

# Flexible Strategies for Ensuring Quality

## Learning Outcomes in Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Assessment in Asia-Pacific

### During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been multi-faceted, far reaching, and ultimately global in nature. Early stringent mitigation measures, like lockdowns and stay-at-home orders, have finally limited the devastation and spread of the coronavirus, but they have also negatively affected education and schooling. Most of these pandemic mitigation measures recently have been relaxed, but school closures remain in effect in many places around the globe.<sup>1</sup> Prolonged closure of schools across the globe has adversely impacted education and learner's development globally. As a result, there has been a need for appropriate shifts away from traditional modalities of learning to newer ones better suited to the ongoing circumstances.

The education systems of the Asia-Pacific region have not been well equipped for this situation, and they have been lacking in adequate resources for a major transformation of education to online and distance-learning modalities. Compounding the problem, more than 50% children in the region live in learning poverty: they are unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10. Some 12.5 million children

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/13061/file/4-page%20Summary%20Report.pdf>

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at the primary level, and 16.5 million children at the lower secondary level, are completely out of school. Even prior to the pandemic, millions of children completed primary education without mastering the foundational skills of basic numeracy and literacy, let alone the twenty-first century skills required for meaningful employment, personal well-being and active participation in adult society.<sup>2</sup>

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 envisions 'inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities' for all by 2030. This goal has been, in itself, challenging for most countries of the vast region, and it has been rendered all the more daunting by a global pandemic even further exacerbating widespread inequities in education. The United Nations estimates that school closures have kept nearly 90% of students out of school, thus reversing years of progress in regional education. Notably, remote learning itself remains out of reach for roughly 500 million students across the globe.<sup>3</sup>

It is understandable that most national financial resources of countries in the region have been directed towards upgrading their national health infrastructures; nevertheless, some of these same countries have been able to redirect a substantial share of their national budgets (in some cases even increasing them) to facilitate the delivery of critically important educational services to their learners.

In China, the Ministry of Education (MOE), along with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology launched in 2020 an emergency policy of 'Suspending Classes without Stopping Learning',<sup>4</sup> which highlights different aspects of education delivery during the pandemic. A national primary and secondary school network cloud platform was launched in 2020. Learning resources and relevant course materials were disseminated through Channel 4 of China Education Television, extending to remote rural area.

India's Ministry of Education (MoE) formulated own guidelines, called 'Covid Response in School Education', released in May 2021. The action plan entailed education access, retention, continuous learning, capacity building and stakeholder engagement. An alternative Academic Calendar developed by India's National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) explains the content, skills and competencies at all stages of school education and provides learning solutions to the teacher for children, whether with or without a digital device. The content suggested in the academic calendar can be curated at various levels and by different stakeholders, including the state, individual school systems, or even individual teachers.

In Indonesia, simplification of the curriculum to focus on essential numeracy and literacy skills has given teachers time to adapt to remote teaching modalities. Push for the proper implementation of the Learning Independence (*Merdeka Belajar*) policy was implemented, giving teachers the freedom to focus only on the essential aspects of the present curriculum amid the COVID-19 emergency.

Pakistan's Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT) issued a national education response and resilience plan for COVID-19, in May 2020, which specifies priority areas and key actions. This involved content creation for different platforms, both digital and non-digital, and the development of distance- and blended-learning competency standards and assessment frameworks.

These are only some of the country examples that provide various instructive strategies adopted by the different governments in the South Asia and Asia-Pacific region to define the core focus of curriculum transaction during the pandemic and make technology available to an increasing number of students for reducing significant learning gaps.

As the outbreaks of COVID-19 in the wider region are arising in successive waves, it is essential that any response plan be cyclical in nature,<sup>5</sup> wherein countries are either '*preparing*', '*coping*' or '*recovering*' from the negative impact of the pandemic on regional education:

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2 <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/education>

3 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

4 [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A06/s3321/202002/t20200212\\_420435.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A06/s3321/202002/t20200212_420435.html)

5 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/managing-impact-covid-19-education-systems-around-world-how-countries-are-preparing>

- ▶ The *preparing phase* witnessed several countries in the region developing response plans once the threat of the spread of disease in the specific country became apparent or imminent.
- ▶ The *coping phase* applies to countries making attempts to follow the response-plan guidelines in the wake of the numerous educational and medical threats posed by the pandemic. Imposing school closures, offering distance/ blended learning, using closed schools for emergency purposes, and rolling out hygiene practice campaigns have been a few of the most followed modalities during the *coping phase*.
- ▶ The *recovery phase* applies once a certain wave of pandemic contagion in a specific country begins to subside. Resilience of the country's educational system is ultimately dependent on how effectively and quickly the system recuperates from the damaging educational and health impacts of the pandemic. During this stage, implementation of policies and measures to regain lost time and lost learning becomes crucial.

During the *preparing phase* of the pandemic, most countries decided to close their material school facilities (school buildings, campuses, and such). In a few countries, such as Bhutan, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea, where the immediate action of school closure resulted in the institution of proper plans like Education in Emergencies (EiE), or the Emergency Response and Recovery Plan (EERRP), there were good results, and children were able to continue their learning. During the *coping phase*, most countries moved to the home-based learning or online/blended mode of learning. There were, however, technology constraints, and a few countries opted to print materials and 'guideline' documents for deprived or otherwise disadvantaged learners. Some countries, like Mongolia, prepared education materials and video lessons to sustain remote learning. At this time, the *recovery phase* is setting in, and countries are slowly moving towards normalcy, and schools are generally reopening to their communities. In some states in India, schools have reopened with COVID-19 protocols in place, such as 50% attendance in classes and the installation of special handwashing and sanitation facilities. An Standard operating procedure (SOP) /Guidelines for Health and Safety protocols for Reopening of Schools and Learning with Physical/Social Distancing has developed for ensuring a smooth transition of students from home-based schooling during lockdown to formal schooling.

