UNICEF EDUCATION | COVID-19 Response

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for every child

MITIGATING THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATION SYSTEM:

Continuing learning I Supporting the well-being of children I Opening up Better Schools

Topline

- **The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has disrupted learning for over 89% of the world's student population**. For more than 1.5 billion children in 188 countries, education has been interrupted. The gains in expanding access to education and improving the quality of education risks being permanently compromised. The loss of protection and other forms of support that schools provide including school-based health, nutrition and school-feeding are also compromising children's well-being. Vulnerable children, including girls, migrants, refugees, the disabled, poor and other marginalized groups, are the most affected.

- **UNICEF has mobilized the organization's most coordinated and at-scale Global Education Response in its history.** Together with WHO and IFRC, UNICEF released **operational guidance on protecting children and schools from COVID-19** on 10 March 2020 **(press release)**. On 24 March, in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF allocated catalytic funding to 152 countries and territories to support an at-scale education response **(press release)**.

- **UNICEF's Education COVID-19 Response is aligned with UNICEF's overall emergency response.** **UNICEF 's revised Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for the COVID-19 response** was issued on 25 March 2020 with a revised global appeal of $US651.6 million to support children. The appeal contributes to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Global Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) appeal and is in line with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Strategic Response Plan for COVID-19.

- **Across the world, UNICEF harnesses its operational presence in the field with 800 education staff to allow for a fast and coordinated education response consistent with the reach and scale of the COVID-19 pandemic:** UNICEF's response, by shifting from initial response and broadening to "Open up Better" schools addresses the **humanitarian-development nexus** by going beyond short term action alone. It ensures a safe reopening of schools in the field and accelerates progress in the education system as a whole and thereby is a catalytic initiative to take a collective leap forward towards **SDG4**.

UNICEF Response

There has been an unprecedented global education response through coordinated action at the global and national level. UNICEF has mobilized the organization's most coordinated, at-scale education response in its history. All UNICEF Country Offices were allocated additional funding to support education system-wide response in 152 countries and territories[1]. The joint UNICEF-WHO-IFRC operational guidance on protecting children and schools from COVID-19 is a blueprint for UNICEF's COVID-19 education response and informs UNICEF's vision and action for education and learning after this crisis. Informed by UNICEF's track record and global leadership role in education in emergencies, UNICEF's education response to COVID19 focuses on the humanitarian development nexus, addressing critical needs while advancing development goals.

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[1] This global scale-up was achieved with resources from the Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF Education Thematic Funds.

In 2019, the world acknowledged we are off track to achieve SDG 4. **The Opening Up Better After COVID-19 approach will be a catalytic opportunity to take a collective leap forward towards ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all children**. Informed by UNICEF's track record and global leadership role in education in emergencies, a focus on the most vulnerable children, UNICEF's education response to COVID19 focuses beyond the short term alone on system wide sustainable progress.

What needs to happen now and, in the future, to ensure schools are safe? How do we support children most at risk of dropping out to get back to school? What elements of the response to COVID19 can inform the future of education systems and learning, everywhere and for every child and young person? **In 152 countries and territories and together with partners, UNICEF's team of 800 education professionals are supporting governments on:**

(1) response coordination and real-time monitoring (focusing on the most vulnerable);

(2) safe school operations including through hygiene supplies and risk communication;

(3) continuity of learning through access to diverse remote learning programs as appropriate for each context to meet the needs of each child including the most vulnerable;

(4) cross-sectoral integration to scale-up mental health and psychosocial support, (MHPSS) health, WASH and nutrition services to support children and young people

(5) 'Opening Up Better Schools' initiative by ensuring child receive the comprehensive support, accelerated learning and also concerted efforts to reach the most vulnerable children to re-engage in formal education;

(6) codification and dissemination of what works in diverse range of contexts for immediate roll-out to other countries and globally with innovative partnerships and approaches.

