

GEC Advocacy Messages: Coordination during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Effective coordination is more important than ever.

With over 1.5 billion children affected by school closures, children around the world are facing unprecedented challenges to enjoy their right to continuous, quality education. For the over than 75 million children who had already had their education disrupted by humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises, [the importance of effective coordination has taken on a renewed importance](#). Coordination ensures that responses are predictable, accountable, efficient and effective – and that continuous, quality education is available to *all* children and youth in humanitarian contexts.

This note outlines how a well-coordinated planning and response can support the continuity of education services for children and young people, including supporting families and broader communities.

Existing coordination systems must be resourced and strengthened.

- The IASC and the COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan note that [existing formal humanitarian coordination arrangements, such as Education Clusters and Sector/Working Groups must be used and resourced](#) to maximise the efficiency and the effectiveness of humanitarian responses.
- Supporting the existing architecture will [ensure that COVID19 responses build upon and are integrated into the broader education in emergencies responses](#), as countries move through different phases of the COVID19 response and continue to implement their humanitarian plans.

Clusters and Education in Emergencies Sector/Working Groups promote effectiveness & efficiency by:

- [Supporting nationally led efforts](#) to ensure continuity of learning for children and youth: To the extent possible, clusters are aligned with national and local coordination structures, including government plans and coordination, instead of creating parallel mechanisms and duplicating efforts. They also strengthen humanitarian-development nexus by ensuring [strong linkage to national development plans and Ministry of Education COVID-19 plans](#). They also [mobilise and convene donors](#) around these common priorities and plans.
- [Defining response priorities based on context specific needs and](#) in line with the strategic objectives of the COVID-19 Global Response Plan and identify response options.
- Clusters then [coordinate the many education actors](#) to ensure delivery of continued access to quality education [at scale, to complement the Government responses](#), in particular where Governments are not able to fully support education services. Clusters have a critical role in ensuring that local civil society actors are also engaged.
- This includes through alternative means, such as online learning, radio/ television programmes, or other 'no-tech' or 'low-tech' options. Many of these options are designed against global standards and Clusters provide an operational mechanism to coordinate the [contextualisation of standards and interventions](#).
- [Initiating recovery plans](#), together with national authorities, for the safe and efficient return to schools, as well as ensuring access to remedial, catch-up learning and strengthened school-based WASH services.

- Continuing to support [monitoring and reporting against attacks on education](#) to ensure school re-opening is not jeopardized by occupation by armed groups or damaged infrastructure.

Effective coordination leads to more comprehensive and multi-sectorial education responses:

- COVID-19 is having enormous socio-economic consequences with impact on social cohesion and many aspects of social welfare. The response necessitates an [integrated multi-sectoral response](#) to address the complexity of needs of children, youth, teachers and family.
- School closure is a secondary impact of this pandemic. It is therefore [critical that education responses are designed and implemented in close collaboration with other sectors](#), including public health, protection and food security actors.
- For example, this would include awareness among all education partners of prevention and control measures which are integrated in daily activities and lessons, and which considers the protection, mental health and psychosocial support needs of children, teachers and families.

Effective coordination ensures that responses are inclusive of all children, by taking gender, age and vulnerabilities into account.

- We know that the [COVID19 crisis will affect different children in different ways](#). For younger children, the disruption to their early education can have a profound negative impact on their cognitive, social and emotional development. Older adolescents who miss their final years of high school may not ever go back to finish their formal schooling. Girls and boys also face gendered risks. For example, girls face increased risks of early marriage, trafficking, early pregnancies and sexual violence when not in school. Boys in some areas face increased risks of recruitment. A coordinated response must take into account these different needs to be able to prioritise and efficiently use limited resources.
- Clusters and EiE Working Groups ensure that the education response [strategy includes special measures to reach the most vulnerable children](#), including children with disabilities, to safeguard against disruptions to education.

The Global Education Cluster is providing Support to Country Coordination Teams

The Global Education Cluster has significantly scaled up its support to clusters and working groups offering guidance, tools and support on technical aspects related to the COVID-19 response. This includes:

- Monitoring response priorities and gaps of country clusters and working groups to keep track of, and respond to, support needs; collating global [dashboard](#) outlining response needs across countries with existing humanitarian responses.
- Routinely updating the COVID-19 [Resource Menu](#) in French and English, while also developing new coordination resources as needed.
- Reinforcing the capacity of the [Global Education Cluster helpdesk](#) with additional dedicated support from the Rapid Response Team to provide enhanced remote coordination support to all education clusters and working groups, aligned with the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.