The present document aims to synthesize major steps, whether envisaged or implemented by different countries in South Asia, South-East Asia, and Oceania to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their respective education systems. The response and resilience plans provide insight into the different approaches and planning those the nations from the region have employed to ensure the continued learning of children under the pressing circumstances, uncertainties and unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic. The understanding gained from this examination can help identify the core aspects necessary for supporting learners and mitigating learning gaps.

## USE OF FLEXIBLE AND BLENDED LEARNING STRATEGIES TO ENSURE QUALITY LEARNING OUTCOMES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Studies on the effect of the pandemic on the educational system reveals a uniform pattern of responses by nations in the region from the onset to the present stage of pandemic stabilization. The total lockdown of the countries, and the consequent cancellation of classroom interaction and year end evaluations have generally put education systems into disarray. The restriction of the spread of COVID-19 was, of course, of primary concern, and in which most countries attained significant success. The uncertainty of the duration of the pandemic, however, and the decrease in the number of cases eventually caused lockdown fatigue, implying the lowering of one's guard against spreading or contracting infection, which has contributed to a subsequent and, at times devastating second wave. Most countries transitioned early on to online classes, the remote-teaching and learning method proving to be, at best, capable of establishing

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a semblance of continuity of education, and at worst, proving a poor replacement for the robustness of education more typical of the physical school setting. Most adversely affected have been those who were, prior to the pandemic, already economically marginalized and lacking what would soon be requisite electronic and digital infrastructure (hardware/software/connectivity); still others in remote localities have suffered poor broadband accessibility. Remote teaching and learning has also created an extra workload for teachers called upon to invest greater and greater effort to achieve relatively modest outcomes. At the very least, traditional learning has been seriously compromised. In summary, the various countries in the region have acted in more or less similar manner, in fact with relatively minor variation among them, depending upon the resources available to them, their geographical peculiarities, and the relative viciousness of the pandemic's effect on local populations.

## AMERICAN SAMOA

Once the dates of school closures were finalized, all students were given work packets by their teachers, together with clear instructions of teacher expectations, plans for work submission, protocols of grading, and other essential information and instructions. The salient and recurring features of this school-closure process are the following:

- ▶ Teachers, students and parents had each other's contact information for communication purposes in case students and/or parents had questions, needed clarification of assigned work, needed to confirm assignment submission dates and location, and so forth.
- ▶ Distribution of all available resources, including software, hardware, books and other printed materials.
- ▶ Encouragement of communication methods among all parties.
- ▶ Identification of drop-off points for student work.
- ▶ Utilization of all available social and online media to support communication among students, parents and teachers (e.g., KVZK, Moana TV, radio, cell phones, social media, and others)

**Student work packets for 4 weeks:** Teachers created student work packets for all students, including students with disabilities and appropriate work for the different grade levels (e.g., K–Grade 5; Grades 6–8; Grades 9–12). The steps in the process are as follows:

- ▶ Identification of what is to be covered under the remaining standards and benchmarks given the particular timeframe (e.g., 4 weeks);
- ▶ Identification of teaching practices or pedagogy to be employed for students with access to technology at home, and students lacking such access;
- ▶ Planning of student work submissions for grading on a weekly basis;
- ▶ Clarifying the use of the standard ASDOE grading scale to grade student's work;
- ▶ Communicating with parents to share the school's action plan for continuing to provide learning for all students at home during school closures; sharing of student work packets with parents to garner parental support at home.

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- [https://4307e575-0744-4fa0-bcca-68011612de53.filesusr.com/ugd/4bfff9\\_343950bcf59740fa9d5c00c7ffd4a7a1.pdf](https://4307e575-0744-4fa0-bcca-68011612de53.filesusr.com/ugd/4bfff9_343950bcf59740fa9d5c00c7ffd4a7a1.pdf)
  - [https://www.doe.as/files/user/2/file/ASDOE%20SCHOOLS%20FINAL%20ACTION%20PLAN%20GUIDELINES\(1\).pdf](https://www.doe.as/files/user/2/file/ASDOE%20SCHOOLS%20FINAL%20ACTION%20PLAN%20GUIDELINES(1).pdf)
  - <https://www.americansamoa.gov/>
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## CHINA

The Ministry of Education (MOE) of the People's Republic of China launched an emergency policy of 'Suspending Classes without Learning Termination' (SCWLT),<sup>6</sup> which highlights different aspects of how to maintain education continuity during the pandemic.

### **Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ It is proposed that the curriculum be revised from grades 1 to 9, mainly in subjects such as biology, Chinese literature, health, history and physical education, with an underlying message of the resilience of the system in facing extraordinary difficulties.<sup>7</sup>

### **Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ Launching a national cloud learning platform for online education (for primary and secondary school network) in February 2020
- ▶ Disseminating learning resources and relevant course work is through Channel 4 of China Education Television, which covers remote rural areas where cable television is not accessible
- ▶ Freely distributing electronic versions of relevant textbooks
- ▶ Mobilizing all major telecom service providers to boost internet connectivity service for online education, especially for under-served regions<sup>8</sup>
- ▶ Upgrading the bandwidth of major online education service platforms

### **Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ Poor network coverage in remote areas; little experience in online teaching on the part of educators; distractions from teaching and learning at home; rampant copying of the offline curriculum to online platforms (Zhang et al., 2020)
- ▶ To ensure the reach of information and resources to all students, including those in remote areas, the government worked on circulating teaching information in multiple way, including using satellite television in areas without internet coverage (Zhang, Wang, Yang & Wang; 2020)

### **Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ The Department of Teacher Education, working with various institutions, produced a resource package for teachers which covered online teaching strategies, information technology applications, school epidemic prevention cases, local teacher training cases, and so forth. All resources were made freely available to the public. Additionally, an online teaching feedback system was established to encourage teachers to actively summarize and share their experiences and thoughts, and to discuss them among their peers. Schools also appointed online teaching technology consultants to support online teaching (Zhang et al., 2020)

### **Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ As a part of home online learning, parents of students studying in elementary classes are able to take concerted decisions regarding in terms of specific regulations on the time limits for online classes

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6 [http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A06/s3321/202002/t20200212\\_420435.html](http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A06/s3321/202002/t20200212_420435.html)

7 <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/china-to-change-school-curriculum-to-add-positive-covid-19-narrative/story-wcI9zizLkQ3DEiFNUDJAAK.html>

8 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/edutech/brief/how-countries-are-using-edtech-to-support-remote-learning-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>

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## INDIA

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in India has formulated its COVID-19 response guidelines in the document, 'Covid Response in School Education: Action Plan for Access, Retention, Continuous Learning, Capacity Building and Stakeholder Engagement', released in May 2021. The action plan has been detailed in this document.

