



# Provide hygiene and health education

IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs



When schools are closed because of an epidemic or pandemic crisis like COVID-19, it is important to continue to provide specific [hygiene and health education](#). Students need to understand how to [prevent or reduce the spread of the disease](#) in their immediate environment, but they also need to learn about the mechanisms of diseases and epidemics more broadly.

Below are four suggestions that education authorities might find helpful when planning health education in the face of an epidemic crisis.

## 1. Coordinate responses with other stakeholders

An effective education response to an epidemic requires coordination, bringing together the strengths and expertise of all partners. Aside from the ministry of education (MoE), the actors involved might include the following:

- Ministries (particularly the ministry of health) for technical expertise.
- Education stakeholders (e.g. teachers, teachers' unions, parent-teacher associations) for greater commitment and buy-in to the implementation of the response.
- International development partners for policy development, standard-setting, and norms.
- Regional and national development partners for improved coordination and use of available resources.
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community and faith-based organizations, for understanding of the local context and increased community mobilization and buy-in.
- The private sector, for financial resources and strategic expertise.

Here follow several suggestions for MoEs.

- Identify, and coordinate with, all partners who can inform and improve the education response to the epidemic.
- Work with local NGOs and community and faith-based organizations to identify children most in need of health education, as well as to reinforce hygiene messages within the community.
- Monitor the actions and impact of all partnerships, and adjust them as necessary.

## 2. Review the available health and hygiene learning materials

Teaching and learning materials about public and individual health and hygiene need to be not only available to educators and students but also adapted to the current crisis in terms of content and accessibility.

- Check that all teaching and learning materials include practical, easy-to-understand messages about protecting oneself and others from the epidemic.

- Assemble expert groups to review the curriculum and ensure that content is scientifically accurate, age-appropriate, adapted to the local context and current situation, and available in local languages.
- Provide [training to help teachers](#) deliver age-appropriate messages.
- Ensure that child-friendly materials are available through educational channels.

### 3. Deliver health education programmes

Government health education programmes can play an important role in an epidemic crisis. There are several ways for MoEs to get involved.

- Establish a joint working group to prepare best-practice guidelines for health education providers.
- Facilitate or conduct health education campaigns, designed in collaboration with community members and teachers.
- Work with national radio and TV broadcasters, Internet providers, and mobile phone companies to deliver health education programmes in different formats.

### 4. Prepare strategies to deal with abuse and violence during confinement

Alongside policies to combat stigma, [violence, and bullying](#), it may be useful to develop specific strategies to address problems arising from the unique practical measures taken to combat an epidemic. General population confinement might be a necessary step to halt the spread of disease, but it can have other negative consequences for those confined to their homes. Education authorities can help mitigate the risk.

- Work with families and communities to support children during confinement, particularly those who may be [vulnerable to abuse and violence](#).
- Offer guidance to students and families about the safe use of screens and online tools in order to preserve student well-being and mental health as well as to protect minors from online threats.

#### References:

- Attawell, K. 2008. [Partnerships in practice: Good policy and practice in HIV & AIDS and education](#). Booklet 4. Paris: UNESCO.
- Caillods, F.; Kelly, M.; Tournier, B. 2008. [HIV and AIDS: Challenges and approaches within the education sector](#). Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- Carron, G.; Mahshi, K.; De Grauwe, A.; Gay, D.; Choudhuri, S. 2010. [Strategic planning: Organizational arrangements](#). Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- Global Business Coalition for Education. 2014. [Ebola emergency: Restoring education, creating safe schools and preventing a long-term crisis](#).
- IIEP-UNESCO. 2010. [Guidebook for planning education in emergencies and reconstruction](#). Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- Reimers, F.M.; Schleicher, A. 2020. [A framework to guide an education response to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020](#). OECD.
- UNICEF. 2020a. [Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#). New York, NY: UNICEF.
- UNICEF. 2020b. [How teachers can talk to children about coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#).
- UNICEF; WHO; IFRC. 2020. [Guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools](#). New York, NY: UNICEF.

World Bank. 2020. [Guidance Note on Education Systems' Response to COVID19](#). World Bank.

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

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