

**UNICEF Funding Proposal to
Global Partnership for Education**

Title of proposal:

**Access to Education for COVID-19 Emergency-affected
Children in Afghanistan**



Assiya, 10, stands by a pile of metal debris that was once part of a girls school in Nangarhar province.
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UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office

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Overview

Title of Proposal	Continuity of Education for COVID-19 Emergency-affected Children in Afghanistan
Country	Afghanistan
Donor	Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
Total Proposed Budget	US\$ 11,000,000
Project Duration	July 2020- June 2021 (12 months)
Project Outcome	School-aged girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable, continue to access relevant education opportunities and realize sustained learning outcomes throughout the lockdown and recovery periods of COVID-19.
Focus population	Direct beneficiaries: 625,000 (60% girls) primary students affected by school closures and 1,500 (60% female) teachers. Indirect beneficiaries: 6,250 (30% female) school and shuras members
Relevant national priorities and plans	Ministry of Education (MoE) COVID-19 Response plan (Initial 3-month response – March-May 2019; and Recovery-Response Plan - June 2020 – February 2021) 2020 Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiEWG) Response Plan 2018-2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP)- 2020 revision National Education Strategic Plan III (2017-2021)
Relevant Millennium Declaration Commitment and MDGs or SDGs	SDG 4: Inclusive and Equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all SDG 5. Gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls
Relevant UNICEF's Strategic Plan Outcome Areas	Outcome Statement 2: Girls and boys, in particular the most marginalized and those affected by humanitarian situations, are provided with inclusive and equitable quality education and learning opportunities.
Implementing Partners	Will be selected by calls for proposal. Will be open to national and international organizations.
Strategic/ Policy Partners	Ministry of Education (MoE), EiEWG, Local Education Group (LEG), Development Partners Group (DPG)
Date Submitted	12 May 2020 (updated as of 10 July)
UNICEF Contact	

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Acronyms

CBE	Community-Based Education
DP/G	Development Partner/Group
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EiEWG	Education in Emergency Working Group
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
LEG	Local Education Group
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
PED	Provincial Education Department
SMS	School Management Shuras
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TPM	Third Party Monitor
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

1. Situation Analysis

Afghanistan is a complex context faced with protracted conflict, persistent natural disasters, a failing economy and largely ineffective social-support systems. As such, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a significant crisis-level threat. With more than 190 countries and territories affected, some of these experiencing second-wave infection, the world is on track to suffer considerable societal stress and a serious economic downturn, with multiple countries including Afghanistan balancing on a knife-edge the economic and social costs of lockdown measures to contain the spread of the virus. As of May, the economy was already showing signs of slowed growth, and food prices continued to rise as neighbouring countries closed their borders, insurgents continued attacks making transport of goods and services difficult and reports of price gouging in key urban areas, together with lockdowns, hurt specifically those in the informal economy and living on the street. The Ministry of Economy has warned that unemployment would increase by 40 percent, and poverty by 70 percent because of unemployment and the spread of the virus. In addition, the negative impact of the virus on the economies in other countries in the region – Iran, Pakistan and the Gulf States in particular - has cut the flow of remittances from Afghan migrants and seen hundreds of thousands of them returning to limited prospects for work and internal displacement.

Signs are that the virus will continue to spread for the rest of 2020 and beyond, severely threatening the resilience and coping capacities of Afghanistan's worst-affected and vulnerable communities. According to Save the Children, a third of the population – including 7.3 million children – faced food shortages in April and May due to the current pandemic and continue to do so. The country's already fragile social support and health systems are struggling to keep up; according to the MoPH, some 6 percent of those testing positive for COVID-19 are health care providers. As of the end of June 1, over 31,000 cases were confirmed in the country and more than 700 had died. Almost 14,000 had recovered. According to official figures, the situation appears to be stabilizing. While as of early May, the UN Deputy SRSG estimated that 2 million Afghans were likely to become ill and cases were tripling, there are some figures showing a general trend downward², albeit with recurring spikes.

At the same time, without health or unemployment insurance, it is difficult for people to stay home, even when sick. And it remains problematic that the numbers are considered to be under-reported, as testing and tracing are limited (approximately 1,800/million)³ and not all infected Afghans returning from other countries are being identified. According to the MoPH, while about 20,000 tests were being taken daily, there was capacity to assess only about 2,000⁴. According to the governor of Kabul, "the number of infected is higher than the picture we have. In Kabul, it is likely more than a million people," as people were being buried without confirming infection. Rural areas are more challenging in terms of limited or no access to tests or treatment; and slow test results discourage many "from getting tested at all....By the time sick people receive the results, they have either died or recovered, so we don't even bother..."⁵. These are troubling indicators of a potentially slow and uncertain recovery, indicators that parents, teachers and children are likely to be aware of as they consider a return to school. On 14 March 2020, the Ministry of Education (MoE) closed all learning facilities until 15 May. However, education facilities are

¹ WorldOMeter Coronavirus June 29th update

² WorldOMeter Coronavirus June 29th update

³ Test rates are improving from only 270 per million in May, but are still below neighbouring Pakistan (5700/m) and Iran (19,500).