### Curricular modifications:

- ▶ An Alternative Academic Calendar developed by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) explains the content, skills and competencies at all stages of school education and provides learning solutions to teachers of children, whether learners be with or without a digital device
- ▶ The content suggested in the Academic Calendar can be curated at the level of the state, school, or teachers

### Tools, delivery mode and criteria:

High-tech, low-tech, and no-tech interventions have been suggested in order to continue home learning initiatives across all sections of society:

- ▶ PM e-VIDYA; DTH TV channels under the bouquet of SWAYAM PRABHA TV channels; DIKSHA; SWAYAM MOOCs of NCERT and NIOS provide relevant resources to students at all levels of school education
- ▶ Energized Textbooks with QR codes mapped/tagged with e-content for grades 1 through 12
- ▶ Extensive content on radio, community radio and podcasts
- ▶ E-textbooks, e-Contents of NCERT on e-Pathshala and National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)
- ▶ Use of voice calling and Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS)
- ▶ For assessment purposes, the Alternative Academic Calendar will be strengthened by connecting it with item banks/assessments
- ▶ Creation of assessment bank and remedial content
- ▶ Initiating exam reforms (similar to the ones started by CBSE) that align better with the home-based learning mode

### Challenges faced in the implementation:

- ▶ Digital divide amongst students with varying degrees of access to digital devices, and interruptions in its usage
- ▶ Need to understand the reach of online resources and learning, e.g. data of television viewership and reach of radio shows
- ▶ Control and Command Centre (CCC) for teachers and schools to oversee the activities related to maintenance of data about school-going children, out-of-school children, children of migrant labours.
- ▶ Providing financial support to schools to ensure delivery of reading material, material/equipment for sanitation and hygiene, etc.
- ▶ The *Manodarpan* ('mirror of the mind') initiative caters to the socio-emotional and psychological needs of students whereby they can call toll-free numbers to connect with trained counsellors
- ▶ E-content for visually- and hearing-impaired students
- ▶ Conduct door-to-door/helpdesk-based/app-based surveys to identify Out of School Children (OoSC) and provide strategic help
- ▶ Stipend for girl Children with Special Needs (CWSN) under Samagra Shiksha programme
- ▶ Accepting support of local functionaries/volunteers to guide CWSN children
- ▶ Bridge courses (prepared by NCERT) to mainstream children

### **Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ Workshops under National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) was conducted online by NCERT at DIKSHA platform for all teachers at elementary level covering all States and Union Territories (UT); the Central Board of Secondary Education along with other governmental organisations conducted Capacity Building of Teachers on conducting classes online
- ▶ Resources in response to the COVID-19 situation have been developed and shared with teachers, such as Alternative Academic Calendar; Special resources for Teachers-LOs mapped to curriculum; Teacher Energized Resource Material (TERM); Massive open and Online Courses (MOOCs) modules on experiential learning and competency-based education; and Open Educational Resources (OERs) for teacher trainees and teacher educators at Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs) provided by the NCTE
- ▶ Special training for OoSC and CWSN

### **Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ Connecting with parents through text messages, video conferencing, e-PTMs etc.; School-wise/Grade-wise Mothers/Parents Action group
- ▶ Community volunteers (such as NYKS & NSS), SMCs and other motivated members of the community are to work together to help in timely delivery of resources to students, and to reduce the possibility of students dropping out

## **INDONESIA**

### **Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ Simplification of the curriculum to focus on essential numeracy and literacy skills, giving teachers time to adapt to remote teaching<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ Push for the proper implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* ('Learning Independence') policy by granting teachers the freedom to focus on only the essential aspects of the present curriculum amid the COVID-19 emergency<sup>10</sup>

### **Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ The Education and Culture Ministry recently introduced a *Belajar di Rumah* ('Learning at Home') programme through state-owned broadcaster TVRI, and a platform called *Guru Berbagi* ('Teachers Sharing'), providing and creating learning and teaching materials<sup>11</sup>

### **Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ Difficulty in reaching out to children from lower economic households, as well as children with disabilities<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ Teachers facing difficulties in operating digital devices, difficulties on part of students in concentrating on their studies<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ Subsidizing mobile data for students to improve their access to remote learning
- ▶ Changes in school budget allocations with 51% budget used to support and 27% budget to prepare learning materials<sup>14</sup>

9 <https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/14/indonesias-education-minister-on-covid-effect-on-students-learning.html>

10 <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/08/12/covid-19-crisis-opportunity-for-education-reform-in-indonesia.html>

11 <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2020/04/11/challenges-of-home-learning-during-a-pandemic-through-the-eyes-of-a-student.html>

12 <https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/coronavirus/stories/back-to-school-pandemic>

13 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34378/Main-Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

14 <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34378/Main-Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

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- ▶ Allowing schools the freedom to spend national budget allocated to them on items such as electronic laptops and tablets

**Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ Providing training to teachers for use of digital platform and online mode of teaching

**Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ Finding different means to reach parents and community

## PAKISTAN

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT), Government of Pakistan issued a national education response and resilience plan for COVID-19 in May 2020 that specifies priority areas and key actions.

**Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ Content creation for different platforms, digital and non-digital
- ▶ Developing distance and blended learning competency standards and assessment frameworks

**Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ MoFE&PT has established a new 'Distance Education Wing' to continue developing alternate modes of education, even after schools reopen
- ▶ Teaching the students using various mediums requiring no technology (textbook, workbook, printed material), low technology (television/radio learning programmes) and high technology (web platforms, smartphones, digital books, etc.)
- ▶ TeleSchool initiative in collaboration with leading EdTech providers such as Knowledge Platform, Sabaq.pk, Sabaq Muse, and Taleemabad to broadcast free learning content to grades 1 through 12 students<sup>15</sup>; eTaleem portal and Taleemabad app to encourage remote learning via internet, television or radio<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ Conducting high-stake examinations (Grades 10 and 12) in physical settings with adequate precautions; in-person examinations are to be conducted for the students enrolled in Cambridge examination system with strict measures pertaining to maintaining the health safety of students

**Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ Existing digital divide among students: the MoFE&PT is also piloting blended learning in 200 public school classrooms to better understand the implementation challenges of new technologies<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ Liaisoning and partnering with local businesses to obtain support in terms of food packages, mobile data services, cable television access, etc., for the education of children
- ▶ Providing grants to schools for maintenance of general health and sanitation
- ▶ Providing cash grants and stipends to learners to mitigate the risk of dropout

**Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ Training the teachers to use different modalities of teaching learning
- ▶ Providing necessary guidance and tools for community outreach to schoolteachers and head teachers through different methods, such as a support group and/or free call-in numbers
- ▶ Giving more autonomy to schools to take decisions in COVID-19 related emergency situations

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15 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/covid-19-spurs-big-changes-pakistans-education>

16 <https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/education-in-pakistan-amid-covid-19-a-test-case-for-policymakers/>

17 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/covid-19-spurs-big-changes-pakistans-education>



### **Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ Taking support of local telecom companies' television channels to communicate with families and education staff regarding various situations and decisions in the times of COVID-19

## **BANGLADESH**

Bangladesh's Ministry of Primary and Mass Education strategized and launched the 'COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan' in May 2020. It is a three-phase programme spanning a two-year timeline.

### **Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has formulated a shortened syllabus that could be completed within 60 or 80 working days for the Senior and High school certificate candidates, respectively, in 2021
- ▶ NCTB has provided another plan on providing education to first graders on 11 selected topics from all subjects to recover some academic losses of 2020<sup>18</sup>

### **Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ Learning content for remote learning is being developed by four distinct groups, and this has been made available through different platforms: Electronic Media Platform, Mobile Platform, Radio Platform and Internet Platform
- ▶ Under the Electronic Media Platform, state-run Shangshad Bangladesh Television has been broadcasting content from 29 March for Secondary, and from April 7 2020 for Primary. During the programme 'Ghore Bose Shikhi' ('Learning from Home'), lessons are being delivered on every subject for 20 minutes, from 2pm to 4pm every day. At the secondary level, 10 classes per day are televised on secondary general education, allocating 20 minutes for each class
- ▶ Primary school certification examination has been postponed for this academic year due to the coronavirus. However, performance of students on the homework assignments will be considered a part of the continuous assessment. As stated in a recent report, 'The government has summarized a thirty-day long syllabus and decided to evaluate students with assignment work for secondary school level. Students from Grade 6 to 9 collected their assignments from the TV lessons and the website of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), as well as from their current school'. (Mahmud, DasGupta & Kabir, 2021)

### **Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ Scarce internet facilities in rural areas; high cost of data packs; lack of digital devices; and lack of concentration and psychological pressure are a few of the challenges faced in implementation of online education (Mahmud, Das Gupta & Kabir, 2021; and Khan, Rahman & Islam, 2021)
- ▶ Insufficient knowledge of teachers in how to teach online; lengthy online sessions; monitoring of remote learning; teaching pre-primary children through online medium
- ▶ Liaising with ICT sectors/mobile network operators (MNOs) to bring down the cost of data packages and usage charges for educational purposes; and/or to secure free access to specific platforms/websites for learning
- ▶ Social media is utilized to minimize potential dropout, early marriage, or gender-based violence and to maintain student engagement with learning through various media; significant focus is placed on needs and interests of the most marginalized, especially girls, out-of-school children and children with disabilities

18 <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/education/2021/04/12/in-covid-19-education-is-prey-to-collateral-damage>

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- ▶ Current resources are being evaluated to extend support to children in need. Printed learning content may need to be developed for reaching the most marginalized learners who have no access to any of the four remote learning platforms, as well as exploring adaptations to internet-based platforms so they can run effectively on low-cost feature phones

#### **Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ Free-flow of knowledge through telecast of distant learning shows for schools
- ▶ Online training for teachers on pedagogy, content knowledge and supporting remote learning

#### **Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ Involving parents and community members by proactive messaging on different platforms, such as social media, to encourage them to ensure the continuity of education for the children and to help prevent children from dropping out of school
- ▶ Community awareness-building plans will be rolled out to ensure the inclusive re-enrollment of the maximum possible number of students at reopening
- ▶ Mass awareness campaign on health and safety in general and in specific case of COVID-19

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

The decision to send school children in Russia on a prolonged fall break wasn't taken at the federal level, but rather at the regional. In three regions, Moscow, Sakhalin, and the Ulyanovsk Region school children were sent on a two-week vacation due to outbreaks of the coronavirus. Russia's public health authority, Rospotrebnadzor, prepared the guidelines as to how schools should operate during the pandemic and the same rules were functional across the country since September 1.

#### **Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ Limiting physical contact by reducing social and extra-curricular activities<sup>19</sup>
- ▶ Classes were assigned a specific classroom, the children no longer travelled from class to class, instead their teachers come to them.

#### **Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ Online platforms, such as Russian online school, Yandex.textbook, Teach.ru, Yaklass, and Дневник.ру, has been made available for teachers, students and parents<sup>20</sup>
- ▶ An online marathon held called, 'Home Hour', via the Vkontakte social network
- ▶ Hotline to support regional ministries, schools and colleges in organizing distance learning
- ▶ Television programme, 'My School Online', consisting of online lessons and textbooks for secondary school pupils

#### **Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ Households where parents/guardians are unable to provide resources for participating in online education
- ▶ Digital divide
- ▶ Lack of infrastructure for online education

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19 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/managing-impact-covid-19-education-systems-around-world-how-countries-are-preparing>

20 Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/russia/brief/covid-19-response-learning-gaps-inequalities-russia>

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## JAPAN

Japan issued strategic guidelines in September 2020<sup>21</sup> to address the challenges in learning due to the global pandemic.

