



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# EDUCATION AND COVID-19



## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR

COVID-19 has devastated the education sector. School closures have disrupted learning for more than 1.6 billion students around the world. As of January 2021, UNESCO estimates that more than 234 million children and youth remain affected by school closures in 33 countries, equaling more than 13 percent of enrolled learners worldwide. An estimated 11 million girls may never return to schooling. In addition, the effects of the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing education inequality, especially disadvantaging girls, learners with disabilities, people living in extreme poverty, and other marginalized groups.

As education systems rebuild, USAID is working with partners to mitigate learning losses, prepare for heightened uncertainty in global education, and equip education actors and institutions to be increasingly resilient. USAID is utilizing this opportunity to learn from the pandemic and support policy and program reforms that transform education systems to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners and educators.

## USAID'S RESPONSE

Since the start of the outbreak, [USAID has provided billions to fight COVID-19](#) in more than 120 countries. In the education sector, USAID has rapidly **adapted programming in more than 50 countries. Worldwide, USAID has mobilized more than \$900 million for education as part of the COVID-19 response in FY 2020 and so far in FY 2021.**<sup>1</sup>

The complex development and humanitarian landscape underscores the importance of USAID's unique on-the-ground presence, technical education expertise, and focus on serving vulnerable and marginalized populations. To ensure contextualized, evidence-based, and coordinated efforts, USAID convened field-based education staff to jointly solve common challenges, and provided just-in-time technical support, training, and resources, USAID's publicly available [Return to Learning Toolkit](#) emphasizes equity, inclusion, and safety across education and training programs.

## USAID INVESTMENTS ARE SUPPORTING TWO OVERARCHING GOALS:



1. Ensure **safe return to learning**, especially for the most marginalized, and

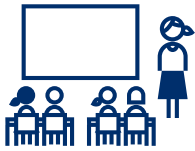


2. **Build more resilient and equitable education systems** and societies with the capacity to better manage future shocks and prevent development backsliding.

<sup>1</sup> Data Source: Foreign Aid Explorer. Data extracted on March 17, 2021



## ENSURE SAFE RETURN TO LEARNING, ESPECIALLY FOR THE MOST MARGINALIZED



### **PARTNERING WITH MINISTRIES TO SAFELY AND RESPONSIBLY REOPEN SCHOOLS**

Drawing on USAID's expertise and experience in crisis contexts, USAID is advising and supporting Ministries of Education to develop and implement school reopening plans around the globe. USAID is working to ensure school reopenings are focused on reaching the most marginalized, recognize the psychosocial impact of COVID-19, and center learning as a priority for all children and youth, especially girls and young women.



### **UTILIZING DISTANCE LEARNING PLATFORMS**

To mitigate learning loss, USAID is serving the hardest-to-reach learners with a variety of distance learning strategies during education disruptions. In 2020, USAID supported distance learning programming over a variety of platforms including radio, television, Internet, and home learning kits. USAID promotes distance learning platforms and content that integrates the principles of Universal Design for Learning, and is designed to meet the context-specific needs of diverse learners.



### **PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION SERVICES**

Education disruptions not only impede academic learning, but also have a devastating impact on the wellbeing and safety of learners and educators. USAID supports education as a hub for social services and has invested in local education systems to provide psychosocial support and protection services, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized populations, especially girls and women.

Despite widespread school closures, USAID programs reached more than 24 million learners in 2020 from the pre-primary through secondary levels, through a variety of in-person and distance approaches. USAID has also supported higher education institutions to play key roles in COVID-19 response efforts across sectors.



## BUILD MORE RESILIENT AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND SOCIETIES



### **BUILDING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPACITY**

Over the course of the past year, education systems have experienced multiple waves of school disruptions. Knowing that the pandemic is ongoing and future waves could result in additional school closures, USAID continues to build the capacity of local education leaders to prepare for, design, and implement data-driven emergency response plans. This capacity will help minimize disruptions to learning now and in future emergencies.



### **INSTITUTIONALIZING REMEDIAL AND ACCELERATED EDUCATION**

USAID is supporting local policies, programs, and educators to help learners get back on track. With this support, educators can apply innovative catch-up strategies, meet diverse learning needs, and provide alternate pathways for (re)engaging the most marginalized, especially girls and learners with disabilities. These are essential for an inclusive and resilient formal education system.



### **ENGAGING YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS LEADERS**

USAID supports partners and higher education institutions in order to mobilize their knowledge, innovation, and capacity to contribute to COVID-19 response efforts. Higher education institutions play an important role in education and workforce training, advancing research, and strengthening networks and communities.

