

Impact of COVID-19 on Education:

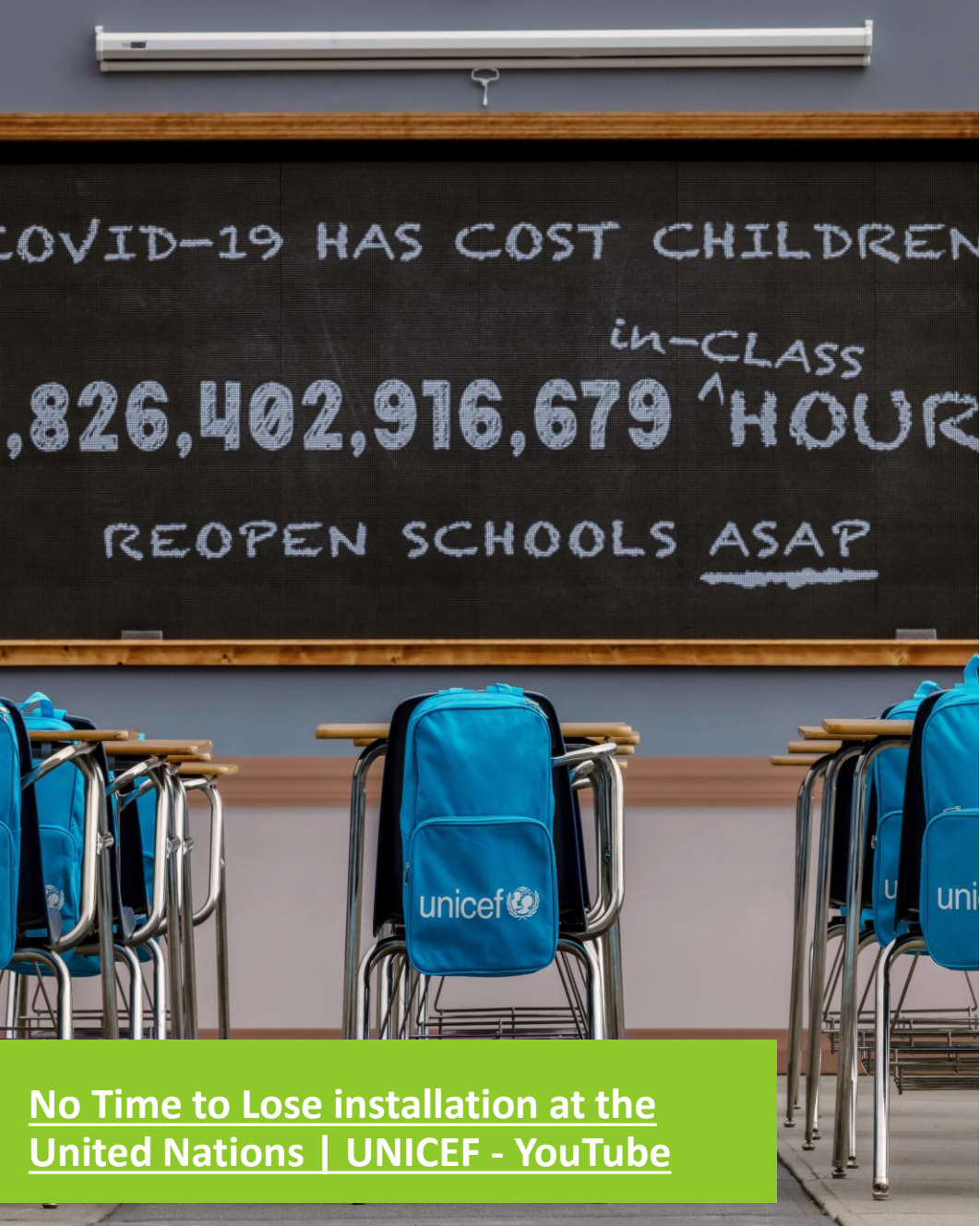
Tools, Lessons Learned, and Ethical Considerations for reopening schools

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REPENSAR LA EDUCACIÓN EN
TIEMPOS DE INCERTIDUMBRE.
APRENDIZAJES Y RETOS.

