Building Resilient Education Systems beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Second set of considerations for school reopening

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UNICEF Europe and Central Asia

This document is being updated continually with new information as the situation changes. Please contact Sarah Fuller at sfuller@unicef.org to ensure you are working with the most recent version of this publication.

UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

Geneva, Switzerland

Telephone: +41 22 909 5111

Email: ecaro@unicef.org

ww.unicef.org/eca

This product has been authored by Laetitia Antonowicz, UNICEF Consultant, under the supervision of Parmosivea Soobrayan, Regional Education Advisor of UNICEF Regional Office for ECA, and with inputs from Sarah Fuller, UNICEF ECARO Education Consultant.

Area 5 Nutrition has been co-authored with Amirhossein Yarparvar, Health and Nutrition Specialist at UNICEF ECARO, with inputs from Chitraporn Vanaspongse, Programme Policy Officer-School Feeding at the World Food Programme. Special thanks go to UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office colleagues for their inputs on the 2020 version of the Considerations (Child Protection, Communication for Development, Early Childhood Development, Gender, and WASH teams) and for their inputs on this 2021 Second Set of Considerations (Education, Early Childhood Development, Health and Child Protection teams). A special thanks to Country Office colleagues who provided valuable comments and suggestions on the 2020 version (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey) and on this 2021 Second Set of Considerations (Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Turkey).

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CONTENTS

1 Introduction 4
2 Considerations for planning 12
3 Area 1: Access 17
4 Area 2: Learning 29
5 Area 3: Well-being 48
6 Area 4: Safe schools 588
7 Area 5: Nutrition and school feeding 65
8 UNICEF support in Europe and Central Asia 72
Annexe 1. Bibliography 74
Annexe 2. Potential negative impact on children of the pandemic and risks based on gender and marginalization lenses 76
Annexe 3. Current and future risks and negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people 77

1 Introduction

> *"Schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen."*
> *UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2021)*

UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia published Building Resilient Education Systems beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Considerations for decision-makers at national, local and school levels in July 2020. The aim of this publication was to support education decision-makers at all levels to plan for education recovery and normalization following the spring 2020 school closures and education disruption. This included support for governments, ministry officials and other education decision-makers at the national level, alongside local governments, and schools.

A year later, it became clear that the Considerations needed to be revised to reflect: (i) the rapid contextual shifts consequent to the progression of the pandemic; and (ii) new evidence showing the impact of the pandemic on education and how best to mitigate the most pressing priorities to ensure that all children and youth participate in learning.

Much happened during the 2020-2021 school year around the world. Many countries implemented new national or local lockdowns following second and third waves of COVID-19 and the emergence of new and more infectious COVID-19 variants, which resulted in additional school closures and distance learning. Hybrid learning modalities expanded rapidly to enable some level of in-person teaching combined with remote learning. Following the discovery and approval of several COVID-19 vaccines, vaccination campaigns started in 2021 in most countries, with large disparities in rollout and take-up. In Europe and Central Asia, many countries only planned to fully reopen schools and in-person teaching at all levels gradually from September 2021 onwards.

Unequal access to and varied quality of remote and hybrid learning during the first 18 months of the pandemic have slowed down students' learning and widened learning equity gaps between students. Education disruption and remote and hybrid learning also had an impact on the mental health of children and adolescents, including increased anxiety and depression. UNICEF has advocated for school closures to be only a last-resort measure and has called for joint coordination across sectors and partners to keep schools open and safe.

The 2021 academic year is the year when education system resilience will be truly tested across the world. How will Europe and Central Asia rise to the challenges of leaving no child or young person behind, and, in particular:

- Ensure the return of each and every child and young person to education and learning?
- Address the learning gaps of students who have faced education disruption and whose academic and skills development needs are different?
- Respond to the long-lasting impact of the pandemic and education disruption on students', families' and teachers' mental health and well-being?
- Improve school preparedness and response to mitigate potential future outbreaks of COVID-19 and keep schools open?
- Learn lessons from the impact of the pandemic on education systems and their resilience to inform future policies?
- Harness the positive practices that emerged from education during the pandemic to inform future education practices: (i) hybrid and blended learning, (ii) parental engagement in learning and home-school communication, (iii) assessment, curriculum and instruction adaptation (v) learning support for the most marginalized, and (vi) innovative partnerships for education delivery?

This document – *Building Resilient Systems beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Second set of considerations for school reopening 2021*, presents revised and updated considerations over the short and long term to support decision-makers at national, local and school levels to rise to these challenges.

1.1 Context

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in school closures in 20 countries in Europe and Central Asia, affecting 49.8 million children of pre-primary to upper secondary age. Education has remained interrupted throughout the 2020-2021 academic year in the region and, as of March 2021, more than 26.6 million primary- and secondary-aged children were living in countries where schools were still partially closed. With rapid epidemiological changes at national and local levels, many countries have alternated periods of school opening with full or partial closure nationally or locally. Many countries continue to rely on hybrid and blended learning to complement in-person teaching, particularly in secondary education.

Decisions over school openings and closures have been extremely complex globally, taking into consideration not only the academic, health and social interest of children but also epidemiological factors, such as transmission rates among different school age groups and the role of schools in community infection rates, and factors pertaining to child care and parents' working situations. Given that children will be the largest unvaccinated population group in the region by autumn 2021, appropriate in-school mitigation measures will be necessary to minimize the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission among students and staff.

The pandemic has deeply exacerbated existing education and social inequities in the region. Children from low-income families, children living in rural areas with poor infrastructure, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children, children in conflict with the law, children in institutional care, out-of-school children and youth and boys and girls living in otherwise difficult circumstances or abusive homes were already facing significant barriers to participation in education and learning and experiencing lower education and social outcomes than their peers.

Learning loss and learning disruption

A lot of focus has been put on learning loss as a result of the pandemic, particularly in regions and countries where learning outcomes were low pre-pandemic. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, it is estimated that approximately 19.5 million primary- to upper-secondary-aged learners were not achieving minimum proficiency levels in foundational skills before the pandemic (42 per cent)[1].

Learning loss and gaps

Experts foresee that learning loss due to the pandemic will be significant in both the short and long term, both globally and across the region. Using data from 174 countries, Azevedo et al. (2021) estimate that school closures could result in a loss of between 0.3 and 1.1 years of schooling. In Europe and Central Asia, they calculated that, based on PISA data, 31 per cent of 15 years old were below the Level 2 basic skills threshold across literacy, numeracy and science before the pandemic; this proportion was expected to rise to 39 per cent or 48 per cent depending on scenarios. The OECD underlines that the pandemic has hit vulnerable groups disproportionally and is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities (OECD, 2020e). Experts agree on the differentiated impact on different groups, particularly widening inequalities between the highest and lowest wealth quintile. Direct linkages have been made between learning loss, skills loss and GDP losses, with estimates of 1.5 per cent GDP loss for the remainder of the century (Hanushek and Woessman, 2020).

Data from the Western Balkans shows similar trends according to the World Bank. **Based on a March to June 2020 school closure scenario with some remote teaching in place, estimates showed a likely average drop of 9 PISA points in the Western Balkans. In Kosovo*, this would mean a reading score below its 2015 level; in Albania, a reading score equivalent to its 2012 level** (The World Bank Group, 2020a). It is also expected that learning inequalities between socio-economic groups will widen in the sub-region from 1.5 to 2 years. The share of students below the proficient PISA Level 2 in literacy, already significant in the sub-region at 53 per cent, would increase to 61 per cent. This means that almost 2 out of 3 students in the Western Balkans could fall back into functional illiteracy (The World Bank Group, 2020a).

**All references to Kosovo are made in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).*

[1] According to UNICEF's calculation, which used the most recent enrollment totals and basic mathematics proficiency rates from UIS and PISA.

Estimating learning loss alongside educational outcomes that were already low is useful to build a case for the global-, national- and school-level effort needed to respond to this new education challenge. The learning disruption experienced by students, however, goes beyond learning loss and includes social and psychological impacts. In addition to learning disruption for students, education disruption has affected parents, teachers, school managers and communities more broadly.

Schools are not only a place for academic learning but also for social and emotional learning, social interaction and social support. For preschool-age children, school readiness is critical and has potentially lasting effects. Schools also play a key role in the safeguarding of children and driving referrals to basic health and social services. They provide specialized services to children and families, particularly children with disabilities. They often ensure that the most marginalized children can access a nourishing meal every day. Schools and learning are critical to providing a sense of normality to displaced, refugee and migrant children, and help them integrate and learn their host community language. Schools also act as a hub for parents to receive information about available socio-economic support, national and local, and as a community hub for cultural and educational events that contribute to social cohesion. School attendance is often a prerequisite for children and families to access a range of benefits and services, including cash transfers and social benefits. When schools are not in a position to monitor attendance due to closures and remote learning, safety-net mechanisms might be disrupted too.

Mental health and well-being

The mental health of young people has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. A Rapid Assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on education in Bulgaria reveals the toll the pandemic has taken on children and young people, with half those students surveyed reporting feelings of loneliness, uncertainty or anxiety, and a third of parents stating that the mental health of their children had deteriorated since the beginning of the pandemic (Yankova, 2020).

The well-being of parents and teachers has also been severely impacted. In Bulgaria, 44 per cent of teachers reported their mental health had worsened since the beginning of the pandemic (Yankova, 2020). Similar findings can be found in other countries. In the UK, a survey of 3,000 educators revealed that 52 per cent of teachers and 48 per cent of other school staff, including education managers, reported little or considerable decline in mental health and well-being (Education Support, 2020). A systematic review exploring the impact of (non-COVID-related) school closures on the mental health of children and young people found significant negative impacts on anxiety and depressive symptoms (Viner et al., 2021). There is also evidence that student well-being can be impacted at least the over medium term by school closures, as shown in a UK study where primary school students who experienced emotional and behavioural difficulties following spring 2020 school closures continued to experience difficulties in autumn 2021 (Blanden et al. 2021).

In Bulgaria and elsewhere in Europe and Central Asia, the most marginalized families have been more severely impacted by the pandemic due to the halt put on many economic sectors – including construction, hospitality, tourism and activities of the informal economy – which resulted in unemployment and in difficulties in covering daily food costs. In Turkey, refugee communities have reduced household expenditure on education, and some refugee families have withdrawn their children from school as a direct consequence of worsening economic conditions (UNICEF communication).

The OECD notes that mental health issues in the 15-24-year-old group have doubled in the past year. Not only have young people faced learning interruption and social interaction deprivation during school closure, but they have also been impacted by changes in the labour market, from the lack of summer jobs to increased unemployment, and have been less likely to be identified as in need of support or offered mental health services (OECD, 2021).

Recommendations from the Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 and schooling

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on COVID-19 and schooling has provided eight sets of recommendations regarding schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic, which were presented at the third high-level meeting jointly organized by UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, WHO Regional Office for Europe and UNESCO on 2 July 2021.

The main messages from the meeting were:

- While children are not the drivers of this pandemic, they risk being among its biggest victims: largely spared from the direct health effects of COVID-19 - the measures put in place to control the pandemic are having a profound effect on their health and well-being.
- Effective policy considerations for the school year should focus on the goal of having children and adolescents physically present in school. Schools should be among the last places to be closed, as school closures have been shown to be detrimental to child health and well-being and educational outcomes.
- Keeping distance, limiting contact between children, wearing masks, hygiene and enhancing ventilation are the mainstay of current transmission control in schools.
- Public health approaches need to balance ALL effects of the measures. Actions need to be monitored carefully and adapted as more evidence becomes available – so that we do better than harm.
- Improving the overall schooling and learning environment: As investments are being made, they should aim to make every school a health-promoting school and invest in better learning facilities, overcoming the digital divide.
- Children living in vulnerable situations need special attention. They continue to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic and by subsequent school closures.
- The measures affect several aspects of children's rights: Countries need to undertake a child rights assessment when implementing them.
- Children and adolescents need to participate in decision making. They have different experiences arising from school closures, online learning and control measures. Their opinions and values are important for making decisions affecting them.

Source: Technical Advisory Group on COVID-19 and schooling (2021) Outcome Statement of the Third High-Level Meeting jointly organized by WHO Regional Office for Europe, UNICEF and UNESCO on 2 July 2021.

See also: World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. (2021). Schooling during COVID-19: recommendations from the European Technical Advisory Group for schooling during COVID-19, June 2021. World Health Organization, Regional Office for Europe.

The challenge ahead

School dropout and early school leaving are a major risk for many children and young people. Globally, 11 million students are at risk of dropping out as a direct result of the pandemic (Azevedo et al., 2021). In addition to dropout for economic reasons, data from the OECD shows that students "indicating mental distress are 35 per cent more likely to have repeated a grade and remain at elevated risk of early school leaving" (OECD, 2021).

The challenge ahead is significant. **Failing to rise to this challenge will have life-long impacts on children, young people, families, communities and societies more broadly in both social and economic terms**. Improving the resilience of the education system by planning purposefully for quality inclusive education for the most marginalized children and by strengthening system, institutional and organizational capacities to mitigate, adapt and recover from the pandemic in a manner that reduces vulnerability and increases inclusion is a paramount priority for the upcoming months and years. It is a core principle of 'building back better'. Resilient education systems and schools have the potential to improve individual, community and institutional resilience, which enables the provision of inclusive quality education for all, and in turns plays a role in mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Priorities of the Mission: Recovering Education

UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank launched joint mission – *Mission: Recovering Education 2021* – focused on three priorities:

- All children and youth are back in school and receive the tailored services needed to meet their learning, health, psychosocial well-being, and other needs.
- All children receive support to catch up on lost learning
- All teachers are prepared and supported to address learning losses among their students and to incorporate digital technology into their teaching.

Source: UNESCO, UNICEF and The World Bank (2021)

1.2 Purpose

This document contributes to improving the resilience of education systems—systems that are more flexible and dedicated to ALL children learning through a range of learning modalities and technologies and better equipped to face potential crises through reflective practice and lesson learning processes.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it aims to operationalize and contextualize the recommendations of the multi-agency Framework for Reopening Schools (UNESCO et al., 2020). It seeks to help maintain and promote quality, inclusive education and learning for ALL children and young people throughout and beyond the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the most marginalized children.

This second set of Considerations provides school leaders and education officers in local authorities, district education offices and ministries of education with an overall framework and a set of thematic considerations to inform their decision-making, planning, and policy development processes as schools return to full-time in-person teaching.

The second set of Considerations build on the Considerations published in 2020 and reflect the changes in priorities and challenges as countries work towards removing restrictions and gradually reopening schools at full capacity for the 2021-2022 school year. They also align with the Outcome Statement of the Third High-Level Meeting jointly organized by UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, WHO Regional Office for Europe and UNESCO on 2 July 2021 (see box above).

The hope is that these considerations will encourage the education community to address the major inequalities in access to quality, inclusive education provision and the significant learning disparities across groups of children that have been widened due to school closure and inequitable access to quality remote and blended learning.

Because contexts vary significantly, the document does not tell school leaders and education officials to implement specific activities or strategies. Rather, it outlines aspects and parameters to take into consideration for ensuring that:

- barriers to participation, learning and well-being are removed for ALL children and young people as schools transition back to full-time in-person teaching;
- ALL children can participate in quality, inclusive education, can learn and can be adequately cared for and supported at all time throughout the education process;
- the capacities of schools, teachers and national/local education officers and the overall resilience of education systems are strengthened to deliver inclusive quality education for ALL children, including in times of crisis; and
- the appropriate combination of physical distancing and hygiene measures, including occupational safety and health measures, are implemented in all school settings.

The basic premises of the document are that education systems need to **reflect**, **analyse**, **plan**, **do**, **review** and **sustain** strategies in five critical interrelated areas:

1. **Area 1: Access to education provision**
2. **Area 2: Quality and inclusive learning**
3. **Area 3: Mental Health and well-being**
4. **Area 4: Safe schools**
5. **Area 5: Nutrition and school feeding**

Building Resilient Education Systems beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic: Second Set of Considerations for decision-makers at national, local and school levels complements UNICEF's ongoing efforts to ensure that ALL children grow, develop and learn. These considerations have been drawn from UNICEF's past and ongoing work across the region on inclusive education, out-of-school children and dropout prevention and overall education policy, planning and monitoring support at the system level.

1.3 Scope of the document

After this introduction, readers will find the following information:

- Section 1: Considerations for PLANNING for resilient education systems.

- Section 2: Considerations for ensuring ACCESS to education for all children and adolescents.
- Section 3: Considerations for ensuring inclusive and quality LEARNING for all children and adolescents.
- Section 4: Considerations for ensuring the MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING of all children and adolescents, teachers and parents.
- Section 5: Considerations for SAFE schools for children and adolescents.
- Section 6: Considerations for NUTRITION and school feeding.

Each section presents both considerations and additional thematic resources.

1.4 How to use the guidance

While Section 1 provides general considerations about planning, the five remaining sections include:

- A summary of main risks and key priorities for planning in the short and medium term,
- A series of considerations to help decision-makers address key challenges ahead and ensure inclusive and quality education provision for ALL children.

Considerations can be applied at different levels by:

- Schools*,
- Local authorities,
- District Education Authorities or Administrations,
- National-level decision makers: Ministries of education, national education agencies and other relevant national stakeholders from the education or other sectors.

**The term 'school' is used for convenience as a broad term covering all types of education institutions, formal and informal, at all levels of education. Where relevant, preschools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and non-formal education centres and provision are referred to specifically.*

A symbol (◆■●♦) indicates which level(s) should consider addressing a given question.

Considerations span the short (2021-2022) ■ and medium term (2022-2023) ■.

Below is a summary of the symbols and colour codes used throughout the document.

ST ■	MT ■	S ◆	LA ■	DEA ●	N ♦
Short-term	Medium-term	Schools	Local authorities	District education authorities	National level

Major changes between the 2020 and 2021 Considerations document

This second edition of the Considerations has been fully updated to reflect the situation and challenges of the academic year 2021-2022 and beyond.

The main changes include:

- Updated Considerations for planning;
- Updated Considerations for each of the 5 Areas;
- Inclusion of additional thematic resources for each of the 5 Areas of the Considerations.

1.5 Terminology

School is used for convenience as a broad term covering all types of education institutions, formal and informal, at all levels of education. Where relevant, preschools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and non-formal education centres and provision are referred to specifically.

*Within this document, **preschools,** regardless of their type and line ministries, are considered an integral part of the education system. It is, however, recognized that young children are less autonomous in their learning than older children, with strong needs for nurturing relationships at home and in school to enable early learning and development. The programmes that serve children from pre-school age also have unique features and needs. The reader can refer to UNICEF's guidance on preschool reopening for more information[2], along with the Global Guidance on Reopening Early Childhood Settings. UNICEF's framework in support of universal quality pre-primary education, "Build to Last",[3] outlines the key elements of an effective pre-primary subsector and can further inform the work of countries in building more resilient education systems.*

It is recognized that while education institutions mostly depend on education ministries, some children are educated in special institutions, residential care institutions, detention centres, closed educational institutions, hospitals and sanatoriums that might be attached to other line ministries, including ministries of health, social affairs (e.g., kindergartens), the interior or justice.

The Considerations are, to some extent, relevant to all types of education institutions but are not comprehensively addressing the reopening specificities of each institution, with the exception of regular schools.

School reopening refers to schools reopening shared physical spaces for students and teachers.