The activities conducted in the COVID-19 response will have a positive impact on learning in the short and long-term in all UNICEF programme countries and will also contribute to more resilient education systems to be better able to withstand future challenges. Interventions to mitigate against COVID-19 impacts will have a forward-looking approach to not only meet the needs of children who were in school pre-COVID-19 but to also target those on the margins including out of school children into the system.

Key Intervention Areas and Strategies

1. Response coordination, efficient delivery and real-time monitoring

UNICEF country teams are supporting country response plans and are collecting up-to-date information about the situation of children including through short message service (SMS) and other communication channels (e.g. voice; social media channels, such as Facebook Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp) to enable real-time data collection and

mass-communication with target end-users, including beneficiaries and frontline workers. UNICEF is accompanying planning efforts to ensure longer-term building blocks of human development remain in focus, including strengthening of disaggregated data collecting and equitable allocation of education financing for the most marginalized children and young people is in place as well as supporting Comprehensive Risk Reduction and preparedness strategies in education.

2. Safe school operations and risk communication

UNICEF supports operationalization of inclusive and safe school practices including equipping schools with protective measures such as hygiene supplies, promoting and disseminating life-saving information material (e.g. handwashing and recommended behaviors to address stigma/xenophobia) and adapting school policies.

3. Continuity of learning and provide access to remote learning programs

UNICEF is supporting the continuation of learning during the current global crisis through appropriate strategies for each context. This includes development and roll-out of free and open digital tools to support large-scale remote learning; including educational TV and radio programmes, online content, internet-based and learning, educational TV and radio programmes and print material for use at home. UNICEF is also deploying a mix of approaches ensure accessibility of instructions for all children regardless of the medium of delivery and for children with disabilities this includes closed captions, live sign language interpretation, large print, visual or audio adaptations of material.

> **Anytime and anyplace learning - EdTech for the most vulnerable children and young people:** During the COVID19 crisis, UNICEF is leveraging technology that will enable high quality, flexible learning pathways during the crisis and once it is over.
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> ✓ The **Learning Passport** is a partnership between UNICEF and Microsoft - intended to reach vulnerable children and adolescents with quality education to enhance learning outcomes.
> ✓ The Learning passport is a digital platform that is facilitating learning opportunities for children and young people within and across borders.
> ✓ By 2021, the Learning Passport will benefit 3 million children in Kenya and Bangladesh and by 2025, 16 million will have been reached. This number is likely to increase because of an exceptional scale-up of the Learning Passport in more countries during the COVID19 crisis.

4. Cross-sectoral integration to scale-up MHPSS, health, WASH and nutrition services to support children and young people

UNICEF is a global leader in policy, planning and service delivery to prevent and address poor outcomes for children and young people. This includes strategies to address School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV), provision of psychosocial support (PSS) to help children, teachers and communities heal and re-build confidence after an emergency or critical event, and provision of school-based health, nutrition services and standards-based WASH facilities which prevent drop-outs and keeps children safe and healthy. This will contribute to the reduction of barriers that have kept vulnerable children out of school even pre-crisis.

5. Opening Up Better Schools Initiative

UNICEF ensures that all children and young people, especially the most vulnerable and at risk of dropping out, are mobilized to enroll or re-enroll in schools through communication campaigns and social mobilization, recover lost learning including through accelerated education which allow for multiple pathways back into formal education, and supports design and roll-out of system-wide solutions to address missed examinations. If strategies are implemented effectively, these approaches can also attract children who were previously out of school, significantly advancing progress towards SDG 4. The UNICEF-WFP partnership on school health and nutrition leverages the crisis to accelerate system-wide reforms through cross-sectoral efforts. Currently, more than 368 million children are missing out of school meals globally.