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A photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, several blue UNICEF backpacks are hanging on metal chairs. In the background, a chalkboard has the following text written on it: "COVID-19 HAS COST CHILDREN", "in-CLASS", "826,402,916,679 ^HOUR", and "REOPEN SCHOOLS ASAP".

COVID-19 HAS COST CHILDREN
in-CLASS
826,402,916,679 ^HOUR
REOPEN SCHOOLS ASAP

No Time to Lose installation at the
United Nations | UNICEF - YouTube

*“We are short-changing
an entire generation
whose minds and
futures hang in the
balance. We must
prioritize the reopening
of schools and support
those who have lost out
during the pandemic.
There is no time to
lose.”*

*Antonio Guterres, Secretary
General of the United
Nations*

Impact of COVID-19 on Education

Since then, **recent evidence suggests children and schools are not the main drivers of the epidemic across countries. There is also no known evidence on the correlation between the rate of disease transmission and whether or not schools remain open or closed.**

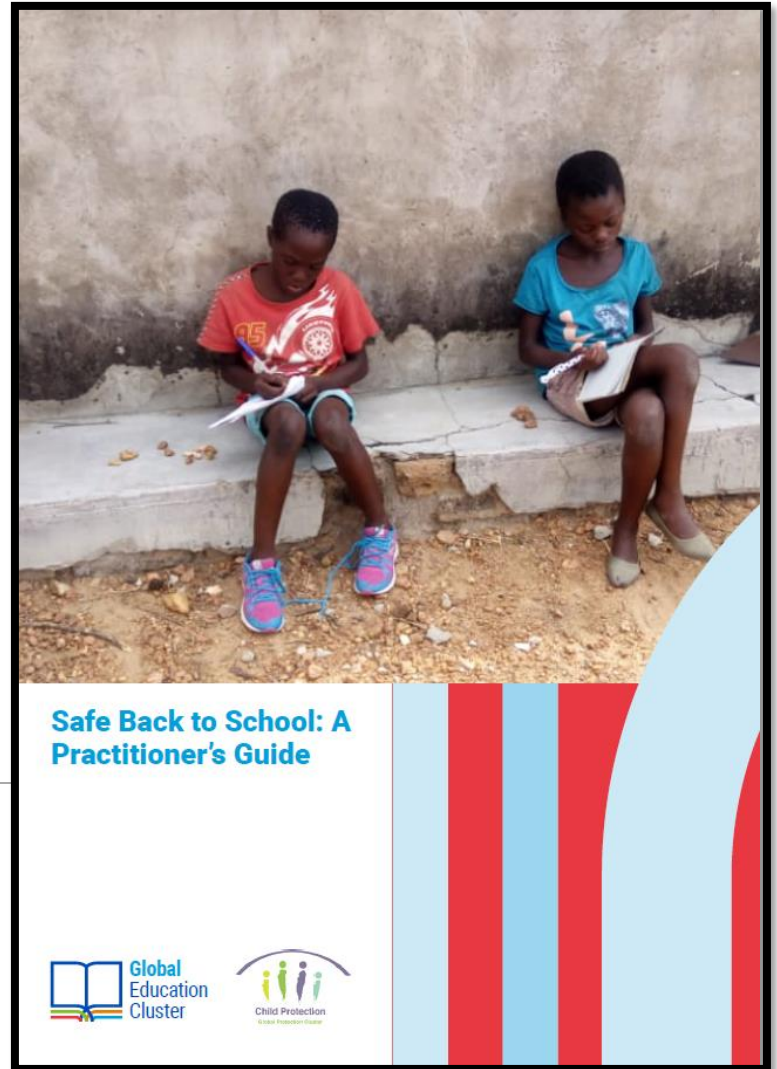
Evidence on the negative impacts of school closures on children's learning, safety, health and wellbeing is overwhelming. The longer children are out of school, the greater their exposure to physical, emotional and sexual violence, exploitation and abuse. Prolonged time out of education increases children's vulnerability to child labour.

