

COVID-19 SYNTHESIS #3 Education - CPMS 23

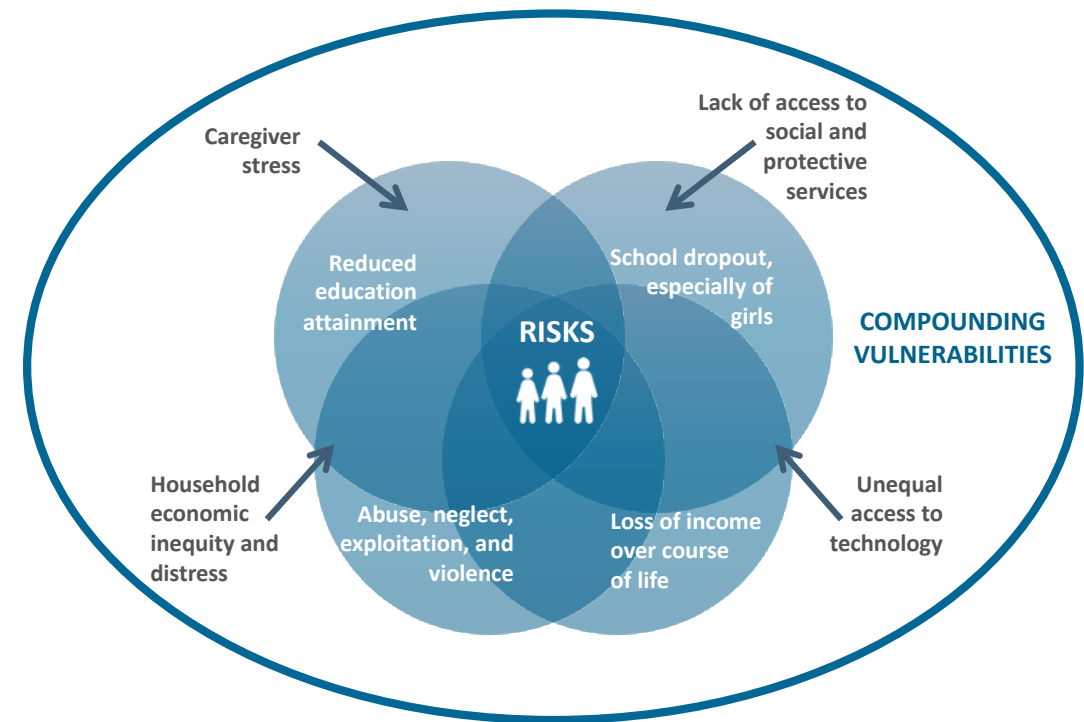
TOPIC: Impact of School Closures on Children's Protection and Well-being | 15 June - 10 July 2020

This synthesis is a periodic digest of COVID-19 related resources (guidance, news, & academic articles). The purpose is to identify emerging child protection risks, responses, and resource gaps based on the information gathered. Each synthesis analyzes a different topic related to child protection during COVID-19.

"I am really missing classes. Sometimes I try to study at home but the house chores are so much that I can't revise my notes. I take care of my siblings as well as the house and the farm. I start working very early and go to bed very late. I pray the government finds a solution to this disease as soon as possible, so girls like me can go back to school. My dream of becoming a doctor should not be broken, please." - Halima, 16, from Niger (Plan International, 16 June 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced school closures in more than 190 countries worldwide (UNESCO, April 2020), leaving over 770 million children in the majority world without access to any form of schooling (Global Partnerships for Education, 2020). School closure has had adverse effects on the development and protection of children who have lost access, not only to education services, but also to peer support and other school-based services (e.g. school feeding programmes, health or social service referral programmes, MHPSS, etc.). School closures are linked to increased risk of social isolation, stigmatization, psychological distress, as well as an increased vulnerability to neglect abuse, and exploitation. Widespread lack of access to remote learning opportunities for children in the majority world exacerbates existing inequalities and is likely to have long-term negative impacts on their future academic and economic prospects. Children may also encounter additional obstacles that prevent them from returning to the classroom once schools reopen, as shown in previous infectious disease outbreaks. These are likely to disproportionately affect girls and children with disabilities.

