



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Education
Sector

COVID-19 Education Response Webinar

Ensuring quality of learning and well-being for young children in the context of the COVID-19

Wednesday 15 July 2020

01:30 PM – 03:00 PM CET (Paris)

AGENDA

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic response has not yet focused on young children, despite the risk of them becoming the biggest victims of the pandemic through a lifelong impact on their education and well-being¹. Before the outbreak of the COVID-19, at least 250 million young children, representing 43 percent of children under 5 years old, were already at risk of not reaching their full potential.

At the peak of the pandemic, the world witnessed the closure of schools in 192 countries, placing parents in the role of first-line responders for their children's care and learning as teachers scrambled to ensure the smooth continuity of learning.

Background and rationale

The early years constitute a critical stage of rapid brain development that lays the foundation for health, wellbeing and productivity throughout life. It is demonstrated that Early Childhood Education increases educational efficiency in the primary classes and provides children with foundation skills required for learning and thriving in later school years and lifetimes. In recognition of the importance to early childhood education, it is important to ensure that the learning and wellbeing of young children is given

¹ UN Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on children, April 2020

due consideration when educational and care services are interrupted. Special attention should be given to vulnerable children and their families.

In the COVID-19 context, young children are deprived of appropriate care, wellbeing and learning opportunities due to intense and prolonged closure of ECE centres. The toxic stress created by COVID-19 on young children can disrupt the foundations of learning, behaviour and health, with long-term consequences on children's development². Young children's learning occurs through hands-on experiences guided by a teacher, facilitator or caregiver. The best educational technology cannot replicate this human connection but can help to improve teaching or substitute in case of school interruption, such as occurred by COVID-19. It is unrealistic to expect parents and caregivers, particularly those with low levels of education or limited caregiving and educating skills, to be able to offset the resulting gaps from children's lack of early learning opportunities. It is therefore important to empower the ECE practitioners particularly with the confidence and skills to implement intentional, hands-on learning from home with or without distance learning tools to be manipulated by children.

According to a rapid analysis of learning continuity solutions envisaged by the ministries of education, ECE is not the priority in remote learning. However, ECE TV and radio programmes, despite the techno-pedagogical constraint such as interactivity, became a huge solution used by parents and young children. Cartoons and ECE TV programmes allowed young children at last to feel part of learning continuity process.

If acted upon, the situation can be an opportunity for ECE teachers/educator to engage with families through different channels including radio and TV, giving ECE unprecedented ways to expand with reference to parental education. This would entail creating learning platforms for ECE teachers/educators informed by existing and tested tools and resources using high, low or no tech solutions. Special attention should be given to reaching the most disadvantaged children, including those displaced, through inter-sectoral collaboration.

Based on the latest [UNESCO](#) available data, over 18.6 million pre-primary teachers in 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and 4.4 million pre-primary teachers (85 percent of whom are women) in 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific region are under more pressure than ever to handle unprecedented challenges, stress and disruptions resulting from the pandemic. This situation is exacerbated by their already vulnerable status in the overall education personnel structure compared to their counterparts in other levels of education. Several webinars have been organized and resources developed and shared by UNESCO, UNICEF, WB, and ECD regional and global networks such [ECDAN](#), [AFCEN](#) and [ARNEC](#).

Against this background, UNESCO is organizing, under the high patronage of Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development a webinar on the topic of "***Ensuring the quality of learning and wellbeing for young children in the context of the COVID-19***" in order to further mobilize global and country policymakers, ECE practitioners and partners in pursuit of concrete action for ensuring quality education and wellbeing for young children during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives and outputs

The webinar objectives are to:

- Highlight some of the common challenges faced, solutions provided and lessons learnt during the Covid-19 crisis in ensuring continuity of inclusive quality learning and wellbeing for all young children;
- Mobilize international community, especially Global Education Coalition (GEC) members to devise on and develop concrete solutions and actions towards quality learning and wellbeing for young children.

² Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2007).

The thematic aspects to be addressed at the webinar include, but are not limited to:

- What are the key elements to consider when it comes to ensuring quality learning and wellbeing for young children? Should health and psychosocial care be privileged over early learning? What support is needed for teachers and caregivers?
- What are the promising models or programmes (High-tech, Low-tech or no-tech³) to reach the most disadvantaged children? What have we learned from these experiences and how to put them at scale?
- How can we strengthen capacities of ECE practitioners, especially on their skills to interact and engage with parents and caregivers to ensure learning continuity and children's wellbeing in crises?
- How can we better integrate ECE into education and learning systems that are yet to be further strengthened and made resilient? What crisis-sensitive and responsive legal, policy and planning frameworks are required to ensure the right of young children to quality and inclusive ECCE?

