**Prioritizing education in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan**

**Key messages for country clusters**

The closure of schools is not only preventing children from learning and enjoying all the other benefits that education provides, but it is also exposing children to increased risks including abuse, child labour, early marriage, trafficking, health, and malnutrition, as well as putting households under more stress. In this crisis, education is not only about learning but also about managing, protecting and mitigating risks of children and their communities. The [secondary impact of COVID-19](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/COVID-19%20AFTERSHOCKS-%20SECONDARY%20IMPACTS%20THREATEN%20MORE%20CHILDREN%E2%80%99S%20LIVES%20THAN%20DISEASE%20ITSELF_0.pdf) risks threatening children and their communities more than the disease itself. **Education should be explicitly listed as a priority in all revised Humanitarian Response Plans and response strategies**

**Children are facing the greatest disruption to their right to education in living memory.** There are currently over 1.5 billion children affected by school closures in 191 countries. In the 29 countries covered by the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), more than 250 million children are now unable to physically attend school. This includes the 29 contexts with education clusters that were already facing significant disruptions to education as a result of humanitarian emergencies. These were already a priority pre-COVID19 – and the situation of these children has become more serious, more urgent and more complex to address.

**Education is lifesaving**. It is lifesaving in its own right, as underscored in the [Introduction to the INEE Minimum Standards](https://inee.org/system/files/resources/INEE_Minimum_Standards_Handbook_2010%28HSP%29_EN.pdf), and even more in this crisis. Education actors play a critical role in keeping children protected through supportive learning opportunities, nutrition/school meals, where necessary ensuring vulnerable families have access to more specialized services. The education system can play an important role in reaching communities with critical messages to contain the spread and reduce morbidity and mortality and to prevent new infections when schools reopen.

**Education more than ever is prioritised by Governments and communities in this crisis.** If we are serious about accountability to affected populations, we need to listen and prioritise what nations are prioritising.

**Education is already one of the most underfunded sectors.** At the beginning of this year (prior to the COVID19 crisis), education responses in countries with Humanitarian Response plans were were only 4% funded (FTS data March 2020). This means that this sector is particularly vulnerable to economic shocks and has limited capacity to reallocate or realign existing funding. Not prioritizing education in the GHRP exacerbates this.

**Adequately resourced plans to support** [**the return to school**](https://educationcluster.box.com/s/519qsvs1twkpj29v7z4awpjgjd6qg4m1) will be essential to protect children and their community, as return to school will require adaptation of facilities, risk communication and community engagement, increased support to teachers and initiatives to recover lost learning learn time.

**Education will cost more if we don’t act now.** We know from other public health crises, that once older children lose access to education, they are less likely to return. This is also the case for the most vulnerable children, who end up in child labour, child marriage and facing other life threatening protection risks. For younger children, even a few months of missed education can have long-term effects on their lifelong learning, requiring additional and intensive remedial efforts to catch up. All of this will mean that education – an already under funded sector – will be even more expensive in the future.

**A successful inter-sectoral effort is not possible without education**: This response and adapted delivery modalities will require increased inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination. The overall health and well-being of the school population (students, teachers, and other personnel) will require collaboration with health and protection actors. Education offers one of the most effective and efficient means of providing children with [life-saving health services, information and life-skills](https://inee.org/system/files/resources/INEE_Minimum_Standards_Handbook_2010%28HSP%29_EN.pdf) and keeping girls in school has a sizeable, positive impact on [national economies](https://www.usaid.gov/education/girls). [School feeding](https://www.wfp.org/school-meals) is also an integral part of a comprehensive nutrition response. Education plays a critical role in [protection](https://inee.org/system/files/resources/4._Protective_Role_of_Education_-_Narrative_Report.docx). If education services are so badly disrupted that they cannot open safely, efficiently and effectively, they may even contribute to the spread and impact of COVID19. Conversely, if education is not prioritised, it will undermine and limit the effectiveness of the public health, economic and protection outcomes that the GHRP strives to achieve.