

**COVID-19 education:  
Contingency planning, risk  
reduction, preparedness  
and response framework**

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COVID-19 Education: Contingency Planning Risk Reduction, Preparedness and Response Framework

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# **COVID-19 education:**

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# COVID-19 education: Contingency planning, risk reduction, preparedness and response framework

Please note this document is aligned with and complementary to the [Safe School Operations Guidance](#) (i.e. Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools, March 2020) issued by IFRC, UNICEF, and

WHO. As the COVID-19 global pandemic is a dynamic situation, this document should be understood and applied in line with latest recommendations and instruction from governments and health authorities.

## Risk reduction and preparedness

- Support Government with education sector risk assessments, contingency and response plans.
- Advocate and support governments for schools, teachers and families to be prepared for school closures and school re-opening.

## Response 1

- Implement the safe school operations guidance with government and local partners.

## Response 2

- Develop context appropriate strategies for continuous learning that **allow pupils, teachers and schools to utilize flexible and remote/ home-based learning, which may include homework assignments, reading material, Radio, TV, online content, and internet-based learning.**

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Develop and implement simple monitoring and evaluation systems of learning activities and education response plans to track implementation and after-action reviews.

# Key considerations

## Response 1: Implement the safe school operations guidance with government and local partners

### Contingency planning and preparedness:

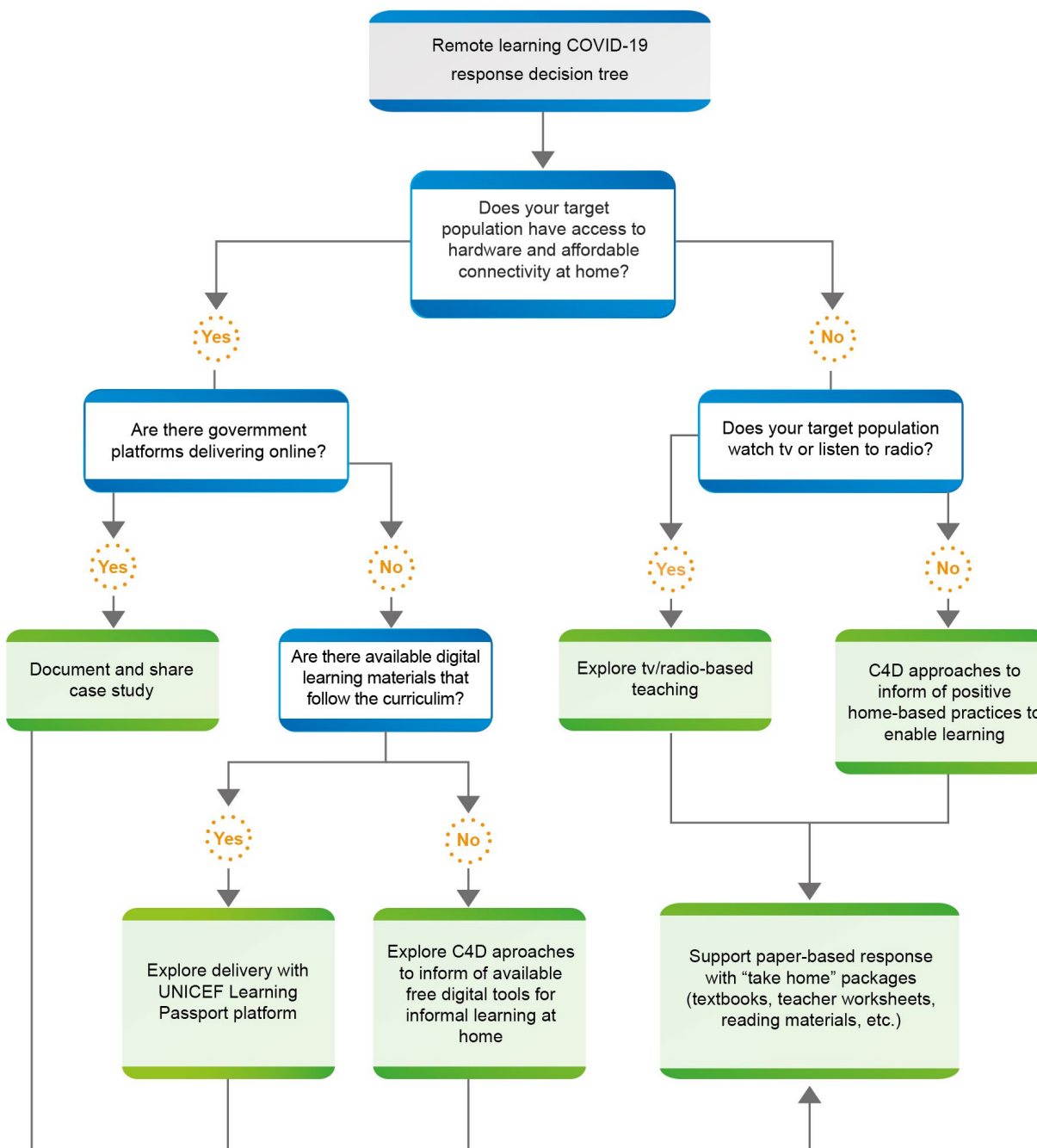
- Develop costed contingency plans for school closure and/or re-opening of schools.
- It is recommended that Governments consider conducting education sector risk assessments, and the development of contingency and response plans for the closure and/ or re-opening of schools.
- Contingency Plans should include all areas included in the *Safe School Operations Guidance* as well as:
  - Supply needs, expanded considerations for remote/distance learning.
  - Specific activities for reaching the most vulnerable children (children on the move, with disabilities, minorities, etc.).
  - specific activities for non-formal education settings (camps, madrassas, etc.).
- Consider any challenges with regards to gender differences or for children with disabilities in accessing home-based learning.
- Identify the most vulnerable groups who may need additional support.
- Consider how teachers will stay engaged with their classes and students to monitor progress, assign new lessons and to give required psychosocial support (PSS) - or share information on referral services.
- Identify the mechanism to support learning that will reach the most children, and the most marginalized children (*see decision tree below*).
- It is recommended that Governments and schools consider - preparing learning packages (texts, worksheets, reading materials), preparing for radio/ tv programme development, identifying online learning options, establishing teacher-class contact groups with partners/ caregivers as required. In several countries, teachers are either conducting home visits to check assignments on children's progress, or checking via the phone, WhatsApp, email etc.
- If safe to do so, consider identifying locations for small groups of children to meet with their teacher on a regular basis.
- If your target population cannot access regular affordable connectivity, but online learning is a good option otherwise, then engaging with the appropriate groups to request learning sites and applications to be zero-rated is of priority. This will enable affordable access to the tools described in the accompanying linked [document](#).

