In Jordan, schools have been fully or partially closed since March 2020. From September 2021, all schools reopened, but half of students still attend only 2 to 3 days a week. The Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, launched Learning Bridges in September 2020. It is a national blended learning programme that links printed materials with online resources to provide weekly activities based on core curricula. By the end of 2020/2021, Learning Bridges had reached nearly half a million students in Grades 4 to 9 in over 70 per cent of public schools, with a target of one million by the end of the 2021/2022 school year.

Learning Bridges is an innovative approach which links textbooks and technology, school and home, and subject knowledge with applied learning. Every child in Grades 4 to 9 receives a printed activity weekly with guidance on how parents can support. Learning Bridges activities are also available to download on the UNICEF Jordan Learning Bridges page in addition to the Ministry of Education’s DARSAK online learning platform. Every activity pack has its own QR code linking to an online resource with audio content and extra resources. Teachers receive weekly guidance and an online resource to support teaching. Audio files are embedded to provide accessibility or children with visual impairments or that have difficulty reading. UNICEF also provided printed weekly activities, as well as monthly data packages, for teachers and students in the refugee camps.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education prepared an online training to strengthen teachers’ pedagogical understanding of blended learning. Learning Bridges Champions in each Directorate supported teachers to be flexible and innovate in their delivery of the curriculum. This included
promoting the use of Good practice padlets; large notice boards of children’s work for use by schools and supervisors which have had an average of 100,000 views a month.

RESULTS
An impact study undertaken by UNICEF and Education Development Trust confirmed that in the first academic year of implementation Learning Bridges:

- reached almost 500,000 students (65 per cent girls) in Grades 4 to 9 in over 70 per cent of public schools in 2020/2021
- enabled 30,000 teachers to access online teacher education on blended learning – a first in Jordan
- provided access to online learning resources: as an example, between March and May 2021, over 350,000 visitors clicked on Learning Bridges activities with the intention of downloading from UNICEF’s web page.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Learning Bridges sparked innovation among teachers.** Teachers have been challenged to break away from the textbooks and think creatively about curriculum and pedagogy. They have moved from a heavy reliance on textbooks to embrace new ways teaching styles, including problem-solving and investigation. Many reported improving their digital skills and ability to produce engaging and participatory lessons.
- **Learning Bridges is accelerating children’s learning.** Learning Bridges enabled the Ministry to identify core learning objectives. Weekly Learning Bridges activities are all cross curricula, aligned directly to that week’s taught content for each grade group. This makes curriculum delivery more effective and accelerates learning. In the recent impact study, the cross curricular approach is viewed by the Ministry of Education as one of the greatest successes of Learning Bridges.

- **Learning Bridges is 'building back better'.** In addition to strengthening skills in blended learning and the use of technology, Learning Bridges improved overall teacher pedagogy. This has helped teachers to improve their teaching practice and support children’s learning recovery. Such an approach is in keeping with the Mission Recovery advocated by UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank, which calls for all teachers to be prepared and supported to address learning losses among their students as schools reopen.

NEXT STEPS
The Learning Bridges Programme is included in the Jordan’s Education During Emergency Plan – with budget committed – as a key strategy to support children’s learning recovery. Learning Bridges continues to be used in schools as a blended learning resource for teachers to recover and accelerate children’s learning. Moreover, UNICEF, the Ministry of Youth and Ministry of Digital Economy are in the process of establishing Learning Bridges Clubs. These will create links between schools and the community, supporting students who lack devices, connectivity or parental support.

Cost effectiveness: In the first year of implementation, the programme reached almost half a million students. To achieve this result, UNICEF committed US $500,000 to Learning Bridges. The Ministry of Education was able to leverage additional funding from donors which supported printing and hiring of 12 project writers. The national digital platform which is used by teacher and students to access online resources costs UNICEF only US $12 per month. The cost per student will decline with every additional year that the program is implemented.