The **purpose** of this evidence synthesis is to examine the impact of school closures on the protection and wellbeing of children globally, with a focus on the majority world. It was carried out by reviewing existing literature published in English and French. This included 31 academic articles and reports and guidance notes from the grey literature and 59 news articles published online between April 22 and July 13, 2020.



The following synthesis covers multiple issues. Examples from select articles and research studies illustrate the child protection risks and compounding factors that result from school closures. Strategies to reinforce protective factors are outlined, followed by education and protection practices that are arising during COVID-19. Key information gaps are then identified and discussed. Finally, case studies of emerging practices related to education are presented in the annex.

STRATEGIES TO REINFORCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Providing or expanding cash transfer and other social protection services.
- Promoting inclusive, remote learning solutions.
- Ensuring a safe and effective transition back to school.
- Considering the best interests of children in decision-making processes.

SUMMARY OF GAPS

Several gaps in knowledge related to the data on the impacts of school closure were identified, including:

- Fewer articles/evidence on the current impact of school closures on stakeholders (children, youth, teachers, etc.) in the majority world.
- Lack of data on the impact of school closure on children with special needs/disabilities.
- Lack of age and gender (including gender non-binary) disaggregated evidence on the impact of school closure on the protection and wellbeing of children.
- Absence of documented lessons learned during the school closure decision-making process.

COVID-19 CASE STUDIES*

Location: Syria

Topic: Tiered approach to more effectively address problems facing children with varying levels of vulnerability (including children with disabilities).

Location: Democratic Republic of Congo

Topic: Community-based approach to raise awareness of child protection risks and provide educational support to household caregivers.

Location: Ethiopia

Topic: Participatory response to help households create alternative play opportunities to support safe and stimulating activities for children at home.

**Click on the headers above to read through full write-ups on each of these issues, including first-hand accounts of children and caregivers impacted by COVID-19 and observations from child protection practitioners in the field.*

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SCHOOL CLOSURES

RISKS	KEY ISSUES	EVIDENCE
<p>Children show psychosocial distress and mental health issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of physical activity, social interaction with peers, and consistent routines may lead to increased emotional stress and feelings of isolation for children and youth. ● Lack of access to MHPSS services provided through schools and exposure to toxic stress can induce undue fear and stigmatization of the virus. 	<p>“When participants were asked why they considered school disruption to be a critical issue in the crisis, they drew on their personal experiences to explain. 71 per cent of the child respondents (n=101) said that they feel isolated and lonely since their schools were closed” (World Vision, June 2020).</p> <p>“During recovery a number of challenges emerge to ensure children return to school regularly or at all, and to avoid increases in dropout rates. Following the Ebola outbreak, fear and stigmatisation had a negative impact on re-enrolment rates (UNESCO 2020). In Sierra Leone, around 8,000 ‘Ebola orphans’ faced particular difficulties in returning, and many more faced stigmatisation through parental loss, or through surviving the disease themselves (Government of Sierra Leone, 2015)” (Hallgarten, J., 2020).</p> <p>“The real risk for the child in this Covid-19 epidemic is surely to deprive him/her of a socio-educational environment beneficial to his/her development, and of preventive medical follow-up essential to his/her good health. The challenge of returning to the community is first to learn to live together without excessive fear of the other, to open up to the world through play and learning, in contact with other children and caring professional adults. and responsible” (Le quotidien du médecin, May 2020).</p> <p>“‘I am not able to play or go to school. This has limited our interactions and we are not able to share the advice we were getting when we met together. This has also brought a negative impact on my life of loneliness away from my friends and relatives.’ - A 15-year-old boy, community worker, Kenya, WCY” (Kindernothilfe, June 2020).</p>

Risks Associated with School Closures, Cont.

