Reducing the impact of the coronavirus on children’s learning
# UNICEF EDUCATION - COVID19 Response

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Background

- The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is disrupting learning for millions of children and youth. Over 861.7 million children and youth are directly affected by nationwide school closures in 107 countries. Additional learners are affected by localized school closures implemented in further 15 countries. School closures put gains made in access to education and learning at risk. Especially the poorest and most marginalized children and youth also face broader risks linked to limited access to essential services like school feeding programmes, information on disease prevention, water and sanitation.

- UNICEF, together with WHO and IFRC, released an operational guidance on protecting children and schools from COVID-19 on 10 March 2020 (press release) and works with national and subnational governments on crisis response, efficient delivery and contingency planning.

- There is an urgent need to invest now in education systems to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic including ensuring that children can continue learning and are protected.

UNICEF response and strategies

UNICEF’s approach is guided by the following ‘readiness’ agenda, focusing on countries and children furthest behind:

- Every 5-year-old is ready for school (more 5-year old’ on track to identify or name 10 letters of the alphabet and recognize numbers from 1 to 10)
- Every 10-year-old is able to succeed at school (more 10-year olds are able to read a simple paragraph and do basic math)
- Every 18-year-old is ready to transition to work and life (more 18-year olds have literacy/numeracy, digital, transferable and job specific skills).

UNICEF is the designated agency within the UN Crisis Management team for monitoring issues and actions of the social impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, which includes education as a response priority. UNICEF, together with partners, is mitigating the social impacts of the coronavirus by ensuring continuity of learning and well-being for children and youth, especially for the most vulnerable affected by the outbreak.

UNICEF, together with WHO and IFRC released the operational guidance on protecting children and schools from COVID-19. UNICEF has shared awareness-raising materials, including materials translated into local languages for easier and wider access. UNICEF has developed key messages and communication materials for the public to reduce exposure and prevent COVID-2019 infection in schools. UNICEF has been working closely with national authorities and development partners since the onset of the outbreak to respond to current needs.

UNICEF is liaising with governments, WHO, UNESCO and other partners to develop response plans in all countries.

1 As of 18th March 2020
**Vision**

The overall vision of this partnership with the GPE is to contribute to ensuring children are safe and keep learning during this pandemic, and to have a lasting positive impact on national education systems in all GPE-eligible countries.

**Objective**

**Overall objective:**

Support Governments and partners in close collaboration with Local Education Groups to reduce the risks of the social impacts of the coronavirus on the education of children. Ensuring safe school operations and the continuity of learning and well-being for children and youth, especially for the most vulnerable affected by the outbreak.

**Specific objectives:**

Governments and partners supported technically and financially in close collaboration with Local Education Groups to:

1. Enhanced education system-level response to the pandemic
2. Support the planning and implementation of safe school operation and risk communication
3. Enhanced knowledge sharing and capacity building both for the current response and future pandemics

**Key Intervention areas**

All Local Education Groups will be provided with a set menu of options of activities to select to maximize impact of the funds in their own local context.

UNICEF proposes the following activity areas to strengthen the preparedness and resilience planning processes and mechanisms of education partners and systems at all levels. Resulting into an increase in the resiliency and capacity of systems to more effectively respond to COVID-19 and other such emergencies

**Objective 1: Enhanced education system-level response to the pandemic.**

1. Support coordination response planning and related system and implementation design to respond to the pandemic (at national, subnational and school level)
2. Support to MoE crisis management team including, technical assistance, coordination and communication of activities
3. Support Rapid Risk Analysis including identification of vulnerable groups, data collection, response planning, budgeting
4. Design and preparation of alternative education delivery systems including reviewing available options from a range of partners, best practices, analysis of capacities and context
5. Establishing appropriate monitoring systems for response including data collection and analysis
6. Support early planning for recovery, reopening of schools and develop initiatives for closing any learning gaps including enabling pathways back to school for the most vulnerable.
7. Based on analysis of the most vulnerable, support contingency and response planning for the poorest and most marginalized, including addressing barriers to access (such as missing any high stakes exams), so that all children have access when schools reopen.

**Objective 2: Support the planning and implementation of safe school operation and risk communication**

1. Translation, printing, dissemination and implementation of safe school guidelines,
2. Monitoring of implementation including effectiveness and reach

Objective 3: Enhanced knowledge sharing and capacity building both for the current response and future pandemics

1. Documentation of the response, including analytical work, case studies and lessons learned and best practices
2. Facilitating dissemination and supporting communication of knowledge-related work (case studies, lessons learned, best practices) in partnership with LEGs, KIX Regional platforms and global platforms including the GPE Board and network. Knowledge products will also be shared on partner platforms, INEE, UNESCO and other regional and global network partnership platforms.