### **Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ The teaching of some learning content from a particular school year can be postponed by 1–2 years into the future

### **Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ The Ministry of Education and Technology (MEXT) is offering learning support videos on the one-stop 'Children Learning Support Website', and creating learning materials to help students retain what they learn
- ▶ High school entrance examinations are being administered with special guidelines that elaborate on the scope, content and type of examination depending on the region where being administered.

### **Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ During voluntary school closures in Japan, disadvantaged student populations have struggled to receive food and other social services<sup>22</sup>; as these children are from poor families, they depend on schools for their meal requirements
- ▶ About 1 in 20 Japanese children lack the amenities necessary for online learning, such as a quiet study space, a computer or textbooks
- ▶ Providing 'one computer per student' at the earliest possible time to ensure equitable and individually optimized learning; this is a part of the GIGA (Global and Innovative Gateway for All) school programme
- ▶ In some regions, the local government has been offering free school lunches to all public elementary and junior high school students to alleviate the financial burden placed on households by COVID-19<sup>23</sup>
- ▶ Special additional payments are made to help cover communication costs using existing subsidy programmes
- ▶ Supplementary instruction to children who have not yet fully retained the target content
- ▶ MEXT is also providing all elementary, junior high, and high schools nationwide with funding to support reopening in order to take quick, flexible countermeasures against COVID-19 and ensure quality learning
- ▶ Data packs provided at low costs

### **Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ Extending the valid period for teacher's licenses to help teachers focus on the learning of students
- ▶ Partial cancelation of yearly surveys for schools and commissioned projects by MEXT to ease teacher's workload

### **Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ Private companies provide free-of-cost digital devices to underprivileged sectors of society

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21 Available at [https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200904\\_mxt\\_kouhou01-000008961\\_1.pdf](https://www.mext.go.jp/en/content/20200904_mxt_kouhou01-000008961_1.pdf)

22 <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/impact-covid-19-education-inequality-japan>

23 <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/impact-covid-19-education-inequality-japan>

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## PHILIPPINES

Department of Education issued a 'Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan' (BE-LCP)<sup>24</sup> in June 2020 as a response to the pandemic. The BE-LCP aims to provide quality distance learning with the use of self-learning modules in digital and printed formats, radio, television and the internet.

### **Curricular modifications:**

- ▶ The K-to-12 curriculum has been streamlined into the 'Most Essential Learning Competencies' (MELCs). MELCs are defined as competencies (e.g. reading comprehension, research skills, map reading, and so forth) that a learner needs in order to continue to subsequent grades, as well as to have a successful life

### **Tools, delivery mode and criteria:**

- ▶ Learning delivery modalities include face-to-face interaction, modular distance learning, online distance learning, television/radio-based instruction, blended learning, and home-schooling. The choice of the modality for a particular group of learners and teachers depends on the COVID risk severity, school context (e.g. health status of teachers, readiness of school personnel to manage multiple learning modalities, etc.) and learner's context (e.g. capacity to complete self-directed learning resources, parental home and community support, access to technology and resources, etc.)
- ▶ Learning tools include self-learning modules in print and digital formats which are interactive in nature and comprise video, audio and sign language interpretation
- ▶ Portfolio/e-portfolio comprising samples of written and performance tasks will be prepared by the learners, and which teachers will assess using the rubrics. Both formative and summative assessments are to be conducted to ensure learning. Techniques for formative assessment have been suggested through synchronous and asynchronous mediums. Summative assessment will be implemented in the form of written work and performance tasks. All competencies should be covered by the performance and written tasks. Administration of national examination will continue amidst COVID-19

### **Challenges faced in the implementation:**

- ▶ Extending the reach of digital education for all children
- ▶ Assessment for remote learning is suggested through relevant strategies using high, medium or low forms of technology, depending on the person administering the assessment. Because remote learning is more viable in times of emergencies or health outbreaks, learners and their parents or guardians play a larger role in the assessment of learning
- ▶ Self-administered and parent- or guardian-assisted assessments are more likely in the face of limited teacher interaction and technological challenges
- ▶ Self-learning modules have been adapted for the CWSN. Adaptations such as closed captioning, transcribing to braille, sign language interpretation have been considered, as well. Implementers are encouraged to contextualise the MELCs in order to accommodate the varied contexts of learners, teachers, learning environments and support structures

### **Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:**

- ▶ Learning Action cell to provide administrative/technical advice and guidance
- ▶ Providing training to teachers to address learning needs of children at risk of learning discontinuity (e.g. children facing abuse and bullying, children in conflict affected areas, etc.), training on curricular requirements in terms of competencies and ensuring sound mental health of children amidst the pandemic

### **Contributions of the other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):**

- ▶ Participation of parents and guardians is suggested in implementing learning as well as assessment tasks

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24 Document available at [https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DepEd\\_LCP\\_July3.pdf](https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DepEd_LCP_July3.pdf)

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## VIET NAM

Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Viet Nam has taken various measures in response to the spread of the pandemic in their country.

### Curricular modifications:

- ▶ In the new curriculum proposed by MOET there were many new and positive points, with more active teaching methods, as well as richer and better teaching materials.
- ▶ Lessons were designed in a more open direction, which enabled students to expand their thinking in many directions and dimensions.
- ▶ Teachers were given the right to be proactive and flexible in their teaching plans.

