lives and societies after massive traumas.

1. WHY A REPAIRING EDUCATION ?

- In the Democratic Republic of Congo, decades of armed conflict have left deep scars: schools destroyed, teachers displaced or unpaid, children deprived of education and traumatized by violence.
- In this context, **education cannot be limited to reopening classrooms** .
- It must become an instrument of healing, restoration and reconstruction.





THE NUMBERS

- **DRC, 2025:**

- 3.9 million children needed emergency educational support.
- 6,294 schools/learning sites damaged or converted into shelters for armed groups
- 2.37 million children deprived of school.
- 73.2% of reported disruptions were related to armed conflict.

2025 teaching staff Statistics: 57,159 teachers assigned, of which 33% are women.



Eastern DRC: the epicenter

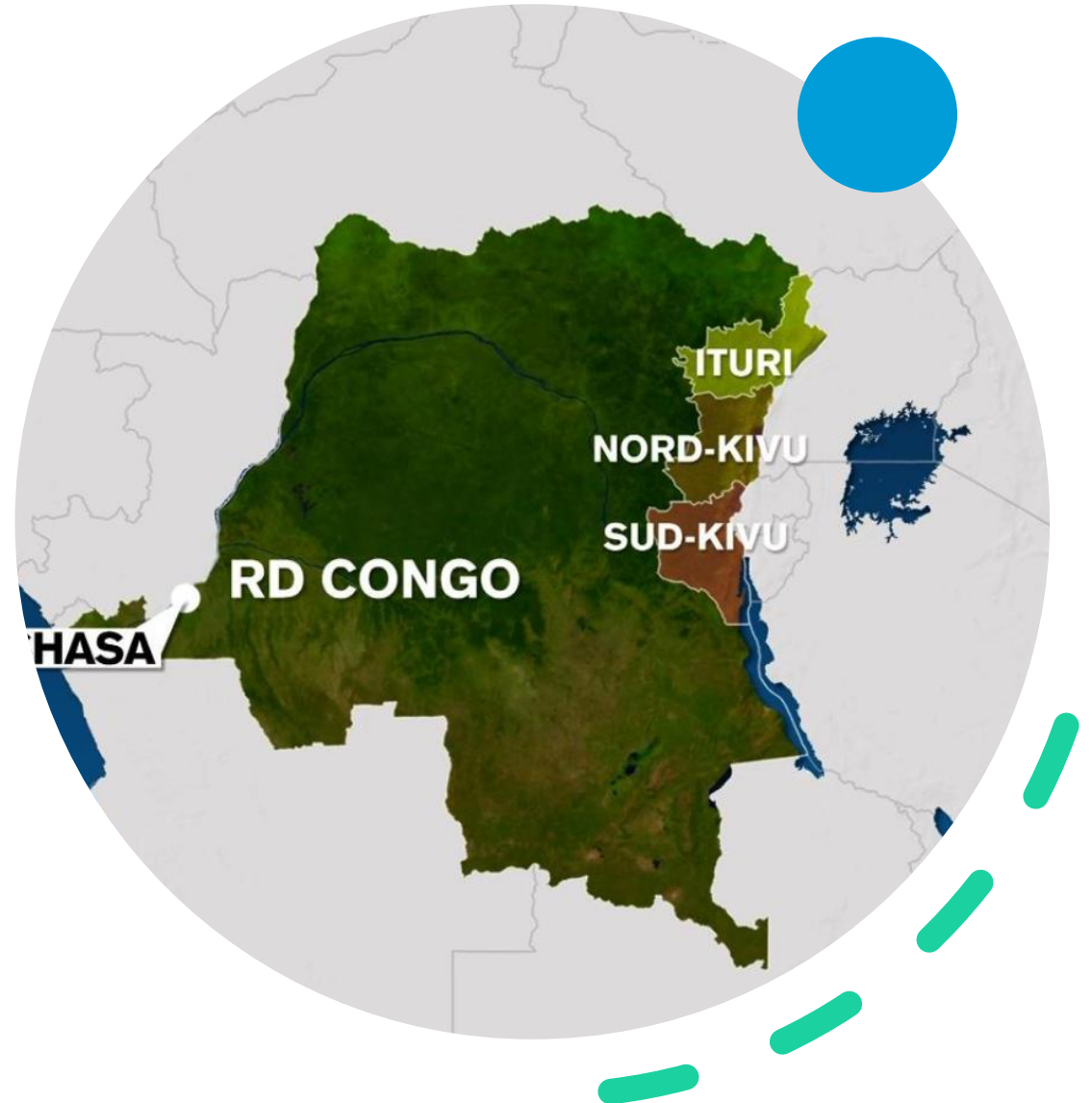
Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is now recognized as **the epicenter of the humanitarian and security crises** affecting the country.

