



Provide continuous support to teachers, learners, and their families

IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs



Professional and social support for teachers, learners, and their families is an important part of education's response to a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Support needs to be appropriate, effective, and ongoing to ensure that learning continues and that the post-crisis recovery is, in turn, as straightforward as possible.

Even if countries already have a contingency plan for the education sector, the reminders here may be helpful.

1. Support, and collaborate with, education stakeholders

In times of crisis, [continuous support](#) should be provided to education stakeholders, including teachers, students, and families, as well as school principals, district education officers, educational supervisors, and pedagogical advisers. Below are some suggestions.

Collaborate with education stakeholders:

- Encourage school leaders to establish local crisis-response teams and communication mechanisms to produce daily updates on the local situation and on context-based needs.
- Enhance school-to-school collaboration initiatives.
- Build knowledge-sharing communities to aid collaboration and motivation among school leaders, teachers, parents, and students.

Support and motivate teachers (and other education personnel):

- Provide continuing [guidance and training/information sessions to teachers](#) throughout the crisis, for example relating to open and distance learning solutions as well as the relevant competencies.
- Consider establishing teacher resource centres.
- Provide teaching materials on topics related to the crisis, for example disease prevention and [health education](#).
- Encourage teachers to get involved in the decision-making process.
- Build collaborative communities among teachers at a local, national, and even international level.

Support students:

- Support learners in the use of open and distance learning solutions.
- Make [accurate and age-appropriate information](#) about COVID-19 readily accessible to students, including details of safety measures and good health practices.
- Provide students with regular updates on the impact of the crisis on their schooling, for example [evaluation processes, achievement targets, curricula, exams](#).

- Help students to process their feelings and concerns about the crisis and to cope with its effects on their lives.
- Ensure that efficient and sufficient child protection mechanisms are in place throughout the crisis, by cooperating closely with school leaders, teachers, local-level education stakeholders, and other ministries.

Support parents and the wider school community:

- Communicate and work with families and community members for the duration of the crisis. In this regard, school leaders, parent–teacher associations, school management committees, and local elected authorities can play a major role.

2. Develop partnerships with NGOs, CSOs, and private actors to support vulnerable students

School closures during crises may pose serious challenges for vulnerable students, such as [students with disabilities and special needs](#), girls, and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In order to provide rapid, context-adapted solutions to meet the specific needs of at-risk populations, MoEs can explore and develop partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), private actors, and others.

MoEs may find that crises exacerbate gender inequalities. For instance, the negative impacts of intensive household chores, the obligation to care for younger siblings, and gender-based violence can [affect girls disproportionately](#), particularly their welfare and their home learning. It is thus essential to tackle gender issues, which may arise both during and after the crisis, and to provide an inclusive, gender-responsive solution with the help of NGOs, CSOs, and private actors. Several recommendations are provided here for education authorities looking to minimize the impact of crises on disadvantaged or marginalized groups.

Consider the specific needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations:

- Offer solutions that meet the needs of children with disabilities. For instance, MoEs might look into the provision of specific services and therapies remotely (such as tele-therapy).
- Ensure that school feeding programmes are continued and adapted to current circumstances. Where possible, education authorities could implement take-home rations or cash transfers. Although many children benefit from school meals, it is essential in the short term to prioritize the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, especially girls.
- Develop partnerships with different actors working in the information and communication technologies (ICTs) sector, including private actors, to ensure that at-risk groups have access to technological open and distance learning solutions. This might involve distributing smartphones or providing access to 3G/4G Internet connections.

3. Ensure medical and psychosocial support to school communities

It is essential to support the physical and psychosocial needs of educators and learners during a crisis.

- Monitor the physical, medical, and mental wellbeing of education personnel.

- Look out for teachers who have suffered stress, and provide appropriate support mechanisms during and after the crisis.
- Help teachers and parents to monitor children and identify those who may be experiencing particular difficulties due to the crisis.
- Implement pedagogical training on the psychosocial impact of the crisis.

References:

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Access to all IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs:

<http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/five-steps-support-education-all-time-covid-19>