Marginalized children refer to individuals or groups of children who are socially and educationally excluded. In Europe and Central Asia, these children are typically Roma children and children from other ethnic or linguistic minorities, children living in poverty, children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children, internally displaced children, children in conflict with the law, children in institutions, children from dysfunctional or vulnerable households, children left alone by parents working abroad, children living and working in the street, out-of-school children, and other children living in difficult circumstances, including girls at risk of child, early or forced marriage, pregnant girls, young mothers and young fathers, girls and boys caring for siblings or sick parents, and girls and boys who are victims of gender-based violence. Marginalized children can be girls and/or boys, depending on contexts.

It is recognized that gender is an important aspect of marginalization, which intersects with other dimensions of exclusion. It is also recognized that the COVID-19 crisis might have resulted in increased domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV), which disproportionately affects girls and women.

This document also recognizes that 'families', 'parents' and 'communities' reflect multiple realities and are not homogeneous groups. Single-parent-headed households or young parents have specific needs and might require matching support. Engaging with parents might require adopting differentiated strategies for mothers and fathers.

Remote Teaching (or Remote Learning) encompasses the idea that courses are offered through distance learning in response to a crisis, rather than having been planned or designed for the purpose of distance education. It typically refers to a sudden (and often rushed) transition from classroom-based teaching to distance education and/or virtual classrooms. Many are calling for a distinction between online learning, underpinned by inclusive pedagogy, and remote learning in recognition of the fact that online learning has been planned and designed while remote learning primarily uses technology to conduct tasks designed for classroom-based teaching.[4]

[2] UNICEF (2020) Guidance for Re-Opening of Preschools and Kindergartens post-COVID-19. Accessed at: https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/reports/guidance-re-opening-preschools-and-kindergartens-post-covid-19

[3] UNICEF (2020) Summary: Build To Last: A framework in support of universal quality pre-primary education. Accessed at: https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Build-to-last-framework-universal-quality-pre-primary-education-Summary.pdf

[4] EdTech (2020): 'From Emergency Remote Teaching to Rigorous Online Learning'. Accessed at: https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2020/05/emergency-remote-teaching-rigorous-online-learning-perfcon

Distance learning (distance education) is defined as education provided to students remotely without regular in-person contact with a teacher in the classroom. Distance education, once implemented via correspondence, includes learning through take-home printed materials, radio or television programmes, and online.

Online learning is usually understood as education that takes place over the internet. It can be part of distance education programmes but also used to complement classroom-based teaching (blended learning). Students can study online at home or in their classrooms and with their peers. Online learning uses a range of formats, often combining internet-based technology and education technology applications that can be used offline.

Blended learning combines multiple modalities, including in-person teaching and learning, the use of education technology applications and students' interactions with online learning. In this case, education technology applications and online learning are some of the teaching strategies to support students in reaching their learning goals. Blended learning can also include distance learning.

Hybrid learning describes one of the education modalities used by countries in the 2020-2021 school year, whereby students attend a combination of in-person teaching a few days a week and of remote learning the rest of the time. This option has enabled schools to comply with reduced-class-size regulations throughout the year.

Socio-emotional learning Socio-emotional skills "refer to the abilities to regulate one's thoughts, emotions and behaviour" (OECD, 2018). These skills, developed gradually from infancy onwards, enable children and adults to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.[5] Socio-emotional skills are labelled differently by different agencies. The OECD organizes socio-emotional skills around five big domains: Task Performance, Emotional Regulation, Collaboration, Open-mindedness, Engaging with others, plus an additional Compound Skills domain comprising of self-efficacy, critical thinking/independence, and self-reflection and metacognition (OECD, 2018). For the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), socio-emotional skills relate to self-awareness (e.g., identifying emotions, recognizing strengths, self-efficacy), self-management (e.g. stress management, self-discipline, self-motivation, goal setting, organization skills), social awareness (empathy and respect for others), relationships (e.g., communication, team work), and responsible decision-making (e.g., identifying problems, analysing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting). Other frameworks are more relevant to preschool-age children. *UNICEF's Guidance for Re-Opening of Preschools and Kindergartens* post-COVID-19 provides additional information on the topic.

Recovery is used in the document to indicate a return to a normal state. 'Learning recovery' covers steps and interventions to address the learning gaps caused by school closures and the pandemic.

Community engagement refers to working with traditional, community, civil society, government, and opinion groups and leaders, including youth groups; and expanding collective or group roles in addressing the issues that affect their lives. Community engagement empowers social groups and social networks, builds upon local strengths and capacities and improves local participation, ownership, adaptation and communication. Community engagement includes youth participation.

Family engagement refers to working with and empowering family members (parents of children currently in school and other family stakeholders).

[5] https://casel.org/

2 Considerations for planning

Governments, ministries, and schools are faced with the challenge of planning for education delivery in uncertain times. With the virus still in circulation globally, and a slow and unequal rollout of vaccination campaigns, learning might continue to be disrupted for the forthcoming months or years in some countries, localities or schools. Countries are facing the challenge of preparing and planning for:

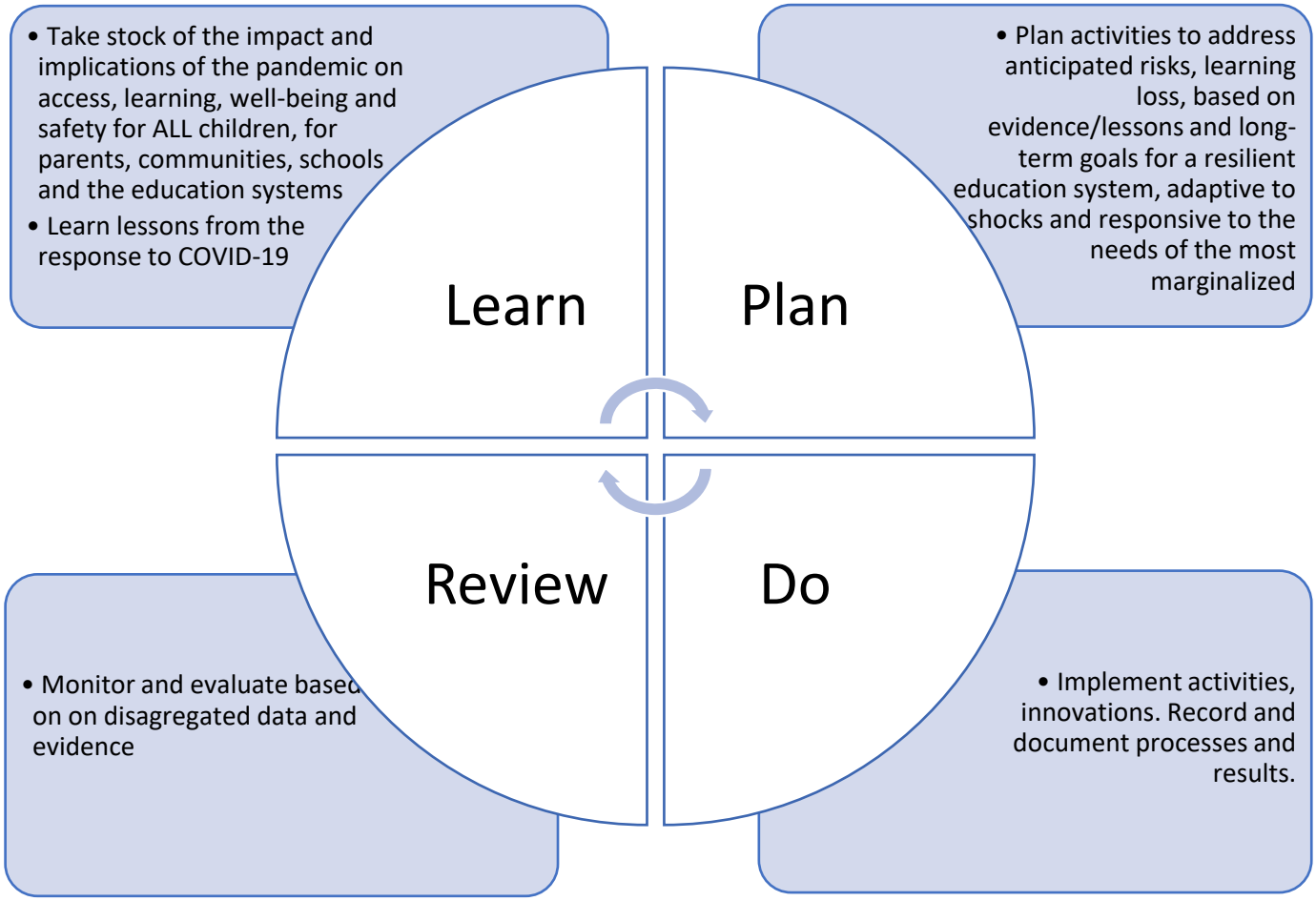
(i) Measures for resurgent outbreaks of COVID-19;

(ii) Mitigating the negative impact of the learning disruption in the past 18 months; and

(iii) Ensuring greater resilience of their education systems in the long term.

Taking stock and learning lessons is a key attribute of resilient systems. This is not only necessary as countries are embarking on planning for the new academic year but also for planning for long-term changes in education systems and education delivery for greater resilience and inclusion (See Figure 1 below). Taking the time to learn from the education response to the pandemic in the past 18 months is, therefore, paramount to building back better, to building a more inclusive and resilient education system.

FIGURE 1 LEARNING AND PLANNING CYCLE



2.1 Taking stock and learning lessons

Taking stock is an important part of a lesson learning exercise. In the context of education planning in 2021, this means taking stock of:

- The impact of the pandemic on education. This includes both negative impacts, such as widening learning inequalities between groups of children, and positive effects, such as teachers' greater understanding of the personal situations of their students and how they might be affected by poverty and exclusion, and the increased parental role in children's education.

- The impact of the pandemic on system capacity in relation to a range of stakeholders, from beneficiaries (students, families), education staff (teachers, managers and other school staff), education institutions (schools, learning centres, ministries and national education bodies) and other stakeholders, particularly local authorities. This includes investigating and taking into consideration the toll that the pandemic has taken on teachers and students' well-being and mental health, and the financial impact of COVID-19 on countries' budget allocations to the education sector.

Learning lessons about what was done during the 2020-2021 academic year is also critical, and should include:

- Understanding the characteristics and attributes of the education response in a country, different regions and different schools.
- Reflecting on what has worked well, what has not worked well, what was missing and why.
- Reflecting on gains and perspective changes from the pandemic regarding the role of education, schools, parents and other education stakeholders, and identifying education practices during the pandemic that will remain in the future.

It is valuable to learn lessons at all levels of the education system, nationally but also at the school and community level, and in different institutions and organizations dealing with education, including ministries, national education entities, and deconcentrated and decentralized authorities.

Resilient organizations and systems are able to include lessons learned in their planning processes, ensure they are acted upon and monitor their effects.

2.2 Anticipating risks

Identifying potential risks, particularly on children and young people, is a key part of understanding the impact of the pandemic on education, and of building resilient education systems.

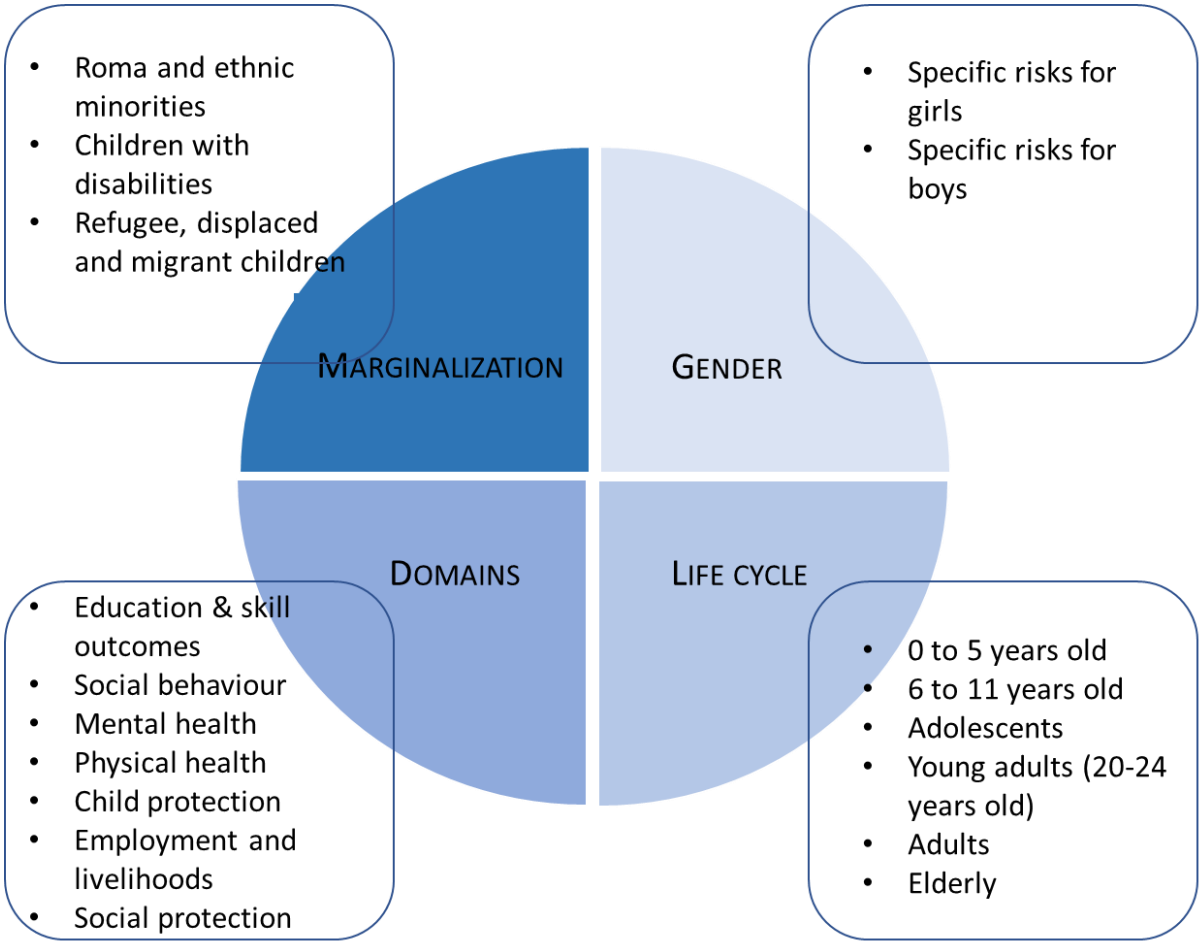
Resilient education systems are risk-informed. They have the capacity to identify the risks from an equity and inclusion perspective and devise measures to mitigate those risks based on evidence, particularly for the most marginalized. Risks are likely to be identified at the level of the system, such as funding risks, low morale of the teaching force and increased burnout risks among teachers and school leaders. Anticipating risks for children and young people, now and in the future, is also key to inform short- and long-term education plans and other relevant policy planning processes in sectors such as health, child protection, social protection and employment.

Four lenses can be applied to identifying and anticipating current and future risks for children and young people:

- Marginalization;
- Gender;
- The life cycle; and
- Risk domains.

Risks for children and young people can be analysed through each of these lenses separately, and together.

FIGURE 2 FOUR LENSES TO IDENTIFY CURRENT AND FUTURE RISKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Potential risks in different domains for children and young people are further detailed in Annexes 2 and 3.

Annex 2 presents a non-exhaustive list of potential negative impact and risks for children based on a gender and marginalization lens.

Annex 3 details risks across the life cycle. These include not only the potential negative impact and risks for children in different age groups today, but also the potential negative impact and risks later in their adult and elderly life.

2.3 Planning for resilient education systems

The pandemic and its subsequent shock on education systems has led to the heightened recognition that education was part of a larger ecosystem that does not only deliver education outcomes but also contributes to delivering a range of social and economic outcomes for children and families. Below are some considerations for planning to build resilient education systems beyond the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure that ALL children receive inclusive quality education.

- **Wide stakeholder engagement at all levels and at all steps of the planning cycle.** Building back better education requires a vision shared by the society as a whole, **including young people** (UNICEF and ETF, 2021). Wide stakeholder engagement is critical to defining this vision, shaping interventions and ensuring buy-in, particularly at times of uncertainty.
- **Rethink the purpose of education and role of schools.** The role of schools, teachers and students has evolved throughout the pandemic. The role of schools in building community resilience and facilitating the most marginalized students' integration and well-being has been recognized. Greater attention has been paid to the holistic development of students, including mental health and well-being. Socio-emotional learning and fostering autonomy has become a priority in the learning process, as well as supporting the development of 21st century skills. The role of schools as providers of social and other support for the community has also been highlighted, with implications for the role of teachers, particularly in a context where EdTech is flourishing. By strengthening school and community resilience, schools can remain open and deliver on their multiple roles,

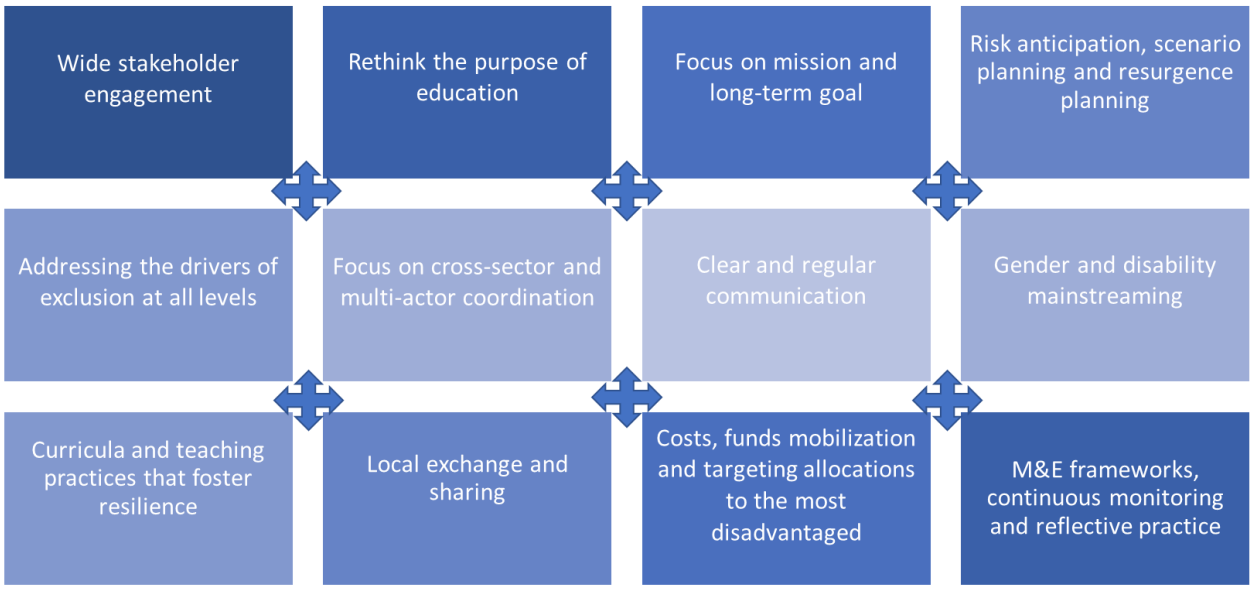
even when school buildings are physically closed. Redefining the purpose of education and its relevance in the short and long term is therefore important.