As countries prepare to ease their lockdowns, they must prioritize schools in their re-opening plans – for the sake of children, but also for the sake of the economy. **The best interest of every child should be paramount.**

Key Messages

- UNICEF calls on governments to **prioritise reopening schools** and to take all possible measures to reopen safely.
- **School closures have devastating consequences**, with marginalised children paying the heaviest price.
- Without **urgent action and increased investment**, a learning crisis could turn into a learning catastrophe.
- When governments decide to keep schools closed, they must **scale up remote learning opportunities** for all children.

Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide



Safe Back to School Guide Overview

Checklists

1. Integrated Safe Back-to-School Checklist for Program Staff: 6-pager providing key actions for **Health, Nutrition, WASH, M&E, Education and Child Protection/MHPSS** sectors before and after schools reopen to ensure sectoral integration the school reopening process.
2. School-Friendly Safe Back-to-School Checklist: 2-pager providing top line actions for a head teacher or school committee to follow.



Technical Annexes

1. Participatory, **inclusive** back-to-school campaigns
2. **EdTech** for absentee management systems
3. **Enable teachers** in the transition back to school
4. **MHPSS** for children as schools reopen
5. Participatory education and continuity planning
6. Adaptations for camp settings
7. **Advocacy** messages
8. Key considerations for Early Childhood Development (forthcoming)

Key Principles for Safe Back to School

1. An integrated approach
2. Child & youth participation
3. Gender, inclusion, and accessibility
4. Whole school community
5. Build on existing structures
6. Build back resilient





Integrated Safe Back- to-School Checklist for Program Staff

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

Monitoring and Evaluation

Before Schools Reopen:

- ❑ **Engage the whole community, including children and young people, in back-to school planning and campaigns using participatory methods**
 - ❑ Use this Checklist to develop a participatory Safe Back to School monitoring tool to track progress with the whole school community. This can also be used to aggregate progress on reopening at district or national levels.

After Schools Reopen:

- ❑ **Conduct needs and gender assessment using participatory methods**
 - ❑ Conduct a rapid needs assessment on the education, CP/MHPSS, WASH and H&N needs now that schools have reopened. Assess how much children and young people continued learning during school closures and what support is needed to return to school.
- ❑ **Refresh or establish accessible, gender and age-friendly accountability and feedback mechanisms**

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

HEALTH/NUTRITION & WASH

Before Schools Reopen:

- ☐ Clean and disinfect the school facilities with emphasis on surfaces that are touched by many people
- ☐ Engage whole school community in cleaning and maintenance for school reopening

After Schools Reopen:

- ☐ Ensure that cleaning and disinfection measures are effective and regular
 - ☐ Encourage equal sharing of water sourcing and cleaning tasks between women and men.
- ☐ Educate children and young people about good hygiene, health, nutrition and menstrual hygiene
- ☐ Increase air flow and ventilation

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

HEALTH – Guideline Overview

Objectives of Public Health are well highlighted in the guideline:

Prevent transmission ⇔ Care for those infected ⇔ Mitigate impact of pandemic
Concept of “whole School Community ” very important as it highlights Multisectoral approach ⇔ Integration (no stand alone action) ⇔ Participation (students not passive beneficiaries)

- ➔ Hygiene and sanitation: need to motivate, train, equip (PPEs, disinfectants)
- ➔ Coordination: Designate formally a focal point for school health within COVID 19 coordination platform at all levels, including at field levels
School to attend COVID meetings and include an agenda

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

HEALTH – Guideline Key Points

- **Risk Communication and Community empowerment:** awareness materials adapted to children
- Properly equip schools based on government school health facility standards.
- Stock schools with **first aid kits, including PPE, thermometers and rubbing alcohol for cleaning thermometers.**
- Orient and train, give information on existing services and facilities
- Establish proper **recording and reporting of COVID-19** cases and other health information management, as recommended by governments
- **Connect schools with health facility for referrals**
- Identify temporary isolation areas for children/school staff who may be infected to safely wait before receiving care.

