

REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WEST & CENTRAL AFRICA

EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



A refugee student taking her Baccalaureate exam in Chad. @UNHCR Chad

A school year coming to an end under the cloud of COVID-19

While all education experts agree that it is urgent and essential that children across the African continent return to school quickly and safely, education policy makers face the dual challenge of getting children back into school and planning for the long-term consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In West & Central Africa, there was an education crisis even before the coronavirus pandemic. The region has the lowest school enrolment rates in the world. Now, according to *Save the Children* latest report, **Save Our Education**, almost 10 million children worldwide may never return to school following Covid-19 lockdown - up to a third of them could be in West & Central Africa.

The tragedy for millions of children is that the COVID-19 crisis has come on top of an existing security crisis in the region, as countries across the Sahel were already hit by huge insecurities.

The Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Education in Africa, a research from *Human Rights Watch*, shows that school closures exacerbated existing inequalities, while UNICEF's **analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies** indicates that almost 50% of students in WCA were not reached by those policies.

Children living within the poorest and most marginalized communities are thus most at risk of never returning to school, especially refugee girls. Instead they face being forced into child marriage or child labour, and they are at increased risk of having unplanned pregnancies.

As stated in a **GPE Blog**, "*post-COVID education needs to rely on more sustainable and holistic measures that go beyond just accessing education, but also address the obstacles encountered by girls and young women in accessing quality education and completing the school cycle*".

UNHCR'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

[NIGER] Support a safe return to school



Installation of emergency classrooms in Ouallam. @UNHCR Niger

In Niger, schools have reopened since June 1 and UNHCR and its partners have supported this return by rehabilitating storm-damaged classrooms and installing **emergency classrooms** in the Tahoua and Tillabery regions, distributing **school kits** to primary and secondary refugee students, along with **teaching aid kits** for teachers who were forced to move after the attack on the Intikane camp and the destruction of the school.

To support students who were deprived of education during mandatory school closures prepare for the next school year, UNHCR's implementing partner, NRC, organized **catch-up classes** in the Maradi region. The program, which will last until September, started in July for 2,641 children, including 1,199 Nigerian refugees.

UNHCR also supported 100 Nigerian refugees enrolled in **distance secondary programme** - in order to keep pace with the Nigerian curriculum - to head back to Nigeria to sit for their exams.



Nigerian students taking the bus to cross the border and take their exams in Nigeria. @UNHCR Niger

Check out *UNHCR Niger education Dashboard (Jan-July 2020)* [here](#).

[CHAD] Organize end-of-year exams

In Chad, following the closure of all schools in the country since 19 March due to COVID-19, students who were preparing to take exams during the summer of 2020 returned to class on 25 June. Out of the 1,744 refugee students enrolled in the final year of lower secondary, 1,353 returned to classes, **a loss of 22%**. For the last year of upper secondary, 1,069 Baccalaureate candidates returned to class out of the 1,420 who were registered in March, **a loss of 25%**.



Refugee student taking the Baccalaureate exam in Farchana refugee camp. @UNHCR Chad

While all students should return to class in September, the statistics are already showing the **negative effects of COVID-19 on the schooling of refugee children**.



In August, UNHCR supported the organization of end-of year exams by creating, in collaboration with the Chadian government, a **Baccalaureate examination center in a refugee camp** (Farchana camp, Ouaddai province) to allow Chadian and refugee candidates to take their exams while respecting physical distancing measures.

A total of 1,209 refugees (57% of girls) sat for the national Baccalaureate and 1,866 for the Brevet (exam marking the end of lower secondary school).

Read *UNHCR Chad Flash Infos* [here](#).

[BURKINA FASO] Support distance learning over the radio

In Burkina Faso, 83 refugee students took part in the exam session for primary and secondary schools. Following the exams, which began on 14 July after being postponed for a month due to COVID-19, 342 radios were distributed to support distance learning by enabling children to access the Ministry of Education's national programme broadcast. In total, 4,000 portable solar radios were distributed to refugee and host community students. The radios and school kits that accompany them allow students to continue learning and to prepare for the upcoming school year.



Student receiving a radio for distance learning, after completing primary education. @UNHCR Burkina Faso

[GHANA] Prepare for the new the school year



Students receiving school kits in Ampain refugee camp. @UNHCR Ghana

Ahead of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in September, UNHCR has distributed school kits to refugee children and host community students who are in final year in Ampain and Krisan camps to help them preparing for their exams.

In preparation for the reopening of schools, UNHCR also provided refugee children enrolled in basic education with cash assistance (CBI) for the procurement of school uniforms. The exercise has taken off in all 4 camps with about 1,500 pupils expected to benefit.