Persistent armed violence is causing mass displacement, weakening communities and compromising access to education, health and security.

Highlighting this idea of an "epicenter" helps to emphasize that:

- **The suffering is concentrated there** and has repercussions throughout the entire territory.

- **Children and women are the most exposed** , suffering sexual violence, school dropouts and lasting trauma.
- **Social and educational infrastructure is systematically targeted** , exacerbating the vulnerability of the population.
- **National peace depends on the stabilization of this region** , because what happens there determines the future of the country.



As of August 31, 2025, more than 5,200 schools were closed due to threats or attacks, depriving nearly 1.9 million children of learning.



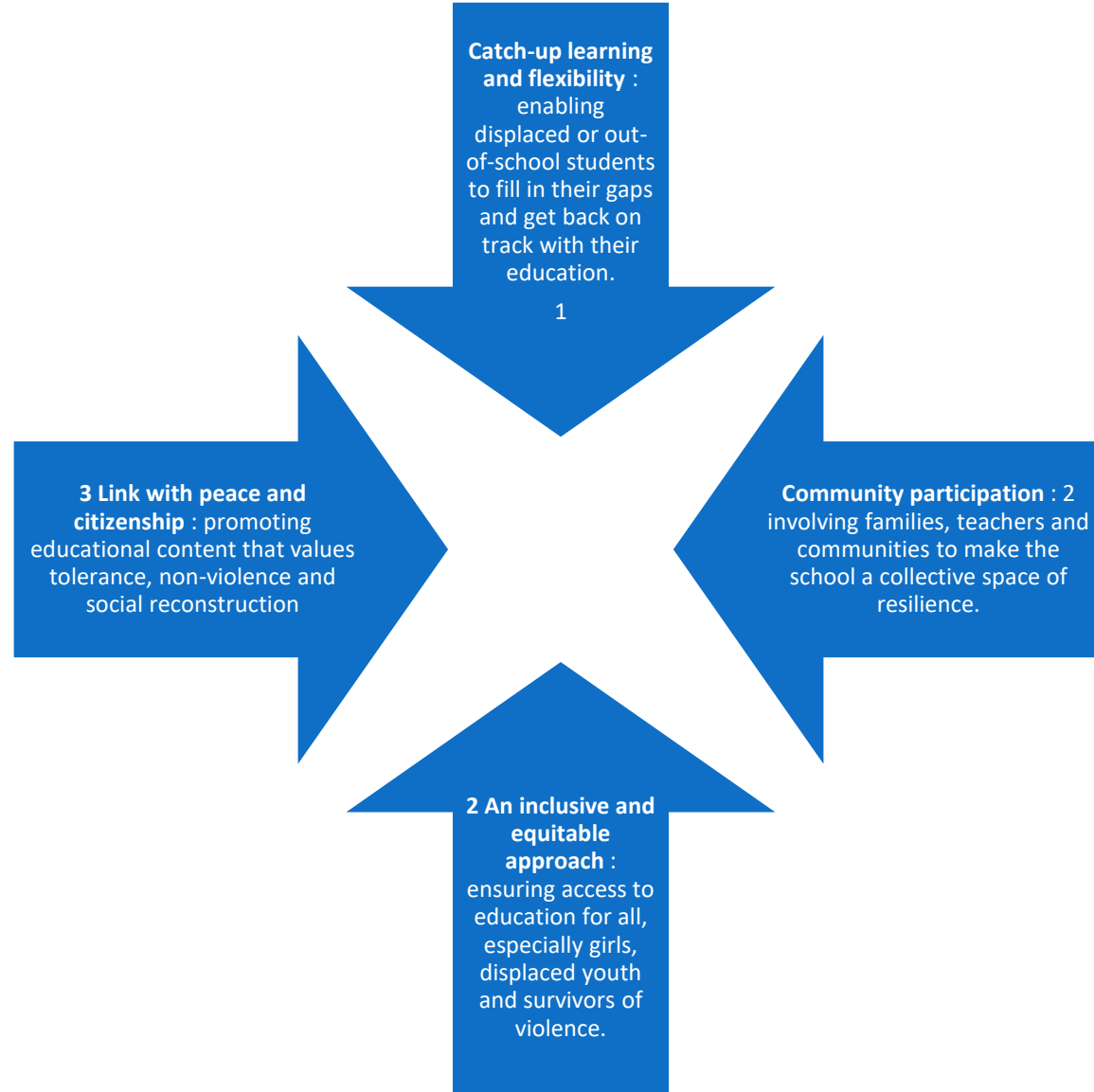
- North Kivu/South Kivu: 795,000 children deprived of education during the escalation at the beginning of 2025.
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- Ituri: more than 1.3 million children were out of school since May 2025.