- **Focus on mission and long-term goal.** Education planning needs to focus on provisions for education continuity and school reopening while also addressing long-term goals. Framed by the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 and the leave no one behind agenda, a resilient education system stays true to its mission and ensures that ALL children can realize their education rights and reach their full potential.
- **Risk anticipation, scenario planning and resurgence planning.** Throughout the pandemic, anticipating risks, planning early, planning for contingency and revising plans regularly based on evidence, lessons learned and good practice has been key. Planning for resilient education systems involves preparedness and resurgence planning in case of future outbreaks or other crises. Scenario planning will continue to be relevant in the foreseeable future. Cross-ministry scenario planning capacity will also be useful to countries should other crises arise, regardless of their nature.
- **Addressing the drivers of exclusion at all levels**. The pandemic has amplified the drivers of social exclusion: poverty, discrimination, unemployment, ill health, social capital, housing, local networks (supportive neighbourhoods, transport, etc.) and education. The education experience of students and outcomes for children and young people are typically influenced by factors operating at four levels: (i) *The child and the family*: gender, ethnicity, income, health, mobility; (ii) *The school*: resources, teaching and learning practices, ethos, care and support; (iii) *The community*: school-community relationships, engagement of local authorities, of civil society; (iv) *The national level*: policies, investments and social norms, including gender norms. Building back better education means addressing drivers of exclusion and barriers to participation as a priority and at all four levels simultaneously. Building back better education includes (i) additional provision and adaptation for the most marginalized children and (ii) ensuring that national and local efforts converge to support the transformation of schools towards truly inclusive learning environments where pedagogy, relationship with parents and communities, and a holistic and supportive school ethos for all school actors are at the core of schools' missions and practices.
- **Focus on cross-sector and multi-actor coordination**. Coordination at national and local levels across sectors (health and mental health, psychological support, social services, child protection services, nutrition programmes) and across actors (state and non-state actors including municipalities, the private sector, academia and other civil society organizations) is paramount to ensuring that the most marginalized children and young people will return to education and training and have their holistic needs met beyond the pandemic.
- **Clear and regular communication.** Communicating transparently on education planning processes, education delivery and education outcomes is important during and beyond times of crisis. Increasing education resilience means ensuring genuine opportunities for two-way student, parent, teacher and community engagement. Throughout the pandemic, clear and regular communication from governments and ministries play a critical role in reassuring families about the readiness of schools to welcome back children, in reassuring the education workforce that their challenges are understood and that they will be supported to face them, and in reassuring children that education provision and school practices will be transformed to support them to learn.
- **Gender and disability mainstreaming.** Resilient education systems are informed by gender and disability analyses that feed into pandemic and post-pandemic decision-making processes. Resilient education systems strive to understand the impact that COVID-19 policy responses have had on girls and boys, women and men, and children and young people with disabilities, through data systems that provide disaggregated data. They include differentiated measures for girls and boys and children with disabilities where needed, including twin-track approaches to ensure that the education is inclusive while also supporting girls, boys and children with disabilities with targeted support. Lastly, they promote and foster the participation of gender equality actors and organizations of people with disabilities throughout planning, M&E and lesson learning processes.
- **Curricula and teaching practices that foster student resilience.** Considering the implications of what we learn from crisis on the purpose and principles of curricula is important. Resilient education systems are also systems that promote and foster individual resilience, including through curricula, teaching practices, and school practices, from socio-emotional learning and life skills promotion to classroom practices that support learners' autonomy and independent learning and collaborative skills.
- **Local exchange and sharing of knowledge.** Nurturing local exchange and sharing knowledge is key in systems where local governments and local communities are empowered to make their own choices about education to be more responsive to local contexts and where schools have some level of autonomy to use funds based on

their specific needs and to develop innovative practices. Local networks and reflective practice spaces for schools, local authorities and other local education stakeholders are important structures and fora for building resilient and local context-responsive education systems.

- **Cost, funds mobilization and targeting allocations to the most disadvantaged schools and students**. Planning for resilient education systems require funding. Where funds are scarce, fund mobilization strategies are necessary to secure long-term funding. Harnessing the potential of public-private partnerships is critical, particularly to support the development of IT infrastructure and equipment or health supplies. Lastly, prioritizing regions, schools and groups of students based on needs and targeting funds to those who need them most is a requirement for education systems to address vulnerability and inclusion, and therefore to become more resilient.
- **M&E frameworks, continuous monitoring and reflective practice.** Continuous monitoring of the education response to the pandemic is important, including mechanisms for feedback loops between beneficiaries and policymakers to enable re-adjustment and appropriate messaging to address stakeholders' concerns. So is taking stock of the impact of the pandemic on children and schools to identify and mitigate risks, as well as learning lessons to make education systems and education delivery more responsive to specific situations. Embedding these mechanisms into regular education planning will strengthen the resilience of education systems beyond the pandemic.

FIGURE 3 PRINCIPLES FOR PLANNING FOR RESILIENT EDUCATION SYSTEMS



While the pandemic has significantly disrupted education provision and deepened inequalities, it has also provided opportunities for transforming pedagogy and schools: new ways of teaching and learning, new ways of communicating with children and families and a greater role for schools in supporting well-being.

Countries have a lot to gain from the creative education responses to the pandemic at school, local and national levels. Valuable experiences have taken place, innovative partnerships have been built, valuable lessons have been learned, all of which can feed into education planning and reform processes for years to come. This is an opportunity not to be missed, which requires a quality assured planning process that continuously learns from experience and assesses the situation, plans to address inequalities, encourages recording and documenting intervention processes and results, and monitors and evaluates practices to improve their transparency, effectiveness and sustain what works.

3 Area 1: Access

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENSURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In this section, "access" is understood broadly and encompasses all aspects of enrollment, prevention of non-enrollment, failure to re-enrol, school dropout and support measures for children to return to and participate in education. Elements that are specific to learning have been included in Area 2: Learning.

Main challenges and risks

- Students not returning to school, dropping out from school, not transitioning to higher levels of education or training
- Education opportunity costs for families resulting in child labour or decisions to shorten studies in favour of work
- Parent fear and reluctance to send their children back to school
- Unequal access to remote, hybrid and blended learning opportunities for the most marginalized children
- Weak systems, mechanisms and cross-sector coordination to identify and support children not returning to school

For specific risks for boys and girls and marginalized children, including Roma and ethnic minorities, children with disabilities and refugee and migrant children and specific risks across the life cycle, see Annexes 2 and 3.

Priorities for 2021

- Identify students not (re)enrolling/returning to school and those at risk of dropping out, with a focus on, but not limited to, compulsory education, so as to include pre-primary and upper secondary
- Remove financial, administrative and other barriers to access and participation in education
- Implement dropout prevention interventions in schools and localities
- Strengthen school-home communication and parent involvement in education and early learning
- Upgrade EMIS and other data systems to identify out-of-school children and students at risk of dropout and to track students across education cycles and formal and non-formal systems.

Mid-term priorities for transforming education for greater resilience

- Investment and policies for more sensitive and disaggregated EMIS, SMIS and student tracking systems across general, TVET, education cycles and formal and non-formal education provision
- Strong cross-sector coordination at national and local level to support education access and participation for the most marginalized and to enable schools to play their social support role for children and families
- Comprehensive cross-sector policies and investments to remove key barriers, financial and other, to access and participation in education at all levels for the most marginalized including children with disabilities
- Complementarity of formal and non-formal education, alternative and second-chance education programmes
- Continuous mobilization of funds for upgrading and maintaining IT infrastructure, equipment and software in schools and across the country, including free equipment for the most marginalized and assistive technology for students with disabilities

3.1 Considerations for ensuring access to education for all children and adolescents

ST ■	MT ■	Questions for consideration	S ◆	LA ■	DEA ●	N ♦
		1. Identification of children at risk of not (re)enrolling				
		1.1 Responsibilities and protocols	◆	■	●	♦
■		Nomination of responsible persons, committees or agencies to identify learners at risk of not (re)enrolling, out-of-school children, including of pre-primary age, and youth and students at risk of dropping out.	◆	■	●	
■		Protocols ensuring that all children having reached the age of school entry by September will have been identified, registered in schools and enrolled in compulsory pre-primary grade or Grade 1.	◆	■		♦
■		Protocol to identify children particularly at risk of not (re)enrolling, including: ▪ Children educated in residential care institutions ▪ Refugee and migrant children, children in displaced situations ▪ Children enrolled in informal or non-formal education centres (e.g., displaced and migrant children or early school leavers, informal early childhood education centres) ▪ Children educated in detention centres or health institutions (hospitals, sanatoriums)	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Mechanisms to triangulate data sources at local level with health, social services, civil registry, population registry, family mobility data, and NGO data to ensure that all out-of-school children are identified, including migrant and refugee children and children with disabilities. For displaced and refugee children, involvement of education coordination mechanisms established under IASC/Education Cluster or Education in Emergency or Refugee Education Working Group.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Additional rapid assessments to identify specific groups of children at risk of not (re)enrolling, and children at risk of not enrolling in particular geographical areas or in particular communities, including refugee and migrant communities	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Data analysis, interpretation and timely use to identify the most at risk and target support.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Organization of outreach activities that are not stigmatizing for children, families and particular groups or communities.	◆	■	●	♦

■	■	Clarification of and proactive role of localities/municipalities in connecting schools with other sector stakeholders and in coordinating local identification mechanisms of out-of-school children and young people.		■		
■	■	Education quality standards reflecting the role of schools in identifying and supporting student at risk of dropping out.				♦
		1.2 Data systems				
■	■	EMIS systems, combined with other data sources, such as school registers, civil registries, health and social benefits records, and municipality population records, that enable to identify in real-time: ▪ Children at the age of entering compulsory pre-primary or Grade 1 but not enrolled in school ▪ Children who dropped out before or after school reopening ▪ Children at risk of dropping out (due to non-participation in distance learning, non-interaction with the school during lockdown or hybrid learning periods, frequent absenteeism, or other personal and family factors that could make them at risk of not (re)enrolling) ▪ Children supposed to transfer schools who never re(enrolled) or attended their new school, including refugee and migrant children transferring from non-formal to formal schools ▪ Children who did not transition from primary to secondary education, even where secondary is not compulsory, or entered pre-primary when it is not compulsory		■	●	♦
■	■	EMIS indicators and school data collection forms that enable sensitive and automated flagging of children potentially at risk of not (re)enrolling or of dropping out, including: ▪ Differentiating justified and non-justified absences ▪ Non-engagement in distance or hybrid learning ▪ Low learning outcomes and widening learning gaps ▪ Personal MHPSS and protection risks ▪ Disability ▪ Refugee or migrant status, children in displaced situations including children educated in non-formal or temporary education centres ▪ Other risks as deemed relevant to national authorities and/or schools	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Rapid assessments at the beginning of the school year to assess the level of school (re)enrollment and inform mitigation measures based on EMIS and additional surveys to ensure data is collected in the most marginalized communities, particularly Roma and ethnic minority communities and refugees and migrants.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	EMIS collects data on refugee and internally displaced children.	◆		●	♦
		1.3 Case management				
■		Nomination of responsible persons, with roles and responsibilities clearly outlined, to follow up on cases of children at risk of not (re)enrolling or not returning to school.	◆	■	●	

■		Protocols and processes to follow up and manage cases of children at risk of not (re)enrolling or not returning to school.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Simple student needs assessment to facilitate the return of children and young people in need of targeted or multi-disciplinary support during and after school return.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Referral mechanisms development or review between health, social and child protection services to prioritize support for children and young people not returning to school, or at risk of harm, neglect or abuse.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Prioritization of the (re)enrollment in regular schools of the most vulnerable children, particularly children formerly educated in Residential Care Institutions, detention centres, non-formal or temporary education centres or health institutions.	◆			♦
		1.4 Attendance regulations				
■		Amendments of attendance rules and attendance registration mechanisms to accommodate or take into account: ▪ Health-related absenteeism, including learners shielding or quarantining ▪ Remote learning for students with underlying health conditions who are shielding ▪ Hybrid or remote learning arrangements ▪ Requirements from social benefits and cash transfer programmes so as not to penalize learners during school closure, learners shielding or quarantining, or learners engaged in hybrid or distance learning arrangements and not physically attending school daily.				♦
		2. Community engagement				
		2.1 Communication				
■		Clear, simple, and comprehensive messaging for school return: ▪ Dates of school (re)opening for each education level (pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary, TVET, non-formal) ▪ Priority groups for returning to each education level (if any) ▪ Learning arrangements, including staggered re-entry processes or hybrid learning arrangements for each education level ▪ (Re)enrollment processes for each education level ▪ Importance of education and in-person learning ▪ Child labour prevention messages ▪ Incentives, support and services available to students and families during and beyond school return ▪ Procedures in place to ensure health and safety of children and their families ▪ Addressing common family concerns and overcoming objections ahead of time regarding health and safety	◆	■		♦
■		Communication campaigns and practices that: ▪ Take into consideration children's age, as well as gender, ethnicity, language, culture and disability ▪ Take parental fears and misconceptions about COVID-19 into consideration	◆	■		♦

		▪ Make school return messages available in relevant languages, accessible formats and tailored to the needs of the most marginalized communities and families ▪ Use multiple channels; media and social media are used in combination ▪ Build on partnerships with media and mobile phone companies to enhance the effectiveness of information campaigns.				
■		Outreach communication campaigns, including large-scale SMS campaigns, for communities for which risks of not (re)enrolling are higher, including Roma and other ethnic minorities, and refugee, displaced and migrant communities.	◆	■		♦
		2.2 Community engagement				
■		Involvement of a wide range of partners in outreach work targeting students at risk of not (re)enrolling or not returning to school, including, ▪ Health staff (e.g., visiting nurses, health mediators) ▪ Roma mediators, community and school mediators, (Roma) pedagogical assistants, Roma health mediators ▪ Social assistants ▪ Housing associations ▪ NGOs and CSOs working with particular vulnerable groups ▪ Community leaders including religious leaders ▪ Faith-based organizations ▪ Community groups such as women groups and youth groups, and youth social media influencers ▪ Parent-teacher associations ▪ Community volunteers	◆	■	●	♦
■		Engagement with employers, businesses, industrial facilities, agricultural facilities and farms, to: ▪ Raise awareness about the importance of school return ▪ Prevent an increase in child labour or an increase in hazardous and exploitative work among children ▪ Accommodate school return in work schedules		■	●	♦
		3. General measures to support (re)enrollment, retention and prevent dropout				
		3.1 Removing barriers				
■	■	Removing administrative barriers at the time of (re)enrollment: ▪ Vaccination certificates/passes, including for routine vaccination ▪ Proof of permanent and registered address, ▪ Documentation, ID card or birth certificate ▪ Age requirements ▪ Certificates and proof of prior learning, particularly for returnees and refugee and migrant children			●	♦

■	■	Removing cost barriers: ▪ Access to free personal protective equipment, in particular masks ▪ Uniforms ▪ School supplies, textbooks, IT device ▪ School registration fees and parent-teacher association contributions ▪ Removing all sanctions, such as withdrawal of social benefits or cash transfers following school absenteeism for health, shielding or quarantining reasons, and for following hybrid or distance learning		■	●	♦
■	■	Legislation removing administrative hurdles and cost barriers to compulsory education and progressively to non-compulsory education levels.				♦
■	■	Removing grade repetition.				♦
		3.2 Incentives for (re)enrollment				
■	■	Common short-term measures, including: ▪ Nutrition (see Area 5) ▪ Free school meal distributions over the summer holiday ▪ Financial incentives for vulnerable and marginalized groups, including families impacted by the COVID-19 disease or loss of livelihoods as a result of restrictions and economic recession ▪ Additional financial incentives to social benefit, cash transfer and education bursary beneficiaries, including one-off welcome back to school allowances ▪ Grade 1 entry one-off allowances, including in-kind packages such as school bags and school supplies ▪ Secondary school entry one-off allowances and secondary education scholarships for the most marginalized, particularly children with disabilities, Roma, ethnic minorities and refugee and migrant children or young people studying in evening classes ▪ Financial schemes, allowances and scholarships for post-secondary and tertiary education students ▪ School transport support (see below) ▪ IT and connectivity support (IT device loans, free IT devices, connectivity vouchers, etc.) ▪ In-kind support, including school supplies and kits with washable masks, soap and reusable sanitary pads		■	●	♦
■	■	Adaptation of safety nets and social protection mechanisms to support: ▪ Children, adolescents and young adults now and in the long term, i.e., taking into accounts the potential risks associated with lower number of years of education and subsequential loss of income in the future. ▪ The poorest families and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in the short and long term, including by adapting social benefits and cash transfers to reflect the loss of income for child labour.				♦
		3.3 Transport				

■	■	School transport vouchers and fee waiving during and beyond the pandemic, particularly for the most marginalized.		■		♦
■		Bus routes and schedules accommodating staggered returns or periods of hybrid learning.		■		♦
■	■	Reasonable accommodation in transports for students with disabilities.		■		♦
■	■	Coordination of transport stakeholders (education and transport ministries, municipalities, providers, users) for participatory decision-making processes over school transportation issues.	♦	■	●	♦
		3.4 Access to services				
■	■	Delivery of service packages in schools as a single service point to ensure take-up and maximize return to school ▪ For children with disabilities ▪ For children or parents facing mental health distress ▪ For vulnerable families, including social benefit registration and referrals, registration for documentation, referrals to job centres and other relevant municipal services, including childcare and preschool provision.	♦	■	●	♦
■	■	Reviewing the role of schools as social support hubs and implications for funding and staffing allocations.		■	●	♦
■	■	Mobilization of local resources by localities/municipalities to provide disadvantaged families with material and socio-emotional support throughout and beyond the pandemic.		■		
	■	Overall role of localities/municipalities in education planning and delivery for formal, non-formal and informal education services.		■	●	♦
		3.5 Supporting transition back to school (see also Area 2 Learning)				
■		National, municipal and community strategies for supporting students' transition back to school: ▪ Summer camps; community provision of summer educational, cultural and leisure activities to children and young people ▪ Summer skills development programmes, including digital literacy ▪ Summer catch-up or accelerated learning programmes, including early childhood education programmes ▪ Prioritization of the most marginalized and at-risk of non (re)enrollment ▪ Linkages between schools and between formal and non-formal education providers, including preschool providers.	♦	■	●	♦
■		Engagement and coordination of schools, community learning centres, businesses, job centres, academia, university students, women's groups, youth groups and associations, libraries, and the civil society more broadly to contribute to these efforts, particularly for learners entering Grade	♦	■	●	♦

		1, students transitioning into secondary or post-compulsory education, children moving from non-formal to formal education, children with disabilities and children who have been excluded from remote learning.				
		3.6 Twin-track approaches				
■	■	Universal interventions for supporting all children and young people to (re)enrol in school	◆	■		◆
■	■	Targeted interventions for supporting specific at-risk groups, including girls, boys, Roma and ethnic minority children, refugee, displaced and migrant children, children with disabilities, working children, young mothers/parents and carers.	◆	■		◆
		3.7 Alternative education pathways				
■	■	Alternative pathways back to education: ▪ For children out-of-school before the pandemic and those who dropped out in early 2020 ▪ For children moving from non-formal to formal education or temporary education centres to regular schools ▪ Bridge and accelerated-learning programmes, particularly for refugee and migrant children	◆			◆
■	■	Second chance education programmes for early school leavers and young adults, including: ▪ Needs analysis ▪ Targeting audience and geographical areas ▪ Planning, financing, piloting and partnership building for second-chance education		■		◆
■	■	Connecting young people above the compulsory education age to future education opportunities and skills training, apprenticeships and future employment opportunities.	◆	■		◆
	■	Complementarity of formal, non-formal and informal education throughout and beyond the pandemic.	◆	■	●	◆
■	■	Coordination of formal, non-formal and informal education providers at the local level and national level.	◆	■	●	◆
		4. School-specific measures to support retention and prevent dropout				
		4.1 Welcoming back students in schools				
■	■	School strategies for welcoming back all learners in-person including: ▪ Open days and induction sessions, particularly for preschool, post-secondary and TVET ▪ Summer learning and recreational activities in schools ▪ Welcome and induction strategies for first cohorts of lower, upper secondary/TVET and post-compulsory education levels	◆	■		