[LIBERIA] Improve refugees access to distance learning solutions

Rising On Air is a free distance learning solution from Rising Academies. Founded in Sierra Leone in 2014 to provide emergency education to children kept out of school by the Ebola Epidemic, Rising uses high quality, structured curriculum content, redesigned for delivery via radio and SMS.



In Liberia, Rising on Air is an official contributor to the Ministry of Education and the Liberia National Radio Program that has been aired during the pandemic whilst schools were closed. Rising on Air are offering a) 20-week programme of free, open source, downloadable radio scripts and audio recordings to teach literacy and numeracy to K-12 learners in English, French, and Arabic; and b) wraparound content via SMS and phone for teachers and caregivers offering guidance to maximize the radio experience.



6th grade students in their classroom in Bahn refugee camp, Nimba country. @UNHCR Liberia

Through a new partnership with Rising On Air, UNHCR's objective is to provide additional support to refugee children in grades 6-9 and 12 who have returned to school and printable materials for 'take home' learning packages for grades 1 to 5 not due to return to classes until the New Year, in order to give the much needed support to the students and teachers whilst they navigate this pandemic.

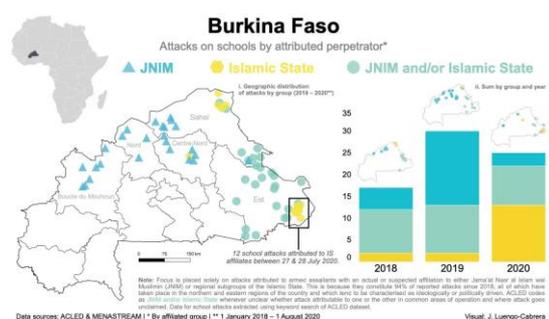
Learn more about Rising On Air [here](#).

EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK IN WCA

As schools gradually reopen in the region, **targeted attacks on education** continue in the many countries affected by insecurity (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Nigeria) and recent events even indicate an upward trend in these attacks.

In the **Sahel region**, schools are caught up in an armed conflict that continues to escalate and the impact of the twin scourges of COVID-19 and attacks on education threatens to destroy hard-won gains in refugee education and jeopardize the future of thousands of young people. Threats to education personnel, abduction of students, attacks on education facilities and the use of schools for military purposes - all of which amount to a grave violation of children's rights - are becoming commonplace across the region.

Read UNHCR Story: **Schools caught up in armed conflict sweeping across the Sahel.**



Between 2017 and 2019, the central Sahel countries witnessed a six-fold increase in school closures due to violence. As of March 2020, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 4,000 schools were closed in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, affecting more than 750,000 children, including refugees and internally displaced who were already struggling to pursue their education.

In Burkina Faso, so far in 2020, more attacks have been reported than in all of 2018.

While attacks on schools continue, the new COVID-19 related challenges appear to influence patterns of such attacks, as indicated in a report published in July by Insecurity Insight: **Attacks On Schools Continue Despite COVID-19 Pandemic**. Since the pandemic was declared on 12 March, the overall number of violently damaged schools declined compared to the previous two months of 2020. In Cameroon for instance, this is partially due to the ceasefire declared by Anglophone militants in the Ambazonia region.

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: JANUARY TO MAY IN 2020

- Schools reportedly damaged in 2020**
- Collateral damage to schools from fighting continues in Ukraine and Yemen where schools were reportedly hit by aerial bombing and shelling, but decreased in Syria following the ceasefire on 23 March.
 - In Burkina Faso, targeted attacks on schools continue. In Mozambique, attacks on schools in the context of attacks on civilians have increased in April and May this year and are driven by increased armed activity by Islamic State-affiliated militants.
 - Attacks on civilians increased across the Western Sahel at the beginning of 2020. Several of these attacks also inflicted deliberate damage to schools. Some attacks on schools appear ideologically-driven and have targeted the education system while others are part of wider violence against civilians. However, since April, no new reports of such violence have been reported from Cameroon, Mali and Niger. The reasons behind these trends are not clear. It is possible that there are bottlenecks in information flow. COVID-19 related school closures may have also reduced the incentive to attack schools as a form of opposition to the education system. It is also possible that it is related to wider security developments within the region.
 - In Niger, all five reported incidents took place in the Tibesti region bordering Mali's Gao region. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) militants were named as perpetrators in four incidents. It is unclear whether Jema'at al-Islamiyya wa al-Mudawana (JIM) or ISGS militants were behind the fifth reported incident.
 - In Mali, JNIM/ISGS militants were named as perpetrators in both incidents without details on which of the rival groups was likely responsible. It is unclear to what extent the decline in attacks on schools may be linked to reporting difficulties between the two groups. Reported incidents took place during February in Gao and Tombouctou regions.
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- Mali: Violence against school buildings was reported in Arlesong, Gao region and Ghardaia, Tombouctou regions.
 - Niger: All five incidents were reported in the Tibesti region in the Tibesti and Ouadien departments.
- In Cameroon, a school along with a health centre in the Estrie-Nord region was set ablaze in February in an incident attributed to Boko Haram militants. No further attacks on schools by Anglophone militants in the Ambazonia region have been reported since the militants declared a ceasefire on 23 March.