⁴ Mashal, Mujib et al. June 14/20, "Desperate for Any Coronavirus Care, Afghans Flock to Herbalist's 'Vaccine'". NYT

⁵ Glinski, Stefanie. June 10/20. "Through mountain passes and Taliban land: the longest journey in the world for Covid-19 samples". The Telegraph

now not expected to reopen until September and then presumably gradually, on evidence of reduced infection rates, increased capacity for testing, treatment and tracing, and broad community adoption of hygiene, masking and distancing protocols. With roughly 7.5 million children not resuming their normal schooling schedules and access to curriculum content for some time, in addition to the 3.7 million who were already out-of-school, the burden on a seriously stressed education and child protection system will be significant. Prolonged absence from school, the existing weak habits of learning and the beneficial social interactions schooling can provide, will inevitably create a downward spiral of schools being less welcoming for children and of children's own declining commitment to and interest in learning with a loss of skills especially in reading and math, and increased involvement in other types of activities – chiefly work and, for girls, marriage.

Substantial disparities of wealth and security within and between provinces are not discriminating against at-risk communities in terms of access to school, as such; all are being affected by the closure. Inequality is, however, very seriously disadvantaging those children and their families whose resilience and strategies for coping are already limited and it will undoubtedly impede their ability to make use of prevention or remediation interventions that are available during lockdown and once schools begin re-opening. In areas like Helmand, Kandahar, Paktika, Uruzgan, and Wardak provinces, recording low girls' enrolment prior to the outbreak, girls remain particularly at risk of not returning to school.⁶ The most vulnerable and marginalized students are disproportionately affected by fewer opportunities at home to feel safe and secure, as well as for learning, the World Bank estimating that only 14 percent of Afghans use the internet and these not in marginal communities⁷.

Based on growing evidence from even well-developed education systems and more so in marginalized and vulnerable communities in the less developed ones, children are suffering increasing stress as their time away from established routines, friends and a sense of positive direction in their lives continues; as school-based resources providing psycho-social support and life-skills guidance disappear. At least some, and perhaps many, will drop out of school altogether. The need for support is also proving high for parents and caregivers as they try to maintain the patience, resilience and capacity to guide children's learning while coping with their own isolation and restrictions on movement as well as lost income and an uncertain future.

All of this is affecting especially women. There are concerns they are being "left out of testing and their health deprioritised" according to an IRC advisor. While women make up 51 percent of cases world-wide, they are only 30 percent in Afghanistan. There is growing evidence, too, that they are confronting increased levels of domestic violence and confinement. These are the mothers, female care givers and teachers crucial to children's returning to school.

The impact of all of these dynamics will be magnified even further for children and families living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, refugee and returnee communities, on the streets of larger urban areas and among socially isolated minority groups.

⁶ In some provinces as many as 85% of girls were out-of-school prior to the COVID outbreak.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, June 18, 2020

2. Project Goal

Development Partners are continuing their regular support to the MoE for the on-going implementation, supervision and monitoring of the use and effectiveness of strategies, undertaken through various funding sources, during the mitigation period, aimed at enabling:

- school-age children, especially girls and other of the most vulnerable children, to avoid significant loss of learning during school shutdown through accessing age-appropriate self-learning materials linked to curriculum priorities: self-learning text and audio-visual materials and distance education media-based (TV, radio) programmes; and

- teachers to maintain and strengthen their professional capacities through self-learning pedagogical packages and media-based (mobile-apps, TV, radio) as well as mentoring structures to improve basic skills like effective communication, stress management, targeted pedagogical concepts as needed per the student self-learning materials, etc.

The proposed project reflects both the intention of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) that the funding window supports governments to “*plan, respond to and coordinate action*” to recover from the education impacts of the pandemic, and the guidance of the MoE that actions align directly with its Recovery-Response Plan (June 2020-February 2021). It will do so by **supporting the preparation and re-opening of public schools at the basic education level**⁸, prioritizing the COVID-19 high-risk districts in border provinces with Iran and Pakistan (such as Herat, Kandahar, Nimroz, Faryab and Nangarhar).

Recognizing the heightened increased barriers facing children’s timely return to school, especially for girls and other vulnerable children, the interventions will make explicit the importance of resuming education through promotion of outreach campaigns to the communities and parents by emphasising messages of inclusion, gender equality, protection, security and a healthy environment.

Recognizing also that globally there are as yet no definitive answers to how best reopen schools safely and in ways that are inclusive of all children, collaboration with partners at school, community and national levels will ensure that all decisions on strategies, types and levels of support and timing are based on local context, take into account an expanding international database of effective practice, and are adapted through “learning from evidence” of the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

Considering the chronic education crisis underlined in the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the enormous burden now being added by COVID-19, this funding will be crucial in mobilizing and extending focused, coordinated and targeted interventions through support to children’s continued engagement in learning, the readiness of their schools and their communities to encourage their return and receive them safely, and continue the regular curriculum and, as needed, provide remedial support.