<p>Reduced educational attainment and loss of future income</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extended time away from school and structured learning activities often leads to decline in knowledge retention and loss of classroom-based skills. ● Lost school time, especially for children lacking the necessary resources to support effective distance learning, will contribute to a widening achievement gap. ● Even temporarily suspended access to education is likely to have long-term impacts on future academic and economic prospects for affected children. 	<p>Extended time away from the classroom as a result of COVID-19 will contribute to a decline in knowledge retention. <i>“Over the holiday, young kids in America normally lose between 20% and 50% of the skills they gained over the school year. [...]by the end of this summer the sizeable group of American children whose learning loss started when schools closed might have lost up to a year’s attainment”</i> (The Economist, April 2020).</p> <p>“A study of the impact of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan found that while children missed three months of school, four years after the earthquake, they were the learning equivalent of 1.5 years behind where they would have been with no earthquake. The likeliest explanation is that because the students were already behind the curriculum when they re-entered school, they continued to fall further behind even after they returned” (Brookings Institute, 15 June 2020).</p> <p>“According to children and young people, students from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities were particularly likely to be excluded from alternative learning opportunities. Miruna, age 15, from Romania noted, “Many children did not previously have access to education, and now, as families do not benefit from essential things, such as electricity or the Internet, the children are limited in the possibility of attending online courses.” Furthermore, another Romanian participant, Teodora, age 16, argued that remote learning was a discriminatory practice since ‘children who live in rural areas do not have Internet access’ or the same opportunity to study as other more privileged children and young people” (World Vision, 2020).</p> <p>“The COVID-19 lockdown gave a whole new dimension to the definition of inclusive access. In almost every context, some working children had to drop-out because schools (formal and/or informal schools) were closed. Some schools continued with online education. Some children were given printed homework every two weeks; some received assignments via WhatsApp; and a few received lessons through radio and TV programs. The lack of internet access, digital devices like computers or smartphones, and internet costs made it difficult for children to pursue their education during the pandemic and made the digital divide visible” (Kindernothilfe, 2020a).</p> <p>“We begin by assuming that every additional year of schooling equates to 10 percent in additional future earnings...Extrapolating to the global level, on the basis that the U.S. economy represents about one-quarter of global output, these data suggest the world could lose as much as \$10 trillion over the coming generation as a result of school closures today” (Brookings Institute, April 2020).</p>
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Risks Associated with School Closures, Cont.

<p>Exposure to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children may now be fully confined to abusive home environments without access to safe spaces and the formal or informal social support provided at school. • Young children are at risk of being left home alone with parents who are forced to continue working outside of the home / re-enter the economy while schools remain closed. • With children unable to attend school, there is rising child labour (including worst forms of child labour, trafficking and exploitation).¹ • Many children are forced to take on household work or seek additional income generating opportunities. 	<p>“One of the least appreciated costs of re-opening the economy while keeping schools closed for 90% of learners (as is currently the case in South Africa) is that children are at higher risk of being left home alone. Our analysis of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) data of 2019 shows that if all employed workers return to work, there would be more than 2-million children aged 0-15 years without an older sibling (15 years+) or an adult caregiver to look after them. Of highest concern are the almost one million children (974 000) below the age of six who have no other adult caregiver in the household except a working parent. It is highly plausible that hundreds of thousands of these children would be left home alone in households without an adult caretaker if their employed caregiver was forced to return to work to earn an income and sustain her family” (Van Der Berg & Spaull, June 2020).</p> <p>“Childline received as many as 92,000 SOS calls (a 50% surge) during the first 11 days of the first lockdown, with callers requesting protection from abuse and violence. Many child labourers, allowed out briefly to go to a toilet, rang up on this help... [...] Child activists are terrified at the post-COVID 19 situation which has rendered millions of workers jobless. Explained Heenu Singh, “With no jobs and no food available for millions of families, this is going to be the golden period for traffickers...” [in India] (Sehgal, 2020).</p> <p>“In Somalia, the lockdown is being viewed as an opportune time to cut girls for supposed benefit of ample “healing” time. According to Sadia Allin, Plan International’s Head of Mission in Somalia, the already bad situation of high FGM rate in the country is being made worse by the economic downturn that’s seeing the cutters more aggressively market their services to earn an income. ‘They are knocking door to door to cut girls’” (Plan International, 16 June 2020).</p> <p>“The increase in home and community violence, child exploitation and labour, reported on by all NGOs [during Ebola], disproportionately affected the most vulnerable children (Hird et al, 2016). Vulnerable children in Sierra Leone reported on new pressures to supplement family income, and that school closures had led to a growth in child exploitation (Fisher et al, 2018). Children in Sierra Leone also described the need to take on new roles and responsibilities to supplement household income and reported a direct correlation between school closure and increases of child labour and exploitation (CERA, 2015)” (Hallgarten, J., 2020).</p>
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¹ Please refer to The Alliance’s previous synthesis on Child Labour for additional evidence related to increases in the various forms of child labour as a result of COVID-19 at <https://www.alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-online-library/covid-19-synthesis-evidence-briefs>.

