

Inclusive Education sector guiding note on COVID-19

Quick facts:

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had an unprecedented impact on education systems worldwide. As of 20th March, the number of children, youth and adults not attending schools or universities because of COVID-19 is soaring. Governments in **124 countries** have closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the [global pandemic \(link is external\)](#).

According to UNESCO monitoring, **107 countries** have implemented nationwide closures, impacting over 1.5 billion **children and youth which is 73% of the total enrolled learners**. A further **12 countries** have implemented localized school closures and, should these closures become nationwide, millions of additional learners will experience education disruption. UNESCO has developed and regularly updates a map of learners affected by school closures caused by VIDOC-19. You can find it here: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>

Here is the Coalition Education message in French: <http://www.coalition-education.fr/ie-m-informe-COVID-19--un-e-eleve-sur-cinq-descolarise-e--l-urgence-d-une-reponse-internationale-280.html>

Why is this so important?

The closure of schools not only disrupts education, but also access to food programmes, social support, personal assistance or medical care, often accessed through schools. Children are at increased risk of child protection issues without the protective and social environment of a school, and linked services. There are increased risks for children with disabilities, if they are unable to access such services, and they are likely to be more at risk and yet have less access to prevention and treatment.

The closure of schools to control COVID-19 transmission may have differential impact on women and adolescent girls as they provide most of the informal care within families, with the consequence of limiting their work, economic opportunities and education opportunities. In many contexts girls are less likely to return to school after the crisis. Men are more likely to be teachers in many of the contexts we work in. If state schools are suspended and pay is frozen, this will have an impact on men's status as 'breadwinners'. Changes in gendered roles and responsibilities in the home, particularly concerning economic income, may have a negative impact and increase the likelihood of intimate partner violence or violence against children.

Key messages :

- ✓ DO NO HARM is the first rule. You do not want to contribute to the dissemination of the virus, disastrous in a camp situation where there is limited water and soap.
- ✓ Protect yourself and your family, staff, partners and of course the beneficiaries.
- ✓ Analyze the situation where you are, and follow the local advice. This may include social distancing where possible and avoiding large gatherings.
- ✓ Work closely with other stakeholders. It is our job to ensure children with disabilities are protected and are not forgotten in the key messages and activities accessible and inclusive to all being rolled out.
- ✓ Follow HI's guidelines and the guidance from the national and local authorities regarding COVID 19 at all times.

1) Adaptation of existing projects to fit the new situation with COVID 19

There are two main stages to consider:

If schools are still open...

- Prioritize **the Health awareness messages**/hygiene promotion in educational settings where they are still operating and link with HI's protection and DRR teams where possible to prepare families for a healthy home environment, psychosocial support etc. We will disseminate accessible and child friendly messages soon. It is important to think about accessibility for children with visual, hearing, communication or intellectual disabilities too. Here are UNICEF key messages for Coronavirus: https://www.unicef.org/reports/key-messages-and-actions-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-prevention-and-control-schools?fbclid=IwAR0nLs4QjjxrsP4cB-EGnFO_hFeX67aehLuJMWFGUzAfaA3P7pvuvNsX8Ao
- Ensure that there is provision of sanitizer, water and soap, and clean clothing where possible, accessible for all, and provide messages that are relevant and possible to implement, and understood by all children.
- Work with Wash and SHR actors to distribute sanitary kits (including information on menstrual hygiene management) for girls with and without disabilities.
- Work with schools to ensure that protection and safety messages are delivered to parents and children in a way that limits panic and distress, reassures, and encourages adherence to health messaging.
- Update protection and health referral pathways since access to services will change. (from online platforms to phone hotlines , or triage systems depending on context)
- Train teachers and other school staff on signs of distress to enable them to identify and refer children who may have specific psychosocial support needs, or for signs of violence who may require protection assistance Work in close collaboration with MHPSS and Protection actors wherever possible to get trained (via Skype/WhatsApp, etc. for those home based)

If schools have already closed...