All activities proposed will apply principles of transparency, accountability and effectiveness in aiming to enhance capacity within the education system and among especially vulnerable communities to maintain children’s, especially girls’, engagement with schooling in cumulative and sustainable ways; and to promote risk reduction and mitigation thinking, planning and implementation especially at local level toward ensuring the continued safety and security of schools.

⁸ In Afghanistan, these are grades 1-9

The particularly fragile situation of children and families in IDP camps, returnees⁹ and other irregular arrangements will be highlighted, with ways explored for how best to address the reality that the basics of avoiding and managing COVID-19 infection (hand sanitizing, physical distancing and isolation) are untenable where “home” and “classroom” are tents or small rooms. This also comes with an understanding that vulnerability to the virus will be significantly exacerbated once winter starts (winterization of accommodation and schools are included in other education programmes, but will be ramped up here with specific attention to working with families, Shura and teachers on how guidance on distancing and hygiene can be maintained in close and enclosed quarters). Coordination with protection and humanitarian counterparts will be prioritized; and lessons being learned in other countries with similar high-risk populations will actively be sought, adapted and applied.

3. Implementation Plan

GPE funds will support interventions in ways intended to strengthen and sustain institutional and individual resilience and competencies in dealing with the immediate and on-going implications of COVID-19; monitoring their implementation and effectiveness; and sustaining children’s learning as much as possible at grade level, while keeping them healthy, secure as well as academically included. Public schools, as they reopen, will be supported to be child-welcoming and effective learning environments.

As much as possible, all interventions build on existing systems, resources and materials. For example, the project will build on the work done by the Education in Emergencies Working Group (EiEWG) Task Forces at the onset of COVID-19 on students’ learning pathways and teachers’ engagement, which developed and disseminated self-learning packages for grades 1-3 as well as monitoring tools for teachers to oversee the learning of children who received self-learning paper-based packages. Recognizing COVID-19 as an unprecedented and still poorly understood and therefore unpredictable crisis, all interventions will ensure consistent coordination, intensive monitoring of assumptions and results, and a readiness to learn and adapt. Key here will be supporting the MoE in making evidence-based decisions on where, when and how to re-open. The EiEWG will help facilitate this through its dashboard data-management facility.

During the first mitigation period, the MoE has focused on reaching school-aged children with at-home learning opportunities aimed at preventing loss of progress made before closure. As the MoE continues to refine its “Recovery Response Plan” and find the appropriate balance between keeping children and staff safe while also enabling effective teaching and learning as basic education schools (grades 1-9) reopen, emphasis of the GPE funding will be on support to those components aimed at enabling the continuity of the system through safe schools, quality of teaching and children’s learning outcomes. Specifically, funding will contribute to these priorities through **three objectives**:

- Objective 1: Improving and sustaining safe school environments: access to clean water¹⁰, hygiene kits, disinfectant and training needed to maintain safe school environments;

⁹ Returnees may be stigmatised as potential carriers of Covid-19 and face additional barriers as well as loss of livelihoods, and/or barriers for children wishing to enter the Afghan education system.

¹⁰ Recognizing that chlorinating water is a technical and potentially dangerous activity without the right implementation, this will be prioritized only in schools considered ready to manage the procedure and with regular technical monitoring.

- Objective 2: Sustaining inclusive and effective child-friendly learning environments: recruit volunteer¹¹ teachers and encourage return of those previously in place, with specific focus on female teachers; provide training emphasizing strategies for continuous assessment of children’s basic literacy/numeracy skills, and provide remedial support; and promote Shura, principal and teacher outreach to communities to mobilize return to school;
- Objective 3: Enabling children’s re-engagement with learning: starting as schools begin reopening to provide teachers with appropriate training to support children to study at the right level and avoid dropouts.

4. Key Interventions

Guided by the best interests of the child, based on progressive assessment of the benefits and risks of resuming face-to-face learning facilitated through on-going dialogue with the MoE, and assuming the recovery period will continue to be uncertain and so necessarily require iterative, non-linear and evidence-based responses, GPE-funded interventions will support the MoE in implementing its Recovery-Response Plan (June 2020-February 2021) through prioritizing actions to:

- Make public schools proactively “ready for children” through safe-school guidelines, supplies and clean water/hygiene facilities¹²: this assumes re-infection risk remains high, with staff, families and students anxious over exposure; and families already in multi-dimensional poverty falling further and adopting coping mechanisms dysfunctional to children’s schooling e.g. work, early marriage;
- Recruit, train and support the pedagogical skills of teachers in public schools: this assumes changes in personnel numbers due to reluctance, resignation and deaths in most schools¹³, and the need for new remedial teaching and assessment skills in order to close learning gaps especially among children who were unable to access or benefit from earlier mitigation measures. Efforts will be made to make up for children’s lost learning time e.g. double shifting, catch-up classes;
- Formatively assess students and adapt curriculum sequence: this assumes many children will have suffered decline of target competencies, trauma, lowered nutrition levels, illness, uncertainty over grade placement, and inability to access mid-year and end-year exams;
- Address the financial and materials strain on schools: this assumes a weakening of the “supply side” as the sector as a whole and individual schools continuing to lose ground in the economic downturn; distribution of cost-free teaching and learning supplies reduces the burden of school costs on households and provides teachers and students with basic materials needed to carry out their lessons;
- Encourage innovative “back to school” thinking: this assumes the need to find creative ways of enabling children’s return through: managing parents’ and children’s fear; determining how best to provide reasonable and feasible distancing options in confined school spaces e.g. phasing days of

¹¹ Toward sustaining the value of the training resources provided by the grant, the Ministry will be encouraged to maintain as many of these teachers as possible on tashkil.