		▪ Welcome and induction strategies for children who were in and out of school during the pandemic, children who were shielding, and children who missed out on most of their schooling since the beginning of the pandemic, particularly Roma and ethnic minority children and refugee and migrant children ▪ Holistic welcome strategies addressing mental health, socialization and peer interactions (see also AREA 3: Mental health and well-being) ▪ Coordination between primary and secondary schools, general and TVET schools ▪ Peer-mentoring.				
■	■	School strategies specific to Grade 1 entry: ▪ Open days ▪ Summer school readiness programmes for future Grade 1 learners, with a focus on the most marginalized communities, linguistic minorities and the poorest households ▪ Welcome strategies for Grade 1 cohorts ▪ Coordination between preschool and primary schools ▪ Buddy systems (peer support)	◆	■		
■	■	Additional funding to schools to support re-enrollment and dropout prevention activities *[See also Area 4: Safe Schools]* ▪ Block grants ▪ Communication and transport costs for outreach activities ▪ School meal costs ▪ Costs for summer school activities		■	●	♦
		4.2 Parental engagement				
■	■	Building on good parental engagement practices from before and during the pandemic.	◆			
■	■	Differentiated parental engagement mechanisms: ▪ For families from different socio-linguistic groups ▪ For refugee and migrant families ▪ For mothers and fathers ▪ For extended family members where relevant ▪ For parents with/without access to the internet	◆	■		
■		Parental engagement in health protocols development, implementation and monitoring (also See Area 4: SAFE SCHOOLS)	◆	■		♦
		4.3 Student engagement and participation				

■	■	Review of student participation mechanisms and improvement of student agency: ▪ (Re)activation of student councils ▪ Mechanisms for including students in school decision-making, school self-evaluation processes and school development planning ▪ Student involvement in health protocols development, implementation and monitoring (also See Area 4: SAFE SCHOOLS) ▪ School/class assemblies ▪ Feedback loops for improving the school environment, teaching and learning, the school climate, social and peer cohesion, learning support, mental health support, leisure and recreational activities ▪ Supporting student agency in designing their learning experience.	◆		●	♦
		4.4 Learning support (See Area 2: Learning)				
		4.5 Mental health support (See Area 3: Mental Health and Well-Being)				
		4.6 Monitoring participation				
■		Attendance monitoring and individual follow-up with students and families for unjustified or chronic absenteeism.	◆		●	♦
■		Remote learning participation monitoring and follow-up: ▪ Online engagement tracking ▪ Remote learning logs ▪ Learning journals from students or parents (for younger children) ▪ Coordination with parents, mediators, pedagogical assistants, NGOs/CSOs. Volunteers for check-ins on student learning	◆		●	♦
		5. Supporting the capacity of teachers and schools *(see also Area 2: Learning and Area 3: Mental Health and Well-Being)*				
		5.1 Supporting the professional development of teachers and other school staff				
■	■	Professional development training and activities to increase the capacities of teachers and other school staff (pedagogues, psychologists, counsellors, directors, mediators, resource teachers, teacher assistants, etc.) regarding: ▪ Identification of children out of school ▪ Dropout prevention ▪ Parent/family engagement strategies ▪ Coordination with local services			●	♦
		5.2 Supporting schools during and beyond the pandemic				

■	■	Guidelines to schools on: ▪ Attendance monitoring during remote and hybrid learning periods ▪ Identification of students not (re)enrolling or at risk of not (re)enrolling and case management practices ▪ Coordination with local teams, including local authority staff, social workers, the police and NGOs on cases of children not returning to school ▪ Enrolling and supporting vulnerable children, particularly children formerly educated in residential care institutions, detention centres or non-formal education		■	●	♦
■	■	Collection and sharing of good practices to support school re-enrollment, transition and dropout prevention between schools, local/municipal authorities, and nationwide.	◆	■	●	♦
		6. Monitoring, evaluation and accountability				
■	■	Inclusion of key access-related indicators in pandemic monitoring and pandemic impact assessment on the education system: • Enrollment in preschool programmes • School registration and enrollment in Grade 1 or compulsory pre-primary grade • Transition to post-secondary education, TVET programmes, university programmes and other training for youth • Registration and enrollment in compulsory education programmes delivered through evening classes or independent studies • Enrollment in and/or demand for alternative education programme for adolescents and youth (second chance or evening/independent study programmes) • Number of out-of-school children and students at risk of dropping out and profiles of risk groups • School absenteeism	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Use of disaggregated data particularly gender, ethnicity, location and disability to assess differentiated impact on different groups.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Evaluation for learning and accountability purposes, of national policies and local practices regarding school closures, school reopening, and support to school (re)enrollment and return.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Feedback loops to ensure that information: ▪ Feeds into measures to support enrollment, re-entry and transition ▪ Contributes to future contingency planning ▪ Informs future policies and education planning for ensuring access to education for ALL children and young people, particularly the most marginalized	◆	■	●	♦

3.2 Resources for Area 1: Access

General resources on out-of-school children, dropout prevention and back to school campaigns

- Attendance works (2020), Monitoring Attendance in Distance Learning
- European Commission (2013), Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support. Final Report of the Thematic Group on Early School Leaving.
- OECD (2021), Looking beyond COVID-19: Strengthening family support services across the OECD, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Briefs, OECD, Paris.
- UNICEF (2013), Back to School Guide. New-York: UNICEF
- UNICEF and UIS (2016), Monitoring Education Participation: Framework for Monitoring Children and Adolescents who are Out of School or At Risk of Dropping Out. Geneva: UNICEF Europe and Central Asia.
- UNICEF (2017), Improving Education Participation: Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents in School and Preventing Dropout. Geneva: UNICEF Europe and Central Asia.
- UNICEF (2018), Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping Out. Geneva: UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.
- UNICEF (2020), All children returning to school and learning. Considerations for monitoring access and learning participation during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic

Country approaches and toolkits on dropout prevention and out-of-school children

- Jovanović et al. (2016), How to be a caring school? A study on the Effects of Prevention and Intervention Measures for Preventing the Dropout of Students from the Education System of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade: UNICEF, Centre for Education Policy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development Accessible at:
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo and UNICEF (2014), Equity in Education for All: Manual for School Prevention and Response Teams Towards Abandonment and Non-Registration in Compulsory Education.
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Preschool and early learning

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Country guidance examples

- US Centre for Disease and Control Prevention (2021), Guidance for Operating Child Care Programs during COVID-19
- US Centre for Disease and Control Prevention (2021), Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention

Refugee and migrant children

- UNHCR (2020), COVID-19 Refugees' Return to Schooling Guidelines.

Children's data

- UNICEF (2021), The Case for Better Governance of Children's Data: A Manifesto.

4 Area 2: Learning

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENSURING THAT ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH ARE LEARNING

In this section, "learning" is understood broadly and encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning, assessment and support to socio-emotional learning. Elements that are specific to Mental Health and Psychosocial Support are presented in Area 3: Well-being. Elements that are specific to access to education are presented in Area 1: Access.

Main challenges and risks

- Weak system capacity for curricula and assessment
- Digital divide affecting the most marginalized children's ability to participate in remote, hybrid or blended learning, including (i) limited availability of remote learning materials for linguistic minorities, refugee and migrant children, and preschool children, (ii) accessibility issues for children with disabilities; (iii) limited digital skills
- Learning disruption affecting learning progression, particularly for the most marginalized students and resulting in widened learning inequalities.
- Stigmatization of students who missed out on remote learning
- Educational, social and economic impact of the pandemic on students' ability to concentrate, learn and develop
- Teachers' limited skills: (i) digital skills to support students in virtual learning environments, (ii) competences for remote and blended learning pedagogy, (iii) assessment competences, particularly formative assessment, (iv) differentiated pedagogy skills for both classroom and virtual environments
- Outdated curricula and teaching methodologies that do not equip students with socio-emotional and independent study skills

Specific risks for girls/boys and marginalized children, and specific risks across the life cycle, see Annexes 2 and 3.

Priorities for 2021

- Devise strategies for smoothing the transition from remote or hybrid learning to in-person teaching
- Plan for learning assessment during and after school return, with a focus on diagnostic assessment and continuous classroom-based assessment (formative and summative throughout the year to inform remedial teaching and learning recovery)
- Establish feedback loops for assessment results to be used by teachers, schools and education authorities to plan for instruction and learning support
- Devise options and strategies for learning support, including national and school-based programmes and adaptation of instruction delivery based on inclusive education principles. Explore how blended learning can facilitate learning support while also taking into consideration the availability of learning materials in various languages.
- Embed socio-emotional learning in teaching and learning practices
- Support parents to be active participants in their children's learning
- Support teachers' professional development (assessment, pedagogy, blended learning) and mitigate teacher workload

Mid-term priorities for transforming education for greater resilience

- Curriculum and assessment reform to improve students' skills and resilience through socio-emotional learning, digital and key competences for study and work

- Developing IT infrastructure, national e-learning platforms, repositories of resources and blended learning approaches to support individual learning progression
- Transforming pedagogy at classroom and school levels for accelerating inclusive learning outcomes
- Supporting students' agency in learning and instruction design
- Focus on evidence generation and reflect lessons learned from the pandemic in policies, education and teacher standards, and in teacher training and professional development

4.1 Considerations for ensuring inclusive and quality LEARNING for all children and adolescents

ST ■	MT ■	Questions for consideration	S ◆	LA ■	DEA ●	N ◆
		1. Assessing learning				
		1.1 Policy planning for learning assessment				
■	■	Understanding and review of options for learning assessment: ▪ Option review depending on time available before school reopening, on pre-existence of assessment tools and on country priorities, including clarity over the purpose of the assessment, its validity for provision of actionable information and how results will be used ▪ Option review depending on the purpose of assessment: assessment of learning or assessment for learning (and trade-offs between the two) – and the use of various assessment methods to do so (summative, formative, diagnostic) ▪ Option review regarding large-scale assessment of learning loss against expected standards – this requires pre-existing comparable data for different grade cohorts and is a time-consuming process unless countries have previous experience of large-scale assessment (see below) ▪ In exam years, option review between one-off summative assessment externally marked (typically exams) and continuous assessment (i.e., average scores of a range of school-based summative assessment throughout the year, marked by the school), and various combinations of the two ▪ Level of complexity of assessment tools: from questioning students in class to standardized written assessment ▪ Understanding the time and cost implications of different types of assessment, particularly large-scale assessment	◆		●	◆
■	■	Learning assessment plans at national levels: (i) General considerations for national assessment plans: ▪ Prioritization of grades for particular assessment methods and rationale for this ▪ Clarity over exam year assessment approaches ▪ Prioritization of curriculum content to be assessed: subjects, knowledge and skills, and the levels at which assessment takes place ▪ Clarity over how assessment results will be presented, interpreted and used (see also section 1.3 below) ▪ Assessment schedules: (i) before the school return, if any (ii) at the beginning of school return (iii) throughout the year (iv) at the end of school terms/semesters/school year, or any combination of these ▪ Compliance of assessment methods with health protocols and rules for in-person teaching ▪ Communication on assessment with students and parents ▪ Resource allocations	◆		●	◆

		(ii) Creation of assessment tools at national level ▪ For new assessment tools creation: strategy to select foundational knowledge and skills to be assessed based on curricular competencies, the time schools were closed in the past two years, any hybrid learning modality implemented in the 2020/2021 school year and various access to remote learning scenarios for marginalized students. ▪ Wide involvement of subject teachers, curriculum specialists, learning assessment specialists, special needs education specialists ▪ Piloting part of or the full assessment tools ▪ Checking accessibility of assessment tools for children with disabilities and providing reasonable accommodation and differentiated assessment for students with learning difficulty (iii) Guidance and capacity development for assessment stakeholders: assessment agencies, teachers and schools ▪ Ministry officers and learning assessment agencies capacity building for learning assessment ▪ Guidance for Inspectorates and pedagogical counsellors ▪ Prioritization of teacher training and professional development on formative assessment methodologies and tools ▪ Teacher guidelines for assessment design, administration, scoring and usage – including consideration for assessing variations between girls and boys, students who benefited or not from remote learning, children with special educational needs, and other marginalized children as well as direct linkages with possible learning support strategies				
■		Planning for large-scale assessment (for countries that are considering this modality only): ▪ Steps and length of the process for developing, piloting, implementing and analysing results of large-scale assessments ▪ Implications of school closure, hybrid learning and teacher workload on the development and piloting of large-scale assessments ▪ Considerations for risk that teachers would teach for tests ▪ Prioritization of subjects, grades, frequency of assessment ▪ Understand cost and resources implications of large-scale assessments ▪ Exploring sampling strategies and pros and cons of those ▪ Exploring possibilities of collecting additional data through large-scale assessment, including on student well-being, student learning environment, access to and competences for IT/digital learning, learning support mechanisms, etc. ▪ Possibility to reuse assessments conducted in previous years to compare achievements of cohorts ▪ Possibility to compare COVID-affected cohorts with previous large-scale assessment results ▪ Availability of online and or-IT enabled assessment tools (tablets) to facilitate the analysis ▪ Timing of results dissemination for informing decision-making processes at national, local and school levels				◆
	■	Securing participation in international learning assessment to benefit from benchmarking data to inform policymaking in the long term.				◆
		1.2 Assessment planning at school level				
■		**Prioritization of diagnostic assessment at classroom level** (where students are “now”) in relation to where they are expected to be according to the curriculum and IEP where relevant.	◆		●	

		Timing for conducting diagnostic assessment considering: ▪ The need for administrating diagnostic assessment in the first few weeks of school return and before new instruction ▪ The need for administrating any assessment after activities that enable students to get used to school routines and in-person instruction again, to reconnect with teachers and peers, and to be supported emotionally. ▪ The need to avoid stigmatization and stress for students of various ages, background, and abilities, particularly those who have missed out on distance learning opportunities Focus of classroom diagnostic assessment: ▪ Mastery of knowledge and skills ▪ Core subjects (literacy and numeracy) vs all subjects or prioritization of other subjects if any, particularly in secondary ▪ Prioritization of foundational knowledge and skills for future learning ▪ Ensuring coverage of content from previous grades' instruction ▪ Balancing assessment time vs instruction time Type of classroom assessment tools to use: ▪ Written, oral, combination of both ▪ Ministry developed or ministry-approved diagnostic assessment tools, other off-the-shelves tools, assessment developed by school teams, or by individual teachers ▪ Clarity and simplicity over information sharing with parents and students on the purpose of the diagnostic assessment and how results will be used				
■		**Prioritization of formative assessment at classroom level** Ensuring formative assessment throughout the school year: ▪ Purpose and timing of formative assessment ▪ Usage of a range of formative assessment approaches and tools, including summative assessment tools used in a formative way, self-assessment and peer assessment ▪ Prioritization of curriculum content for formative assessment ▪ Assessment in the classroom, at home, online and necessary adaptation for each ▪ Provision of feedback to learners on what to learn next and communication with parents about these decisions ▪ Documentation of learning achievements, including learning diaries, portfolios, etc.	◆		●	
■		Focus on development delay assessments in early-childhood settings.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Planning for improving the learning monitoring culture in the school: ▪ Interpretation and use of assessment results (See section 1.3 below) ▪ School organization and structures to monitor learning (learning teams organized by grade levels or subjects.) ▪ Common school strategies for using assessment results to inform teaching and additional learning support for students	◆		●	

		1.3 Maximizing use of assessment results at national and school levels				
■	■	Disaggregation of assessment results data, particularly by sex, socio-economic and other student characteristics, disability, ethnicity, region, location, refugee and migrant status.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Mechanisms for sharing assessment information across stakeholders and using assessment results for decision-making: ▪ By teachers for identifying students' needs, adjusting instruction and differentiating teaching and learning ▪ By teachers for providing feedback to students and families ▪ By teachers for measuring and monitoring learning progress throughout the year ▪ By schools for monitoring adequate learning progress and allocating extra human and financial resources to specific grades or students or groups of students with the greatest needs. (See Section 3.3 below on learning support) ▪ By education authorities for understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on student learning and learning gaps and for planning learning recovery, monitoring adequate learning progress and allocating extra human and financial resources to specific: ○ Programmes, such as catch-up or tutoring programmes, including non-formal education programmes for refugees and migrants ○ Locations, such as poor or remote and rural regions ○ Schools with high proportions of marginalized students, deprived schools and low-performing schools ○ Grades, such as early grades and transition grades ○ Most marginalized students ▪ By students and parents	◆		●	♦
■	■	Learning lessons from assessment practices during remote, hybrid and return to school phases to inform: ▪ Future curriculum and assessment reforms that give more importance to continuous and formative assessment ▪ Training on assessment literacy skills for teachers ▪ Teaching practices	◆		●	♦
		2. Organization of learning recovery				
		2.1 School return				
■		Prioritization of grades and groups for reopening and staggered reopening: ▪ Early grades and transition grades ▪ Marginalized and vulnerable students, including students at risk of abuse and children traditionally excluded from education, such as Roma and ethnic minority or refugee and migrant children ▪ Students excluded from distance, remote and blended learning throughout school closure and hybrid learning phases	◆		●	♦
■		Use of blended learning throughout the school return phase to support access, support teaching and accelerate learning.	◆		●	♦

■		Mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition from distance and hybrid learning to in-person teaching, particularly for the most marginalized: ▪ Welcoming back students in the classroom and making them feel valued, respected and supported ▪ Encouraging students to bond and reconnect ▪ Encouraging and supporting students to re-engage in learning	◆		●	♦
		2.2 Instruction time adaptation				
■		Evaluation of options to modify the instruction time and academic calendar to accommodate learning support activities: ▪ Extending school hours ▪ Summer tutoring camps (in formal and non-formal settings) ▪ Learning support provided during school hours (pull-out models)	◆		●	♦
■		Prioritization of possible options according to: ▪ Students' age, grade and vulnerability ▪ Public health, safety and restriction protocols and school opening scenarios	◆		●	♦
■		Potential impact of any options on: ▪ Needs of the most marginalized children and communities; children with the greater learning gaps; ▪ Workload and morale of teachers and human resources costs ▪ Well-being, free time, rest and engagement in recreational, leisure or extracurricular activities of students ▪ Parents and family time	◆		●	♦
■		Decision-making processes over school calendar modifications and consultation and participation mechanisms with: ▪ Teachers, unions, professional organizations ▪ Parents and students ▪ The most marginalized groups of communities including girls/boys, Roma and ethnic minorities, refugee and migrants, and organizations that represent them (OPDs, NGOs/CSOs)	◆		●	♦
		2.3 Supporting transitions between education levels and cycles				
■	■	Organization of learning support for students transitioning between two education levels: ▪ From preschool to compulsory pre-primary programmes or Grade 1 ▪ From lower to upper secondary education including TVET ▪ From secondary to tertiary education	◆		●	♦
■	■	Fair entry to post-compulsory education, and particularly to tertiary education.	◆			♦
■	■	Organization of learning support for children and adolescent boys and girls transitioning from: ▪ Non-formal to formal education, particularly for refugee and migrant children	◆	■	●	♦