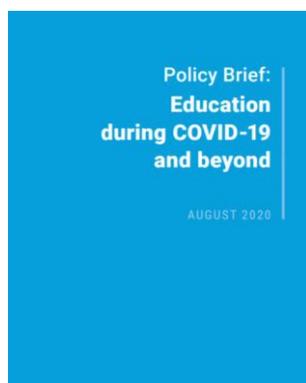
However, the partial reopening of schools since June has triggered renewed violence. 13 primary schools were already attacked in **Burkina Faso** (East region) while in **Mali** (Mopti region), 1 school and two school inspectors and a school director were kidnapped. In **Nigeria** (Kaduna State), seven students and their teacher were kidnapped in the middle of the classroom by a group of armed men while they were preparing for exams.

In its latest report, **Education under Attack 2020**, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) provides a global overview of this violence against education and outlines recommendations for stakeholders. Explore the report findings using this **interactive map**.



EDUCATION RESOURCES

[UN] Education during COVID-19 and beyond



The COVID-19 pandemic has led to [the largest disruption of education ever](#). Despite the delivery of lessons by radio, television and online, and the best efforts of teachers and parents, many students remain out of reach. Learners with disabilities, those in minority or disadvantaged communities, displaced and refugee students and those in remote areas are at highest risk of being left behind.

This Policy Brief calls for action in [four key areas](#): reopening schools, prioritizing education in financing decisions, targeting the hardest to reach, and reimagine the future of education for all.

Download the full document [here](#).

[The Alliance-INEE] Weighing up the risks: School closure and reopening under COVID-19 – When, Why, and What Impacts?

In this new [Policy Paper](#), The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the INEE have developed a balanced analysis to inform decisions based on holistic child-wellbeing as to when and why to re-open schools. This paper is meant to help decision makers frame a holistic analysis of school closure on the wellbeing of children and young people, and to consider the safe reopening of schools.

Download the full document [here](#).



[GEC-CP AoR] CP-EiE Collaboration Framework



The Global Education Cluster (GEC) and the CP AoR have committed to strengthen [joint planning, coordination and response](#), to support the education and protection of children and youth living in humanitarian contexts.

This new [CP-EiE Collaboration Framework](#) supports Education and CP coordination teams' predictable and coherent collaboration throughout the HPC to achieve efficient, effective, and accountable humanitarian responses.

Download the full document [here](#).

[GPE] 8 tracking tools on COVID-19 data for education

Several organizations have been collecting and publishing data on how the crisis would affect the delivery of public services, including education. This blog presents the [different resources and tools](#) that have been produced so far.

Read the blog [here](#).



[SIL Africa Learning & Development] Language solutions for African communities



SIL Africa Learning & Development is an advocacy and consulting group that focuses on the use of African languages for learning and communication. Where vital issues such as COVID-19 are concerned, it is crucial that the messaging be well understood and easily acted on – and that means using the language of the home and the local community.

Where refugee populations are concerned, the language issues are more complex; at the same time, due to the fragility and learning challenges that typify refugee children, it is even more important to identify and use languages that really communicate to them and their families. That is why SIL develops **literacy and numeracy programming for refugee learners**, in appropriate languages, allowing them to access essential written information on COVID-19 and other critical health and development issues.

Check out SIL's website [here](#) and their COVID-19 Resource Center [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

[September 9] International Day to Protect Education from Attack

Building on the **Safe Schools Declaration**, the first international agreement dedicated to the protection of education in armed conflict signed in 2015, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 9 September the **International Day to Protect Education from Attack**, to reaffirm the right to education for all and the importance of ensuring safe, enabling learning environments in humanitarian emergencies.

By its terms, the Assembly strongly condemned all attacks against schools and the use of schools for military purposes, when in breach of international law. It recognized that **access to quality education in humanitarian emergencies** can foster long-term development goals and reiterated the need to protect and respect educational facilities, in accordance with international law.

Read the GCPEA press release [here](#).



Global Coalition to **Protect Education from Attack**

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