### Tools, delivery mode and criteria:

- ▶ MOET has allowed provinces to conduct mass teaching via television and online teaching

### Challenges faced in the implementation:

- ▶ Difficulty in connecting with children in the mountains<sup>25</sup>
- ▶ Teachers are unfamiliar with child-friendly online teaching
- ▶ Families lack devices or sufficient numbers of devices, which often results in the favouring of boys' over girls' access to learning<sup>26</sup>

Ministry of Education and Training and private sector partners mapped learning gaps to increase connectivity, particularly for schools in rural and hard-to-access areas; provided tablets with WIFI for the hardest to reach, often ethnic minority boys and girls; produced online videos and learning aids for students and teachers that illustrated child-friendly, inclusive, and gender-sensitive best teaching practices; and organised virtual teacher training<sup>27</sup>

### Teacher's and head teacher's preparedness and support provided:

- ▶ Building knowledge and skills of teachers and school managers through virtual trainings on child-friendly approaches to online learning, and online classroom management. National Teacher Training College in Hanoi, in collaboration with other agencies are working to mainstream training on digital learning into regular pre- and in-service teacher training<sup>28</sup>

### Contributions of other stakeholders (parents, communities, organizations):

- ▶ The big internet operators are providing support to the education sector in the prevention and control of COVID-19 by offering free mobile data for students, teachers and parents when using the online training solutions announced by MOET facilitating education digitalization in Viet Nam<sup>29</sup>

## BHUTAN

The Bhutan Ministry of Education launched Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs) with the theme 'Reaching the Unreached', an alternative educational resource in print media for students who do not have access to the internet, Bulletin Board Service (BBS), and e-learning facilities. Education in Emergencies (EiE)

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25 <https://vietnam.fes.de/post/vietnam-covid-19-and-the-challenges-for-the-education-sector>

26 [https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7136/file/Case\\_Study%3A\\_Viet\\_Nam\\_%E2%80%93\\_The\\_digital\\_transformation\\_accelerated\\_by\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7136/file/Case_Study%3A_Viet_Nam_%E2%80%93_The_digital_transformation_accelerated_by_COVID-19.pdf)

27 [https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7136/file/Case\\_Study%3A\\_Viet\\_Nam\\_%E2%80%93\\_The\\_digital\\_transformation\\_accelerated\\_by\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7136/file/Case_Study%3A_Viet_Nam_%E2%80%93_The_digital_transformation_accelerated_by_COVID-19.pdf)

28 [https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7136/file/Case\\_Study%3A\\_Viet\\_Nam\\_%E2%80%93\\_The\\_digital\\_transformation\\_accelerated\\_by\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/7136/file/Case_Study%3A_Viet_Nam_%E2%80%93_The_digital_transformation_accelerated_by_COVID-19.pdf)

29 <https://vietnam.fes.de/post/vietnam-covid-19-and-the-challenges-for-the-education-sector>

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curriculum has been prepared at the ministry with the collaboration of Royal Education Council (REC), and the Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessments (BCSEA). It is implemented through various modes (broadcast media – television, radio; social media – WhatsApp, telegram, WeChat; online (YouTube, Google Classroom) and print media, according to grade and the availability of resources to reach all students. Formative assessments after every video/class; avoiding summative assessments, as it is not advisable to conduct standard examinations based on content covered via e-learning. Education Emergency Operation Centre (EEOC) for communication and online educational materials repository are established. Teachers and parents are oriented for the implementation of Education in Emergencies (EiE). New Normal Curriculum (NNC) is not just a mere response to the pandemic but a culmination of the curriculum reform work of the last four years by the Royal Education Council; it is an attempt to transform education from the teaching of ‘what’ to learning of ‘how’ and ‘why’, towards empowering learners with the transversal competencies and the twenty-first century skills necessary to facilitate deep learning and prepare students to be lifelong learners.

## **CAMBODIA**

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) has strategized many educational programmes covering different levels. The government’s Multilingual Education Action Plan (MEAP) helps in conducting multilingual educational radio programming for children in pre-primary and primary education (grades 1 through 3). The plan provides training for teachers, including study materials for further reference. The Department of Non-Formal Education of MoEYS expanded its network to communities across Cambodia, to identify multiple spaces, including factories, community learning centres and pagodas, where learners can gain access to the platform and receive support from nationally trained facilitators. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) made sure that additional training around mental health and psychosocial support was integrated into the Positive Parenting programme. The government has started digital and distance learning for early grade students, lower secondary students and out-of-school youth and factory workers through e-learning video lessons on television channels (e.g. Techo TV). The video lessons initially broadcast live on Krou Cambodia and KomarRienKomaCheh, the MoEYS’s official Facebook page for Early Grade Learning, will be available for download at MoEYS E-learning platform, MoEYS Facebook page, MoEYS Youtube Channel, phone applications of E-School Cambodia: EG1, EG2, and EG3, and the educational channel, TV Techo. The Basic Education Equivalency Programme (BEEP) on digital platform successfully provided an alternative learning platform for lower secondary school students and drop-out youth, and prepared them for further skills development. Given the COVID-19 situation, the BEEP platform, offering a wide range of subjects, including Khmer Language, Mathematics and English, was made public to strengthen distance learning for all Cambodian learners.

## **GUAM**

Schools have reopened as of 12 August 2021. Schools are following the guidance of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS); the GDOE is using layered safety and risk mitigation. The 10 key strategies being implemented at all schools include the following:

- ▶ Ensuring that employees and students stay home when sick
- ▶ Encouraging eligible individuals to be vaccinated
- ▶ Requiring the use of a face mask at school throughout the day
- ▶ Developing regular screening and testing of students and employees
- ▶ Promoting frequent hand washing
- ▶ Requiring frequent cleaning and disinfection
- ▶ Maximizing physical distancing wherever possible

- ▶ Ensuring proper respiratory etiquette
- ▶ Maximizing ventilation
- ▶ Conducting contact tracing for positive cases

## FIJI

With a total population of less than one million, the Ministry of Education launched its digital hub through which students and parents can access educational worksheets for use at home. (<https://learninghub.telecom.com.fj/home>)

## MONGOLIA

To facilitate students' continued studies, Mongolia's government has prepared online courses and tele-lessons in several languages, such as Mongolian, Kazakh, Tuvan and sign language, which are available to students, parents and teachers, and are being delivered on 16 different television channels. Since school closure, 480 online courses and 206 textbooks have been uploaded. All television lessons have been designed with sign language for hearing impaired learners, and bespoke lessons for those with intellectual disabilities have been created. It is generally expected that visually impaired children are able to learn by listening to the television lessons. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and teachers of special schools for visually impaired children have suggested the adoption of the 'Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY)' to improve the learning environment for visually impaired learners. DAISY is a world-wide standard for digital audio books for the visually impaired, or for those with a print-related disability. Teachers from the Institute for Teacher's Professional Development (ITPD) are trained to develop interactive learning content to supplement existing television-based lessons for children. There is a nationwide initiative to support parents on home-based learning during COVID-19, as well as help them prepare their children for school. There has been developed and distributed a student's workbook and a parent's guidebook targeting primary school children from herder families in remote areas. Teacher guidelines for remedial classes covering all core subjects, from pre-primary to upper secondary, are prepared. These classes have responded to children's feedback, aiming to reduce stress and anxiety, and allow students to ease back into their learning routines. To make remedial classes more effective, Mongolia has focused on core subjects deemed critical to the current academic year.