¹² The funding will not cover infrastructure e.g. bigger buildings / more classes. It will support other organizational and capacity strategies to work with schools to accommodate social distancing.

¹³The number of teachers returning as schools reopen will likely remain uncertain and unstable for considerable time. For this reason, needs assessments will be undertaken to confirm the precise distribution over the 1,250 targeted schools of the 1,500 teachers to be recruited.

attendance by birth month, morning and afternoon shifts, using outdoor spaces; blending in-class and distance learning arrangements; preventing stigmatisation and abuse of children perceived to be co-virus carriers e.g. IDPs, returnees.

Based on the above, the interventions will aim to reach three main outcomes:

Outcome 1: Public schools¹⁴, especially those in hard-to-reach and COVID-19 high risk provinces, are made ready for re-opening with the resources, information and materials they need to welcome children and their teachers

Output 1.1: Schools have safe water stations and apply hygiene standards in line with evolving MoE guidance and MoPH policy on COVID-19 prevention.

Activity 1.1.1: Undertake initial mappings of schools, especially those in high poverty, high density and high infection areas, to assess the scope and type of WASH and hygiene needs and, from these, supply access to clean water chlorination, disinfectant materials, hygiene kits and handwashing stations with soap targeting 1,250 schools.

Activity 1.1.2: Train 6,250 local community members and teachers (up to 5 per school) to place, use and maintain water and hygiene supplies as well as supporting school staff and students' WASH knowledge and practices such as distancing behavior, Covid-19 symptoms' identification and follow-up; in line with MoPH and MoE guidelines.

Activity 1.1.3: Provide training to Shura on school safe guidelines consistent with MoPH policy on COVID-19, building on existing and evolving MoE outreach messages with respect to safe school reopening targeting 1,250 schools.

Outcome 2: Teachers able to manage child-centred classrooms, assess children's learning levels and tailor lessons geared to these

Output 2.1: Teachers, especially female, have improved capacities in conducting lessons and assessing students' performance and providing remediation as needed to low-performing students

Activity 2.1.1: Recruit¹⁵ and deploy 1,500 teachers, especially female, and train them to provide child-centered lessons and continuously assess student's skills

Activity 2.1.2: Support MoE with provision of in-service supervisory support for newly recruited 1,500 teachers, self-learning pedagogical materials and online coaching to develop, in a timely way, their capacities for assessment and remediation, for identifying behavioural and cognitive changes likely to impede learning, and for taking appropriate learning support measures.

¹⁴ This proposal focuses on the response only in public basic education schools, in Afghanistan grades 1-9. It does not support CBEs which are covered under the separate US\$ 20 million GPE Accelerated Fund.

¹⁵ Though it is expected that these will be volunteers, associated costs will be covered through the GPE COVID-19 funding.

Activity 2.1.3: Support MoE development, dissemination and implementation of guidelines for student assessment and exams by following-up their application in the target 1,250 schools by Academic Supervisors and Shuras, monitoring and supporting teachers as they analyse results and use them to prepare interventions enabling students to successfully learn at the right level.

Output 2.2: Teachers and School Shura are supporting continuing to reach out to families and children with tailored “back to school” outreach with families

Activity 2.2.1: Support teachers and school *shuras* to conduct back to school campaign especially targeting issues of children in work, pushed into early marriage or excluded as IDPs and returnees due to the economic impact of COVID-19

Outcome 3: Students resume their education and are able to study at the right-grade level

Output 3.1: Children return to school and are supported to study at the right level

Activity 3.1.1: Develop, print and distribute guidelines for conducting formative and summative assessments of children’s learning levels in 1,250 schools to allow appropriate grade placement and remedial planning, especially in the core subjects and competency areas; with particular attention to inclusion of girls, linguistically and culturally marginalized children and those with disabilities.

Activity 3.1.2: Distribute standard student learning kits, teacher pedagogical support packages and classrooms education supplies (tents, black boards, plastic mats) for 625,000 children in the targeted 1,250 schools.

Activity 3.1.3: Support the opening of accelerated and remedial classes for students who have fallen too far below grade level to be readmitted at the right placement, with special attention to IDP and returnee students at risk of being stigmatized or abused, reaching 312,500 children (60% girls)

Activity 3.1.4: Initiate coordination with the MoE/Literacy Department, MoPH, other clusters (food security, health) and NGOs to develop and recommend options for remote learning as “transition bridges” to supplement teaching and learning where schools are operating on partial or adapted schedules, or are slower to open.