		▪ From residential care institutions, special schools or detention centres to regular schools				
■	■	Continuum of learning support activities before and after transition.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Organization and availability of additional support, such as multi-disciplinary support for the transition of the most marginalized children and students with special education needs.	◆	■	●	♦
		2.4 Catch-up and remedial programmes				
■		Scope, organization and targeting of programmes: ▪ Nation-wide programmes, ministry-led programmes, school-based programmes, programmes targeted to specific groups (e.g., refugees) ▪ Human resources, mobilization of expertise and costing options for programmes ▪ Partnerships for implementation of such programmes, including in non-formal education ▪ Preparation, implementation, management, leadership and monitoring mechanisms for such programmes ▪ Targeting strategies: the most vulnerable, students excluded from distance and hybrid learning, specific grades or exam year groups ▪ Bridging strategies, if any, between non-formal and formal education, and between grades. ▪ Development and dissemination of teaching and learning materials ▪ Training of teachers, educators, parents and volunteers involved in those programmes. ▪ Liaising with home country practices and curricula adaptation in the case of mother-tongue-based catch-up programmes for refugees.	◆		●	♦
■		Principles for curriculum selection and prioritization of competences.	◆		●	♦
■		Application of accelerated learning principles.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Application of the principles of Universal Design for Learning in designing learning activities and tasks.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Building on existing catch-up programme practices, including in non-formal education and second-chance education.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Learning materials accessibility strategies: ▪ To all students, including students with disabilities and students whose mother tongue is not the language of instruction ▪ Free of gender, racial, disability, ethnicity, language and sexual orientation bias ▪ Actively promoting social inclusion, tolerance and peace ▪ Socio-emotional learning and resilience	◆		●	♦
		3. Pedagogical practices to support return to school and learning				
		3.1 Curriculum adjustments				

■		Prioritization of curriculum areas and academic, socio-emotional and meta cognitive skills and competencies: ▪ Focus on literacy, numeracy and skills that are essential to learning progress ▪ Focus on relevance to students' lives and interests ▪ Focus on current grade-level standards ▪ Inclusion of previous-grade level curriculum competencies where essential for scaffolding ▪ Focus on skills that contribute to independent and autonomous learning (cognition, metacognition and motivation for self-regulation, organization skills, goal setting) ○ To facilitate additional learning support through blended learning ○ To prepare secondary school students for transition to tertiary education or the world of work ○ To prepare students transitioning from non-formal to formal education	◆		●	♦
■	■	Mechanisms to give teachers the flexibility to deviate from the curriculum to best respond to students' individual learning needs, age and developmental characteristics.				♦
■		Curriculum prioritization vs students' needs for recreation, play, sports and creative activities in schools.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Broad stakeholder coordination mechanisms to inform policy decision-making on curriculum adaptation at national and school level.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Capacity development strategy of teachers on curriculum prioritization and adjustment.			●	♦
■	■	Learning lessons from curriculum adaptation during the pandemic to inform future curriculum reforms.	◆			♦
	■	Curricula review, including TVET and practical skills-based curricula in light of the needs for: ▪ Social and emotional learning ▪ Social, environmental, sustainable development and civic education dimensions ▪ Skills for life and work, particularly digital skills.				♦
		3.2 Instructional delivery				
■	■	Strategies for developing individual learning pathways based on students' interests and learning needs.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Collaborative learning between students, grades, classes and schools: ▪ Grouping strategies across classes to provide differentiated instruction based on students' needs. ▪ Opportunities for peer learning, students taking responsibility for group learning in person and through blended learning ▪ Peer tutoring opportunities within and across grades and groups of students	◆		●	♦
■	■	Application of the principles of Universal Design for Learning in designing learning activities and tasks.	◆		●	♦

■	■	Prioritization of social learning, hands-on learning, and contextually-relevant play and exploration in preschool and early grades.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Supporting students' agency in design of learning and instruction and inclusion of students' voices in both in-person and blended learning instructional delivery.	◆			
■	■	Provision of feedback for learning.	◆			
■	■	Accommodation for students with disabilities to access in-person and blended-learning opportunities, materials and activities.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Reflective practice mechanisms and lesson learning on teaching and pedagogical practices to inform future curriculum and assessment reforms, teacher training, teaching practices and school-level learning support practices.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Promotion of teacher modelling and dialogue on learning processes.	◆		●	♦
		3.3 Additional learning support (see the Catch-up section above for other approaches)				
■		Additional learning support strategies for students excluded from distance and hybrid learning, including students with disabilities: ▪ Targeted learning support for specific students/groups of students during lunch breaks, after school or through pull-practices (brief and focused support on key academic skills) by teachers, teacher assistants, other school staff (e.g., pedagogues), and possibly parents ▪ Additional learning support after school through school study time or homework club practices ▪ Embedding additional learning support in IEPs ▪ Avoiding stigmatization of students who could not participate in remote or hybrid learning	◆		●	♦
■	■	Promotion of in-class differentiated learning vs additional learning support that can add school time for children.	◆		●	♦
■		Coordination with students' support teams when relevant/existing (inclusive education teams, psychologists, special teachers, pedagogues, external services).	◆			
■	■	Exploring how blended learning can facilitate learning support and learning progression to mitigate learning gaps (see below).	◆		●	♦
		3.4 Blended learning				
■	■	Understanding and rationale for activities that are based for in-person learning and those that could be delivered remotely.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Strategies for improving and strengthening students' digital skills: ▪ Age-appropriate and gender-responsive strategies ▪ Classroom, school-based and national strategies	◆		●	♦

■	■	Strategies for embedding blended learning in learning support and regular classroom practices: ▪ Linkages with national e-learning platform development ▪ Linkages with curriculum and textbook digitization processes ▪ Linkages with teacher training and professional development (digital skills and blended learning pedagogical skills) ▪ Linkages with infrastructure and equipment development (see section 5 below)	◆		●	♦
■	■	Safeguards to guarantee that the shift towards blended learning does not hinder students' physical and socio-emotional development and that human physical interaction, direct experience and exploration remain at the core of the students' education experience.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Taking stock of what worked and what did not work for students and teachers during distance and hybrid learning periods: ▪ Discussions with students and parents ▪ Engaging students in sharing good practices in peer groups, the classroom and school ▪ Engaging teachers in peer learning and sharing at the school level and beyond (see also section 7 below)	◆		●	♦
■	■	Collection of best practices in distance and blended learning to inform future curriculum reforms and classroom practices.	◆		●	♦
		3.5 Social and emotional learning in schools				
■	■	Inclusion, review or improvement of how social and emotional learning is supported through the curriculum and in schools and classrooms: ▪ Review or adoption and dissemination of social and emotional learning definition and frameworks ▪ Integration of social and emotional learning concepts and practices in teacher training and professional development ▪ Understanding that socio-emotional skills are for life and not just for school, with opportunities for students to practice those in different school, family and life situations ▪ Identification of socio-emotional skills that support girls' and boys' empowerment and improve girls' and boys' negotiation and decision-making skills at school and at home ▪ Identification of curriculum entry points for social and emotional learning	◆		●	♦
■	■	Prioritization of social and emotional teaching that will support school return and learning: ▪ Skills that support students' autonomy and capacity to learn independently (self-directed skills and 'learning to learn'/study skills) ▪ Skills that support students' focus and motivation (mindfulness, taking ownership and responsibilities, etc.) ▪ Emotional resilience ○ Provision of space for students to understand, name, discuss ad process emotions ○ Welcoming errors as part of the learning process ○ Dealing with learning challenges and adopting a growth mindset	◆		●	♦
■	■	Embedding socio-emotional skills in blended learning, particularly related to self-motivation, self-directed learning, self-efficacy, goal setting, leadership and organizational skills.	◆		●	♦

		4. Progression and examination				
		4.1 Progression (see also section 2.3 on transitions above)				
■		Strategies for student promotion to the next grade that minimize repetition, particularly for the most marginalized children for whom overage might lead to dropout in later years. Strategies for ensuring school autonomy and fairness of progression and transition decisions across students, schools and regions.				♦
■	■	Review and expansion of bridges between non-formal and formal education and between general and TVET education. Strategies for flexible transition and bridges between various TVET streams to enable students to change pathways for greater employability following the pandemic impact on the structure of the labour market and the skills in high and low demand.				♦
■	■	Coordination with employers for reopening work placements and accommodating the varying needs of apprentices and TVET students.	♦			♦
■	■	Strategies for recognition of non-formal and informal learning during school and workplace closures to support (re)-entry into various education and TVET programmes.				♦
■		Strategies for modular training and micro-credentials in TVET and higher education to support and ease progression through learning pathways.				♦
		4.2 Examination				
■		Fairness across schools, regions and with previous cohorts where continuous assessment is used instead of exams.				♦
■	■	Adaptation of EMIS and M&E systems to reflect changes in examinations.				♦
■		Measures to recognize and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of adolescents when marking exams.	♦			♦
■	■	Fairness across cohorts that have experienced adjusted exams (continuous assessment, take-home exams, online exams, or unifying exams with university entrance exams), particularly for the most marginalized children.	♦			♦
■	■	Measures and accommodations enabling students with underlying health conditions to sit their exams in the best conditions or be provided fair alternatives.	♦			♦
■	■	Mechanisms for avoiding stigmatization and discrimination of the 2020 and 2021 exam cohorts by universities and employers.			●	♦
	■	Adjustments to the content of future examination years to take into account the compound learning loss caused by the pandemic.	♦		●	♦

■		Strategies specific to TVET exams where practical skills learning has been slowed down by the pandemic restrictions. ▪ Broad engagement of employers and trade unions from all professional branches, TVET education stakeholders and young people in national-level discussions about examination, qualification awards and informal recognition of achievements ▪ Alternatives to work-based assessment of practical skills				♦
	■	Broad consultation and reflective processes to learn lessons about recent changes in examination (adjustment, waiving), and the pros and cons of greater weight for continuous assessment in examination: ▪ Broad consultation processes including students before and after graduation, universities, employers, professional trade associations, parents, teachers, teacher unions, parent associations, student associations, DPOs and NGOs and relevant ministries (education, TVET, higher education, employment, youth, and sector ministries relevant to TVET) ▪ Consideration for exam readiness in preparation of post-secondary education ▪ Consideration for future innovative assessment and certification and new national evaluation frameworks	♦		●	♦
		4.3 Transition to work				
■		Transition to work support programmes to secondary education graduates transitioning to work during the pandemic: ▪ Support mechanisms such as career guidance and counselling services ▪ Re-skilling and upskilling programmes ▪ Services that are responsive to the needs of the most marginalized students, particularly those with family responsibilities ▪ Services that are addressing the gender-differentiated barriers to transition from school to work ▪ Partnerships between schools, municipalities and career and job centres to provide such support ▪ Engagement of the private sector, for job shadowing programmes and pro-bono support such as youth mentoring		■	●	♦
■	■	Adaptation of career guidance and counselling services to reflect changes in labour market needs following the pandemic: ▪ Shift in human resources needs in different sectors in the medium and long term (health care, green jobs, food and agriculture sector, IT, services) ▪ Anticipation of future skills needs following the recognition of the importance more social and greener societies and economies		■	●	♦
		5. Enabling environment for online and blended learning				
		5.1 Addressing the digital divide				
■	■	Long-term national IT infrastructure and equipment plans and financial investments that are responsive to the needs of the education sector and of learners in remote areas: ▪ Strategies for improving connectivity coverage and expanding access to technology, IT devices, software and assistive technology ○ For all schools, including non-formal education centres and preschools, and particularly in remote and rural areas ○ For all children, particularly the most marginalized and including the youngest children ○ For all teachers and educators (including connectivity and IT devices to be able to work from home) ▪ Partnerships between countries and donors, national and local governments, the public and private sectors, schools and donators		■		♦

		5.2 Developing accessible and safe virtual learning environments				
■	■	Education plans and policies addressing the digitization of education: ▪ Development and maintenance of e-learning platforms ▪ Bring your own device policies ▪ Merging of, or bringing under one portal, the multiple learning platforms that mushroomed during the pandemic, including for early learning and for specific groups such as children with disabilities ▪ Establishment of learning resources repositories aligned with national curricula ▪ Establishment of school-level virtual learning environments ▪ Creation of digital pedagogical resources accessible to all students and repurposing of distance learning materials developed during the pandemic ▪ Policy implications including IT policies in education, standards and guidelines on virtual learning environments and content development, teacher training and professional development, and human resources in schools and ministries ▪ Normative framework and enforcement mechanisms for online protection of boys and girls from digital risks and respect of security and privacy ▪ Normative framework and enforcement mechanisms for online protection of schools and local education authorities from digital risks and data breeches			●	♦
■	■	Research on how children and young people learn online, through self-directed learning and through blended learning approaches.				♦
■	■	Standards ensuring that hardware, software and digital content chosen or developed during and beyond the pandemic are fully accessible for all students regardless of age, language, disability or education institution (e.g., detention centres, sanatoriums).				♦
■	■	Strategies, partnerships and financial investments supporting the development and democratization of assistive technology and devices for students with disabilities.		■	●	♦
■	■	Production and dissemination of accurate and accessible information on screen-time impact on children and adolescents to parents, schools and other education stakeholders.			●	♦
■	■	Use of e-learning platforms and blended learning approaches to enrich education delivery in evening classes and distance learning programmes.	◆		●	♦
		6. Parent and community engagement				
■	■	Learning lessons from parental engagement in the learning of their children during the pandemic: ▪ Lessons about engaging marginalized families, including those not sharing the language of the school/medium of instruction ▪ Lessons about engaging parents in the learning of children of various ages (younger children and adolescents and young people) ▪ Lessons about supporting parents to support children through online and blended learning ▪ Lessons about the resources created to help parents to support the learning of their children, including resources targeting different groups of parents, including refugee and migrant parents and parents of children with disabilities	◆	■	●	♦

		▪ Lessons and best practices about parental engagement in the learning of their children ▪ Lessons and best practices about parents mitigating household-level technology and digital gaps, including gender gaps				
■	■	Harnessing lessons learned: ▪ To inform future parental engagement strategies and resources ▪ To inform feedback mechanisms between parents, schools and education decision-makers ▪ To disseminate best practices of parental engagement in learning	◆	■	●	♦
■		Awareness raising, information and resource sharing for parents and families to provide a socio-emotionally nourishing environment for their children, including during distance and hybrid learning periods and at points of school re-entry.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Networks and partnerships at national and local levels that could be established or strengthened to support marginalized families' engagement with the learning of their children, including parents of students with disabilities or special educational needs and refugee and migrant parents.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Strategies for community engagement for learning provision and support outside of school hours (homework clubs, after school programmes combining learning, sports and skills development, etc).	◆	■	●	
		7. Capacity development for schools and teachers (see also the capacity development sections of Area 1, 3 and 4)				
		7.1 Professional development of teachers and other school staff				
■	■	Prioritization, preparation, content development and training delivery for teachers on key areas for learning-loss mitigation and learning support: ▪ Pedagogical skills to individualize and differentiate teaching ▪ Learning gaps assessment and particularly diagnostic and formative assessment methodologies ▪ Blended learning methodologies and practices ▪ Socio-emotional skills and learning ▪ Digital competences	◆		●	♦
■	■	Prioritization, preparation, content development and training delivery for school support staff (teacher assistants, pedagogical assistants, pedagogues, social-pedagogues, resource teachers, psychologists) on key areas for learning loss mitigation and learning support: ▪ Roles and responsibilities in supporting teachers, learners and learning, particularly for the most marginalized students and those who did not benefit from remote or hybrid learning ▪ Learning support methodologies for students ▪ Socio-emotional learning support for students ▪ Family engagement in children's learning	◆		●	♦
■	■	Learning lessons from and reviewing, improving and expanding innovative teacher professional development support mechanisms, such as: ▪ Online self-directed professional development and hybrid professional development to reduce costs and maximize reach ▪ Teacher mentoring schemes ▪ School peer networks, building on the support networks that mushroomed during the pandemic	◆		●	♦

		▪ Online professional community of practices				
■	■	Learning lessons from professional development activities delivered online and reviewing/improving professional development policies and approaches on that basis.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Provision, preparation and dissemination of curriculum, assessment and other pedagogical guidelines, tools and resources to support teachers in: ▪ Diagnostic and formative assessment ▪ Feedback for learning ▪ Differentiated and individualized pedagogy ▪ Socio-emotional learning ▪ Supporting transitions (to Grade 1, and to the first grade of lower and upper secondary)	◆		●	♦
■	■	Collection and dissemination of good practices among teachers and schools on priority topics: ▪ Distance, hybrid and blended learning ▪ Learning assessment, catch up programmes and learning support ▪ Socio-emotional learning practices ▪ Enhancing students' digital skills	◆		●	♦
■	■	Update of professional teacher standards to reflect the need for digital skills, distance learning, and skills for designing blended individual learning pathways for students.				♦
		7.2 Human and financial support for schools				
■		Taking into account and planning for human resource implications, including compensation schemes and protection of workers' rights for successful school return and learning support: ▪ Teacher and other school staff workload ▪ Additional time/posts required to support students who are lagging behind (teachers, pedagogical assistants, teacher assistants, pedagogues and other school support staff)	◆		●	♦
■		Teacher and school financial and equipment support for periods of remote and hybrid learning, for blended learning practices and for harnessing the potential of EdTech in the long term: ▪ IT devices ▪ Software licensing ▪ Data credits and internet connections (See also section 5 above)			●	♦
■		Financial provision and budget allocation mechanisms for the learning support of marginalized students, students who have not participated in distance and hybrid learning, students with disabilities and for refugee and migrant children education.				♦
■	■	Partnership building with universities and teacher training providers to mobilize expertise for working on curricula, teaching and learning materials, assessment tools, teacher training packages and for providing direct support to teachers and schools throughout and beyond the pandemic.			●	♦

4.2 Resources for Area 2: Learning

Assessment

- Bazaldua, D. L., Levin, V. and Liberman, J. (2020), Guidance note on using learning assessment in the process of school reopening. The World Bank.
- Clarke, M. and Luna-Bazaldua, D. (2021), Primer On Large-Scale Assessments Of Educational Achievement.
- Education Endowment Foundation (2021),. Teacher Feedback to Improve Pupil Learning. Guidance Report.

Catch-up and accelerated learning

- Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) (2020), COVID-19 Pathways for the Return to Learning: Guidance on Condensing a Curriculum
- Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) (2021), Catch Up Programmes. 10 principles to help learners catch up and return to learning.
- OECD (2020). Curriculum (re)design: A series of thematic reports from the OECD Education 2030 project. OECD Publishing.
- Pershad, D., Comba, R., & Bergmann, J. (2020), From schooling to learning for all: Reorienting curriculum and targeting instruction. Background paper prepared for the Save Our Future white paper Averting an Education Catastrophe for the World's Children. Save Our Future.
- Sarr, K. G., Tolani, N., Morales, I.R., Aghabozorg, R. and Mulcahy-Dunn, A. (2020), Research Brief: Strategies for Accelerating Learning Post-Crisis. USAID.
- Sarr, K.G., Tolani, N., Morales, I. R., Aghabozorg, R. and Mulcahy-Dunn, A. (2020), Reigniting Learning: Strategies for Accelerating Learning Post-Crisis. USAID.
- UNESCO (2021), Recovering lost learning: What can be done quickly and at scale? UNESCO COVID-19Education Response Education Sector issue notes. Issue 7.4. June 2021.
- UNICEF (2015), Teacher Training Modules for Inclusive Education. Geneva: UNICEF Europe and Central Asia.
- UNICEF & University of Zurich (2020), Learn In Emergency Manual for Teachers.
- USAID (2020), Policy Brief return To Learning During Crises.
- World Bank (2021), Foundational Teaching Skills. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Learning support throughout and pandemic

- Aga Khan Development Network (2020), Supporting Primary School Educators to Help Students Learn.
- Aga Khan Development Network (2020), Supporting Secondary School Educators to Help Students Learn.
- UNICEF (2020) Emergency Manual for Teachers.
- UNICEF MENA Regional Office (2020), Ready to Come Back: Teacher Preparedness Training Package. Amman: UNICEF.