## NEW CALEDONIA

The New Caledonian education directorate arranged to help families assist the children at home during this period of non-attendance at school, through free access to the DENC website. The resources offered are of a fun nature, and they encourage parents to be with their children in situations that promote reflection, memory, commitment and the mobilization of learning outcomes. All these activities can be practiced within the family. Teachers are also instructed to include these activities in the activity books for the students. Éduscol is the educational support site of the Ministry of National Education for primary and secondary education. To help children understand the coronavirus, more than 50 organizations active in the humanitarian sector have joined forces to publish documents and videos regarding the school reopening measures.

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The National Department of Education (NDoE) launched the country's COVID-19 Education Emergency Response and Recovery Plan (EERRP), which help to sustain learning and inclusion during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan includes four phases:

- ▶ All students can continue remote learning safely
- ▶ All students and teachers can return safely to school
- ▶ All students are safe and learning
- ▶ The education system is more resilient to future disruptions

Establishment of an ICT platform offering online teaching and learning for nationwide daily television and radio broadcasts of lessons for primary and secondary school students. Government Tuition Fee Subsidy (GTFS) Policy, in which the government will pay 62% and parents will pay 38% of the tuition fees. Flexible Open Distance Education (FODE) is free in 2021, and those who wish to complete their education enroll at the nearest FODE Centre. A national 'back-to-school' campaign to promote student's return to school, and 'back-to-learning' incentive kits are created for students and teachers.

## LAO PDR

The village facilitators receive regular professional opportunities through monitoring and on-site coaching, which is supported by the District education office to ensure the quality of teaching-learning and the community's effective engagement. Community Learning Centers (CLCs) have also been providing non-formal education to out-of-school children who have been as affected by the pandemic as those in school. This includes a blend of using print, television, radio and online platforms to support continuity of learning, accompanied by support to teachers and parents/caregivers to facilitate learning at home. The Department of Teacher Education (DTE) has established centres to deliver teacher education in remote learning. Engagement of parents/guardians to support home-based learning; with the support of Development Partners, activities are developed, including routines and learning games shared to parents, along with additional learning materials, including tips for parents to support home-learning.

## NEW ZEALAND

The Ministry of Education has a 'Learning from Home' website that contains advice and a range of online resources, guidance and information for parents, students (*whānau*), teachers and leaders from early learning to senior secondary school, and booklet resources for learners at all levels to support learning at home. Different platforms from arts to technology were created to address all learners and teachers covering various subject areas. Te Kura Summer School offers learners (*ākonga*) the opportunity to achieve additional credits to attain a National Certificate in Educational Achievement NCEA, or a University Entrance award over the summer break. During the 2020 school year, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) developed templates to support schools and immersion schools (*kura*) to recognise learning that has occurred outside of school settings and is not part of a student's formal programme of learning. NZQA acknowledged that through extra-curricular learning, young people can develop capabilities and skills that align strongly with the vision and key competencies of the National Curriculum. Senior secondary students who helped out at home, worked part-time, or did unpaid volunteer work during the COVID-19 lockdown may be able to earn credits towards an NCEA for the skills they gained from these learning experiences. A mental health education and well-being resource for teachers has gone out nationwide to schools whose students are year 7 and above, including Teen Parent Units, Activity Centres, Alternative Education providers and Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Clusters.

## BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

When COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in early March 2020, the Government of His Majesty, the Sultan provided prudent policy and quick actions. As a result, the situation in Brunei was under control. Unlike most other countries, lockdown in the true sense was imposed in Brunei. The mode of teaching and learning was shifted to mainly online and home-based teaching and learning. Given that the end of



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the pandemic could not be predicated with certainty, Brunei MOE adopted a pragmatic and cautious policy. Based on the various backgrounds of the stakeholders (namely students and teachers) and varying situations, Brunei's education response to COVID-19 has been conducted in an integrated and collaborative manner, involving the collaboration of various industries and agencies in ensuring continuation of learning; collaboration is guided by the Ministry of Health.

## SINGAPORE

Home-Based Learning: Schools are to assist students who may require digital devices or internet access. The Singapore Student Learning Space (SLS) platform is to be accessible to students during the pandemic period. Blended Learning will be supported by the use of educational technology, such as the Singapore Student Learning Space, and by device provisioning under the National Digital Literacy Programme NDLP, whereby all secondary school students will own Personalised Learning Devices PLDs by end of 2021. The Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), People's Association (PA) and Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) are working together to set up a Child Development Account (CDA) led by the Uplifting Pupils in Life and Inspiring Families Taskforce (UPLIFT), an inter-agency taskforce to train about 400 outreach staff and volunteers, who are instrumental in reaching out to families. MOE increased the number of Education and Career Guidance Counsellors (ECGCs) to provide services to students who may face greater uncertainties due to the impact of COVID-19 on the economy.

## SOLOMON ISLANDS

In response to the global health pandemic, the Government of Solomon Islands has established a Joint Oversight Committee (OSC) under the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to provide strategic direction on a whole-of-government planning and response to COVID-19. This strategy especially responds to the education system needs and addresses the immediate challenges that COVID-19 represents to students, teachers, staff and communities the school closure, reopening, and health-related measures. A detailed plan is in place to provide implementation direction to ensure that the education system scales up quickly in the re-opening of schools, the enrolment of students, providing remedial measures, and having resurgence preparation and planning in place. Reimagine how the environment for education might evolve towards the achievement of the Government priorities, such as the Education Strategic Framework 2016–2030, the National Education Plan and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 with its related targets.

