

Armed conflicts, forced displacement, climate change induced disasters and protracted crises have disrupted the education of 75 million children and youth globally. And that number is growing in an unprecedented way with the spread of COVID-19. Education has been hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic with 1.52 billion learners out of school and 165 country-wide school closures, impacting 87.1% of the world's total enrolled learners. Drop-out rates across the globe are likely to rise as a result of this massive disruption to education access.

While other critical needs such as health, water and sanitation are being responded to, educational needs cannot be forgotten and these have an equally detrimental impact if left unaddressed. The 'pile-on effect' of the coronavirus is that, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, interruptions to education can have long term implications -- especially for the most vulnerable. There is a real risk of regression for children whose basic, foundational learning (reading, math, languages, etc.) was not strong to begin with. And millions of children who have already been deprived of their right to education, particularly girls, are being more exposed to health and well-being risks (both psychosocial and physical) during COVID-19. These are the children and youth we at Education Cannot Wait (ECW) prioritize, including:



- **Girls:** Young and adolescent girls are twice as likely to be out of school in crisis situations and face greater barriers to education and vulnerabilities such as domestic/gender-based violence when not in school.
- **Refugees, displaced and migrant children:** These populations often fall between the cracks as national policies might not necessarily include these vulnerable groups and they *must* be included and catered for in any global responses to this crisis if this has not already occurred.
- **Children and youth with disabilities:** Along with other marginalized populations, including children from minority groups, are neglected in the best of times and have lower educational outcomes than their peers.
- **Young people affected by trauma or mental health issues:** Schools and learning centers are places for communities to address health related issues, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), which the most vulnerable students rely on for their wellbeing and development in order to learn.

Without access to education, as shocks are experienced – including loss of life, health impacts and loss of livelihoods - children are more vulnerable and unprotected. As household finances are being strained and needs increase, out-of-school children are more likely to be exposed to risks like family violence, child labor, forced marriage, trafficking and exploitation, including by responders. **For the most vulnerable children, education is lifesaving. Not only does it provide safety and protection, importantly, it also instills hope for a brighter future.**

So continuing education through alternative learning pathways, as soon as possible, must also be a top priority right now, to ensure the interruption to education is as limited as possible. We urgently need to support teachers, parents/caregivers, innovators, communications experts and all those who are positioned to provide education, whether through radio programmes, home-schooling, online learning and other innovative approaches.

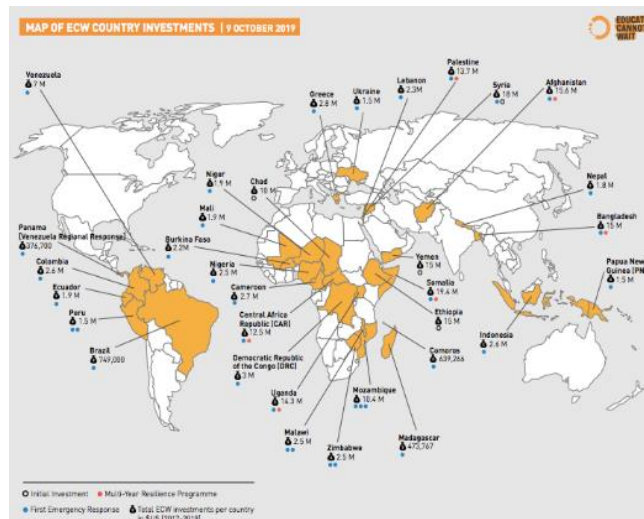


What does this mean for responders like ECW? In the **short term**, this means we must maintain access to learning and ensure kids retain knowledge and skills (i.e. through temporary remote, alternative or distance learning programmes). In the **medium term**, this means catching up and transitioning students who have fallen behind or had a break in their education to re-join their level of schooling and competency (i.e. automatic promotion with a mandatory catchup/remedial period at the beginning). In the **longer term**, this means there is a need for education systems to be set up with contingency capacities to mitigate and manage risk in the future.

HOW ECW IS POSITIONED TO RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Education Cannot Wait, the global fund for education in emergencies, was launched in 2016 at the World Humanitarian summit to coordinate responses and raise financing for education in emergencies, and distributes funds where they are needed most and as quickly as possible, to continue children's education in times of crisis.