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

NUTRITION - Safe Food Preparation

- Where school meals or snacks were provided before schools closed, plan to restart provision as soon as possible. Due to COVID-19 many families need regular access to healthy meals as a matter of urgency. Where on-site distribution is not feasible, **consider providing or increasing take-home rations**.
- Procure nutrient-enhanced school feeding supplies if nutritional status of children and young people has significantly dropped.
- Plan to reopen school canteens to keep children and young people and staff safe: i.e. reduced capacity, protection measures for staff (see WFP/ FAO/UNICEF guidance, pages 7-8), staggered lunch hours, and hand washing before and after.
- Ensure that school canteens have safe water supply for drinking and hygiene, drinking water stations, handwashing facilities/stations with soap nearby, and proper waste disposal measures (e.g. trash bins, proper drainage).

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

EDUCATION

Before Schools Reopen:

- ☐ Prepare school for physical distancing in, around, and on the way to schools
- ☐ Take action to ensure all children and young people return to school, prioritizing the most vulnerable
- ☐ Support school personnel well-being and train teachers on key topics and pedagogy to ensure a safe, quality return to school (see Technical Annex 3)

After Schools Reopen:

- ☐ Prioritize psychosocial support and socio-emotional learning activities in the reopening period
 - ☐ Include basic MHPSS or SEL activities into daily classroom routine (see Technical Annex 5)
- ☐ Identify additional learning needs (see Technical Annex 3)
- ☐ Prepare for recurring or future school closures

Safe Back-to-School Checklist

CHILD PROTECTION/ MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS)

Before Schools Reopen:

- ☐ **Prepare teachers and education personnel to meet the psychosocial and protection needs of children and young people and to manage their own health and wellbeing (see Technical Annex 3)**
- ☐ **Update/establish effective referral mechanisms**
 - ☐ Update school-based reporting and referral mechanisms for protection and health concerns, ensuring they are gender-sensitive, inclusive and age-appropriate adapted for COVID context if necessary. Test communication channels.
- ☐ **Organize with child protection case workers and/or social workers to support school reopening**

After Schools Reopen:

- ☐ **Ensure psychosocial support for children and young people, prioritizing girls and other vulnerable groups (see Technical Annex 4)**
 - ☐ Identify children and young people in high distress and/or with mental health conditions and refer them to specialized services. Coordination of MHPSS activities and referrals across sectors, including Education, CP and Health, is coordinated by MHPSS Technical Working Groups (where they exist) at country level).

School-Friendly Safe Back-to-School Checklist

A tool for school management to plan the safe reopening of the school

STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE REOPENING

- Contact local, subnational, or national authorities to receive guidance on:
 - School reopening protocols and support available (i.e., hygiene materials and PPE)
 - Support available for attracting additional teachers in case teachers do not return or more are needed to follow physical distancing rules
 - Changes to assessments or curriculum as a result of COVID-19
 - Plans to support learners who have fallen behind when school was closed (i.e., remedial classes, catch-up classes, accelerated learning classes, reading clubs, social-emotional learning)
- Receive authorization of Ministry of Education to reopen school.
- Clean/disinfect entire school. Use extra care if school was used as a quarantine facility, health center or for other purposes during school closure.
- Have necessary water and sanitation infrastructure available (gender-separated toilets/handwashing stations).
- Have enough hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies available: hygiene kits, cleaning materials, disinfectants, soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, masks, gloves, etc.
- Ensure transportation to and from school (if pre-existing) meets physical distancing requirements.
- Share appropriate information on COVID-19 and good hygiene practices in different formats in classrooms, hallways, and canteens so that children and young people with and without disabilities can understand (i.e., posters, songs)
- Make signs with age-friendly illustrations to show children and young people how to enter/exit school and move within the school according to physical distancing rules.
- Agree on a distance learning program if students will access schools only in turns/shifts.
- Establish protocols for safe food preparation and service. Include handwashing, staggering lunch shifts, sanitizing canteen, training for food handling, and sanitizing cookware, plates, utensils, and cups.
- Establish protocol for teachers and school management when they identify a student or colleague who displays symptoms of COVID-19 (i.e. temporary isolation locations in school, referral to health services).
- Establish a system to monitor absenteeism and drop-out, disaggregated by gender, age and vulnerability criteria to flag and analyse

**School-Friendly
Safe Back-to-
School Checklist
for Head
Teachers or
School
Committees**

UNICEF 5 key Lessons Learned on COVID-19: School reopening and recovery

1) Leadership and co-ordination:

Strong and effective leadership and coordination at national, subnational and school level are all important to the success of reopening of schools.

