Weighing the risks: School closure and reopening during COVID-19

13 August 2020
AGENDA

1. Welcome and introduction

2. Policy paper highlights — Kate Moriarty, INEE and Hani Mansourian, The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

3. Panel presentations
   a. School reopening — Joseph Kajumba, Uganda MoE
   b. Child protection — Juan de Dios Simón Sotz, Educo Guatemala
   c. Health — Gabriele Fontana, UNICEF

4. Moderated discussion/Q&A
THE CHALLENGE

- Nearly 90 percent of students were affected by the closure of schools, universities, and other institutions (UNESCO, April 2020)
- Decision-making needs to be more balanced
- Includes assessing the negative consequences and children and youth’s overall well-being

This paper asks the following fundamental questions:

- Are children and youth able to learn effectively when out of school?
- Are children and youth better protected in or out of school?
- Are most children and youth safer health-wise in or out of school?
PURPOSE

- To present a framework on when and why to reopen schools or to close them/keep them closed.
- To Review the impacts of school closures on children and youth’s holistic well-being, and presents a continuum to support decision-making processes that:
  - Considers all three sectors
  - Weighs up the respective risks to children and youth
  - Prioritizes the best interests of the child.
**KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

Across the three sectors, **school closures can**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Child Protection</th>
<th>Health</th>
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<td>- Negatively impact learning outcomes of children and youth.</td>
<td>- Negatively impact the mental health and well-being of children and youth</td>
<td>- May not significantly reduce the risks of COVID-19 infection and transmission in contexts</td>
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<td>- Negatively impact teachers’ mental health and access to income.</td>
<td>- Heighten the risk of exposure to child labor, all types of violence and exploitation, and (for girls) early marriage and teen pregnancies.</td>
<td>- Lack of access to in-school nutrition and health provision may lead to additional health and developmental risks in certain contexts</td>
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<td>- Increase stress levels for parents who need to continue education at home.</td>
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The safety and well-being of children and youth must be put at the center of educational decision-making in a COVID-19 response.
CONTEXTUALIZING DECISION-MAKING

CONSIDERATIONS

- Current understanding about COVID-19 transmission and severity in children
- Local situation and epidemiology of COVID-19 where the school(s) are located
- School setting and ability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and control measures
## Guiding Questions

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<td><strong>Overarching question:</strong> What are the impacts of being out of school versus going back to school on educational outcomes?</td>
<td><strong>Overarching question:</strong> What are the impacts of being out of school versus going back to school on child protection outcomes?</td>
<td><strong>Overarching question:</strong> What are the impacts of being out of school versus going back to school on the health of children and youth?</td>
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<td><strong>Sample question:</strong> If schools are closed, what distance education opportunities are children and young people receiving?</td>
<td><strong>Sample question:</strong> What access do children and youth have to other mechanisms to report and/or seek support for violence, abuse, neglect, or exploitation?</td>
<td><strong>Sample question:</strong> Is the educational space sufficient to implement adequate safety measures?</td>
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CONSIDERING WHEN TO OPEN OR CLOSE SCHOOLS

A Decision-making Tool
Ministry of Education and Sports

Education Sector COVID-19 Interventions,
Joseph Kajumba
FPO, Conflict and Disaster Risk Management, MoES
03/09/2020
When and why was the decision taken to close schools/education and keep them closed?

- Officially the schools were closed on 20/03/2020.
- This was after the education sector developing and presenting a Covid-19 response plan that highlighted the 3 scenarios of before, during, and after cases were identified in the country.
- Once a case was identified in the country, the president, on the advice of the medical officials and the national task force, instituted the school closure.
What measures are being taken to ensure learning continues and children and youth are protected during schools closures

- To limit adverse effects and consequences of COVID-19 on Uganda’s education system, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) designed the Preparedness and Response Plan to COVID-19 with a focus on continuity of learning among others.

- The MoES under the guidance of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) developed standardized study lesson packages in all the core subjects for primary and secondary levels and were distributed to learners, including special needs learners.
Measures are being taken to ensure learning continues and children and youth are protected during schools closures

In addition, model teachers prepared remedial lessons and are being delivered on radio and television stations across the country. There are also pre-recorded lessons and materials that are accessed online as summarised below.