5. Implementation Schedule

Description	Quarter-1 (Jul-Sep 2020)	Quarter-2 (Oct -Dec 2020)	Quarter-3 (Jan-Mar 2021)	Quarter-4 (Apr-Jun 2021)
Outcome 1: Public schools, especially those in hard-to-reach and COVID-19 high risk provinces, are made ready for re-opening with the resources, information and materials they need to welcome children and their teachers				
Output 1.1: Schools have safe water stations and apply hygiene standards in line with evolving MoE guidance and MoPH policy on COVID-19 prevention¹⁶.				
Activity 1.1.1: Undertake initial mappings of schools, especially those in high poverty, high density and high infection areas, to assess the scope and type of WASH and hygiene needs and, from these, supply access to clean water chlorination, disinfectant materials, hygiene kits and handwashing stations with soap targeting 1,250 schools.				
Activity 1.1.2: Train 6,250 local community members and teachers (up to 5 per school) to place, use and maintain water and hygiene supplies as well as and supporting school staff and students' WASH knowledge and practices such as distancing behavior, Covid-19 symptoms' identification and follow-up; in line with MoPH and MoE guidelines				
Activity 1.1.3.: Provide training to Shura on school safe guidelines consistent with MoPH policy on COVID-19, building on existing and evolving MoE outreach messages with respect to safe school reopening targeting 1,250 schools.				
Outcome 2: Teachers able to manage child-centred classrooms, assess children's learning levels and tailor lessons geared to these				
Output 2.1: Teachers, especially female, have improved capacities in conducting lessons and assessing students' performance and providing remediation as needed to low-performing students				
Activity 2.1.1: Recruit and deploy 1,500 teachers, especially female, and train them to provide child-centered lessons and continuously assess student's skills				
Activity 2.1.2: Support MOE with provision of in-service supervisory support to newly recruited 1,500 teachers on assessment and remedial capacity.				
Activity 2.1.3: Support MoE development and dissemination and implementation of guidelines for student assessment and exams by following-up their application in target 1,250 schools, monitoring and supporting teachers in analysing results and using them to prepare interventions enabling students to successfully learn at the right level.				
Output 2.2: Teachers and School Shura are supporting continuing to reach out to families and children with tailored "back to school" outreach with families				
Activity 2.2.1: Support the MoE and partners to conduct back to school campaign especially targeting issues of children in work, pushed into early marriage or excluded as IDP and returnees due to the economic impact of COVID-19				

¹⁶ WASH will start in Q1

Outcome 3: Students resume their education and are able to study at the right-grade level				
Output 3.1: Children return to school and are supported to study at the right level				
Activity 3.1.1: Develop, print and distribute guidelines for conducting formative and summative assessments of children’s learning levels in 1,250 schools to allow appropriate grade placement and remedial planning, especially in the core subjects and competency areas; with particular attention to inclusion of girls, linguistically and culturally marginalized children and those with disabilities.				
Activity 3.1.2: Distribute standard student learning kits, teacher pedagogical support packages and classrooms education supplies (tents, black board, plastic mats) for 625,000 children in 1,250 schools.				
Activity 3.1.3: Support the opening of accelerated and remedial classes for students who have fallen too far below grade level to be readmitted at the right placement, with special attention to IDP and returning students at risk of being stigmatized or abused reaching 312,500 children (60% girls)				
Activity 3.1.4: Initiate coordination with the MoE/Literacy Department, MoPH, NGOs and other clusters (food security, health) to develop and recommend options for remote learning as “transition bridges” to supplement teaching and learning where schools are operating on partial or adapted schedules or are slower to open.				

6. Strategic and Implementation Partners

UNICEF is well-established in the education and humanitarian assistance sectors in Afghanistan, most specifically in EIE as co-lead of the Working Group, and has been proactive in engaging with the MoE to clarify and more tightly focus its COVID-19 Response Plan and set it into a longer-term timeframe to deal with the transition into the recovery period.

Continued collaboration with the MoE, EiEWG, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and other national and international NGO partners over the next 12 months, will enable UNICEF to access the hardest-to-reach areas, those affected by poverty in the mitigation phase and also those in which COVID-19 infections and school closures persist into the recovery period. There will be continued collaboration across other GPE funded activities in-country where these have been re-profiled and targeted to support COVID-19 response. The selection of implementing partners will be based on the commonly agreed operational, technical and budgetary criteria by EiEWG. Since speed is of the essence during the initial phase of the intervention, national and international NGOs with prior experience of implementation of similar type EIE responses, demonstrated technical expertise and experience in design and delivery of alternate and/or distance learning and with access to the prioritized high-risk locations will get precedence.

7. Exit Strategy / Sustainability

The project is consistent with the approach taken by the MoE in its planned COVID-19 interventions in public schools, and EiEWG funding in CBE schools. As such, it will serve to extend the reach and deepen the impact across the whole of the system in what are expected to be the most affected areas.

Assuming that COVID-19 infections will persist until treatment and/or a vaccine are developed, and based on the multi-dimensional impact of the virus on children's access to quality education, while the 12-month emergency funding will serve immediately to strengthen the response actions of the MoE as it opens schools, it will also lay the groundwork for moving forward over the longer period of recovery.