Examples from countries

- National Tutoring Programme in England: https://nationaltutoring.org.uk/
- England National Tutoring Programme (2021) Best Tutoring Practices: Briefing for Schools.

Supporting transition back to school

- Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (2020), Managing the transition back to school: a guide for schools and colleges.
- Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (2020), Helping children and young people to manage anxiety: A practical guide to supporting pupils and students during periods of disruption.

Socio-emotional learning

- Education Endowment Foundation (2018), Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning. Guidance Report.
- USAID (2020), Best Practices On Effective SEL/Soft Skills Interventions In Distance Learning.
- Yoder, N., Posamentier, J., Godek, D., Seibel, K. and Dusenbury, L. (2020), From Response to Reopening: State Efforts to Elevate Social and Emotional Learning. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

Distance and blended learning

- Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020), Prioritizing the Safety of Children Online During the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Girls' Education Challenge, UKAID, EdTech Hub (2021), Designing and monitoring distance teaching and learning interventions. A guide for projects and implementers.
- UNICEF (2021), Practical Guide to Blended/Remote Learning and Children with Disabilities.
- UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2020), Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities To Reach All Children And Youth During School Closures.
- UNICEF (2020), Monitoring Distance Learning During School Closures.
- UNICEF Kosovo (2021), Reimagine education with the Learning Passport platform: the case of Kosovo. Prishtina, 2021.
- Huang et al. (2020), Guidance on Providing Open and Distance Learning for Students with Disabilities during School Closure. Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University (SLIBNU), 2020.

Supporting children with disabilities

- UNICEF EAPRO (2020), Ensuring an inclusive return to school for children with disabilities.
- Global Action on Disability Network (2020), COVID19 and Education for children with disabilities.
- International Disability and Consortium (2020), Repository of resources on disability inclusion and Covid-19.
- UNESCO (2020), Empowering students with disabilities during the COVID-19 crisis.
- CAST (n.d.) Universal Design for Learning Guidelines.
- The Autism Education Trust UK (2020), Transition Back to School.

TVET

- UNESCO (2020), Case Study on Finnish TVET. A Resilient Model of Training During COVID-19.
- ILO, World Bank, UNESCO (2021), Skills development in the time of COVID-19:Taking stock of the initial responses in technical and vocational education and training.

Early Childhood Education

- UNICEF (2020), Additional Resources to the Global Guidance on Reopening Early Childhood Education Settings.
- Aga Khan Development Network (2020), Supporting Pre-Primary School Educators to Help Students Learn.

5 Area 3: Well-being

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENSURING THE WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS, PARENTS AND SCHOOL STAFF

In this section, "well-being" is understood broadly and encompasses all aspects of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). Elements that are specific to socio-emotional learning have been included in Area 2: Learning.

Main challenges and risks

- Increased number of students and teachers facing mental health and well-being issues, including socialization issues.
- Mental health issues for students unidentified due to school closure/hybrid learning.
- Burnout risks for teachers.
- Increased protection risks for vulnerable children due to issues going unidentified and broken referral systems.
- Limited access to social and other support services due to health restrictions and overburdened services.

Specific risks for girls/boys and marginalized children, and specific risks across the life cycle, see Annexes 2 and 3.

Priorities for 2021

- Identify and refer students and families at risk.
- Clarify the role of schools in identification and referral processes.
- Assess students' and teachers' mental health and well-being needs.
- Devise mental health support plans and activities in schools and beyond. Including support to parents.
- Provide guidance to schools on mental health and well-being support for students and teachers
- Develop comprehensive sector-wide policies for mental health and well-being support for students and teachers, in collaboration with health authorities.
- Train teachers on mental health and well-being support (for students, parents, teachers).

Mid-term priorities for transforming education for greater resilience

- Policies and investment for adequate provision of mental health and well-being support in schools.
- Education quality standards inclusive of mental health and well-being.
- Integration of mental health and well-being in pre-service and in-service teacher training.
- Individual and organizational resilience.

5.1 Considerations for ensuring the well-being of children and adolescents, parents and school staff

ST ■	MT ■	Questions for consideration	S ◆	LA ■	DEA ●	N ♦
		1. Policy, planning and guidance				
		1.1 Evidence-based policy development				
■	■	Sector-wide policy development in the area of mental health and well-being support for students and teachers informed by research and measurement of well-being, including research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: ▪ On children's and adolescents' mental health and well-being particularly on the most marginalized and vulnerable students and specific groups: o Roma and ethnic minority children and adolescents o Refugee and migrant children and adolescents o Boys and girls o Young children o Children with disabilities o Children in residential care or detention centres or equivalent ▪ On school staff's mental health and well-being across education levels, including differentiated impact for women and men ▪ On parents' mental health and well-being, particularly the most marginalized parents, single-parent households, differentiated impact for mothers and fathers, and parents of children with disabilities.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Policy development addressing: ▪ Mental health and well-being holistically across the education system, including in work-based placements for TVET students ▪ A whole-school approach ▪ Identification and referral mechanisms to external services, including online counselling services ▪ Mental health and well-being support integration in education quality standards and external evaluation/inspection frameworks ▪ Provision of mental health support for students and staff in schools and community services and strategies to scale-up existing provision ▪ Support mechanisms for schools to improve the promotion of mental health and well-being for students and teachers ▪ Curriculum development promoting mental health and well-being, including bullying and violence prevention, alcohol and drug abuse, socio-emotional well-being and puberty education ▪ Funding mechanisms and budgets for mental health and well-being promotion in schools and support for students and teachers, in a context where demand for mental health support provision is rising ▪ Human resources for mental health support in schools and across the education system: a. Recruitment and deployment of school psychologists and school social workers				♦

		b. Creation of 'school psychologist' and/or 'social-pedagogue' posts where they do not exist c. Creation of Departments, Units or posts in ministries at central and regional levels to oversee mental health and psychosocial support in schools ▪ The review, improvement or integration of mental health and well-being in pre-service and in-service teacher and school manager training ▪ The role of universities in (i) adolescent and teacher mental health research, (ii) tertiary education curricula related to adolescent and teacher well-being and (iii) school psychologist diplomas and pre-service training ▪ Linkages with other policies, particularly: a. Dropout prevention and increasing upper secondary education participation as education and learning are key to the well-being of adolescents b. General health promotion in education policies c. Children and adolescents suicide prevention policies d. National mental health policies e. Children, adolescents and youth policies f. Child protection/safeguarding policies				
		1.2 Identification and referrals of students, families and teachers at risk				
■	■	Clarification, regulation and guidance about the role of schools in identifying and referring students and families at risk: ▪ Child protection risks ▪ Health and mental health-related risks ▪ Gender-based violence or domestic violence risks ▪ Extreme poverty and social protection risks			●	♦
■	■	Referral mechanisms for schools to refer students and families to school-based services and/or to professional community-based services: ▪ Family support services ▪ Social services and social benefits services ▪ Support services for refugees and migrants ▪ Mental health services ▪ Child protection services ▪ GBV and domestic violence services	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Clarification, regulation and guidance about the role of education authorities and school management in: ▪ Duty of care ▪ Creating a supportive working environment ▪ Raising awareness among teachers about mental health and burnout ▪ Identifying and supporting teachers at risk of burnout ▪ Referring teachers and school staff showing signs of burnout	◆		●	♦

■	■	Clarification, regulation and guidance on online safeguarding to support families, schools and students on how to report harmful conduct and content, how to respond to such situations, and how to protect students from harm when working remotely or online.	◆		●	◆
		1.3 Other school guidance				
■	■	Guidance for schools to plan for mental health and well-being support and promotion for students, families and parents.			●	◆
■	■	Creation of school networks for mental health and well-being promotion.			●	◆
■	■	Guidance for schools on teacher well-being ▪ Identifying staff and teacher well-being and responding to needs ▪ Promoting well-being among staff and teachers ▪ Burn out and signs of burn out ▪ Breaking down stigma around teacher mental health ▪ Accessing quality resources on teacher mental health and well-being and support for training ▪ Providing a safe and positive working environment for staff and teachers a. Supporting flexible working b. Managing workload c. Supporting staff and teachers whose role has a significant emotional component (psychologists, case managers, pedagogical assistants, etc.)			●	◆
		1.4 School planning for mental health and well-being				
■	■	School plans to support the mental health and well-being of students and teachers upon school reopening: ▪ Integration of mental health and well-being in school ethos and school development plans ▪ Breaking down stigma around mental health ▪ School plans/road maps to support and promote mental health and well-being for students, families and teachers throughout and beyond the pandemic, including through periods of distance and hybrid learning, and at school reopening points ▪ School activities to support well-being and mental health of students and teachers throughout and beyond the pandemic, including through periods of distance and hybrid learning, and at school reopening points ▪ School mental health and well-being services for students and teachers ▪ School allocation of staff and staff time to mental health and well-being support ▪ Coordination mechanisms between teachers, management, school psychologists and social-pedagogues to best support students, families and teachers ▪ Coordination mechanisms between schools and external services to best support students, families and teachers ▪ Partnership building with community services and available support (e.g., NGOs, youth centres, etc.) ▪ Linkages between mental health and well-being and other areas/interventions, including positive communication, bullying and violence prevention, etc.	◆		●	◆

		▪ School monitoring and evaluation of plans and activities regarding mental health and well-being, including identification of promising practices and learning lessons about what works well and why and what could be improved and how.				
		2. Support for students (see also Area 5: Nutrition)				
■	■	Well-being and mental health support <u>activities</u> adapted to distance, hybrid and in-person learning periods: ▪ Setting up peer support groups during distance/hybrid teaching periods ▪ One-to-one contact with teachers during distance/hybrid teaching periods ▪ Mindfulness, breathing and relaxing activities ▪ Interventions of school psychologists in classrooms to talk about mental health and well-being ▪ Developmentally appropriate awareness-raising activities on well-being and mental health issues ▪ Activities enabling students to express and process emotions and manage stress, anxiety and uncertainty (e.g., drawing, questionnaires, small group discussions, naming emotions, mood meters, understanding stress triggers, etc.) ▪ Raising awareness among staff and teachers about signs of poor mental health and well-being, how to respond and refer when appropriate, including referrals for students with protection risks (violence, abuse, neglect) ▪ Engaging students in voicing issues and concerns about well-being and in designing and giving feedback on school well-being support activities ▪ Peer-to-peer support mechanisms set up by adolescents for adolescents, including girls' and boys' peer mentoring ▪ Availability of age and context-appropriate mental health and well-being information on school platforms for remote access	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Well-being and mental health support <u>services</u> adapted to distance, hybrid and in-person learning periods: ▪ Remote/physical access to school psychologist, on a one-to-one or small group basis ▪ Drop-in sessions with school psychologists during and after school hours ▪ Linkages with external services (referrals) for mental health and well-being but also more broadly (child protection, social protection, health and nutrition) ▪ Career guidance and counselling services, including support to transition to post-secondary education and transition to work	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Strategies so that all students, particularly the most marginalized, can benefit from school-based interventions and services without being stigmatized.	◆	■		♦
■		Prioritising students for targeted support according to age, disability, personal and family circumstances (e.g., child protection issues, girls at risk of early marriage), level of education (e.g., students transitioning to another level of education, to the world of work) and previous experience of mental health issues.	◆	■		♦
■	■	Embedding mental health and well-being in a whole school approach: ▪ Inclusion of socio-emotional learning into the curriculum/school, teaching practices and extra-curricular activities ▪ Provision of safe and supportive school environments (interventions and supports) ▪ Provision of positive school climate (positive peer relationships, open communication between students and staff, violence prevention, student participation in decision-making) ▪ Promotion of health and healthy habits more broadly, including healthy eating, exercising, getting enough sleep, alcohol and drug prevention and comprehensive sexual education	◆		●	♦

■	■	National and regional support mechanisms for student mental health and well-being: ▪ Role of education officers across ministry levels ▪ Publication of guidance and information materials at national level ▪ Use of social media platforms and helplines at national level to disseminate information and reach out adolescents and young people ▪ Partnerships with universities, mental health professionals, youth centres, NGOs and civil society ▪ Hotlines and regular online counselling platforms for children and adolescent seeking psychological support			●	♦
		3. Support for parents and families				
■		Awareness raising, information and resource sharing for parents' and families' well-being during distance and hybrid learning periods, including helplines, online repositories, and support groups at national and local levels.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Information dissemination to parents and families regarding access to: ▪ Social benefits and COVID-19 family support schemes ▪ Food banks ▪ Social services and GBV and domestic violence services ▪ Job and career centres	◆	■	●	♦
■		Availability of resources in different languages, through different media and communication channels (printed, helpline, online) to ensure that all families, including the most marginalized can benefit.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Availability of resources for parents of children with disabilities.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Role of school boards, parent-teacher associations and national parent associations in supporting parents and families throughout the pandemic.	◆		●	♦
■	■	National and regional support mechanisms for parent and family mental health and well-being, particularly the most marginalized: ▪ Role of various line Ministries in provision of guidance and information materials at national level ▪ Use of social media platforms and helplines at national level to disseminate information and reach out to parents and families ▪ Partnerships with universities, mental health professionals, NGOs and civil society			●	♦
		4. Support for teachers				
■		Provision of supportive working environment throughout distance, hybrid and in-person teaching: ▪ Flexible working ▪ Support with technology ▪ Understanding of personal situations and family responsibilities throughout the pandemic ▪ Managing workload ▪ Managing supply teaching to cover for COVID-19 related absences or quarantines ▪ Working conditions during restrictions (personal protection equipment, continued salaries and allowances, compensation for extra-work)	◆		●	♦

■		Information sharing (resources, workshops, etc.) on: ▪ Stress management ▪ Burn out and signs of burn out ▪ Mental health, self-care, well-being and resilience ▪ Access to community psychosocial support services ▪ Peer support	◆		●	♦
■	■	Support for school psychologists, counsellors and pedagogues: ▪ Online repositories of resources ▪ Guidance on supporting students and school staff upon return ▪ School psychologists' support networks	◆		●	♦
■	■	National and regional support mechanisms for teachers' mental health and well-being: ▪ Role of various line ministries in provision of guidance and information materials at national level ▪ Use of social media platforms and helplines at national level to disseminate information and reach out to teachers ▪ Partnerships with universities, mental health professionals, NGOs and civil society ▪ Teacher and school staff professional development			●	♦
		5. Resource mobilization				
■	■	Mapping of mental health and well-being services at national and local levels and of access routes to such services.		■	●	♦
■	■	Mapping/identification of funding mechanisms for mental health and well-being in school, including identification of potential donors at local, national and international levels that could provide financial support.		■	●	♦
■	■	Budget allocations to Mental Health in education: ▪ Overall allocation considering the increased demand for mental health support in schools and throughout the education system ▪ Joint funding approaches between the ministry of health and education				♦
■	■	Business cases and advocacy materials for supporting mental health and well-being in schools for both students and teachers.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Partnerships with universities and professional associations of psychologists, coaches and other related professions to mobilize expertise for developing programmes, training packages and provide direct support to schools, students, families and teachers.	◆	■	●	♦
		6. Teacher and school staff professional development				
■	■	Preparation, content and delivery of teachers and school staff professional development on: • Mental health and psychosocial needs • Teacher mental health and burnout			●	♦

		• Identification and referrals of students, parents and colleagues with mental health and psychosocial risks • Well-being support and managing stress techniques • Whole school approach to mental health and well-being • Violence and abuse, including domestic violence and gender-based violence and online bullying and safeguards				

5.2 Resources for Area 3: Mental Health and Well-being

Mental health and well-being of students

- Evidence-Based Practice Unit, UCL, Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (2021), Child Outcomes Research Consortium In partnership with Well-being Measurement Framework for Primary Schools.
- Mentally Healthy Schools UK (2020), Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.
- OECD (2021), Supporting young people's mental health through the COVID-19 crisis. OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2021), Youth and COVID-19: Response, recovery and resilience. OECD Publishing.
- UK Department of Education (2021), Curriculum planning for Relationships Education and Health Education in primary schools as part of education recovery.
- UK Department of Education (2021), Curriculum planning for Relationships, Sex and Health Education in secondary schools as part of education recovery.
- UNICEF (2020), Operational Guidance for Implementation and Adaptation of MHPSS Activities for Children, Adolescents and Families.
- WHO and UNICEF (2021), Helping adolescents thrive toolkit: strategies to promote and protect adolescent mental health and reduce self-harm and other risk behaviours.

Teacher training resources on well-being

- UK Department for Education (2020), Mental Well-being Teacher Training Module.
- UNICEF EAPRO (2020), COVID-19: Integration of Child Protection in Return to School. Tips for Teachers and School Management.

Teacher mental health and well-being

- Aga Khan Development Network (2020), Supporting Educators' Well-being and Professional Development.
- Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families (2021), Supporting staff well-being in schools.

Supporting parents

- UNICEF (2020), Coronavirus (COVID-19) guide for parents.
- Reading Comprehension Interest Group (2020), COVID-19 Reading Comprehension Guidance: Tips for Parents & Caregivers.
- ThriveGlobal (2020), Tips for Parents with Special Needs Children and IEPs During The COVID-19 Crisis.
- UNICEF (2020), Additional Resources to the Global Guidance on Reopening Early Childhood Education Settings.

- UNICEF (2020), 7 ways employers can support working parents during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak

Child protection

- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, End Violence Against Children, UNICEF, WHO (2020), COVID-19: Protecting Children from Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the Home, Version 1.
- Global Working Group on School-Related Gender-Based Violence (2020), Strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence as schools reopen.
- Safe to Learn (2020), Reopening Schools Safely: Recommendations for building back better to end violence against children in and through schools.
- UNICEF EAPRO (2020), COVID-19: Integration of Child Protection in Return to School. Tips for Teachers and School Management.
- UNICEF EAPRO (2020), COVID-19: Integration of Child Protection in Return to School. Advocacy Brief.
- UNICEF EAPRO (2020), COVID-19: Integration of Child Protection in Return to School Messages for Children and Adolescents Returning to School.
- UNICEF EAPRO (2020), COVID-19: Integration of Child Protection in Return to School Template for Child Protection Referral Pathway between Schools and Child Protection Authorities and Other Services
- World Health Organization (2020), Addressing Violence Against Children, Women and Older People During The Covid-19 Pandemic: Key Actions.

Keeping safe online

- UNICEF North Macedonia (2021), Staying Safe Online.
- e-Safety Commissioner, Government of Australia (2020), COVID-19 Global Online Safety Advice for Parents and Carers (Available in English, Arabic, French, Chinese, Russian, Spanish)
- LSE Blogs, Parenting for a Digital Future.

Child labour

- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2020), Inter-Agency Toolkit: Preventing and Responding to Child Labour in Humanitarian Action.
- The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2021), Technical Note: COVID-19 and Child Labour.
- UNICEF (n.d.), Cyberbullying: What is it and how to stop it, 10 things teens want to know about cyberbullying.