If you can still move around outside , please follow all local guidelines about distancing yourself away from other people and following safety guidelines regarding you to protect yourself when outside. If there is restricted movement meaning that you have to stay inside as much as possible use phones, emails, Skype, WhatsApp, etc. to communicate, get an idea of the situation, inform the authorities and try to implement these recommendations as much as possible.

- Monitor whether children with disabilities are being abandoned or put at additional protection risks in orphanages or special institutions due to the situation and report the situation to OPDs and protection actors to coordinate a response (In case of panic, staff may be sick; return to their families, parents may be blocked by lockdown so this is a risky situation) etc.
- Update protection and health referral pathways since there will be a huge impact on services. Support solutions depending on context: online platforms, phone hotlines, triage systems, local support systems.
- Provide positive parenting tips in line with child protection recommendations. A separate brief on resources to support children learning at home, and also to support their well-being, will be disseminated soon.
- Work with education authorities to try alternative education modalities, and make sure they are inclusive. (radio-, television-, cellphone-, and internet-based learning options). For example, HI had experience during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone in supporting distance learning using radios, and making it more inclusive for all by asking CBR volunteers to support children as they listened to the lessons. For now, this could just be something you suggest to school staff you are working with. However, we can also look at setting up new projects based on rolling this out on a wider scale later on. Attention should be paid to the correct language, relevance and progression of children's learning. Distant learning resources are collected by INEE: <https://inee.org/collections/coronavirus-covid-19/distance-learning> with list of existing platforms <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures/solutions>
- Advocate for the continued payment of teachers and staff where possible (e.g. shadow teachers or advocacy to government) – to lose them would make the situation worse in the long run. Use recruited staff (mixed teams of male and female) for home visits (e.g. itinerant teachers, shadow teachers, classroom assistants, CBR volunteers) if there is no “lockdown” and it is still possible.
- Check the needs of children and adults with disabilities and ensure maximum independence (in particular for new environments); continuity of care, protection and that services and social networks are in place to meet these needs, ideally with a separate space for 1:1 discussion. Pay particular attention to their health situation,

follow-up in continuity of care, specific needs and protection risk (e.g. cleaning of assistive device, Face touching of Sign Language Interpreter, physical distancing etc.)

- Make the most of your trained staff (e.g. Itinerant teachers) to support other staff to carry out activities in the community (again if possible) .e.g. Training CBR volunteers or assistants in supporting with IEP activities in the home, or other home based learning ideas and protection activities. (see resources page)
- Involve Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and/or Persons with Disabilities themselves into the response. This for example to identify households with children with disabilities; ensure accessibility and diversity of public health and protection messaging; monitoring access to essential services in non-discriminatory manner.
- See messages on how to support OPDs to get involved here:
<http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid-19>
- Work in synergy with mental health and protection sectors in schools. Here is a good guidance: <https://alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-news/alliance-coordinators-new-technical-note-protecting-children-during-covid-19>

2) Mitigating the negative consequences of school closure and support with alternative activities

School closures severely impact access to services via the school as mentioned previously, and there can be an increase in domestic violence, child labour, other GVB and CP concerns such as increase the number of pregnant teenagers and return to school is compromised after long interruptions. Therefore it's important to push for the continuation of learning through distance activities (as mentioned above) and continuing sharing of information.

- Promote the idea of schools remaining hubs for some of these activities including school feeding, or psychosocial support, home-based physiotherapy and rehabilitation for those at risk. (in small groups to prevent gatherings)
- Support families at risk (cash, IGA, child care...), work in collaboration with social services, protection and livelihood actors.
- Link with Livelihood sector and look at flexible solutions for parents and caregivers who may have lost access to childcare to enable them to continue care and education of their children
- As before, provide positive parenting tips in line with child protection recommendations and promote learning through play, activities and games where possible (for primary school aged children especially)
- In order not to increase burden on women and girls as caregivers, include messages to equally share responsibilities of providing care to sick persons, persons with disabilities and/or children in the information/sensitization sessions
- Ensure that any wider government or NGO led response to education in emergencies (i.e. alternative distance learning options whilst schools are closed) is inclusive of children with disabilities.