All actions proposed here are consistent with well-established development interventions in the sector, serving to anchor them in regular lines of funding. At the same time, response to COVID-19 will be seen very much through the lens of "building back better", not simply restoring the status quo.

- Clean water, sanitation and learning supplies are expected to remain in schools; as well as the capacities to maintain them and train staff in their use. Complementarity to other WASH initiatives will be highlighted.
- "Back to school" outreach materials and relations built with parents on the value of education and safety of schools will serve in the longer term to maintain children's participation – especially if COVID-19 infections persist, and other crises emerge.
- Children provided remedial support to catch-up their grade-level learning, especially girls, and tailored to those with specific disabilities, will have a stronger sense of inclusion and learning-to-learn skills base from which to continue realizing learning outcomes. At least some of the IDP and returnee children targeted for enrolment and at-home learning may be sustained.
- In-service teacher education in formative/summative assessment, child-centred pedagogy in a child-friendly learning environment – already needed, before COVID-19 – will work to ensure teachers are able to provide learners with inclusive, quality education in the long term.

Support to the MoE, as it continues to evolve its Recovery-Response Plan, provides the opportunity to coordinate on longer term recovery, including activities that may be incorporated into MoE's budget and other sources of funding support. A key point here is that on-going discussion with the MoE will seek to ensure that the additional teachers (especially female) recruited and trained in key areas such as student assessment and remedial learning will be retained.

8. Performance Monitoring and Reporting

The Results Framework that will be used for monitoring is provided in Section 11.

UNICEF has five zonal offices covering the central region (Kabul), eastern region (Jalalabad), western region (Herat), southern region (Kandahar), and northern region (Mazar-e-Sharif) and outposts located in Badakhshan, Badghis, Bamyan, Daikundi, Gardez and Ghor. Allowing for distancing and hygiene regimes, these offices continue to be operational, with managerial, technical and operational personnel able to support planning and monitor implementation of UNICEF activities. In addition, field offices are able to

assist with the capacity-building of government and other partners through various training and mentoring approaches, most of which can be applied while following health and safety guidelines.

UNICEF implements activities through counterparts, including government institutions and national and international NGOs. In addition, UNICEF staff carry out regular field monitoring to support implementing partners and ensure quality and effective programme delivery.

UNICEF, as the grant agent, will sign Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with selected implementing partners. The crucial monitoring tools and systems below will be put in place:

Monitoring systems: UNICEF monitoring and evaluation officers and technical extenders, in close collaboration with the MoE and other major stakeholders, will establish relevant assessment tools to measure indicators related to the project. These will be assessed and collected through joint monitoring activities, at a distance and, when possible, in person.

Field offices: UNICEF field-based staff supported by the Kabul office will conduct day-to-day monitoring of implementation progress.

Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT): In 2013, UNICEF fully adopted the HACT system, which requires a systematic approach to monitoring of partners, including regular field visits as well as financial and programmatic 'spot-checks' at the head office and field office levels. Regular UNICEF internal, as well as external, audits are carried out, as relevant, to ensure procedures are duly followed.

Third Party Monitoring: UNICEF has engaged the services of a private sector firm to conduct third party monitoring across the country. The firm will focus on hard-to-reach areas, as well as support UNICEF teams on the ground with complementary monitoring and reporting.

9. External Threats to Project Implementation

- The COVID-19 infection rate will continue to worsen before a plateau is reached and decline begins. This implies:
 - opportunities for income generation will become increasingly limited, affecting most particularly vulnerable families already in poverty or on the margins;
 - children will suffer from food insecurity, psycho-social stress and physical abuse, making it difficult to undertake self-directed learning even where the materials and technology are available;
 - teachers, Shura and other community-based supports for children will be social distancing, quarantined or stressed and not be available for children; and
 - materials will be difficult to produce in sufficient quality and quantity where developers and printers are staying away from work, and supply chains for inputs like paper, hand-sanitizer, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for care workers, will be strained.
 - limited availability of teachers (especially female teachers) for recruitment as teachers/teaching aides.

Monitoring & Mitigation: a limited number of Outputs are planned for the 1st phase to allow time and attention to “getting the activities right”: working in close collaboration with the MoE and partners; continuous monitoring of assumptions and impacts; openness to adaptation to accommodate unstable targets, delivery and supply chain environments.

- While there is a risk the government will reopen schools too soon without appropriate COVID-19 risk mitigation measures in place, the likelihood is greater that closure will be maintained until at least August 2020. This implies:
 - extending the time children are away from the stabilizing effects of school and motivating experience of realizing learning outcomes, leaving them reluctant or unable ever to come back; and
 - school openings when they do begin will be “rocky”, as buildings, including WASH facilities are deteriorated, teachers decide not to return or return sporadically, and semester curricula need to be started over, rather simply adjusted.

