

UNICEF Education COVID-19 Case Study

Mongolia– Safe back to school

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Schools across Mongolia began to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic in February, affecting approximately 900,000 students from pre-primary through to secondary.

Keeping all children learning

Mongolia has opted primarily for educational programmes on 18 national TV channels as a means of helping children continue their education. Teachers deliver the lessons in 20- to 25-minute blocks that run from Monday to Friday from the morning to mid-afternoon. They cover all levels from pre-primary through to secondary and include sign language.

In the first month of the crisis, UNICEF helped the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MECSS) to ensure more equitable access to these TV lessons by producing content in Tuvan and Kazakh languages, which reached about 19,000 learners from ethnic minorities. To help the Government gather evidence, UNICEF has commissioned a study of the effectiveness of the TV lessons, which is expected to be completed in early July.

To help the most disadvantaged children with limited access to TV and online learning options, UNICEF is also printing and distributing printed materials during school closures. These materials include student workbooks, a handbook for parents, and brochures on positive parenting, which will benefit 500 families with primary-aged children living in remote areas.

To encourage positive parenting and parental engagement with home-based learning more generally, UNICEF has produced short video clips for parents and caregivers of pre-primary aged children and published it on its Facebook and Twitter accounts. As of 4 April 2020, they have generated an estimated 700,000 views. For example, this video highlights parents' role in early learning. To help parents further, UNICEF and Save the Children are printing and distributing a parents' handbook to all families with 5- and 6-year-olds at home (81,000) to support their role in home-based learning and to promote overall school readiness.

Other areas of work

UNICEF is also working with partners to heighten child safety and well-being. An example of this work is the rapid assessment it undertook to identify children who would normally be attending 24-hour kindergartens during the work week. The analysis resulted in UNICEF providing food to approximately 250 children who were in need. It also provided an entry point for the organisation to raise awareness about potential protection issues.

Regarding adolescents, UNICEF is providing training for school social workers and doctors in selected locations to enable them to provide psycho-social supports during the COVID response. It is in discussions with popular social media giant, TikTok, as well as youth clubs to enter partnerships to benefit supports and learning opportunities specifically aimed at this age group.

A further area of work is preparation for school and kindergarten reopening. UNICEF is collaborating with the MECSS to develop a contingency plan, informed by the principles from the IASC adopted joint WHO/UNICEF-IFRC Safe School Operating Guidance. As part of this plan, UNICEF provided sanitation supplies to all schools, kindergartens, and dormitories. Work is ongoing to prepare communications for a back to school campaign, in anticipation of school reopening that is currently set for 1 September 2020.

KEY FEATURES

- **Equity-focused.** UNICEF focused on promoting equity and inclusion in response plans, including regarding remote learning. It advocated for options that enabled ethnic minority children to learn in their mother tongue and helped to produce such content during the first month of the crisis, which the Government then continued. UNICEF has also been able to complement with printed materials to ensure continued learning opportunities for children without access to TV or internet.
- **School readiness.** Support for school readiness for children about to enter school in the next school year leveraged an opportunity to better prepare young children and their parents for this important transition.

EMERGENT LESSONS LEARNED

- **Monitoring.** There was no available formalised tool to monitor television programming when these were launched, which limited the ability initially to gather evidence about the effectiveness of this distance learning platform.
- **Support for teachers.** Few teachers had previous experience with facilitating remote learning prior to the COVID-19 response, and the abrupt switch left no time for preparatory training. This experience could be integrated into future planning.
- **Quality assurance.** Similarly, efforts made to ensure equitable access could be further strengthened to ensure continuity of learning for the most vulnerable, including ethnic minority children, those living in rural areas, and children with disabilities. One specific area to consider for the future would be to better quality assure the sign language interpretation added to remote lessons.
- **Strengthening sector planning.** The pandemic has triggered more comprehensive contingency planning to strengthen the education system. It is positive that this planning has taken a longer-term vision beyond the current response to COVID-19 and that Ministry of Education has proactively reallocated funds for the plan.

OTHER RESOURCES

For other resources, including more case studies, please click [here](#) and filter by “Area of Work” (Education).

For more information, please contact:

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