REGIONAL BUREAU FOR **WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA** **EDUCATION** NEWSLETTER

Refugee students in Chad receiving equipment for their COVID-19 awareness campaign

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COVID-19: Preparing for the reopening of schools

Nationwide closures in West and Central Africa are impacting **140 million children** across the region, including forcibly displaced children who are integrated in national education systems in all the countries.

The negative outcomes of prolonged school closures are likely to **disproportionately impact displaced children**, who not only see their education interrupted but also lose the safety offered by a school and get exposed to a higher risk of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation. The longer marginalized children are out of school, the less likely they are to return.

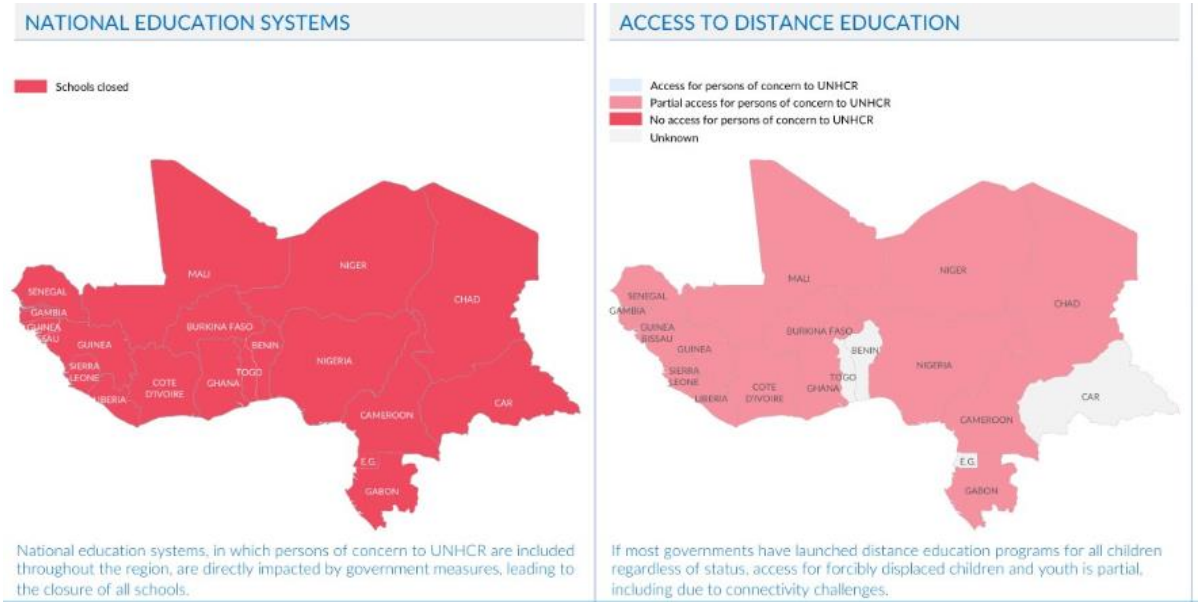
In many countries of the region, **remote learning is a luxury** because it assumes access to technology hardware (computers and tablets) and internet connectivity. According to UNESCO, in Sub-Saharan Africa, 89% of learners do not have access to home computers and 82% do not have internet. This has sometimes led to a rejection of distance education, a cruel indicator of the digital divide, by parents and teachers (see articles pages 3-4).

In this context, many WCA countries are already **preparing for the reopening of schools**. While the uncertainty of duration of school closures require flexible scenarios, when deciding whether to reopen schools, authorities should conduct a context-specific benefits and risks analysis across education, public health and socio-economic factors. Centrality of protection (with regards to physical health, mental health and continuity of learning) should be considered before, during and after the reopening process.

To ensure the **continuity of learning** in a protective environment and to prepare for the **safe reopening of schools**, UNHCR is working with Ministries of Education and education partners to support students access to distance education programmes, enhance health training for teachers, support community awareness-raising activities on COVID-19 and basic prevention measures while upgrading water and sanitation facilities in schools (see country initiatives pages 2-3).

UNHCR'S EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS IN WCA

Impact of COVID-19 on displaced students' access to education in WCA



[BURKINA FASO - CHAD - MALI] Distance learning and WASH in schools for refugee, IDP and host community children

UNHCR has received emergency funding from Education Cannot Wait (ECW) through their First Emergency Response window dedicated to the COVID-19 response in Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali, to ensure pedagogical continuity but to also allow a safe return to school.