During the preparatory phase, UNESCO will consult partners, researchers and relevant structures at the Ministries of Education to identify and select promising experiences or published research as well as key challenges to share. During the webinar, keynote speeches and presentations will be combined with two rounds of focused discussions: a) country and local-level achievements, challenges or initiatives and b) partners' commitment to engage action and deliver on results.

GEC members will be informed about concrete experiences and share their ideas on what and how they can to help improve the situation of young children. It is anticipated that UNESCO would develop follow-up actions to help match countries' needs and GEC partners' support and resources to improve learning and wellbeing of young children.

Target audience and actors

The webinar is primarily directed a) to ministry of education and ministries in charge of ECCE, especially officials and practitioners (managers, teachers, policy makers, curriculum developers, education planners, care and medical professionals); b) International development partners and civil society organisations and networks dealing with ECCE and, Universities and research institutes members to share results and identify new research topics.

The speakers and panellists will be among researchers, planners, philanthropists and education practitioners. They will be selected based on relevant experiences and proven contributions to children's education and wellbeing.

Format

This 90-minute webinar will include official speeches, Ministerial round table and a panel discussion with partners to share key messages or propose concrete actions as take-away. A moderator will facilitate the discussion between the presenters and the audience. A Q&A session will go live on the chat box.

Logistic

The webinar will be held in English and French via [Zoom](#). All participants should be registered and will have the opportunity to send a question before the commencement of the webinar and give feedback after. For more information, please visit regularly the [page event](#)

³ **low-tech** where government is broadcasting programming over TV or radio; **high-tech** where government is encouraging use of digital content platform to support virtual learning; **no tech** where there is no or very limited hardware or internet connectivity that can be made available

Agenda

Wednesday 15 of July 2020 - 15h00-16h30 GMT+2		
01:30 – 01:40 PM	<p>Opening session: Presentation of the objectives and practical information</p> <p>Opening remarks</p>	<p>Mr. Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO</p> <p>Mrs Stefania Giannini, ADG for Education, UNESCO</p>
01:40 – 01:55 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of COVID 10 on pre-primary education - impact of COVID 19 on young children and their families 	<p>Mr. Gwang-Chol Chang, Chief of Education Policy Section, UNESCO</p> <p>Philip A. Fisher, PhD, Director, Center for Translational NeuroScience, University of Oregon, USA</p>
01:55 – 02:25 PM	<p>Ministerial Round table:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experiences from Seychelles - Experiences from Cambodia - Experiences from Qatar - Experiences from Uruguay 	<p>H.E. Madam Jeanne Simeon, Minister of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD)</p> <p>H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport</p> <p>H.E. Dr Mohammed Abdul Wahed Al-Hammadi, Minister of Education and High Education</p> <p>Minister of Education (TBC)</p>
02:25 – 02:35 PM	Call to action: what will we do with what we know?	Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, UNESCO Special Envoy on Literacy for Development
02:35 – 03:00 PM	<p>Panel discussions in response to the Call to action: Sharing 3-minute key message or commitment to concrete action or initiative</p>	<p>Mrs. Chemba Raghavan, senior Early Childhood Development (ECD) specialist, UNICEF</p> <p>Amanda Devercelli, Global Lead for ECD, World Bank</p> <p>Dr Chiara Servili, WHO</p> <p>Oliver Liang, Head of the Private and Public Services Unit, ILO</p> <p>Dr. Katrin Imhoff, Chief Program Officer Right To Play</p> <p>Mrs. Mercedes Mayol Lassalle President of World Organization for Early Childhood Education</p> <p>Mrs. Delphine Dorsi, Director of the Right to Education Initiative</p> <p>Mrs. Sara Dang, ECCD Advisor for Asia, Save the Children</p> <p>Mrs. Elizabeth Lule, Executive Director, ECDAN</p>
02:55 – 03:00 PM	Conclusions and closing remarks	Princess Laurentien

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UNESCO's COVID-19 Education Response



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<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>



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