When school holidays in Viet Nam were indefinitely extended in early February because of COVID-19, the education of more than 21 million children was disrupted. The Ministry of Education and Training, together with UNICEF, accelerated its pre-pandemic efforts on the digital transformation of its education system and quickly moved to online teacher training and learning platforms – Microsoft Teams and Viettel – to keep children learning during the long three months that schools were closed.

The move online brought a renewed urgency to digital learning, underscoring the country’s stark digital divide. Although internet penetration rates are growing, at present, only 17 per cent of students living in remote mountainous regions have internet access. They often lack digital skills, and their teachers are largely unfamiliar with child-friendly online teaching. As well, many families lack devices or sufficient numbers of devices, which often resulted in the favouring of boys’ access over that of girls.

In response, the Ministry of Education and Training, UNICEF, and private sector partners mapped the gaps to increase connectivity, particularly for schools in rural and hard-to-access areas; provided tablets with WIFI for the hardest to reach, ethnic minority boys and girls; produced online videos and learning aids for students and teachers that illustrated child-friendly, inclusive, and gender-sensitive best teaching practices; and organised virtual teacher training.

The school reopening in early May served as a lightning rod to double down on efforts to reimagine education and to transform the system to ensure that all children and young people in Viet Nam have access to digital learning and are prepared for an increasingly connected world and knowledge-driven economy.

**KEY FEATURES**

- **Seizing the opportunity to embed digital literacy into the national curriculum, for all school levels** – COVID-19 accelerated ongoing work on digital literacy and transferable skills. The Ministry of Education and Training is integrating them as foundational parts of the new curriculum, which will be mainstreamed in all grade levels from pre-primary up and in all subjects. A national digital literacy framework, being developed with UNICEF support, is an integral component of the next 10-year national education sector plan and budget.

- **Connecting all schools to the internet** – While bigger schools have access to the internet, remote satellite schools often struggle with low bandwidth. To ensure that all schools have sufficient internet speed and bandwidth to access digital
learning programmes, UNICEF is engaging with Viettel and the Ministry of Education and Training to map internet connectivity and speed across all schools in the country. UNICEF is also providing tablets with pre-loaded content to schools which are not yet able to download school materials.

- **Investing in and empowering teachers** – Teachers are central to digital transformation but are largely unfamiliar with new technology. To address these barriers, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training to build knowledge and skills for teachers and school managers through virtual trainings on child-friendly approaches to online learning and online classroom management. UNICEF is collaborating with the national Teacher Training College to mainstream this training on digital learning into regular pre- and in-service teacher training.

- **Providing devices and data to boys and girls in remote areas** – With funding from the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF provided tablets with WIFI access for the hardest to reach, ethnic minority children during the pandemic. UNICEF is moving to country-wide by engaging private sector partners including LG, Microsoft, Viettel and Samsung.

- **Bringing a focus to children’s wellbeing** – COVID-19 brought to the fore the need to focus on the wellbeing / mental health and self-esteem of children. UNICEF Viet Nam drew on young people to engage and drive awareness around on-line safety, happiness and kindness, and digital psychosocial support campaigns. Key messages were shared in ethnic minority languages and in sign language.

- **Finding innovative solutions for deep-seated challenges** – In hard-to-reach areas with no qualified STEM teachers, UNICEF Viet Nam is working to increase children’s access to STEM education by introducing Augmented and Virtual Reality (AVR) education solutions. AVR will empower marginalized girls to learn-by-doing by directly engaging with their STEM subject matter through gamification and immersive interactive experiences.

EMERGENT LESSONS LEARNED

- **Daring to dream big** – The Government of Viet Nam and UNICEF are daring to dream big in two important ways. Their collaboration with the private sector has an ambitious goal to provide children with access to digital learning on a national scale. Coupled with efforts to mainstream digital literacy at all school levels into the curriculum and teacher training, these advances will accelerate results for children well beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Leveraging private sector expertise and resources** – Technology is an important area of collaboration with the private sector, and new partnerships can leverage the growing national investment in digital learning and encourage innovation. UNICEF had a long-standing partnership on SAP on digital literacy and transferable skills but expanded its collaboration to include Microsoft, Viettel and others during COVID-19. To increase access to devices, UNICEF is currently exploring opportunities for collaboration with additional private sector partners.

- **UNICEF’s value-add – focusing on the hardest to reach** – The private sector partners bolstered access to digital learning platforms for children in urban centers. However, the hardest to reach areas are the communities without access to digital learning options. In keeping with its commitment to equity, UNICEF complemented those efforts by providing support for ethnic minority children living in the most remote, underserved areas to access online learning opportunities. This included adding subtitles in multiple languages and sign language interpretation to existing video lessons and other digital resources.

- **Making learning fun** – The digital learning resources used during COVID-19 in Viet Nam integrated physical exercise, arts, and music and dynamic pedagogy, including breakout rooms, group work and fun challenges. The experience showed that quality digital learning can be interactive, social and fun, providing a useful blueprint for expansion efforts.

OTHER RESOURCES

- For other resources, including more case studies, please click [here](#) and filter by “Area of Work” (Education).

For more information, please contact:
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