USAID is the **largest bilateral donor** in accelerated education.



## LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP



### GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION (GPE)

USAID continues to support GPE's COVID-19 response through technical and senior leadership on GPE's Board of Directors, and through technical support at the country level from USAID Mission staff. With input and guidance from USAID, GPE dispersed new grants to help countries cope with the pandemic's impacts.



### EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT (ECW)

USAID supports ECW at both the technical and political levels through roles on the High-Level Steering Group and Executive Committee. USAID contributions to ECW help provide safe, relevant, and quality education to children and youth in conflict and crisis-affected settings. In immediate response to COVID-19, ECW provided approximately \$1 million per country in all 27 ECW partner countries.



### THE LEGO FOUNDATION AND THE INTER-AGENCY NETWORK FOR EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES (INEE)

[Contributions from USAID and The LEGO Foundation](#) supported INEE to coordinate, curate, and disseminate global and country-specific distance learning tools, resources, and guidance in response to COVID-19 and other crises. This collaboration demonstrates the power of partnership in emergency response to leverage funding, networks, and technical expertise.



## COUNTRY EXAMPLES

### GUATEMALA

USAID supported **2.4 million primary and lower secondary students in the public education system** to transition to a **virtual learning platform** under the Ministry of Education's Aprendo en casa / I Learn at Home strategy. USAID **partnered with the ministry to develop protocols to safely and responsibly open schools**, including guidance on emotional support, school sanitization, and the provision of face coverings to all students, teachers, and administrators in half of Guatemala's public primary schools.

### VIETNAM

The USAID Improving Access, Curriculum and Teaching in Medical Education and Emerging Diseases (IMPACT-MED) Alliance **partnered with the global healthcare company Novartis to train nearly 2,500 final-year medical students at ten Vietnamese medical schools on COVID-19 care and treatment**. To better respond to the pandemic, the Danang Department of Health enlisted 700 senior students who were trained through USAID IMPACT-MED to work in local hospitals and **help deliver care and treatment services to COVID-19 patients**.

### SENEGAL

In response to school closures, USAID supported the Ministry of Education to develop radio and television-based educational content to help students continue to learn from home. The **program created a one-stop shop for teachers to access distance learning resources** from home and provided ongoing support through text messages. As schools began to safely reopen, USAID supported the Ministry's back to school communication campaign and **worked to ensure teachers were equipped with the tools needed to stem learning loss** caused by the COVID-19 crisis once back in the classroom.

### NEPAL

USAID developed the "Reading is Fun" mobile application with access to 177 leveled **digital supplemental reading books**, 56 audio stories, and informational messages for parents and teachers. An additional 119 digital learning activities are being developed in science, math, English, Nepali, and social studies. Through a partnership with Sesame Workshop, USAID utilized public service announcements to engage caregivers of **children with disabilities**, create healthy behaviors, and **support the social-emotional development** of children during the pandemic.

### KOSOVO

To address the challenges of returning to school during COVID-19, USAID, in partnership with UNICEF, implemented the "Back to School" initiative to **supply pre-university and primary education institutions with protective kits** against the coronavirus. To date, USAID and UNICEF have **distributed about 10,000 kits containing masks, hand sanitizer, and other hygiene materials** to students and teachers across Kosovo. This assistance is **part of a \$1.6 million assistance package to increase Kosovo's response capability and stop further transmission of COVID-19**.

### EGYPT

As universities shifted to online learning, USAID **offered online employability skills, entrepreneurship, and language classes**. The program also **hosted Egypt's first online career fair, bringing together 45 employers and 4,000 students**. The programs pivoted to virtual exchanges and study abroad programs. The Egyptian Local Scholarship Program for Public Universities developed a five-week virtual exchange program with University of Nebraska at Lincoln, **hosting online academic learning, entrepreneurship skills, and cultural exchanges between Egyptian and U.S. students**.





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## USAID RESOURCES

- [RETURN TO LEARNING TOOLKIT](#)
- [USAID'S GENDER AND COVID-19 GUIDANCE](#)
- [DISTANCE LEARNING INTERACTIVE AUDIO AND RADIO INSTRUCTION ONLINE LIBRARY](#)
- [FOSTERING RESILIENCE DURING COVID-19 THROUGH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING BLOG](#)
- [BEST PRACTICES ON EFFECTIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTERVENTIONS IN DISTANCE LEARNING](#)
- [STRATEGIES FOR ACCELERATING LEARNING POST-CRISIS](#)
- [HIGHER EDUCATION RESPONSE TO COVID-19: A LANDSCAPE MAP OF USAID PARTNER COUNTRIES](#)