



©UNICEF/DRC/Mulala/2021

UNICEF EDUCATION

Mission Recovery Case Study

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

February 2022

When the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) closed all schools in March 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic it disrupted the education of 27 million children (12.9 million girls). It is estimated that around 6 million school-aged children and adolescents (3.2 million girls) were out-of-school before the pandemic. After nine months of school closures, with a brief reopening for two months in October 2020, and following advocacy efforts led by the UNICEF country office together with international and national partners, the government re-opened schools in [late February 2021](#). The DRC's education response plan is aligned with [Mission Recovery Education 2021](#), a partnership between United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF and the World Bank. The mission focused on supporting countries as they re-open their schools, ensuring all students as well as teachers are prepared and supported as they return to school.

In 2020, the DRC Education Cluster supported the government to develop the 'Education Cannot Wait' facilitated multi-year resilience plan, which was implemented as the country re-opened its schools. The plan focuses on stemming mass dropouts among vulnerable children in the Tanganyika province, with a focus on girls, through alternative learning programmes.

These are designed to mitigate learning loss among students, providing them with mental health and psychosocial support, training teachers on the topics of gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and psychosocial support in the classroom, and creating pandemic-resilient school environments by improving schools' hygiene and sanitation conditions. In addition, financial support from a number of donors enabled UNICEF to scale up activities across the country. These donors included: the Global Partnership for Education through the Accelerated Funding for COVID-19 response and Global Affairs Canada via the Back-to-School Better Project, among others.

RESULTS ACHIEVED

The following results were achieved after the government re-opened schools in the DRC:

- 28,645 displaced and host community girls in the Kwilu and Tanganyika provinces benefited from inclusive, gender-responsive formal and non-formal education programmes, focused on enrollment and retention as part of the [Back-to-School Better Project](#).
 - 9,000 adolescents (3,600 girls) in eight provinces took part in an alternative education pilot programme where they participated in vocational training activities.
 - 133,206 children and teenagers (61,928 girls) and 4,332 teachers were provided with psychosocial support, catch-up classes and school supplies in the five provinces of South-Kivu, North-Kivu, Ituri, Tanganyika and Maniema.
 - 15,000 teachers from 2,500 schools across the country have been trained in providing psychosocial support to their students in the classroom.
- 981 teachers were trained on gender-based violence (GBV) and safety in the context of COVID-19. These classes benefited a total of 8,847 students (4,246 girls) from the three provinces of Bunia, Tanganyika and Kwilu.
 - A total of 1.94 million children (933,672 girls) across the country have benefitted from WASH kits.
 - 8,769 girls have benefitted from menstrual hygiene management kits.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Girls who were able to participate in awareness raising sessions on GBV and COVID-19 school safety** were more likely to advocate for their right to education. Girls were also more actively engaged in discussions on topics such as handwashing and menstrual hygiene management and would advocate on behalf of other students.
- **Extra efforts are needed to ensure girls have access to distance learning materials to support their learning recovery.** Girls are less likely to use distance learning materials at home because of their household responsibilities such as chores and caring for siblings and family's gender preferences, therefore future efforts must be gender inclusive.

NEXT STEPS

In the new academic year, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education to support girls and boys who were affected by the pandemic. A strategy on distance learning is also being developed jointly with the Ministry of Education and partners.

Special thanks: UNICEF's country office would like to thank the Global Partnership for Education, the Government of Canada and Education Cannot Wait for their financial support.

For more information, please contact:

UNICEF Democratic Republic of Congo Country Office: kinshasa@unicef.org

©UNICEF February 2022

unicef 
for every child