- This includes alternative formats (for children with visual/ hearing/ intellectual/ communication disabilities) for learning, and also ensuring support for understanding and following distance learning lessons (whether by radio, or children being asked to study text books, worksheets, mobile phone messages or online learning in contexts where that is possible(e.g. some capital cities).
- Seek to work alongside any other organisations working on home based learning, and make sure the response is inclusive of children with disabilities. Some organisations are experts in the field of home based learning (e.g. Sense International) so reach out to link up.
- Projects should promote referral pathways and services to the community to encourage help-seeking behaviour around VAWG (Violence Against Women & Girls). In particular, services which offer the Sexual and Reproductive Health Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) are to be promoted in the community and clear messaging on the '72 hour rule' regarding sexual violence and the window to prevent HIV contraction, pregnancy and other STIs is to be promoted.

Keep positive and keep smiling! Resilience and staying together will get us all through this challenging time together! Most importantly stay Safe!

Resources

Additional guidance on Coronavirus response

- USAID resources: <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/education-resources-response-coronavirus-covid-19>
- **Simple information on COVID-19 translated into 22 languages** by Translators without Borders: <https://pandemic.internationalso.com/2019-ncov/ncov-education-and-communication?fbclid=IwAR2tQSt5XomIxMe2ZAJlptp0sbd6Bf Jv9LtUDKEh4P0K0pc6UJQ5 wY6Rs>
- **Key recommendations of International Disability Alliance (IDA)** <http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/covid-19>

Information in easy read format

- Easy read information (Europe) <https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read-information-about-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR3sMNXhfap6NARfBpCKHMRS7H37lqo8Tw8z5-4ZVqMAcB0YWgO3uMkeGA>
- Easy read (Hong Kong) <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1u51V-CTVo5iAhMcsI-mKx5mMyB3KjhY6/view>

- Easy to read version of information about COVID-19 , made for people with intellectual disabilities in Ireland: <http://www.inclusionireland.ie/content/news-items/1804/corona-virus-resources>

Information in Sign Language

- World Federation of the Deaf
https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2709566152662107&id=136437246425151
- In French Sign Language: <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/fr/videos#conseils> and this one LSF too:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2I9EnhIjxdM&feature=youtu.be>

Kids friendly cartoons on Coronavirus

- Les dessins de Marge (in French): <https://www.cocovirus.net/>
- COVIBOOK Simple illustrated information on Coronavirus (in English) Several languages available for download) <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- Video (French) Corona & Covid: <https://www.facebook.com/RTLTVI/videos/les-aventures-de-covid-et-corona-/608973593283964/>

Articles for reflection

- An interesting reading on schools closure <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/containing-epidemic-should-schools-close-coronavirus>
- Billions missing water & soap: https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fact-sheet-handwashing-soap-critical-fight-against-coronavirus-out-reach-billions?fbclid=IwAR26oe3dG00x2vTP5KnQTe8kpKzP8_tTFRJmpYFvy46kpbUHbqh2EGaaJg
- And in French: <https://www.goodplanet.info/2020/03/19/coronavirus-sans-savon-et-sans-eau-des-milliards-de-personnes-sans-protection-de-base/?fbclid=IwAR3FzzC7attCxrIzr9vn4bPs4jqxOLaRrxuD7lQj29LPiXfNhxYRWtyQylk>
- Devex article: <https://www.ukfiet.org/2020/opinion-education-in-the-time-of-covid-19/>
- LA Time article (Ebola lessons) <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-03-13/op-ed-lausd-just-closed-schools-ebola-taught-us-why-that-may-be-extreme>
- EDF Open Letter <http://edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/open-letter-leaders-eu-and-eu-countries-covid-19-disability-inclusive-response>

A Webinar

- Webinar: Disability Inclusion in Covid-19 Responses in the World of Work, a webinar hosted by ILO's Global Business and Disability Network. For all interested stakeholders. Connect on zoom. Tuesday 24th March, 2pm CET.
https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tjEkduysqzkiTl2TSVHEf2Oh9H7Yt1_zsw

A MOOC on education in challenging context with digital ideas

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/transforming-education>