Geographic Focus and prioritization of countries

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a fast-moving crisis effecting all countries equally and each requiring a rapid response. 87 GPE eligible countries will be supported in this proposal/partnership. Countries have been categorized into two groups: Category 1: highly populated countries with decentralized education systems (thereby requiring national and subnational engagement and processes) and Category 2: less populated countries with a predominately centralized system. (see annex for breakdown of countries by category)

UNICEF’s role, partnerships and coordination

The COVID-19 outbreak demands an integrated response to keep children safe and learning. At the global level, UNICEF is coordinating with WHO and key partners. At the regional and country level, UNICEF is coordinating with local authorities, UN, local education groups 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 preparedness and response measures and to help minimize any emergent secondary side effects of the outbreak. GPE Partner coordination will be activated at regional levels to identify resources and assets that compliment and build on this ESPDG support.

UNICEF is active in local education groups in all countries. In several countries, UNICEF serves as Coordinating Agency for the Local Education Group (LEG) and in others as Grant Agent for GPE grants, and as such is centrally involved in the LEG.

UNICEF will manage the funds utilizing its normal policies and procedures. UNICEF will support the Ministry of Education and the LEG to identify the activities within the options that have the maximum impact for the response, map out sources of funding available and determine how best the resources made available through this grant can be optimally utilized. In the unlikely event that implementation is not possible in a designated country, the funds would be reallocated to another recipient country to enable further expansion in that country. Also considering the opportunities to leverage other funds for complimentary activities, such as to pay for the continuation of home-based education over months of school closures. UNICEF will also work closely with the Ministry of Education and the LEG to monitor, document and report on the use of funding.

In working with the LEG, UNICEF will ensure that ESPDG funds are used in a complementary manner with resources made available by the World Bank and other donors. In addition, upon approval of the overall ESPDG to UNICEF, it will communicate on the overall COVID-19 response plan through the Global education cluster and ensure the information is shared with Clusters at country level to create awareness of the available funding and
support. Once the LEG at country level chooses the activities to be supported from the menu of options, the activity plan will be shared with the cluster at country level.

UNICEF regional offices will support identification of regional initiatives to benefit all countries, maximizing cost efficiencies wherever possible. This includes in the areas of technical support, procurement, knowledge management and capacity development.

UNICEF will also engage with GPE to leverage the GPE platforms and other platforms such as INEE for sharing best practice and capacity development.

**Budget**

Initial funds are urgently required to manage the social impacts of the coronavirus on education as described above.

Funding allocations will be made to 87 GPE eligible countries since all countries are/will be impacted by the global outbreak of COVID-19 and that all countries must put in place plans to respond effectively. Funding allocation is divided into four categories:

1. **Category 1 countries** (14 countries @ US$140,000 each) $1,960,000
2. **Category 2 countries** (73 countries @ US$70,000 each) $5,110,000
3. **Regional office coordination**, technical support, KM (7 offices) $980,000
4. **Head Office global coordination, oversight, partnership, support:** $140,000
   
   Indirect Recovery costs 7% $573,300
   
   **Total** $8,763,300

Note: A maximum of 10% of the funds will be allocated to management-related expenses including operational support, supply and procurement-related functions.

**Roadmap**

It is anticipated funds will be allocated to all UNICEF Country and Regional Offices by end March 2020, simple written guidance on fund usage and selection of activities will be shared with each country (and also with GPE Secretariat) supported by regional level webinars, via UNICEF with GPE utilizing the GPE platforms. It is anticipated that activities will start immediately noting this is a fast-moving extraordinary crisis where flexibility will be required. It is anticipated that including activities on knowledge management, the activities will be completed over a period of one year.

**Reporting**

UNICEF will provide financial reports in line with UNICEF’s financial reporting system and the required reporting of GPE on ESPDG grants. This will include a report after 3 months on the number of countries that have developed response plans, and an overview of the menu of options selected.

In addition, UNICEF will also share updates with GPE and the GPE Government and LEG partners to contribute to

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2 As this is an extraordinary request for a rapidly evolving emergency, it is not envisaged that any of these funds will be allocated to Regional or Country level overheads
3 Discussions will be held with higher income countries on the need for funding before disbursement
4 Internal to UNICEF and externally with partners
knowledge sharing and exchange of expertise. Documentation of the response, including analytical work, case studies and lessons learned and best practices will be shared with GPE Secretariat.
Annex 1: List of eligible countries eligible for support from ESPDG by category

**Category 1:** Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Tanzania, Vietnam, Yemen

**Category 2:** Afghanistan, Armenia, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Rep, Côte d'Ivoire, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, El Salvador, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Kiribati, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mali, Mauritania, Micronesia, Moldova, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sudan, Swaziland, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Zambia, Zimbabwe