**Implement the safe school operations guidance with government and local partners**

- Consider needs to contextualize the guidance, including translation into local languages.

**Response 2: Ensure continuity of learning**

Please see the decision tree below for a summary of considerations to the *provision of continuous remote learning*:





### Contingency planning and preparedness

- Identify who the most vulnerable children will be in the case of schools being closed.
- Ideally prior to any closures, teachers should obtain the phone numbers of the parents/ caregivers of the children in the class and create WhatsApp groups (or other communication applications) to facilitate discussions, check in on children's progress and share more assignments.
- Visit/ Phone homes where parents/ guardians are unable to come to the school.
- Ensure referral mechanisms are in place should mental health/ psychosocial support issues be apparent.
- Prior to any closures, if safe to do so, hold parents' evenings to discuss the plans, and widely communicate plans to give parents and caregivers the necessary time to plan.
- Hold remote meetings with the governance bodies (School Management Committees, board of governors)- so all are aware.
- A community engagement approach with clear communication and information sharing is important in all situations, as is promoting positive learning environment and practices at home, including:
  - a. Reading together
  - b. Playing together

***If your target population (students, parents, teachers) DOES NOT HAVE access to affordable connectivity and devices (mobile, desktop) at home***

**Printed:** Consider paper based individual home learning assignments (textbooks, pamphlets, worksheets, reading books, etc.). Schools should consider:

- Preparing reading and assignment packages that follow the curriculum.
- Identifying the textbooks and reading books that would be sent home and prepare the necessary release slips for these.
- If safe to do so, identifying locations for small groups of children to meet with their teacher on a regular basis.
- If safe to do so, teachers could be deployed for home visits to check assignments on children's progress.
- Using WhatsApp (see above), or U-report, open polling/monitoring tools, to check children are listening, engaging and learning.