Supporting girls through school reopening

- UNESCO, UNICEF, Plan Intl, UNGEI, Malala Fund (2020), Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide.
- UNGEI (2020), In Solidarity With Girls: Gender and education in crisis.
- Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence (2020), COVID-19: Policy Brief and Recommendations Strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence as schools reopen.
- Boost, E., Jones, N. and Kwauk, C. (2020), Life skills for adolescent girls in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNICEF (2020), Five Actions for Gender Equality in the COVID-19 Response.

Refugee and migrant children

- UNHCR (2020), COVID-19 Refugees' Return to Schooling Guidelines.

6 Area 4: Safe schools

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

In this section, "safe schools" refers to measures enabling safe school operations ***in line with national guidance, reviewed and informed by research evidence.*** The considerations are also relevant for preschools under community auspices and non-formal education settings. Note that Area 5 provides specific considerations for school feeding and nutrition programmes.

Main challenges and risks

- COVID-19 transmission among students and adults (teachers and other school staff)
- Stigmatization and discrimination of students and staff infected by virus
- Schools lacking infrastructure/equipment and funds to comply with health regulations for reopening
- Parents, teachers and students lacking information and confidence in school safety, including due to lack of effective community communication translated to minority languages
- Student, parent and teacher fatigue of regulation changes resulting in non-compliance with rules

Specific risks for girls/boys and marginalized children, and specific risks across the life cycle, see Annexes 2 and 3.

Priorities for 2021

- Apply principle of 'schools last to close and first to open'
- Review and update of school guidelines and regulations based on latest evidence
- Ensure that mitigation measures are not harmful and are equity-focused
- Ensure soap and safe water is available at age-appropriate handwashing stations
- Develop and apply appropriate safety measures (social distancing, hygiene measures) to prevent transmission of infection in schools, including contact tracing
- Parent and student consultation and effective communication of back-to-school messages, including in minority languages
- Review and update of COVID-19-related health messages
- Resume and prioritize health promotion and school-based health services
- Learning lessons from practice in respect of smaller class sizes, ensuring wider spaces between desks and staggering breaks.

Mid-term priorities for transforming education for greater resilience

- Budget and funds disbursement for overall improvement of health and sanitation in schools
- Improved water and sanitation conditions and equipment and personal hygiene equipment and practices
- EMIS enabling monitoring of WASH (access to water, gender-responsive sanitation and hygiene/handwashing) and Infection Prevention and Control arrangements in schools
- Greater and wider participation of students and parents in school planning and activities related to health messaging and heathy habits.
- Preparedness for future outbreaks/pandemics, including local contingency plans.

6.1 Considerations for safe schools for children and adolescents

ST ■	MT ■	Questions for consideration	S ◆	LA ■	DEA ●	N ♦
		1. Review and revision of policy provision, regulations and guidance (see also Area 5: Nutrition)				
■		Review policy and regulations as need based on latest evidence and learning: WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2021, provides the following evidence: ▪ Children and adolescents in primary and secondary schools are not considered primary drivers of transmission of COVID-19 ▪ Transmission rates differ for different age groups ▪ Increased transmissibility of COVID-19 variants impact risk assessments and mitigation measures in schools ▪ School closures have a detrimental effect on child health and well-being ▪ School closures have a detrimental effect on children's learning ▪ Excessive disinfection of surfaces (rather than cleaning) has a low value for infection control ▪ Simple end effective handwashing measures remain critical in infection prevention WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2021, provides the following considerations for planning: ▪ The need for differentiated measures for primary and secondary schools and for different age groups ▪ Contact-tracing including contact in the school (adults and children) ▪ Physical distancing ▪ Prioritization of testing for symptomatic children and close contact cases, particularly those in high-risk groups ▪ The lack of evidence of routine temperature checking in schools ▪ The need for differentiated mask-wearing policies for different age groups ▪ The effectiveness of handwashing ▪ Harms vs likely benefits of mitigation measures for different age groups ▪ The need for individual risk assessments for children with underlying health issues to avoid systematic exclusion from onsite learning				♦
■	■	Review national and local parameters for the closure/reopening of school facilities: ▪ Health parameters (national and local) ▪ Age and grade parameters ▪ Personal circumstances parameters for prioritization of the most marginalized children and those excluded from remote learning ▪ Parental and community readiness and expectations		■		♦
■		Considerations for policy decision-making around vaccination: ▪ Prioritization of school staff and teachers in COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.				♦

		▪ Risks vs benefits of vaccinating children and adolescents				
■		Protocols and checklists for rapid assessments of school premises to comply with updated regulations for school reopening.		■	●	◆
■	■	EMIS able to monitor WASH (access to water, gender-responsive sanitation and hygiene/handwashing) and Infection Prevention and Control arrangements in schools.	◆		●	◆
■		Budget allocations for schools to comply with guidelines and welcoming back all students.		■	●	◆
■		Impact of school mitigation measures on other education policy areas: ▪ Teacher recruitment policies to reduce class size, including alternatives such as increasing supervised school practice for trainees ▪ School nurse recruitment and deployment policies ▪ Budgets and funding allocation mechanisms for health promotion in schools			●	◆
	■	Lessons learned from pandemic restrictions informing future standards for school infrastructure and equipment: ▪ Classroom, communal space and corridor sizes; outdoor spaces ▪ Separate desks, ▪ Gender-responsive WASH infrastructure ▪ Entries and exits, circulation flows, and ▪ Ventilation.				◆
	■	Preparedness and contingency planning for the future, for various situations: ▪ Pandemic ▪ Natural disasters and climate change ▪ Conflict ▪ Other context-relevant threats (e.g., terrorism, cyber-attacks)	◆	■	●	◆
		2. School mitigation measures planning, monitoring and review processes (see also Area 5: Nutrition)				
■		Learning lessons about: ▪ School needs assessment and planning practices for COVID-19 mitigation ▪ The involvement of students and parents in school planning throughout the pandemic, including the most marginalized families ▪ The mediation of protocols and guidance to students of different ages, staff and parents, including refugee and migrant families ▪ The mediation and orientation support for students with disabilities and their families ▪ Preventing stigmatization for students and staff infected or affected by COVID-19, including students from traditionally marginalized communities such as refugee and migrants and Roma and ethnic minorities.	◆		●	◆

■		School plans, protocols, guidance (for teachers, students, parents) and case management systems to respond to: ▪ Compliance to national health regulations and guidelines ▪ Water, gender-responsive sanitation and personal hygiene procurement, management and monitoring ▪ COVID-19 testing requirements ▪ Cleaning and disinfecting procurement, management and monitoring ▪ Personal protective equipment procurement, purchase, management and monitoring ▪ Physical distancing and other restriction measures ▪ Procedures for use, safe sharing, and cleaning of preschool and early-grade toys and other learning materials ▪ School closure process following COVID-19 transmission among staff and/or students	◆		●	♦
■		School plans, protocols, guidance and case management systems to respond to: ▪ Assessing the individual needs of students and staff with underlying health conditions ▪ Managing and isolating cases of students and staff showing symptoms ▪ Contact-tracing ▪ School testing procedures, where relevant ▪ Safe return to school for students and staff infected by COVID-19 ▪ Breaking down stigma and discrimination related to COVID-19 ▪ Stigma attached to being vaccinated or not against COVID-19	◆		●	♦
■		Information, training and support of school staff and teachers on updated regulations, guidance, protocols and plans related to COVID-19 mitigation.	◆		●	♦
■	■	Regular review and update of guidance to schools on COVID-19 pandemic mitigation and management.			●	♦
	■	School preparedness plans for future outbreaks of COVID-19 and/or other pandemics.	◆		●	♦
	■	Reflecting emergency preparedness in: ▪ In school quality standards criteria ▪ In school inspection frameworks				♦
		3. Health messaging about COVID-19 (see also Area 5: Nutrition)				
■		Learning lessons about: ▪ Communication mechanisms at school level, local level and national level to disseminate COVID-19 related information and messages to students, parents and education staff ▪ Communication mechanisms and messages about COVID-19 vaccination for teachers and school staff as front-line workers	◆	■	●	♦

		▪ Communication mechanisms and messages about COVID-19 vaccination for children and adolescents, including those with underlying health issues. ▪ Availability of communication in different languages, through different media and using different channels of communication ▪ Adaptation of communication to children's age and development, including those under 5 years old ▪ Adaptation of communication messages/mechanisms to parents of children with disabilities ▪ Accessibility of communication to children with disabilities ▪ Engagement of younger children, older children and adolescents in developing and disseminating key health messages ▪ Communication with parents to boost confidence regarding school safety and encourage school return ▪ Including COVID-19 health messages in education activities conducted remotely or in school				
■	■	Educating younger children, older children and adolescents on COVID-19 symptoms and steps to take when feeling unwell even after pandemic restrictions are lifted.	◆		●	◆
■	■	Review or development of communication messages about COVID-19 vaccination for teachers and school staff. Review or development of communication messages about COVID-19 vaccination for children and adolescents, including those with underlying health issues.				◆
		4. Health activities and services in schools (see also Area 5: Nutrition and Area 3: Mental Health and Well-being)				
■		Re-establishment of health services provision in school, particularly: ▪ General school vaccination programmes, ▪ Sexual and reproductive health services ▪ Specialized health services for children with disabilities ▪ Psychological support services (See Area 3: Mental Health and Well-being) ▪ Nutrition programmes (See Area 5: Nutrition)	◆	■	●	◆
■	■	Likely increased demand for mental health support and services in schools.	◆	■	●	◆
■	■	Messaging and activities related to physical activity and healthy eating to fight obesity trends during the pandemic.	◆	■	●	◆
■	■	Messaging and activities related to screen time and addiction to IT devices (games, social media, entertainment).	◆	■	●	◆
■	■	Messaging and activities related to sleep deprivation and healthy sleeping habits.	◆	■	●	◆
		5. Consultation and coordination (see also Area 5: Nutrition)				
■		Learning lessons about decision-making processes over school closures and reopening:	◆	■	●	◆

		▪ Coordination between national, local and school levels ▪ Coordination between ministries, particularly health and education ministries ▪ Decision-making processes and timing ▪ Participation of end-users in decision making, including students of all ages, youth organizations, families and teachers ▪ Participation of the most marginalized end users, including Roma and ethnic minority groups, families of children with disabilities, refugee and migrant groups, single parent groups ▪ Successes, challenges and areas for improvement in decision making ▪ Impact of selected decisions on schools, students, families and teachers				
■		Communication on consultation and coordination processes for school closures/reopening.	◆	■	●	◆
■	■	Wide policy consultation process (with local authorities, schools, teachers, teacher unions, early childhood professional associations, parents, parent associations, students and student associations, Organizations of People with Disabilities, NGOs working with marginalized groups, including Roma NGOs and migrant and refugee groups).	◆	■	●	◆
		6. Resource mobilization				
■		Budget allocations for healthy and safe schools: ▪ Allocations aligning with COVID-19 mitigation regulations and implications on infrastructure and equipment ▪ Joint funding between the ministry of health and education ▪ Partnership development, including public-private partnerships for funding a safe school return		■	●	◆
■	■	Directing funding to schools and regions: ▪ hardest hit by the virus ▪ with the greatest dropout rates and lowest learning outcomes, ▪ with the lowest preschool enrollment rates ▪ with the greatest proportion of marginalized children		■	●	◆
■	■	Linkages with municipalities/localities and local private businesses and NGOs for provision of WASH/sanitary equipment and personal protection equipment.	◆	■	●	◆

6.2 Resources for Area 4: Safe schools

Health and safe school guidance

- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2021), COVID-19 in children and the role of school settings in transmission - second update 8 July 2021.
- WHO Regional Office for Europe (2021), Schooling during COVID-19: Recommendations from the European Technical Advisory Group for schooling during COVID-19. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe.

- WHO (2020) Checklist to support schools re-opening and preparation for COVID-19 resurgences or similar public health crises.
- WHO (2020) Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Schools – Q&A.
- WHO (2021) WHO guideline on school health services.
- UNHCR (2020) COVID-19: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools. A safe return to school for refugee children and youth.

Communication

- UNICEF (2020), Risk Communication & Community Engagement: Practical Tips on Engaging Adolescents and Youth in the COVID-19 Response.

7 Area 5: Nutrition and school feeding

CONSIDERATIONS FOR NUTRITION

In this section, "School Nutrition programmes" refers to all forms of school meals or nutrition and feeding programmes in line with national guidance. Some of these programmes will be financed or co-financed by organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP). Others will fully rely on domestic funding. The considerations are also relevant for non-formal education settings.

This section has been co-authored with UNICEF ECARO Nutrition section and has benefited from insights and inputs from the World Food Programme.

Main challenges and risks

- Catering and nutrition services cause extra risk for COVID-19 transmission among students
- Negative impact of school closure and hybrid learning on children's right to adequate nutrition
- Families impacted by economic recession and fluctuating food prices due to the pandemic
- Increased obesity risks following lockdown, school closures, dealing with uncertainty and reduction in physical activity
- Insufficient funds to comply with national and international food safety and hygienic standards

Specific risks for girls/boys and marginalized children, and specific risks across the life cycle, see Annexes 2 and 3.

Priorities for 2021

- Assess facilities, premises and school financial needs regarding school nutrition programmes
- Revise national guidance on schools' nutrition programmes to ensure safe nutrition services upon school reopening
- Revise school planning, protocols and guidance on feeding and nutrition to make school nutrition environment less obesogenic
- Communicate healthy and safe nutrition messages to students and families
- Find school meal delivery modalities for students during school closure/hybrid learning periods
- Identify children and schools in need of most school feeding and nutrition support
- Identify health and nutrition vulnerabilities arising as a result of the pandemic with focus on impacts on specific groups such as preschool children, primary age children, adolescent girls and marginalized children

Mid-term priorities for transforming education for greater resilience

- Nutrition promotion is integrated in school projects and extra-curricular activities
- Improving water and sanitation equipment and personal hygiene equipment and practices
- Schools as enabling environments for healthy nutrition programming.
- Preparedness for future COVID-19 outbreaks and school closure, as well as possible future pandemics.

SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR ENSURING SAFE OPERATIONS OF SCHOOLS[6]

Safety and hygiene of school nutrition and meals:

- Enforce compliance with national food safety legislation and principles of proper hygiene and food safety
- Ensure that the practices by food handlers when purchasing, delivering, storing, preparing, and distributing meals follow the national food safety legislation and principles of proper hygiene and food safety
- Display information material on food storage, food preparation hygiene principles, including the daily cleaning and disinfection of food preparation surfaces, kitchens and eating areas as well as cooking tools and eating utensils.
- Ensure food handlers have access to cleaning and disinfection supplies and materials and monitor proper execution. Where appropriate, provide preventive material (masks and gloves).
- Make regular handwashing mandatory for food handlers preparing the meals and for schoolchildren eating on the premises.
- Ensure specific measures are in place to temporarily exclude/restrict staff members suffering an infectious illness/disease from food production or preparation areas. This is particularly relevant if they develop symptoms of fever. Where applicable, staff responsible for verifying health certificates and food safety requirements at school should be aware of the legal requirements and follow applicable legislation. This can include daily temperature screening before entering the workplace (especially for the staff handling food in the kindergartens)
- Ensure the safe distance between the children as they queue to get the food, in the eating areas, and discourage children from sharing utensils, food, etc.

Ensure adequate nutrition content of meals:

- National or subnational nutrition standards for school meals should be complied with and monitored. Where nutrition standards or guidelines do not exist or do not cover the nutritional value of the schools' means, and where conditions and resources permit, the following considerations can be taken:
- Broadly estimate the current nutrition composition of school meals to provide at least 30 per cent of the total energy and protein requirements and if possible, 50 per cent of key micronutrients (e.g., iron, vitamin A, zinc).
- Use micronutrient-rich foods (milk, animal-source foods such as eggs, dried fish) and fortified commodities (e.g., vitamin A-enriched oil, iodized salt, fortified flour, or rice), as much as possible.
- If possible, offer fruits and vegetables regularly.
- Recognize sharing at home might occur and, if possible, make provisions for this.
- Plan and adapt for potential food supply disruption to ensure balanced/nutritious school meals and to prepare for supply shortfalls/breakage.
- Reinforce food and nutrition education learning plans, focusing on healthy eating behaviours, and on enhancing home diet, targeting both students and families.

[6] **Mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition of schoolchildren,** https://www.unicef.org/media/68291/file/Mitigating-the-Effects-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic-on-Food-and-Nutrition-of-school-children.pdf

7.1 Considerations for nutrition and school feeding

ST	MT	Questions for consideration	S	LA	DEA	N
		1. Policy, regulations, guidance and planning				
■		Latest evidence and learning: ▪ Increased poverty and malnutrition amongst the most vulnerable populations due to COVID-19 ▪ School meals as incentives for marginalized groups to (re)enrol in school ▪ COVID-19 transmission risks in closed areas without personal protection equipment ▪ Excessive disinfection of surfaces (rather than cleaning) and excessive handwashing have low value for infection control ▪ The effectiveness of handwashing				♦
■		Protocols for rapid assessments of school premises that include healthy and safe school feeding and nutrition programmes.		■	●	♦
■	■	EMIS able to monitor most vulnerable and marginalized children in need of school feeding as well as beneficiaries of school feeding and nutrition programmes in schools.	♦		●	♦
■		Budget allocations for schools to provide safe and nutritious school feeding and nutrition programmes.		■	●	♦
	■	Lessons learned from pandemic restrictions informing future standards for: ▪ School infrastructure and equipment such as school kitchens, canteens, canteen tables, etc. ▪ Delivery modalities of healthy meals when schools are closed or regular attendance disrupted, such as take-home rations or other modalities		■		♦
	■	Preparedness and contingency planning for food preparation in schools, school feeding and nutrition programmes in future emergency and crisis situations, including: ▪ Improvement of policies, legislation and regulations for school feeding programmes to include the adaptation of alternative modalities in the case of school meal disruptions ▪ Flexible financing mechanisms that enable the release of funds during shock	♦	■	●	♦
		2. School mitigation measures planning, monitoring and review processes				
■		Learning lessons about practices in school feeding and nutrition programmes during school closure and hybrid learning.	♦	■	●	♦

■		School plans, protocols, operational manuals, guidance (for teachers, students, parents) and case management systems to respond to: ▪ National healthy and safe school feeding and nutrition regulations and guidelines ▪ Water, sanitation and personal hygiene guidelines from food procurement, to preparation and serving ▪ Cleaning and disinfecting school catering facilities ▪ Safe school operations with regard to the cafeteria or distribution of food ▪ Physical distancing in school kitchens and cafeterias ▪ Delivery of school feeding rations at home for students self-isolating or remote learning (it can be uncooked take-home rations)	◆	■	●	♦
■		School guidance on healthy and safe school feeding, nutrition plans and school feeding facilities and equipment: ▪ Guidance for school canteen staff ▪ Guidance for school maintenance staff ▪ Guidance for teachers, parents, and students	◆		●	♦
■		Prioritization of most marginalized students for school feeding and nutrition programmes.		■		♦
■		Clear school feeding and nutrition programmes planning process: ▪ Participation mechanisms for students and parents ▪ Responsibilities for planning and monitoring ▪ Monitoring processes and review frequency for plans	◆			♦
		3. Nutrition messaging about COVID-19 (see also Area 4: Health)				
■		Learning lessons about: ▪ Communication mechanisms at school level, local level and national level to disseminate COVID-19 related information and messages to students, parents and education staff ▪ Availability of communication in different languages, through different media and using different channels of communication ▪ Adaptation of communication to children's age and development ▪ Adaptation of communication messages/mechanisms to parents of children with disabilities ▪ Accessibility of communication to children with disabilities ▪ Engagement of younger children, older children and adolescents in developing and disseminating key healthy nutrition and physical activity messages ▪ Communication with parents to boost confidence regarding school feeding and nutrition programmes and encourage school return ▪ Including healthy nutrition messages in education activities conducted remotely or in school	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Communication of healthy nutrition messages for students and families.	◆			♦
		4. School feeding and nutrition activities and services in schools				