- Given our geographical footprint across emergency and crisis-context countries and the vulnerable child and youth population that ECW serves, COVID-19 represents yet another burden in a series of challenges already experienced by them, their families and communities.
- Crisis response is what we know, and we consider COVID-19 to be a crisis of profound magnitude for all humanity, unprecedented in our lifetime.
- We are closely connected to our partners on the ground in vulnerable communities and are working with them to urgently assess additional needs and determine what support and funding are most impactful. This is how we work to ensure no child is left behind or exploited by this pandemic. After extensive consultations with these partners and across the UN system, we are responding to the COVID-19 crisis with every tool at our disposal.
- In our education in emergency responses, we consider holistic spectrum of needs that children and youth, their parents and caregivers, educators and communities face during crisis. This includes MHPSS, child protection, school feeding, gender equality, access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene education, school infrastructure, teacher training and quality learning materials.
- Through holistically planned interventions, we take a birds-eye view of the entire developmental needs of a child in crisis and ensure our funded responses address their needs and coordinate wraparound support or fill gaps not supported by others.
- We also require our partner organizations to apply child safeguarding measures, manage risks to children, including risks associated with personnel and volunteers who are in contact with vulnerable children, and to report child safeguarding concerns to ECW.
- We detail [below](#) how ECW ensures that these principles and the complex and holistic needs of affected children and youth are met within COVID-19 responses that we fund.



SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE ECW IS PROVIDING DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Our immediate challenge is to educate children where they are, within the infrastructure and setting they are in. This requires innovation and creativity to enhance remote learning tools, services and education. ECW has a range of expertise and background in innovative education solutions in crisis situations, including addressing mental health and wellbeing needs. Our support includes:

- **Complying and coordinating with the UN's** overall guidance and response. At the country level, we coordinate responses with the UN Humanitarian/Resident Coordinator and Designated Official for Security, as well as UN agencies to determine parameters and priorities, risk-assessments and directives, while ensuring the critical importance of education in the response is recognized and prioritized. We continue to coordinate responses through the Global Education Cluster and UNHCR (for refugee situations).
- At the global level, ECW is **part of UNESCO's Global COVID-19 Education Coalition** and, as a UN-hosted fund, ECW participates in all other multilateral coordination efforts undertaken by the broader UN system and UN Appeals. ECW uses both our First Emergency Response (FER) or the Acceleration Facility window to support these initiatives as relevant and necessary.
- ECW's priority is to **provide and deploy urgent funding and use our in-built agility and emergency-design to respond quickly** to education needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. ECW funds and ensures

quality learning for the most vulnerable, in a safe, inclusive environment and through innovative and cost-effective responses in affected countries.

- **For existing countries that we support, this means:**

Organizations can apply under the First Emergency Response (FER) and Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) windows for funding, or to quickly and easily re-programme and re-orient their efforts in line with local needs and coordinated measures. We provide immediate support and fast-track any requests.

- **For new countries and regions that need our support that means:**

If education has been affected as a result of the COVID-19 crisis in a country we haven't worked with, and that meets ECW's criteria, they can apply to our COVID FER window or Acceleration Facility. Proposals may enable local and international civil society organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, government bodies and others to respond to the needs they are seeing on the ground.

- Based on our connection to front-line responders and humanitarian expertise, we provide **support, technical guidance and expertise** to our partners in affected communities to ensure the most vulnerable are not left behind and that children's immediate needs - education, health well-being and more - are met.

- For instance, access to clean water and sanitation, as well as hygiene education (WASH) is critical for every school-aged child right now. ECW can provide technical expertise, funding and infrastructure support to ensure children continue to manage their hygiene and health, as part of their education.

- ECW wants to ensure that children and adolescents don't fall behind, but gain tools needed to 'weather this storm' and develop skills to better navigate life's challenges afterwards. We collaborate broadly with the private sector, innovators, civil society groups, influencers and others to achieve these aims.



ECW'S PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSING COVID-19 RELATED FUNDING APPLICATIONS

- **We know children and adolescents are more at-risk during crises:** When children lose access to education they lose a critical opportunity for protection. To safeguard children in this fluid situation, we encourage proposals that:
 - Prioritize MHPSS and other protection activities, i.e. addressing gender-based and domestic violence;
 - Apply the 2019 Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the 2010 INEE Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery.
- **We recognize the difference between innovation, technology and good solutions:** Because many of our beneficiaries do not have access to internet connectivity, computers or smartphones, innovation through technology may not be feasible. Innovation alone doesn't always represent quality in learning. Responses may channel creative thinking on how to deliver education differently or build on/expand prior local learnings. We consider all responses to remote learning - high tech, low tech and no tech - provided the response is relevant, feasible and reaches all affected children and youth, can be used and understood by children, teachers and parents, and that content is context and language specific (software, hardware, radio-based learning etc.). We encourage responses that build on or utilize locally-available infrastructure and services. We require information on amount of input, time intensiveness and accessibility/reach.
- **We know good teachers are our best hope for kids to learn:** Teacher well-being is paramount to building a workforce of compassionate change makers. We recognize continuity of salary and job security are essential for teachers that work in ECW-funded areas. We ensure that teacher salaries and incentives provided in our grants continue and welcome other proposals that support teachers and quality teaching during COVID.
- **Crises are a difficult, confusing and stressful time:** While most children and youth are resilient, they may experience increased stress and anxiety during times of uncertainty. Existing mental health concerns may be exacerbated when lacking the structure, support and interaction with peers at school. ECW prioritizes MHPSS as part of the COVID-19 education response and, in alignment with the IASC's MHPSS Reference Group's messages and activities and resources and lessons learned shared by INEE and IFRC's Psychosocial Reference Center, encourages responses that help children deal with stress during the outbreak.
- **Leaving no girl behind:** To ensure girls and young women do not face additional inequity and fall further behind in their education during this pandemic, we prioritize solutions that analyze and address their specific needs and rights as part of the COVID-19 response. We encourage initiatives that prevent barriers like the burden of