- Self-study home package
- Radio live lesson presentations/recorded lessons
- Television-lessons
- Live presentations by teachers
- Online uploads to be uploaded on phones
What are the likely impacts of school closures on learning, and on the wellbeing children and youth and how is the Ugandan Ministry of Education weighing these against the risk of transmission in schools

- There will be a degeneration of continuity of the learnt concepts especially the lower class learners, and among those that never had an opportunity to continuously access learning opportunities.
- Disinterest in academic work may develop among many learners, especially those who had taken on other income generating activities.
- Defilement and early pregnancies will occur.
- Child labour and general drop out of school due to lack of provisions.
What are the likely impacts of school closures on learning, and on the wellbeing of children and youth and how is the Ugandan Ministry of Education weighing these against the risk of transmission in schools?

- Moral degeneration and loss of school culture and this may create discipline issues when school resumes.
- Loss or reduced income to the parents and guardians may lead to school drop out or total lack of interest.
- Some learners who had learnt new skills or undertook income generating activities may be better but may also be distracted by their new income streams and this may affect their concentration upon resumption of schooling.
When are you considering reopening schools and how will this decision be made

- This will happen after the country’s top leadership has adequately consulted the medical authorities and the national task force and weighing all the options.
The negative impact of school closures on protection and well-being of children in Guatemala.

By Juan de Dios Simón
Program Quality Coordinator
Educo Guatemala
# Context of Guatemala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>17.2 million, NIS (INE, 2018)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.9% between ages 5-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>8 of 10 in primary level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 of every 10, in basic education (7 to 9th)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 of 10 in upper secondary school (10-12th)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth out of school (YOS)</td>
<td>1,600,000 YOS between 13 to 18 years-old</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malnutrition</td>
<td>5 of 10 children less of five years have chronic malnutrition and lack of food security.</td>
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<td>Indgenouse peoples</td>
<td>46% of the population are indigenous from Maya, Garifuna and Xinka Peoples.</td>
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<td>Children and irregular migration</td>
<td>20,700 go every year to the USA “escaping from poverty and violence”.</td>
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• 1,962 pregnancies between 10-14 years old.

• 44,901 pregnancies between 15-19 years old.

• Total: 46,863 pregnancies

3,821 complaints registered against adults-relatives for sexual violence against girls (MP, 2020).
Violence:

In total, from March to June 2020 there were registered 5,259 complaints against adults for violence against children (MP, 2020).

1 of 10 adults considers using violence to discipline their children (ASDBN 2020).

“We believed that home is a safe place, but it’s actually an unsafe place for us girls” (CRN, 2020).

“I am most worried that my mom and stepdad keep hitting me at home.” (CRN, 2020).

“Violence is normal, the bible says to correct children with a stick” (ASDBN, 2020)
What do you miss the most during COVID-19, while you are at home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Total Participants</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Total Girls and Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Go to school</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.58</td>
<td>24.51</td>
<td>24.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play with my friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.50</td>
<td>21.45</td>
<td>20.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit my relatives and friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.14%</td>
<td>14.92%</td>
<td>17.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go out and play outside</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.42</td>
<td>16.78</td>
<td>14.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See my teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>10.38</td>
<td>10.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the park (Square)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.36</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>7.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Recommendations

**Recommendations to policy makers:**
Ensure all first responders at the local level, are trained and able to identify COVID-19-related child protection risks and know how to safely report and refer concerns.

Ensure safe reopening of schools including by establishing violence-free learning environments and support the return of all children – especially girls and those at risk of child marriage, child labour and teenage pregnancies – to school.

**Recommendations to parents:**
Listen to your children and support their education from home and from school.
If your children ask questions about something that you don’t know during COVID-19, don’t be panic, do not worry too much... no body knows everything, just show calm, speak to them with love and make sure you allow children to express their emotions.
He is close, protect me!

COVID is near, protect me!

“9 in 10 believe that the most important thing adults can do to end violence against children is to love children more and listen to what they have to say” (SMBD, 2019)

Many Thanks.
Questions?
FOR ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

- **Read the full policy paper** where you'll find additional resources in the annex – including links to guidance on how to reopen schools safely and inclusively;
- **Visit INEE's COVID-19 page**; and
- **Visit The Alliance COVID-19 Resource Hub**
www.inee.org/covid-19/webinars

Email: covid-19@inee.org

https://alliancecpha.org/en/webinars

Email: info@Alliancecpha.org