■		School feeding and nutrition services during school closure, hybrid learning and progressive return to full time in-person teaching.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Expansion of safety nets structures and programmes to include all marginalized children.				♦
■		Role of localities/municipalities in provision and support to school feeding and nutrition programmes or alternatives during school closure/hybrid learning.		■		♦
		5. Consultation and coordination				
■	■	Learning lessons about decision-making processes over school feeding and nutrition programmes during school closures and hybrid learning periods.	◆	■	●	♦
■	■	Coordination at national and local level between health and nutrition, education and local authorities about school feeding and nutrition programmes, including referrals for children at serious risk of malnutrition.	◆	■	●	♦
■		Consultation of parents, students and communities about school nutrition and feeding programmes, particularly the most marginalized (Roma and ethnic minority groups, families of children with disabilities, refugee and migrant groups, single parent groups).	◆	■	●	♦
		6. Resource mobilization				
■	■	Budget allocations for school feeding and nutrition programmes throughout and beyond the pandemic. ▪ Allocations in line with required purchase of hygiene and food safety-related items and safe school protocols ▪ Joint funding between the ministry of health and education, and local authorities ▪ Partnership development, including public-private partnerships for school feeding and nutrition programmes		■	●	♦
■	■	Directing funding to schools and students: ▪ hardest hit by the virus ▪ highest deprivation and poverty ▪ with the greatest dropout rates and lowest learning outcomes ▪ with the lowest preschool enrollment rates ▪ with the greatest proportion of marginalized children		■	●	♦
■	■	Linkages with municipalities/localities and local private businesses and NGOs for contribution to school feeding and nutrition programmes.	◆	■	●	♦

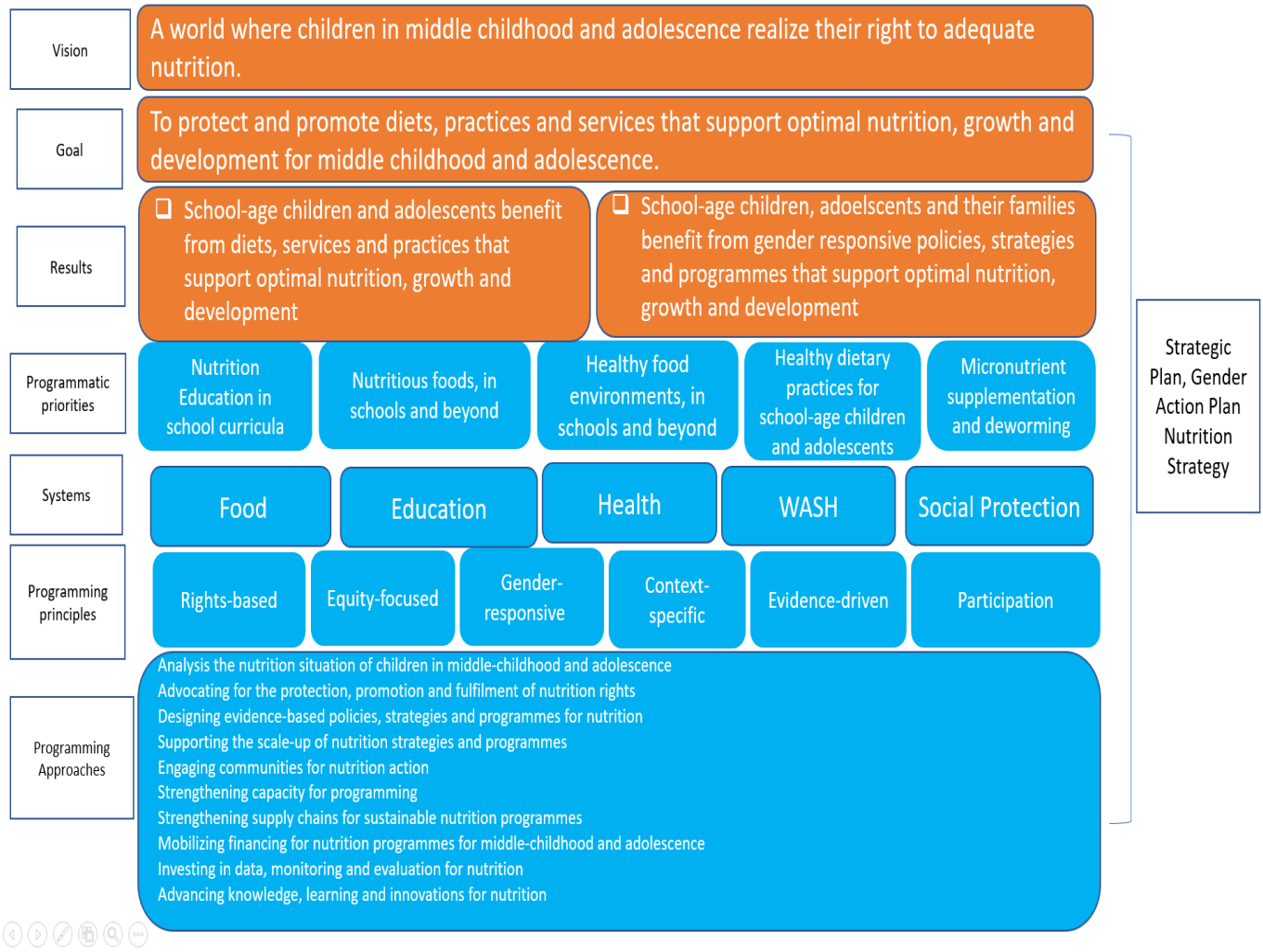
7.2 Resources for Area 5: Nutrition

- United Nations (2020) Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition.
- WFP, FAO and WFP (2020) Interim Guidance Note on Mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on food and nutrition of schoolchildren.

7.3 UNICEF's Strategic framework to School Nutrition Programmes

UNICEF's framework to Nutrition encompasses UNICEF's programming for the prevention of all forms of malnutrition in children and adolescents aged 5–19 years, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight. UNICEF's vision is "A world where all children in middle childhood and adolescence realize their right to adequate nutrition". The goal of UNICEF's programming in this age group is "to protect and promote diets, practices, and services that support optimal nutrition, growth, and development in middle childhood and adolescence". The nutrition chapter of this document is developed on the basis of this framework.

FIGURE 4 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR UNICEF PROGRAMMING FOR THE PREVENTION OF ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE



To achieve this goal, UNICEF will focus on five programming priorities to prevent malnutrition in middle childhood and adolescence. These programmatic priorities – articulated around double-duty interventions to prevent malnutrition in all its forms among children 5-19 years of age – will be delivered through a systems approach focusing primarily on food, education, health, social protection, and WASH systems in line with local contexts.

Nutrition-in-Schools Package: Essential nutrition interventions in and around schools

- Nutrition literacy
- Curricula to improve knowledge on good diets and healthy dietary practices

- Communication to promote good diets, positive eating/dietary practices

Nutritious foods and diets

- Nutritious school meals, including fortified foods, to improve children's diets
- Safe drinking water in schools to improve children's diets

Healthy food environments

- Policies and guidelines to ensure healthy foods and drinking water in/around schools
- Standards and regulations to eliminate the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages

Supplementation and deworming

- Micronutrient supplements to protect children from vitamin and other deficiencies.
- Deworming prophylaxis (when and where relevant in ECA region) to protect children from helminth infections and anaemia.

Physical activity

- Curricula to include physical education and promote active living.
- Communication to promote physical activity and active living.

8 UNICEF support in Europe and Central Asia

In line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, UNICEF is committed to inclusive and equitable quality education for every child by 2030, no exceptions, no child left behind. UNICEF has a long and strong track record of supporting governments in Europe and Central Asia on strengthening education systems and making them more resilient so that they can respond to the challenge of quality education for ALL children. Achieving SDG 4 cannot be done in isolation and requires overall progress in poverty eradication (SDG 1), eradication of hunger (SDG 2), good health and well-being for all (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6) and reduction of inequalities (SDG 10).

UNICEF is working alongside governments and schools on:

- Quality inclusive education policies and practices,
- The implementation of competency-based curricula,
- Skills development,
- Quality education and learning,
- Ensuring effective teacher supply,
- Teacher training and continuing professional development, with a focus on quality, inclusive pedagogy, particularly when learning is digitally supported
- The improvement of assessment practices and systems,
- Supporting out-of-school children to (re)engage in education, and preventing dropout from marginalized and vulnerable children, particularly children with disabilities, Roma and other ethnic minority children, and migrant and refugee children,
- Strengthening links between formal education and alternative and flexible pathways to skills development and certification, particularly for the most marginalized, with a focus on digital skills and girls in STEM,
- Supporting the nutrition of school-age children through school during lockdown and post lockdown, to promote safe and healthy nutritional and physical activity behaviours and to prevent transmission of infection throughout the processes related to food and nutrition in the schools, and
- Strengthening education system resilience, quality, and inclusion through the development of digital learning ecosystems.

This experience, particularly around digital learning, flexible learning assessment, inclusive instructional design, and the provision of catch-up modules and embedding socio-emotional support in education activities has proven useful in the face of the COVID-19 challenges.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, UNICEF has supported education continuity and enabling student learning, with a focus on the most marginalized children. UNICEF efforts have focused on (i) supporting ministries of education and related government agencies in establishing, selecting or improving distance and digital learning systems; (ii) monitoring the impact of school closures on the quality of education provided, particularly through distance learning platforms, and on learning outcomes; (iii) supporting transition from emergency remote teaching to quality, inclusive digital learning for longer-term resilience, and (iv) supporting parents and caregivers in guiding children in home learning and in providing psychosocial support.

With countries engaging in post-lockdown planning and the gradual reopening of the economy, UNICEF education response has adopted a two-fold approach:

1. **Providing a continuum of response interventions** contextualized for the epidemiological context and status of learning, from:
   (i) *immediate response* to the COVID-19 outbreak, to

(ii) *return to school*, learning assessment and identification of learning gaps, support strategies for children to catch up on their learning, and to,
(iii) *improving the overall resilience and effectiveness of education systems* through more innovative inclusive, quality education planning and delivery;

2. **Responding to the needs of marginalized and vulnerable children**, particularly children with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minority children, migrant and refugee children, young children and those from socio-economically deprived or dysfunctional families. UNICEF is taking proactive steps to embedding the principles of Universal Design for Learning in the design and scale-up of inclusive digital learning systems and to designing learning management systems to enable seamless integration with assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication.

To do so, UNICEF has provided a comprehensive response, spanning early learning, school education and non-formal education and addressing the needs of end beneficiaries (children and families), educators (teachers and training providers), other school staff (pedagogues, psychologists, directors) and policymakers and education officers. The response has been articulated around four pillars, as follows:

1. **Education Technology (EdTech)**: Activities, tools, and solutions that are required to maintain contact between students, teachers, schools and parents, to set up distance and online education systems and to design digital learning environments for learners and teachers. The aim has been to move from emergency remote teaching to a more structured distance learning approach, including online learning.
2. **Pedagogy**: Activities and products related to teaching and learning and well-being support, including teacher and educator professional development, curriculum and assessment-related matters, development of teaching and learning materials, and inclusive pedagogy and instructional design for planning, implementing and evaluating learning in all settings (classrooms, distance learning, after school programmes, etc.).
3. **Policy and Administration**: Activities related to creating, monitoring, and evaluating teaching and learning environments, including rules and regulations, policy development, education planning, reform implementation support, organization of education provision, funding and partnership.
4. **Safe and healthy school**: Activities related to nutrition, water and sanitation and infection prevention and control.

Under this framework, UNICEF has launched the *LearnIn Initiative*. ***LearnIn aims to accelerate learning outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable, through the provision of effective, inclusive, equitable, technology-enhanced learning opportunities across the life course. LearnIn uses digital learning solutions to strengthen the instructional core of school-based learning, even when learning takes place at a distance.*** The LearnIn initiative is strengthening teachers' competencies for quality, inclusive digital pedagogy and fostering collaboration among educators, providing inclusive, quality, personalized and culturally-relevant learning and skills development opportunities for children and young people, supported by digital solutions such as a Learning Passport, and helping to bridge the digital divide by improving access to connectivity and devices for learning.

For young children, their parents and teachers, UNICEF has also implemented the **PlayIn** programme which uses digital platforms to build the capacity of teachers and parents to support early learning, stimulation and child development, and which provides EduTainment resources to children for learning at home. PlayIn is applicable during school closures, to support learning when schools are open, and for hybrid learning. It can also be used as a platform for continuous professional development of teachers and to create linkages between the home life and school life of children in early learning classes.

To ensure that the health and nutrition of school-age children are not disrupted due to lockdown of schools and also after the reopening of schools, UNICEF in ECAR is supporting ministries of education to put in place **protocols to enhance the food and nutrition safety** in school nutrition programmes upon schools' opening. This especially applies to countries where the country programme has a school nutrition portfolio.

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Annexe 2. Potential negative impact on children of the pandemic and risks based on gender and marginalization lenses

POTENTIAL RISKS AND IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC FROM A GENDER AND MARGINALIZATION LENSES

Roma and ethnic minorities

- Long-term school disruption, disconnect with teachers and peers, risk of not (re)enrolling
- Limited access to online learning and IT devices, limited parental learning support
- Widening learning gaps compared to peers
- At risk of discrimination, particularly where specific restrictions have applied to settlements
- Risks of not receiving treatments due to lack of health insurance and access to healthcare
- Nutrition and stunting
- Contamination risks due to lack of WASH facilities in houses and settlements
- Child and early marriage
- Increased poverty and food insecurity due to parents' loss of income and livelihood
- School attendance regulations' impact on access to social benefits and cash transfers
- Precarious and informal work positions of parents preventing claims for furlough or other benefits
- Not accessing social support due to lack of permanent or registered address or formal residential status

Refugee and migrant children

- Limited access to formal or non-formal education
- Limited access to online learning and IT devices
- Accessibility of learning materials (language)
- Pandemic stress added to existing MH distress
- Risks of not receiving treatments due to lack of health insurance and access to healthcare
- Nutrition and stunting
- Limited access to PPE
- Inability to comply with safety measures (e.g., wash hands with soap)
- Risks in precarious immigration status
- Child labour
- Reduced services for refugees
- Increased poverty and food insecurity

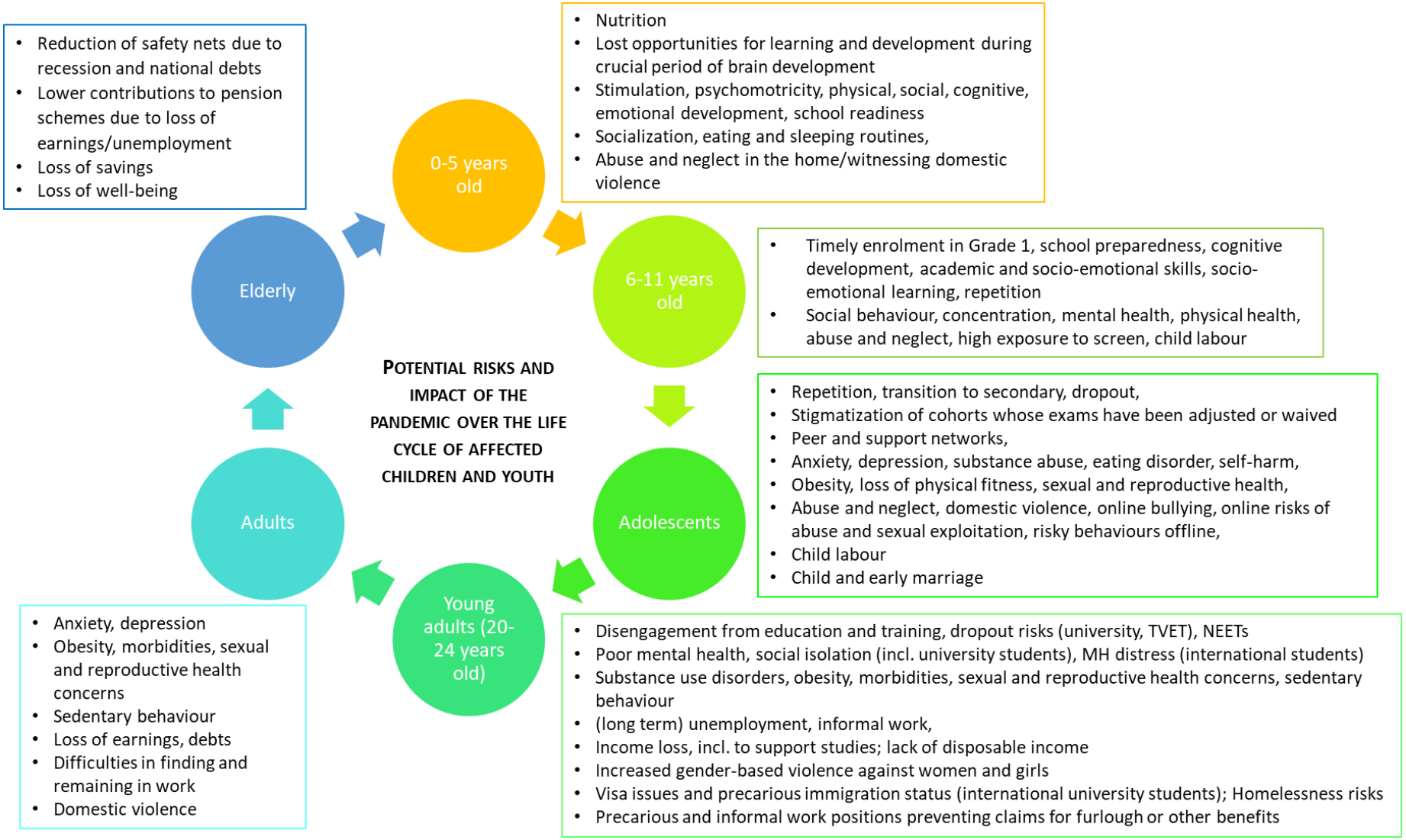
Children with disabilities

- Limited access to in-class, hybrid and remote learning
- Low accessibility of distance and online learning materials, lack of assistive technology
- Limited implementation and follow-up of IEP
- MH distress and routine disruption
- Not accessing support services and (physical) therapy treatments
- Social welfare budget cuts affecting services, care and financial support

Girls

- Caring responsibilities preventing school/ remote learning attendance
- Limited media/IT literacy
- Lower access to internet/IT devices in the home and the school
- Limited social and support networks
- Reinforcement of unequal gender roles at home
- Higher prevalence of anxiety and depression
- Disease contraction risks while looking after sick relatives
- Sexual and reproductive health concerns
- Access to adequate sanitation
- Child, early and forced marriage
- Increased gender-based violence against women and girls
- Caring responsibilities constraining employment
- Higher risk of engaging in informal work, discrimination when entering the labour market
- Gender gaps in earnings negatively impacting old age (pension, savings, retirement age)

Boys

- Dropout
- Pressure to contribute to family income
- Child labour
- Unemployment and loss of income resulting in pressure to migrate
- Risky behaviours
- Reinforcement of negative gender norms

Annexe 3. Current and future risks and negative impact of the pandemic on children and young people