Joint advocacy like in Sri Lanka and **creation of inter-ministerial task forces** help with effectiveness of school reopening policies and implementation of infection prevention and control measures in schools.

UNICEF 5 key Lessons Learned on COVID-19: School reopening and recovery

2) Teacher engagement

The **involvement of teachers in the planning and implementation of reopening schools** adds to the success. **Meaningful participation helps enforce health protocols.** Engaging with **teacher unions and fostering communication networks** and feedback channels amongst **teachers, school directors, students and families** are reportedly beneficial. **Supporting teachers with their wellbeing** and providing simple guidance to identify at-risk children are equally important.

UNICEF 5 key Lessons Learned on COVID-19: School reopening and recovery

3) Spotlight on marginalized, excluded children

Several countries have made specific efforts to reach **adolescent girls** like in Madagascar, **children with disabilities**, **refugee learners** and **children on the move**, **younger children**, and children **from ethnic minority groups**. Some countries are encouraging re-enrollment through offering financial and practical assistance to the most at-risk students. For example, **Burkina Faso** is offering scholarships, school kits, and meals for the most vulnerable. **Turkey** outreach to refugees

UNICEF 5 key Lessons Learned on COVID-19: School reopening and recovery

4) Providing tools/“know-how” and data

Comprehensive school reopening strategies should be based on **interrelated pillars** including **packages for addressing cognitive and socio-emotional well-being**; remedial and **enhancement programs** for students and teachers, and **early warning systems to monitor-enrolment** and identify **students at risk of dropout**, and/or provide targeted outreach for school reopening.

Data should also include identifying learning needs through provision of learning or diagnostic assessments so that target dinststruction and remedial actions and modification of pedagogy can be taken.

UNICEF 5 key Lessons Learned on COVID-19: School reopening and recovery

5) Innovation

With the acceleration of innovative approaches to support continuity of education during school closures, **lessons show these experiences can be beneficial as schools reopen**, like in **South Africa**, providing **new resources and pedagogies for teachers**, different abilities to reach the most marginalized and reimaging education for children and adolescents. Case studies from **Uruguay and Jordan** demonstrate how **innovative approaches are being integrated into the education system** as they reopen.

Ethical Considerations In Deciding When To Reopen Schools

Article by William J. Hawk a, Frederick Spielberg ,
Everett Ressler, Pilar Aguilar, 2021

International Journal of Education Development:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/international-journal-of-educational-development/special-issue/10F5BXLHQ5H>

Ethical Considerations In Deciding When To Reopen Schools

*“Decision makers, tasked with considering complex public health, education, and logistical nightmares, confront a daunting array of numbers, statistics, and variables. We propose an ethical reasoning strategy – asking the Eight Key Questions – as a way to sift through complicated **issues by focusing on the underlying moral values that are at stake**”.*

Ethical Considerations In Deciding When To Reopen Schools

- **Fairness:** Is the decision fair – just, equitable, does it balance all interests?
- **Outcomes:** What actions achieve the best outcomes (short- and long-term) for everyone?
- **Responsibilities:** What responsibilities (duties or obligations) apply?
- **Character:** What actions express a personal or corporate ideal?
- **Liberty:** What actions best respect the autonomy, integrity, dignity and choice of all involved?
- **Empathy:** Do the actions reflect empathy and care for all parties?
- **Authority:** What legitimate authority should be considered?
- **Rights:** What rights, if any, apply?

A young girl with dark hair in two pigtails, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue denim overalls, stands with her back to the camera in a classroom. She is looking at a green chalkboard decorated with colorful cutouts of apples (containing letters W, E, L, M, E), stars, and balloons. Above the chalkboard, the numbers 1 through 10 and the vowels A, E, I, O, U are painted in various colors. To the right of the chalkboard, a sign reads 'Rincón de Artes' (Arts Corner). The classroom has wooden desks and blue chairs. A green banner with the text 'Thank You!' is overlaid on the bottom left.

Thank You!