Monitoring & Mitigation: continuous and focused coordination with MoE and other agencies involved with mitigation and recovery will ensure coherent and consistent messaging to the sector and the wider community about the conditions under which schools can and will reopen, and with what protection and support systems need to be in place for children and teachers. Training for teachers will emphasize the importance of flexibility in managing children’s participation and learning, as well as recognizing and acting on signs of trauma, including their own. PCAs and workplans agreed with implementing partners will allow for some flexibility to respond to school reopening dates. Results frameworks and overall workplan for the activities supported through this grant will be regularly reviewed with Ministry and updated if required to comply with the national COVID-19 response plan and guidance on school reopening.

- Populations will not remain stable as quarantine and resultant income loss drive internal migration, and those returning from elsewhere in the region attempt to find settled living arrangements and employment.

Monitoring & Mitigation: collaboration with community leaders, local authorities and humanitarian organisations will be emphasized, including establishing on-going risk assessment, early warning benchmarks, support for identifying and helping manage community and family stabilizing strategies, where feasible.

10. Project-based Risk and Mitigation

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Mitigation measures</i>
Continued spread of COVID-19 affects the ability of development and humanitarian partners to go to the field and conduct activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF in conjunction with WHO will support training of implementation partners to limit exposure of field staff and beneficiaries. • Partners will apply Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on appropriate risk mitigation measures to undertake field activities, especially distribution. Partners will be equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when needed and as set out in agreed SOP. • Frequent coordination meetings with partners to assess project sites’ accessibility and discuss potential work plans’ adaptation if needed.
Reopening of schools will lead to a resurgence of infection among students, staff, and the broader community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict health prevention measures will be implemented (based on WHO’s recommendations) and social distancing will be applied. • Small-group teaching will be conducted, if and where feasible, with two different shifts (morning and afternoon).

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Mitigation measures</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools/classrooms will be equipped with WASH handwashing facilities. • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be distributed for students and teachers.
Lack of/disruption in access to TV, radio and mobile phones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on REACH assessment regarding communication access, data will be analyzed to identify any gaps in coverage and adapt and inform the response. • Regular communications will take place with Shura members and parents to report any issues in access to learning modalities and to adapt appropriate responses. • Paper-based self-learning packages will be utilized when TV and radio are not available. • Guidance for supporting children’s self-learning will be developed and disseminated to teachers, shuras and parents.
Risk of children dropping out of education as they are not at the right grade level (closure of schools affecting their learning progression)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy-to-use, re-entry, assessment tools will be developed, together with MoE and building on available models (e.g. EGRA). For teachers’ use, they will be focused on basic literacy and numeracy skills, and core knowledge and competencies appropriate to age, grade and content of the self-learning packages. • Catch-up classes will be offered for low-performing students. • Frequent monitoring of children’s attendance by teachers and Shuras will be done to alert on drop-out cases and take necessary support measures.
Unpredictable security situations limit (restriction in activities’ implementation and monitoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security risks are assessed through UNICEF’s Safety & Security Departments and mitigated through continuous monitoring. • Engagement of communities in design, implementation and assessment of activities to ensure access and acceptance of projects and implementers by communities. • The EiEWG will be immediately informed by partners of any deteriorating political situation that might affect project delivery.
Earthquake or flood directly or indirectly affecting the programme and communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will assess project locations to analyze likely risks and identify mitigating measures. • Implementing partners will have contingency plans in place. • In the event of a sudden onset crisis, partners will communicate with UN/EiEWG authorities and communities and apply response plans accordingly.
Supply chains are erratic or fail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market assessments will be conducted to assess availability of supplies and plan for mitigation measures. • UNICEF’s pre-positioned supplies will be used if local supplies are not available. • HACT and supplies procedures will be implemented. Monitoring of supply distribution will be conducted regularly.

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Mitigation measures</i>
Corruption, fraud and diversion of assistance impede accountable and effective intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing partners will be thoroughly vetted before receiving any funding and spot-checks will be regularly conducted (and audited if necessary). • Rigorous financial reporting, monitoring and auditing processes will be applied across the programme. • HACT assessment will be required for all implementing partners. • Regular programmatic visits will be conducted. • Capacity building of implementing partners regarding UNICEF's policies

11. Results Framework

Expected Results	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Means of verification	Frequency of data collection	Assumption(s)
Output 1.1 Schools have safe water stations and apply hygiene standards in line with evolving MoE guidance and MoPH policy on COVID-19 prevention.	# of schools equipped with safe water stations	0	1,250	Post installation reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once after the installation /provision of safe water equipment	Adequate learning conditions are available in school (building, facilities, teachers and active SMS).
	# schools applying minimum hygiene standards for COVID-19 prevention in line with MoE guidance and MoPH policy	0	1,250	Implementing Partner reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Twice per semester after the training on hygiene practices	Schools received hygiene training and protection guidelines.
	# school-age children sensitized on handwashing and proper hygiene practices	0	625,000 (60% girls)	Training completion reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once as a pre-test (before awareness raising sessions) and once after the hygiene sensitization is conducted	Communities received effective communication to send their children to schools. Communities and children are comfortable with the hygiene and protective measures applied in schools. Children are willing to be in school and have access to schools. Hygiene promotion was conducted for

