

# UNICEF Education COVID-19 Case Study

Lao PDR – Providing early learning opportunities for young children

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for every child



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On 19 March 2020 all schools in Lao PDR closed due to COVID-19, including kindergartens, creches and preschools, affecting 200,000 preschool-aged children. Due to successful containment measures, [they reopened on 2 June 2020](#) until forced by a new wave of cases to reclose on 22 April 2021. Assessments conducted at the beginning of the first school closures found that parents were not adequately prepared for the abrupt switch to home-based learning and, consequently, were insufficiently engaged in the learning of their children at home. This case study examines the alternative learning opportunities for young children provided by UNICEF and the Government of Lao PDR during the closure of pre-primary education facilities.

## RESULTS

- **Providing a mix of digital and non-digital options for early learning** – The Government of Lao PDR provided programming for young children through TV, print and an online learning platform. First, in March 2020, it began rebroadcasting [“My Village”](#), a 2017 TV series aimed at developing young children’s physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. At the same time, education officials worked with UNICEF to develop a complementary TV series [“My House”](#). The collaboration also generated story books based on the two TV series, which the Ministry of Education distributed with support from UNICEF, alongside pens and pencils to children who lacked access to TV or the internet. The TV series and story books were also included in the online [MoES teaching and learning platform Khang Panya Lao \(Lao Wisdom Warehouse\)](#), which is based on the [Learning Passport platform](#) (jointly developed by UNICEF and Microsoft) to enable access via mobile phones and other devices.

- **Establishing a support structure for early learning** – The younger the child, the more support is needed for home-based learning. This is why the TV series and print materials were specifically designed to be watched and read by parents together with their young children. UNICEF-supported training for education authorities and village facilitators also aimed to empower them to help parents adjust to their new role in home-based learning as well as to monitor the reach and use of printed early learning materials.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Maximizing reach** – In addition to print materials, UNICEF distributed pre-loaded SD cards to allow remote communities without TV signal or connectivity access to “*My Village*” and “*My House*” on available devices. Additionally, the content on the MoES Teaching and Learning platform Khang Panya Lao can be downloaded allowing users to access learning materials offline. UNICEF continues to explore other options to reach those in remote areas, including through the provision of devices for schools. To reach children with hearing impairments, sign language interpretation has been added to the “*My House*” TV series.
- **Supporting parents, teachers and others in new roles** – During the pandemic, parents, teachers and local authorities were suddenly thrust into exclusive home-based learning, and all needed support. UNICEF supported the in-service training of pre-primary teachers on reading and learning with story books and the coaching and mentoring of village facilitators and local education authorities. The work of pre-primary teachers and village facilitators to show parents how to use the story books and make early learning interesting and engaging was vital. The active involvement of local education authorities ensured the reach and utilization of early learning materials. UNICEF and the Government of Lao PDR developed simple checklists to guide local education authorities tasked with monitoring the reach and utilization of early learning materials as well as tailored training.

## Cost effectiveness

UNICEF’s investment in the country’s COVID-19 education response is approximately US \$9.5 million to date with around 25 *per cent* going to ECE, including valued contributions from the Australia-DFAT, the EU, Government of Japan and GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Grant. The TV series “*My Village*” and “*My House*” were viewed 2.5 million and 115,000 times respectively. More than 15,000 users registered to the newly established Khang Panya Lao since its soft launch in late April 2021. A national launch is planned for September 2021 in time for the new school year 2021-2022.

## NEXT STEPS

UNICEF is continuing its efforts to expand the reach and quality of early learning opportunities through the development of a parenting pack, “*Love and Care for Every Child*”, to enable nurturing care that includes but goes beyond early learning, including information, education and communication tools, such as posters, story- and audiobooks and videos on holistic early childhood development. It will also continue to integrate COVID-19 prevention messages aimed at young children into the second season of the “*My House*” TV series, rollout blended learning options for pre-primary teachers and local education authorities through additional learning videos on the Education TV channel and the [Khang Panya Lao MoES Teaching and Learning Platform](#) and initiate a campaign to vaccinate teachers.

## 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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