## TIMOR-LESTE

The country strives for equality of opportunity during the current emergency for all children, regardless of gender, location, socio-economic status, or linguistic background, including those with disabilities or from marginalized communities, so they have continuing access to educational opportunities. A 'School goes Home' (*Eskola Ba Uma*) initiative has been launched by the Ministry of Education, which relies on an open, distance- and flexible learning approach through the use of different technologies. The School goes Home' initiative comprises a series of dynamic school lessons based on the national curriculum, and broadcast on television, radio, and on an online platform. Target children include those from preschool to the 6th grade. A mobile app also been created for the initiative's delivery. Both media-based distance-learning opportunities and material learning kits are provided. Lafaek magazines are made available in households, and parents and youth receive targeted guidance on how to use Lafaek content to practice literacy and numeracy at home. Distribution of learning materials includes learning kits for pre-schoolers. A basic learning kit will be provided to each household with a child enrolled at pre-school.

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## CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated pre-existing challenges that the region of South and South-East Asia have been facing in terms of access and quality of education, and it has negatively impacted the education landscape in an unprecedented manner and scale. To respond to the rapid global spread of the pandemic, many countries have strategized 'action, response, and resilience' plans to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on their education systems.

As social distancing became requisite for containing the spread of the virus, closure of schools became the only viable option for safeguarding the health of the school-attending population. Presented with unique and sudden changes to school-based education systems, countries adopted various strategies to ensure that learning continued without major further disruption. Shifting to multiple platforms and modalities relating to online, distance- and digital teaching and learning have emerged as a foundational effort made by regional countries to support learners and teachers. Such interventions may become potential starting points to evolve beyond teacher-led classrooms and rote learning methods that dominate the education systems in a majority of countries in this region. National level, inter-agency/inter-departmental coordination and support from the private telecom and EdTech sectors has helped create the basic necessary infrastructure for teachers and students to connect and access various teaching-learning resources.

While pandemic has presented the South and South-East Asia region with opportunities for the digitization of education, and for making new efforts towards providing equitable education for all sectors of society, it has also highlighted persistent gaps in the education systems of the countries of the region, and proportional loss due to COVID-19 school closures. Nevertheless, efforts in the direction of achieving learning outcome continue amidst the challenges of the digital divide in society, reaching out to vulnerable populations of children, such as out-of-school children, girls, underprivileged children and children with special needs continues.

The domain of education is not unidimensional, and aspects relating to the mental, social and financial well-being of the family have direct impacts on the opportunities available for learning. Countries in the region should make concerted and concrete efforts to strengthen the social safety net that learning represents for children, by focusing on domains such as adult literacy, employment, skill enhancement and health so that the human development index shows gradual improvement.<sup>30</sup> Parents and community together must become an integral part of the education of children, and they should be enabled to provide proper support, especially in terms of increasing the access of children to digital means of learning and communication. Some recommendations for future action are suggested below:

### Policy perspectives

- ▶ **Education in emergencies:** Every country should frame certain guidelines with protocols on handling any emergency situation so that learning will never cease. This requires changes in the curriculum, or additions of elements related to actions taken during emergencies. There should be a requirement that policies leave no one behind, and enable everyone to be capable of handling unforeseen crises or helping out the education community in emergency circumstances.
- ▶ **Parental education:** As teaching and learning are transpiring via distance modalities, the responsibility for monitoring children's learning is placed largely on parents. In anticipation of this scenario, there should be a requirement for parental education in how to effectively monitor their children's learning. For lower socio-economic communities with lower literacy rates, adult education plays an especially important role in such circumstances.

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30 <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2434/South-Asia.html>

## Classroom Practices

- ▶ **Online learning:** In most of the region's countries, there is a shift to home-based learning and online learning. Many materials are uploaded on online platforms: textbooks, worksheets, video lessons, posters, and so forth. Online teaching is conducted via television programmes, radio programmes, social media sites, such as YouTube and Facebook, among others.
- ▶ **Formative assessments:** As much, if not most learning is happening online, formative assessments play a major role in understanding learning progress. Different forms of multiple-choice questions (MCQs), small answer questions, quizzes and self- and peer-assessment methods should be included after every lesson, group discussions, or other learning experience.
- ▶ **Child-centered learning:** As learning is happening in distance mode, teaching should be appropriate to the learner. The learner should engage with content; hence the materials developed for these purposes must be child centric. Multilingual education can also encourage children's better comprehension of lessons and supporting materials.
- ▶ **Inclusivity and Equity:** Education systems have predominantly focused on equity in access and participation; flexible strategies can further scale up this equity in learning. There is a need to bridge learning gaps, and technological tools can help to diagnose these gaps, identify students in need of specific attention, and improve the teaching and learning experience for these student populations.

## Teacher Training – Pre-service and In-service

- ▶ There is an utmost urgency for in-service teacher training to skill up teacher's capacities for managing the 'new education normal'. Teachers need to be trained in creating effective digital content, and in shifting their teaching methods to online or blended modalities. Teachers should also be trained in broadcasting their own lessons. Effective communication is an additional element in online/digital teaching and learning, where all students need to be connected among themselves as well as with their teachers.

## Involving the Community

- ▶ **Community-Based School Readiness (CBSR) Programme:** Village facilitators can regularly participate in professional development opportunities through monitoring and on-site coaching supported by district education offices to ensure the quality of teaching offered, and the community's degree of engagement.
- ▶ **Community Learning Centers (CLCs)** can provide non-formal education to out-of-school children who have been as affected by the pandemic as those who are in school. This could include utilizing a blend of print, television, radio, mobile app and other online platforms to support continuity of learning, accompanied by support provided to teachers and parents or caregivers so all education stakeholders can facilitate children's learning at home.
- ▶ **Engaging parents/guardians** to support home-based learning: with the support of non-governmental development partners, learning activities can be developed, including learning routines and games shared and carried out with parents, along with additional learning materials, including guidance and useful tips for parents to support effective home-based learning of their children.

Published in 2021 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France and UNESCO Bangkok Office

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TH/DOC/IQE/21/057

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## Stay in touch

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