In Mali, UNHCR will distribute solar-powered radios to 11,000 refugee, internally displaced and host community children for distance education, equip 6 schools with new water points, and train 36 teachers in MHPSS and WASH.

©UNHCR/NIAVA
Teacher in Kounoungou camp

In Chad, UNHCR will strengthen WASH capacities in schools in camps and refugee sites with the construction of 127 latrines and 10 boreholes, the establishment of handwashing stations in each school, equipment, health training for teachers and community awareness activities.

In Burkina Faso, UNHCR will distribute radio sets to refugee learners, install COVID-specific handwashing facilities in schools, and train teachers in hygiene and health security. UNHCR has also made an in-kind donation to the region of the Sahel that includes the constructions of classes, latrines and administrative blocks for 4 schools in Dori.

[CAMEROON] 68 DAFI students receive iPads in Yaounde

In Cameroon, as part of the **DAFI program** activities, an awareness campaign on girls' secondary education in refugee camps was carried out with the support of Plan International and 68 tablets were offered to new scholarship recipients for the 2019-2020 academic year.

[CHAD] Sensibilization & Learning continuity

In the **refugee camps in eastern Chad**, where **100.000 refugee pupils** had to stop school due to COVID19, teachers are going the extra mile to provide students with homework exercises which are corrected each week, while in the south, provincial committees have set up distance learning programs such as radio lesson broadcasting.

In **urban areas**, home-tutoring is underway to help refugee learners prepare for the national examination. With UNHCR's support, awareness campaigns organized by refugee students continue and free English classes through WhatsApp will be launched with the participation of an English professor from the University of Central Florida.

EDUCATION IN THE NEWS: COVID-19 COUNTRY INITIATIVES

[REGION] The challenge of distance learning in West & Central Africa

In most countries in West and Central Africa, schools have closed to limit the spread of the Coronavirus. Distance education has become the rule and many initiatives have been put in place. But teachers must overcome a major difficulty: ensuring pedagogical continuity for all pupils, even for children who have no access to the Internet.

*Read the full article **here**.*

*Read also **At the time of the pandemic, 600 million young Africans are looking for school** and **Post-Covid-19: "Building the school of Africa's future"**.*

[BURKINA FASO] The resumption of classes is being organized

Burkina is preparing for the reopening of its schools. Obligatory wearing of a mask for students and teachers, handwashing devices and school disinfection are among the sanitary measures planned, but students are still worried about the possibility to respect physical distancing in overcrowded classrooms.

*Read the full article **here**. Read also **Faso prepares for the reopening of its schools**.*

[CAMEROON] The COVID-19 reveals the digital divide in the Cameroonian education system

The pandemic has exposed the digital divide in Cameroon. According to a recent survey by the Ministry of Basic Education, "only 20-25% of teachers in Cameroon have access to the internet, and most do not have ICT skills".

*Read the full article **here**.*

[GHANA] Ghana Learning TV teaches confined high school students

The Ghana Learning TV channel was launched on April 3 by the Ministry of Education for high school students in Ghana, confined since March 16. Math, science, English or social science, the Ghanaian Ministry of Education relies on TV to ensure continuity all day.

*Read the full article **here**.*

[MALI] Distance learning: Teachers boycott the project

Teachers' unions refute the government's distance learning project. Announced as a means of ensuring pedagogical continuity, the distance and online course project is stillborn. The actors without whom this continuity is not possible dissociate themselves from the project.

*Read the full article **here**.*

[NIGER] Without electricity or internet, teachers, parents and students united against distance education

Teacher unions are drawing the attention of the government to the risk of a breach of equality in the delivery of distance education: "the only solution to save the year is lessons where we have students and teachers in the classroom".

*Read the full article **here**.*

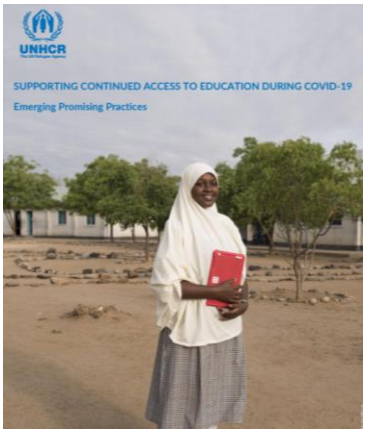
[SENEGAL] The good and bad points of distance learning

To cope with the pandemic, the Ministry of Education has set up an online education platform. But how many of the country's 3 million students, from kindergarten to high school, have access at home to adequate materials to continue their learning and to access this online education platform?