**TV:** past evidence has shown that delivering curriculum via television can be an alternative way of maintaining the learning process and student engagement. Checking in with parents and caregivers on children's engagement with the programmes are an important part of the monitoring process.

Governments may choose this option if there is wide tv coverage and programmes are already prepared, easily accessible or the necessary infrastructure to create new programmes quickly (including programmes from neighbouring countries in the same languages). To create programmes:

- Use the visual medium to its maximum potential.
- Broadcast and make the programmes available for catch up if possible.

- Try and ensure diverse representation of presenters.
- Do engage lively enthusiastic presenters to deliver the lessons.
- Lessons should be as interactive as possible, promote play and games.
- There is potential for children and youth to also present in the programmes.
- You may consider also include key messages on combating stigma and promoting preventative measures at the beginning and end of lessons.
- Consider sign language, and subtitles for children with disabilities

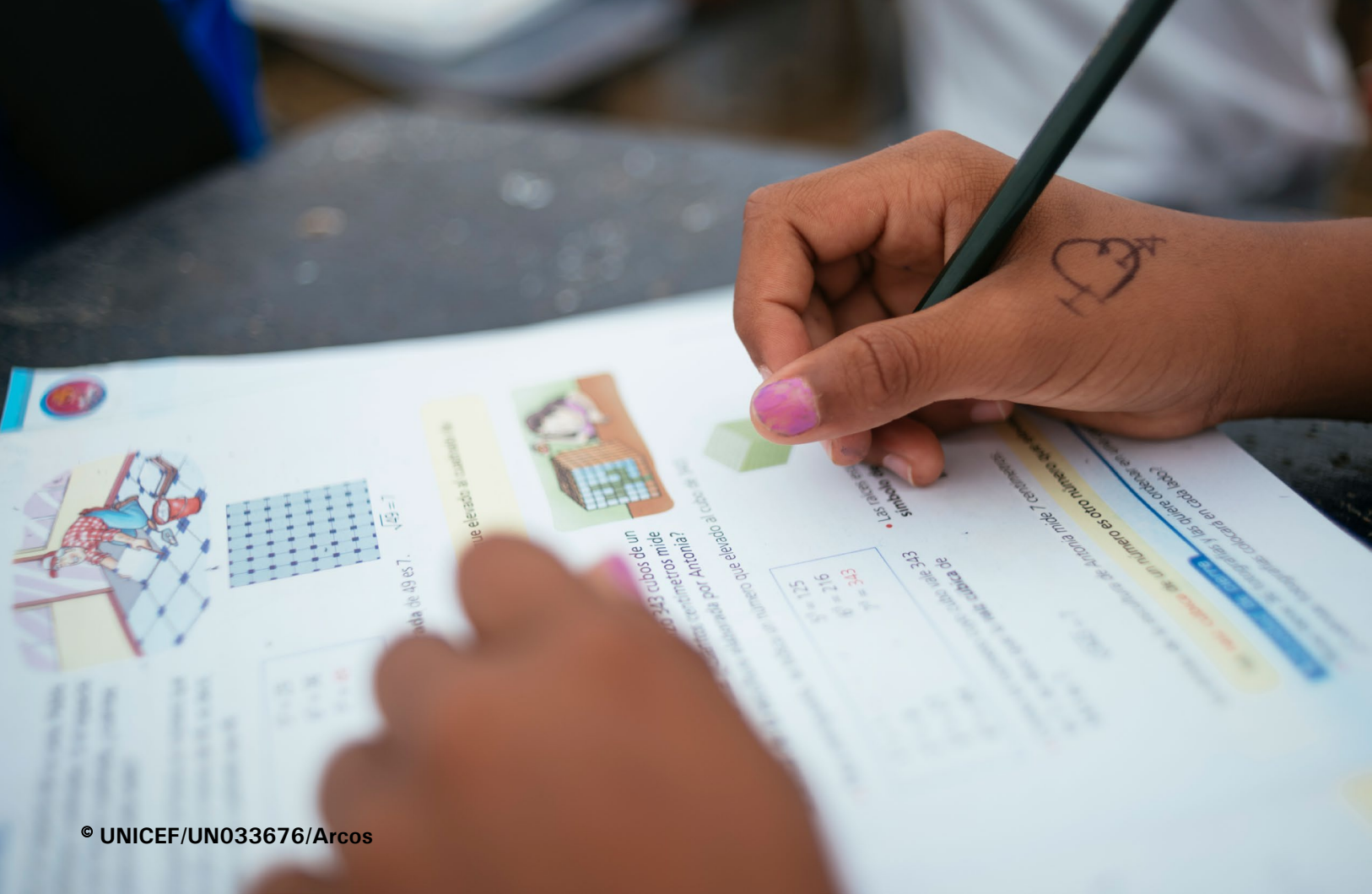
**Radio:** Radio delivery of the curriculum has been used in several contexts when access to school has been disrupted.

