

# UNICEF Education COVID-19 Case Study

## Papua New Guinea – Opening up schools better

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In Papua New Guinea, schools were closed on 24 March 2020 disrupting the education for all 2.4 million students. In response, the National Department of Education (NDoE) urgently scaled-up its approach to support the continuation of learning to mitigate the impacts of school closures on the learning outcomes, health, wellbeing and development of the school-age population. With UNICEF's financial support, continuity of learning was supported with the establishment of an ICT platform offering online teaching and learning for nationwide daily TV and radio broadcasts of lessons for primary and secondary schools benefitting over 370,000 children, including more than 168,000 girls.

School reopening commenced on 4 May 2020 under the NDoE's **"New Normal" COVID-19 protocols** to prepare staff, students and school communities to reopen schools and educational institutions safely. Classes have resumed with shift classes and a blended approach, with students attending one to two days of classes per week and continuing their learning at home through paper-based materials, radio, television and the internet.

### KEY FEATURES

- **Prioritising a needs assessment** – UNICEF, in close collaboration with key partners – Government of Australia, Save the Children, PNG Partnership Fund (PPF), PNG Disability Sector Coalition and PNG Council of Churches, the Global Partnership for Education – and the NDoE, supported an education rapid needs assessment of the COVID-19 situation

of the National Education System. The rapid assessment was conducted between 22 April and 1 May 2020 by inspectors and guidance officers using telephone interviews with the headteachers of 404 schools and education institutions. The results highlighted challenges such as a lack of access to accurate information about COVID-19 (82%), safety and protection issues (81%), lack of supervision at home (78%) and limited access to WASH facilities (75%). These concerns informed the NDoE's response to prioritise and address issues of risk communication and community engagement, protection and WASH, among others.

- **Supporting national leadership** – The NDoE used their role as lead of the Education Cluster (EC) to convene the EC co-leads, UNICEF and Save the Children, the local Education Group and EC members to collaborate on and endorse a four-phase national [Education Emergency Response and Recovery Plan](#) (EERRP) to sustain learning and inclusion during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Enabling blended learning** – Prior to COVID-19, overcrowded classrooms were the norm in urban schools. This has changed as a result of the NDoE's guidelines for the "new normal" school stipulating that maximum 30 students are allowed in each classroom. The NDoE is utilising shifts and a blended learning approach resulting in a new normal of improved teacher to student ratios.
- **Investing in WASH in schools** – With the support of the Government of Japan, UNICEF is establishing handwashing points in 44 National Capital Schools to provide clean water and hand washing facilities. To date, more than 37,000 students (Girls: 18,437 and Boys: 18,775) in 23 schools in the National Capital District have access to clean water and handwashing points. Further, UNICEF supported rapid WASH assessments in 44 selected schools and preparations are currently underway to provide WASH in School trainings for WASH focal teachers in June.
- **Strengthening decentralised services** – Papua New Guinea is administratively managed at the subnational level by 22 provinces and 89 districts. The decentralised education services allowed the District Offices to apply available school grants in response. For example, the National Capital District Office in Port Moresby used these district resources to fund and allocate additional buses for children to allow social distancing while riding to school.
- **Championing inclusion** – Through advocacy and financial support from UNICEF Australia, sign language has been included to all the education programs on television, with technical support from Callan Services for Disabled People National Unit.

## EMERGENT LESSONS LEARNED

- A nationally endorsed and timely COVID-19 EERRP was the critical tool to attract donors to strategically and directly fund key priorities outlined. As a result, on 28 May 2020, the Global Partnership for Education approved funding against the EERRP totalling USD 9.44 million. The Government of Australia generously contributed additional USD 2.6 million for the COVID-19 EERRP for WASH in Schools and COVID-19 support to secondary schools.

## 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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