caregiving, inequitable distribution of learning resources and marginalization in the home, to increase access and opportunity for girls to learn and achieve equally during COVID-19.

- **A wide definition of 'education'**: It is important for responses to demonstrate how they address the wide scope of needs that children currently face. We recognize the value that education plays in ensuring broader needs are met. Responses which also achieve outcomes in nutrition, water and sanitation, health, gender equality, protection and MHPSS are encouraged and should identify how these outcomes are achieved, but also how proposals that address these issues facilitate better learning outcomes overall.
- **As simple and quick as possible**: This is a crisis - not a time to fill out endless applications. While we want to ensure that all proposals meet our basic standards and set key deliverables, our objective is to make the application process as simple, quick, expedient, user-friendly and self-explanatory as possible so that those with good ideas and a way to execute locally can help educate the communities they are in. The form allows partners to make simple inputs on proposals and enables simplified reporting and quick turnaround of approvals and funding.
- **Added value and CSO/ grassroots support**: We serve the often forgotten and most at risk within crisis-affected countries and prioritize partners that can support hard to reach, underserved children, girls, youth and communities in affected areas. Any new or re-programmed investments must demonstrate how they coordinate with other responders in the region and fill a clear gap to support and complement other partners' responses to the crisis. In addition, ECW has the ability to support civil society and capacity building as well as CSO and grassroots organizations which cannot be funded by the UN's emergency response system. Recognizing that localized information, support and response is now critical, we invite proposals from all organizations that can support local educational responses and advocacy.
- **Resilience building**: Longer term outcomes to build resilience and for alternative use and impact should be included in proposals where applicable.



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT US TO HELP THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

With needs escalating by the day, there are three very concrete ways that governments, private sector, foundations, NGOs and individuals can partner with ECW at this difficult time, to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure quality education continues globally, especially in the most vulnerable countries, for the next critical months:

1. **Help us innovate and co-finance education solutions:** ECW is actively working with partners in government and the private sector, especially those involved in education, ICT and entertainment, to engage in developing and financing solutions to ensure the continuity of education. We believe this is an opportunity for demonstrating solidarity between the private sector, government and innovators to invent solutions for what we hope is a temporary crisis. This would also strengthen capacity to respond to education priorities in future crises as whatever we develop and invent now becomes useful global public goods benefiting children and youth, especially those who are refugees, internally displaced, migrants or caught in armed conflicts or protracted crises. If partners would like to support this type of innovation and funding, we are also able to allocate resources from our Acceleration Facility to co-finance coordinated efforts and pilot projects.
2. **Provide funding to help us respond to urgent education needs in the most vulnerable countries:** Our current grantees, including (governments, UN agencies and civil society organizations) are striving to sustain critical support functions and find new ways to respond. Overall, our initial estimates are that the needs in the 26 countries currently receiving support from ECW require additional support of at least US\$35-40 million to support activities in response to COVID-19 for the following 3-4 months. This is just over US\$1 million average for each country, which is the minimum we can expect they need (and, it is likely more will be needed in most countries). We encourage contributions to our ECW Multi-Donor Trust Fund from the Government or KOICA towards this amount and we ensure close communication to share the impact that we are having.
3. **If you believe you can respond to local education needs, submit a proposal:** Apply to ECW via our COVID-19 First Emergency Response Application process, through the in-country humanitarian coordination forum, either the Education Cluster or the Education in Emergency Working Group in in your country/region. Alternatively, you can submit a proposal through the [ECW Acceleration facility](#) to support education in your community.

For inquiries, contact info@un-ecw.org. For updates, please follow: [@EduCannotWait](#) and visit: educationcannotwait.org



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The global fund for education in emergencies

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