If radio programmes are already available, or easily obtained consider the following actions:

- Widely disseminate schedule of the programmes within schools and communities and ensure the schedule is adhered to (lesson learnt- if you move programs around people stop listening)
- Broadcast on to get the widest catchment of children (either Governments networks or negotiate space on multiple private radio stations as required).

If radio programmes are not widely available but the required infrastructure is available to quickly develop and air programmes, in addition to the above consider the following actions (from lessons learnt)

- Do engage lively enthusiastic communicators to deliver the lessons.
- Follow the curriculum.
- Broadcast live, and make the programmes available for download.



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- Use quizzes and promote games.
- Encourage children and youth to also present in the programmes.
- Lessons should be as interactive as possible.
- Beginning and end of lessons can include key messages on combating stigma and promoting preventative measures.
- Widely disseminate schedule of the programmes within schools and communities and ensure the schedule is adhered to (lesson learnt- if you move programs around people stop listening).
- Broadcast on the stations to reach the widest catchment of children (either Governments networks or negotiate space on private radio stations).

For both radio and TV distance learning, teachers

could be deployed for home visits to check assignments on children's progress (if safe to do so). Use WhatsApp- (see above), or U-Report, or other tools to check children are listening, engaging and learning.

***If your target population cannot access regularly affordable connectivity due to cost, but online learning is a good option:***

- Please consider engaging with the appropriate groups to request/ advocate for learning sites and applications to be zero-rated. This will enable affordable access to the tools described in this document.
- Consider how teachers will support to children's learning- such as checking children's progress, giving new assignments. This is relevant for all the different options for continuous learning, and may be by conducting home visits or checking via the phone, WhatsApp, email etc.

*If your target population (students, parents, teachers) HAS ACCESS to affordable connectivity and devices (mobile, desktop) at home:*

**Individual Learning:** There are several free tools that can be leveraged to support individual learning at home. Depending on your country, you may decide to reach out directly to households, via communication for development campaigns, to inform caregivers and students of tools that can be used to engage in digital learning during school closure:

### 1. Digital reading materials

- **African Storybook.** Provides open access to picture storybooks in 189 languages spoken in the African continent. Can be played in desktop and mobile.
- **eLimu.** Digital educational content provider in East Africa. Its 'Hadithi, Hadithi!' app aims to improve literacy rates for 6 and 7-year-olds in the first two years of primary education through interactive stories. These stories are written by local teachers and illustrated by artists across East Africa. Available on mobile and desktop, and via Google Play.
- **Global Digital Library.** Promotes early-grade literacy by making digital storybooks and other reading materials available in multiple languages. Can be played on a desktop. Multiple languages.
- **Let's Read.** Digital library of books for children in Asia. Currently it includes over 2,500 books in 25 languages. Can be played via mobile and desktop; also available on Google Play.
- **StoryWeaver.** Digital repository of multilingual stories for children. Can be played in mobile and desktop.
- **Worldreader.** Provides free access to a large library of digital books and stories that can be accessed via mobile and desktop devices. Available on Google Play Store.

