



# UNHCR COVID-19 Education Response

# Who is UNHCR?

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ( UNHCR) is a United Nations agency with the mandate to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people; and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.

Of the 20.4 million refugees under our care, around 8 million are of school age. Access to education is limited, with more than 50% of children unable to attend school even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

# COVID-19

## A global pandemic: national responses

Building on current ways of working and global commitments.

- **Recognizing the need to plan nationally:**
  - Continuing policy level work toward inclusion of refugees into national systems as per the Global Compact for Refugees
  - Working through and with existing partnerships
- **Advocating for the inclusion of refugees into national plans:**
  - Sharing data about where refugees are not included and how to reach them, including geographic focus
- **Putting in place additional support to go the last mile**
  - Meeting additional needs around connectivity and infrastructure; language; MHPSS; certification (where relevant)

# Sequencing the response

*“ Education activities should not be designed as... stopgap measures but rather as rapid response activities with longer-term development goals ”.*

- Focus first on nutrition and protection
- Immediate support for continuity of learning where possible
- Continued support to teachers and parents, along with community
- Preparing for return and making up for lost time
- Building back better



# Building in support for teachers

Recognising the existing global teacher shortage, and the crucial role teachers play

- **Continue teacher salaries and incentives:**
  - Many teachers in refugee settings are not paid under the national salary systems
- **Advocating for the inclusion of refugees teachers into national plans:**
  - Where national approaches include teacher support or training, advocating for the inclusion of refugee teachers and putting in place resources to go the last mile
- **Supporting teachers to play a full role in the community**
  - Building on existing approaches such as teacher learning circles on WhatsApp: adding in additional information and support, and leaning on teachers as trusted information sharers

# Support for remote learning (online & offline)

- Rolling out national approaches as soon as possible and localizing these where necessary
- Recognising where refugees don't have access to hardware or connectivity
- Work through low/no tech solutions to keep up skills and building on teachers' ideas
- Change our approaches to education support so it works for students right now





Mitigating against inequality

## Mitigating inequalities

Focus on Do No Harm principles –ensuring any response protects

Advocate for Equity - ensuring multi -mode approaches for learners with different levels of access & resources

Understand who is affected differently and plan for this – the crisis is going to exacerbate existing inequalities. Girls are already less likely to be in school but are less likely to learn at home or be given access to shared devices

Prepare for 'back to school' to support those who are more likely to drop out or require remedial education





What comes next?



# A post-COVID world

- A future where refugee children can contribute to a better world
- Guarding against the exacerbation of existing inequalities
- Advocate for increased domestic and global financing for education in lower and middle income countries, and focus on putting inclusion at the heart of strengthening systems
- Seizing the chance to build back better – from WASH in schools to preparedness of education systems and the rolling out of new, flexible, modalities to ensure the most vulnerable do not drop out
- Learning about what does and doesn't work in connected education, and how to bridge the digital divide
- Valuing teachers and putting them at the heart of our work
- Building MHPSS into every school and education system



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