Expected Results	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Means of verification	Frequency of data collection	Assumption(s)
						children in the targeted schools.
	# teachers and <i>shura</i> members trained to implement school- COVID-19 plans	0	6,250 (60% female)	Training completion reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once after the training of teachers and SMSs on COVID-19 management measures	Schools have active SMSs with female representation to support the project implementation and supervision in schools.
Output 2.1 Teachers, especially female, have improved capacities in conducting lessons and assessing students' performance and providing remediation as needed to low performing students	# teachers trained to apply assessments and tailored lessons	0	1,500 (60% female)	Pre-post-test assessments Implementing Partner reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	A pre-test will be conducted to assess teachers' capacities before the training and a post-test will be conducted after the teacher training. A mid-term measurement will be conducted to assess teachers' capacities	Volunteer teachers, particularly female teachers, meeting the selection criteria were recruited. Training was conducted for those teachers.
	# teachers designing remedial interventions based on children's test results	0	1,500	Implementing Partner reports Children's test results Remedial classes' lessons/ attendance sheet of remedial classes UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once, after the assessment is done for the students	Volunteer teachers were recruited and trained.
Output 2.2 Teachers and School Shura are supporting "back to school" outreach with families	# teachers and <i>shura</i> members conducting back-to-school outreach	0	6,250 (60% female)	Implementing Partners & shura reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once, at the end of the back-to-school campaign	Schools have active SMSs to conduct back-school outreach campaigns in the targeted communities.
Output 3.1: Children return to school and	% of students previously enrolled	Actual per school	75% of previously enrolled	School enrolment records	Once after back to school campaign	Schools reopened and are functional.

Expected Results	Indicators	Baseline	Targets	Means of verification	Frequency of data collection	Assumption(s)
are supported to study at the right level	returned to target schools		students (60% girls)	Implementing Partner & shura reports 3rd-party monitoring		School records are updated and complete.
	# of students assessed (reading and numeracy skills)	0	625,000 students (60% girls)	Implementing Partner & teachers' reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once, after the assessment is done	Teachers are recruited and trained on assessment guidelines. Teachers conducted learning assessment for children.
	# of students and teachers provided with learning kits	0	625,000 students (60% girls) 12,000 teachers (70% female)	Post distribution reports UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Once, post distribution of school bag kits	School bag kits were procured and distributed at the beginning of the academic year.
	# children provided with catch-up classes (based on test assessment)	0	312,500	Implementing Partner reports Attendance records of catch up classes UNICEF monitoring reports 3rd-party monitoring	Twice: After the start of catch-up classes (in the second quarter) and one month prior to the final exams	Communities received strong and effective communication to send their children to schools. Children are willing to be in school and have access to schools. Learning assessment was conducted for children. Teachers were trained on the provision of remedial/catch-up classes.

12. Evidence-based Learning Approach

Performance monitoring and risk mitigation efforts described in sections 8-11 will be complemented by an evidence-based approach to project implementation. Considering the project's duration and the current situation, data collected for this project comprises two types: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data about the number of beneficiaries reached through the project's interventions will be collected on a post-intervention basis and will include checking the relevant documentation, e.g. receipt of supplies, trainers' reports and trainees' attendance sheets. In addition, qualitative data, especially with

respect to relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of interventions from the perspectives of key stakeholders, will be collected from schools, based on observations and informal discussions with teachers, Shura and principals during monitoring visits as well as from community members/parents. The information collected at school and community level will be used to facilitate regular progress reporting to GPE Secretariat.

Implementing partners' reports represent the main source of data collected at the school level. Further verification will be ensured through programmatic visits conducted by MoE, UNICEF and Third-Party Monitors (TPM) at school level to verify whether the interventions were implemented as planned. Collection of the required data from different sources along with close follow-up and monitoring of implementation, accompanied by regular feedback at all levels, will support evidence-based decisions allowing for timely response and formative adjustments and/or improvements to be made as required.

As a part of learning from evidence, regular and ad hoc meetings with implementing partners, MoE officials and other stakeholders will be held to discuss progress, enablers and constraints, change recommendations and to agree on the necessary adaptations to achieve the project's objectives. In addition, mid-term and final review workshops will be held to communicate evidence-based lessons and best practices and to document adaptations that might be formative for future programming.

Learning from Evidence Plan:

Event	Level	Targeted Audience	Frequency	Means of Documentation
Progress meeting with implementing partners	Central	Implementing partners & UNICEF	Monthly	Meeting minutes
Progress meetings with implementing partners	At province and district level	Implementing partners & UNICEF Zonal Office	Monthly	Meeting minutes
UNICEF-MoE meetings	Central	MoE (central) & UNICEF	On needs basis	Meeting minutes
Meetings with PED	At province level	PED & UNICEF Zonal Office	On needs basis	Meeting minutes
Mid-term review	Central & sub-national levels	MoE, PED, DED, UNICEF & other stakeholders	One time, in February 2021	Presentations, meeting minutes & attendance sheet
End-term review	Central & sub-national levels	MoE, PED, DED, UNICEF & other stakeholders	One time, in June 2021	Presentations, meeting minutes & attendance sheet