### 2. Learning applications

#### a. Language learning:

- **Akelius.** Language learning application and web-based platform, focusing on students without basic literacy in their mother tongue that need to learn a second language (ex. refugees, migrants). Mobile, Desktop, and available on Google Play. Available languages: Greek, English, French, Swedish.
- **Duolingo.** Language learning application can be accessed via Mobile and Desktop. Available on Google Play, App Store.

#### b. Basic Literacy or numeracy:

- **Age of Learning (ABC Mouse and other products).** The company produces three digital learning tools (ABCmouse, ReadingIQ, Adventure Academy) in English and partially in Spanish for early learners, all the way to lower secondary. For COVID-19 response, Age of Learning offered UNICEF these products for free in countries affected by school closures.
- **Google Bolo.** Application to support literacy. Available for mobile on Google Play in India and test countries. Multiple languages. For more information: Search on Google Play if it is available in your country.

### 3. Learning platforms with diverse content (esp. useful for older, motivated learners, or with active engagement of caregivers/ teachers)

- **Alison.** Free online courses on diverse subject areas. Available on desktop. Available languages: English, Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese.
- **Coursera.** Online courses taught by instructors from recognized universities and companies. Mobile and Desktop. Most courses in English.

- **Edraak.** Free online education in Arabic for K-12 and continuous learning. Can be accessed on desktop. For teachers, learners, and parents.
- **EdX.** Free online courses from educational institutions worldwide. Available on mobile and desktop. Available on Apple store, Google Play. Most courses are in English.
- **EkStep.** An open learning platform with a collection of learning resources in literacy & numeracy. Mobile and Desktop. Available on Google Play. Mostly in English. Learner-facing content access tool.
- **Khan Academy.** Free online courses, lessons and practice. Mobile and Desktop. Available on Google Play, App Store, Amazon App Store. Multiple languages.
- **Kolibri.** Open-source digital learning platform designed for resource-constrained communities capable of running offline. Can be played on desktop. Multiple languages.

Additional resources on digital tools, apps, and platforms to support remote teaching and learning: [Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\) COVID-19 Resources](#). [UNESCO's distance learning solutions list](#).

**Continued access to curriculum.** If there is access to digitized curriculum, continuing the learning process remotely is an option. Given the connectivity available and tools that teachers and learners have access to, there are several possible tools to choose from:

#### 1. The Learning Passport (*UNICEF supported*)

The Learning Passport, a partnership between Microsoft, Cambridge, and UNICEF, is offering extraordinary access to the platform for any

interested country, providing continued access to curriculum for learners with connectivity at home.

If national curriculum in digital form is available, (or textbooks can be scanned into PDF), the Learning Passport is a vehicle to provide curriculum to students with an internet connection at home.

On the request of a UNICEF Country Office, the learning passport team will set up a space for a country and help structure the curriculum into lessons that students can use. Each student will be able to create an account which will be used to log their progress through different lessons and subjects, thereby creating an individual record of learning per student, which teachers can track. The Learning Passport team also has a large library of supplemental curriculum, which can be offered alongside national curriculum.

Anyone can access the Learning Passport platform via an internet browser, on a phone, tablet, or computer, at any school age. Reach out to: [learningpassport@unicef.org](mailto:learningpassport@unicef.org) for more.

Other tools to choose from: Social Media, Messaging and Internet Platforms

1. **Digital Classrooms:** Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, many others: While the requirements of good and consistent connectivity may be a barrier, these tools create a digital classroom environment, with multiple functionalities that recreate a physical classroom environment online, like group and individual activities and assignment functionalities, and classroom management options.
2. **Video Conferencing Platforms:** Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, others: Video communications platforms where teachers

can simulate classroom activities, over video, with students. Note that these options often require relatively good connectivity

- 3. Messaging Platforms:** WeChat, Telegram, WhatsApp, Slack, others: One on one or group-based communication channels, where a teacher can interact with students individually or in groups, give assignments, create Q&A sessions, or mirror other class-based activities, via mobile phones.

- 4. Youtube:** A teacher can upload video recordings of lessons or create a playlist of material that maps to your curriculum, that students can watch.

For any clarifications or support for this technical guidance feel free to contact:

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