

UNICEF Education COVID-19 Case Study

Indonesia – Contextualizing global COVID-19 guidelines to the local context

03. September 2020

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The Government of Indonesia responded quickly to the global COVID-19 pandemic: Even before the first local case was detected in March, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) provided schools with [comprehensive guidance on safe operations and COVID-19 prevention](#). Following confirmation of the first case, the Government closed all 530,000 schools, thus interrupting the education of 60 million school-aged children in the country. To minimize disruption and loss of learning, the government developed a [learning from home guidance](#) based on global guidelines and established distance learning alternatives through online, TV and print materials. Alongside the delivery of these programmes, the MOEC contextualized the global Framework for Reopening Schools to the local context to safeguard the health and safety of both children and teachers when reopening schools. Due to a continued increase in the number of cases, only schools in areas with low risks of local transmission of COVID-19 that met strict requirements were allowed to reopen beginning mid-July. While [data collection on the school reopening status](#) is still ongoing, thus far at least 16,600 schools by the end of August had reported on the school reopening and welcomed around 1,8 million children to face-to-face classes.

KEY FEATURES

- **Contextualizing global guidelines** – The timely development and availability of global guidelines on the [safe operation of schools](#), distance learning and [school reopening](#), combined with a long-established trusted relationship with MOEC, enabled UNICEF to provide comprehensive technical advice and support to the government on learning continuity and school reopening from the start of the pandemic.
- **Prioritizing participatory and inclusive consultations** – A technical working group dedicated to the education response to COVID-19 was established in the MOEC. MOEC staff, other relevant line Ministries, local education departments, teacher associations, civil society, Education Cluster partners and UNICEF worked together to ensure a participatory and inclusive process for contextualization of the learning continuity and school reopening guidelines, taking into account different perspectives and needs. This ensured wide acceptance and endorsement of the guidelines.

- **Providing a cross-sectoral response** – Through close collaboration with Health, WASH, Nutrition and Child Protection colleagues in the country office, UNICEF was able to provide integrated and cross-sectoral recommendations to the MOEC and its technical working group. As a result, important considerations such as WASH, mental health and nutrition are prominently included in the school reopening guidelines.
- **Phasing school reopening** – The school reopening guidelines strike a careful balance between protecting the health of children and teachers and minimizing learning losses. As transmission of cases continues in some parts of the country, the guidelines provide detailed guidance for school reopening based on the epidemiological context of each locality and the individual preparedness of schools. The school reopening process is phased based on the incidence of COVID-19 cases in a particular district and on grade level, and is divided into two stages, with the first two months after reopening considered the transition phase, followed by the new normal. The guidance also provides contingency measures for re-closing schools in case of renewed COVID-19 transmission.
- **Localizing school reopening** – Indonesia is administratively managed at the subnational level by 34 provinces and more than 500 districts and cities. While the school reopening guidelines provide criteria and recommendations, the ultimate decision on reopening schools is the responsibility of the subnational level and school communities based on their assessment of the local context. Thus, the local government and parents can decide to keep their school closed and continue distance learning even if a school meets the requirements that would allow it to reopen. The school reopening guidelines also provide schools with considerable flexibility with respect to the reallocation of school budgets in response to COVID-19. For example, funds can be allocated to strengthen WASH facilities, procure hygiene supplies or provide internet access for teachers and students. Through its presence on the ground and trusted relationship with subnational authorities, UNICEF has been able to provide advice and support on implementation of the guidelines at the local and school levels.

EMERGENT LESSONS LEARNED

- **Influencing policy through evidence** – Evidence generation has played a pivotal role in policy discussions on school reopening. Since the beginning of the response, UNICEF has actively contributed to policy discussions and development by collecting and disseminating data and evidence. Global evidence on the negative impact of school closures on children’s learning and mental health, in conjunction with local evidence generated by UNICEF through multiple rounds of UReport surveys, revealed significant barriers to effective distance learning and demonstrated an overwhelming preference and readiness for students to return to school.
- **Supporting the implementation of guidelines** – A plan is only as good as its implementation, and UNICEF has initiated comprehensive communication and training programmes that will ensure wide dissemination and on-the-ground implementation of learning continuity and school reopening guidelines. UNICEF’s communication campaigns have contributed to increased awareness by authorities, teachers, parents and students, and UNICEF’s capacity building programmes have strengthened the implementation of distance learning and school reopening guidelines at the subnational level. Ongoing trainings on distance learning have reached more than 1 million teachers by the end of August. UNICEF is also supporting MOEC on the monitoring of learning continuity and school reopening. By end of this month, UNICEF is monitoring the [status of school reopening and learning continuity of more than 532,000 schools in Indonesia](#).

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