

UNICEF Education & COVID-19 Case Study

Somalia – Integrated school reopening

30 April 2021

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Somalia has been subject to political, economic and climate shocks for decades. COVID-19 added further devastation and complexity, closing schools across the country in March 2020, and disrupting education for 1,000,000 million learners. The timing of school reopening varies across the country's three main regions. Schools in Puntland reopened to their 230,000 students in September 2020 and have stayed open. In Somaliland, schools reopened in August 2020, but following adjustments to the 2021 school year, the region's 310,000 students are currently on summer break until July 2021. In the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), schools serving 350,000 students, have faced serial reopening and closures. They reopened in mid-August 2020 for the first time, closed again in March 2021 and began opening again in mid-April 2021.

UNICEF worked with education authorities in all three regions as well as the World Food Programme, the UN Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the International Organization for Migration and other partners to offer joined up programmes and services for children, including materials and platforms for home-based learning via TV, radio, and the internet (see one such broadcasted Chemistry lesson [here](#)); teacher training on child-centred methodology, safe school operations and the provision of psychosocial support to students when classes resumed; the construction or repair of water and sanitation facilities; risk communications with lifesaving messages on masks and distancing, as well as dry rations to replace school meals during school closures. UNICEF also funded monetary incentives of US \$100 to teachers to ensure the education system did not collapse due to the additional disruption of the pandemic.

RESULTS

Education authorities reacted quickly to set up different options for home-based learning. In all, with support from UNICEF, they were able to reach almost 160,000 students (71,630 girls) across the country, including 20,107 (8,647 girls) in FGS, 114,197 (52,970 girls) in Somaliland. In Puntland, during school closures in July 2020, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and UNICEF launched the [Learning Passport](#), an innovative online platform created through a partnership among UNICEF, Microsoft and the University of Cambridge, becoming the first country in Africa to do so. Learning materials are available online but also through a mobile app. Through both online and offline use, the Learning Passport reached 24,468 students (10,013 girls) in Grades 8 to 12 during school closures.

Although authorities followed the [Framework for Reopening Schools](#) and its [Reopening](#) and [Recovery](#) Supplements on developed jointly by UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the World Food Programme, and the UN High Commission for Refugees, and developed plans for learning following reopening, funding gaps have prevented the development of a systematic approach to catch up or remedial education. In addition, the precise learning loss suffered by students during the period of school closures is unknown.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Ministries of Education, with support from UNICEF and other partners, were quick to set up alternatives to in-person classes during the pandemic.** They mobilized swiftly to organize the recording of lessons and established agreements with radio and TV broadcasters, leading these efforts.
- **Preparation of parents and teachers is key to strengthen the resiliency of education systems over the longer-term.** With no notice, both teachers and parents were thrust into entirely new roles as the facilitators of home-based learning. Most parents in Somalia have never attended school themselves, so understandably, they were not well positioned to provide effective support for their children learning at home. These issues will need to be tackled in future education sector planning and budgeting to prepare for future risks.
- **The pandemic highlighted and deepened existing inequities amongst learners.** Although the various Ministries of Education adopted a mix of digital and non-digital home-based learning options, they did not reach all children. Connectivity and a lack of devices are bottlenecks, especially for children in rural areas of Somalia. Overall, UNICEF estimates that [49 per cent of school-aged children in the East and Southern Africa region, where Somalia is located, could not be reached by digital or broadcast lessons.](#)

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF will continue supporting the three Ministries of Education to ensure that their emergency preparedness and contingency plans are in place for future shocks. This will build resiliency of these education systems and actors over the longer-term.

Cost effectiveness: UNICEF's investment in the country's COVID-19 response is approximately US \$5 million to date, including valued contributions from the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, USAID, Canada Natcom, KfW, ECHO, thematic as well as regular resources. An estimated 160,000 children (71,630 girls) were reached.

OTHER RESOURCES

For other resources, including more education and COVID-19 case studies, please click [here](#) and filter by "Area of Work" (Education).

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