6. Codification and disseminating evidence of what works

UNICEF's global education team is using real-time approaches to sharing information on strategies and activities to support the COVID-19 response. The COVID-19 crisis has exposed inequities in access to digital connectivity which has the potential to transform education, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable. That is why UNICEF is committed to addressing the binding constraints to connectivity during and after the current crisis, especially through partnerships with national governments and the private sector. As per UNICEF's Education Strategy 2019-2030, UNICEF focuses on measuring learning. Therefore, innovative real-time monitoring techniques will be used to step up ongoing efforts to measure learning outcomes. Evidence of what works in remote learning for the most vulnerable groups such are children with disabilities will be documented and supported to scale as long-term system wide strategies to reach every child.

Connecting every school to the internet

UNICEF is spearheading GIGA – an initiative to connect every school to the internet. GIGA will connect the education system by:

- ✓ Connecting every child and young person to digital adaptive learning through personalized resources and activities which anticipate and address unique needs of every learner
- ✓ Connecting every teacher to digital learning materials to create blended learning opportunities for learners and to enable access to "anytime" continuous teacher professional development
- ✓ Connecting school principal and education system to impartial data on what children and young people are learning so that "just in time" support can be targeted to where it is needed the most
- ✓ Connecting every young person to digital platforms which link them to jobs, entrepreneurship and opportunities for social impact in communities

Partnerships and Coordination

A coordinated global education response: There has been an unprecedented global education response through coordinated action at the global and national level to keep children safe and learning.

- **At the global level,** UNICEF is coordinating with key education actors including The Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, the IASC Global Education Cluster (co-led by Save the Children and UNICEF) as well as UN sister agencies WB, UNESCO, WFP, the World Bank and others. A Global Education Coalition for COVID19 Response has been established. In addition, UNICEF are supporting the Inter Agency Network for Education in Emergencies disseminate key response information with education actors globally

- **At national level,** UNICEF is working closely with governments in all programme countries by rallying coordination systems including education sector working groups and local education groups, to enable an education-system wide response to the pandemic. UNICEF is coordinating with local authorities, UN and other partners including WHO, IFRC, CDCs, NGO partners through the UN Country Teams, under the leadership of Country Resident Coordinators. Depending on context, UNICEF co-leads specific pillars of the response such as risk communication and community engagement, continuity of care and social services and supplies to enhance multi-sectoral response measures and to help minimize any emergent secondary side effects of the outbreak.

Funding Requirements

UNICEF 's revised Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal for the COVID-19 response is in line with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Strategic Response Plan for COVID-19 for all UNICEF programme countries and contributes to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Global Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) appeal.

Urgent fund needs:

- The COVID-19 pandemic requires a global education response. UNICEF has allocated catalytic funding to 152 countries and territories to ensure at-scale education response and recovery interventions.
- Additional funds are urgently required to manage the education impacts of the coronavirus on children and youth and to ensure the implementation of the **Opening Up Better Schools Initiative** with a strong focus on strengthening the **humanitarian-development nexus**.
- Different countries are affected in different ways; **low income countries and countries with high numbers of school-aged populations are particularly vulnerable**. In addition to that countries with weak education systems are prioritized to strengthen their resilience and lower the shocks on the education system.
- **Reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable children** will require targeted as well as streamlined interventions that are tailored to their diverse needs.

Types of funding and channels:

With the fast-moving spread of the pandemic UNICEF requires, now more than ever, **flexible and timely funding** so that it can be allocated quickly to where it is most needed and as the situation evolves. A lack of funding will diminish the humanitarian system's capacity to respond effectively and efficiently. Founding modalities can be discussed:

- Global thematic funding
- Regional and country thematic funding.
- Lightly earmarked global grant

Contact

Robert Jenkins
Chief Education and Associate
Director
Programme Division
UNICEF
rjenkins@unicef.org

www.unicef.org/education
@UNICEFEducation
@RobertG_Jenkins

Rosmarie Jah
Lead Advocacy, Resource Mobilization
and Partnerships
Programme Division - Education
UNICEF
rjah@unicef.org

www.unicef.org/education
@UNICEFEducation
@JAH_ros