What makes education restorative?

Education becomes restorative when it goes beyond simply reopening schools, and when it **heals, rehabilitates, and restores hope** to children, teachers, and communities affected by conflict. It rests on several pillars:

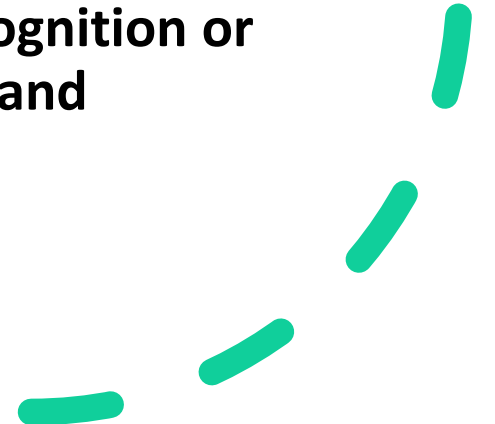
- **Continuity and stability** : providing a regular framework that gives children a sense of normalcy despite the chaos.
- **Psychosocial support** : integrating trauma-sensitive approaches to restore confidence and well-being.



The teacher also needs repair

In a restorative education approach, it is essential to recognize that **teachers also bear the wounds of the conflict**. Their role cannot be fully assumed without a process of support and reconstruction.

- **Trauma experienced** : many have suffered displacement, loss or violence, which affects their personal and professional balance.
- **Emotional burden** : supporting children scarred by war requires psychological resilience that must be sustained.
- **Their professional identity is weakened** : the destruction of schools, the interruption of programs and the lack of resources are shaking their vocation.
- **Isolation and demotivation: without recognition or support, teachers risk feeling powerless and abandoned.**



Recommendations for restorative education

- 1. Establish a national restorative education framework for conflict-affected provinces.**
- 2. To finance a multi-year recovery , not short-term projects.**
- 3. Integrate psychosocial support and child protection into educational policies.**
- 4. Develop accelerated learning and catch-up programs on a large scale.**
- 5. Protect schools and monitor attacks against education.**
- 6. Supporting teachers as frontline actors in the reconstruction.**
- 7. To measure attendance, academic achievement, well-being, retention, and transition to higher levels.**

**This makes the
repair possible**



Trauma-sensitive training and adapted teaching methods



Psychosocial support and referral services



Spaces for solidarity and peer supervision



Institutional recognition and enhancement of the teacher's role



Safe working conditions and practical tools for disrupted classrooms

Conclusion

– *Education as reparation*

War does not simply destroy infrastructure: it shatters childhoods, weakens teachers, and jeopardizes the future of communities. Faced with this reality, **education must become an act of healing** .

- It **heals traumatized memories** , offering a space of safety and dignity.
- It **rebuilds educational and civic pathways** , enabling displaced or out-of-school children to find their way back to school.
- It **restores confidence to teachers** , supporting them as frontline actors in resilience.
- It **strengthens social cohesion** , transforming the school into a lever for peace and solidarity.
- Peace must also be built in the classroom.

THANK YOU



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