*Read the full article **here**.*

COVID-19 EDUCATION RESOURCES

[UNHCR] Promising practices to support continued access to education during COVID-19



Across the world, UNHCR operations have worked with governments and education partners to **ensure that disruptions to learning are minimised**. This document outlines the different actions taken by UNHCR operations that include community mobilisation and dissemination of information about available opportunities to refugee communities, the variety of efforts taken to support access to distance learning programmes, and efforts to ensure the continuity of support services such as cash-grants and teacher incentives.

*Download the document **here** and read UNHCR blog on **Connected Education**.*

[UNICEF] Research Brief: Promising practices for equitable remote learning

Using data on access to technology from household surveys and information on national education responses to school closures in over 120 countries, this brief explores potential **promising practices for equitable remote learning**.

*Download the document **here**.*

[ECW] COVID-19 and Education in Emergencies

Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies, launched a dedicated **First Emergency Response (FER)** to deploy urgent funding to respond to education needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

*Download the factsheet **here**.*

[GPE] COVID-19 Response

As the Coronavirus pandemic closed schools around the world, GPE is supporting partner countries with the **education response and recovery**.

*Read more about the GPE's COVID-19 response **here** and download the factsheet **here**.*

[WBG] Remote Learning, EdTech & COVID-19

This page attempts to curate **useful resources for the COVID-19 response** and publish related documents collected and prepared by the World Bank's EdTech team in support of national dialogues with policymakers around the world.

*Read the blog **here**.*

[UNESCO-UNICEF-WBG-WFP] Framework for reopening schools

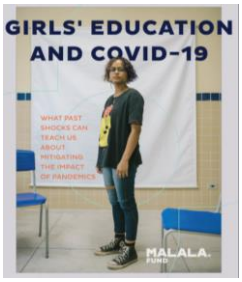
The framework aims to **inform the decision-making process regarding school reopening**, support national preparations and guide the implementation process, as part of overall public health and education planning processes. It is designed to be a flexible tool that can be adapted to each context and updated as the situation changes.

*Download the document **here**.*

[PLAN INT.] COVID-19 Impact on Girls

The COVID-19 outbreak will deeply affect the environment in which children and young people grow and develop, from the earliest years to late adolescence. **Girls, especially the most marginalised, will be particularly affected by the secondary impacts of the outbreak** due to harmful social norms and double discrimination based on age and gender.

*Download the brief **here**.*



[MALALA FUND] Girls' Education & COVID-19

Almost 90% of the world's countries have shut their schools in efforts to slow the transmission of COVID-19. While this will be a temporary hiatus for most students, Malala Fund's latest report reveals **the pandemic will have lasting effects for the most marginalised girls**.

Download the report here.

[ILO] COVID-19 and the education sector

Teachers have had to adapt to a world of almost universal distance education. Most teachers have embraced this challenge, although in many developing countries **teachers lack the skills and equipment to provide distance education effectively**. As governments consider reopening school as confinement measures are relaxed, the safety of learners and teachers should be paramount, and social distancing of learners, access to personal protective equipment, and regular virus testing will be key.

*Download the brief **here**.*

EVENTS & CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

[UNESCO] Call for cases: Innovative literacy learning and education for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons

UNESCO, with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), is conducting a global landscape study entitled **'From Radio to Artificial Intelligence: Innovative Literacy Learning and Education for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons'**. In preparation for the study, UNESCO invites stakeholders to submit promising case studies from around the world in which technology, ranging from low-tech to cutting-edge solutions, is effectively used to support these groups' literacy learning and education and contributes to their well-being and social integration.

The call is addressed to:

- individuals or organizations involved in the planning, delivery or evaluation of literacy learning and educational opportunities for refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons (IDPs);
- individuals or organizations using innovative tech solutions to address the unique learning challenges that refugees, migrants and IDPs are facing;
- individuals or organizations conducting academic research on the innovative use of technologies for literacy and language learning of these specific populations.

*Download the entire call **here**.*

CONTACTS

Charlotte Berquin, Education Officer
Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, Protection Service
berquin@unhcr.org

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