Risks Associated with School Closures, Cont.

<p>School dropout, especially of girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More young girls are likely to be pushed into early marriage and/or pregnancy, which often prevents girls from returning to school. • Exacerbated economic hardship and the shifting burden of domestic roles and responsibilities to children, particularly girls, may cause children to fall further behind and/or drop out of school altogether because of perceived and immediate household opportunity costs. • Scarce resources are more likely to be devoted to continuing boys' education (if at all) – whether for distance learning or for school fees upon reopening – leading to increased dropout, especially of girls. 	<p>“Many girls won't return to school because they will be kept at home for caregiving, domestic work, farm grazing and marriage. Child marriage will increase exponentially as families already see girls as a liability and getting them married off will mean one less mouth to feed,” said Safeena Husain, founder and executive director at Educate Girls. An additional four million girls are at risk of child marriage in the next two years because of the coronavirus pandemic, a report by global charity World Vision has warned, as deepening poverty is likely to drive many families to marry off their daughters. The report also warns that up to 85 million children face physical, sexual and emotional violence at home and in their communities over the next three months as the financial and emotional pressures of the pandemic worsen” (News18, June 2020).</p> <p>“For girls, the cost [of Ebola] was higher: older girls often took on parental roles owing to the death of caregivers, which resulted in them dropping out of school; physical and sexual violence against girls increased, with a substantial rise in teenage pregnancy rates, often linked to transactional sex to secure basic goods and services” (Barnett, S et al., 24 June 2020).</p> <p>“In Sierra Leone, adolescent pregnancy increased by up to 65% in some communities during the Ebola crisis. In one study, most girls reported this increase was a direct result of being outside the protective environment provided by schools. Many of these girls never returned to the classroom, largely due to a recently revoked policy preventing pregnant girls from attending school” (UNESCO, 2020).</p> <p>“For countries where the refugee girls' gross secondary enrollment is less than 10%, like Ethiopia and Pakistan, all girls are at risk of dropping out for good” (Malala Fund, May 2020).</p>
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COMPOUNDING VULNERABILITIES

FACTORS	KEY ISSUES	EVIDENCE
<p>Household socioeconomic inequities and economic distress during COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Socioeconomic status influences children’s access to continuing education through school closures, causing widening inequity. ● Once reopened, school fees may become increasingly prohibitive due to the effect of economic downturns on household income streams. ● Some families are unable to provide home-based learning structures and support (e.g. tutors, parental involvement, etc.) to enable continued or effective distance learning for their children. 	<p>“While fallout from schooling disruption may be limited for most children, this may not be true for those in poor households and in areas most intensively hit by COVID-19. Even when classes restart, some parents may no longer be able to afford to send their children to school. After the Indonesian tsunami, educated and wealthier families were better able to cope and keep their children healthy and in school” (ILO, June 2020).</p> <p>“Children and youth are being impacted differently by school closures, depending on the community they belong to. While Lebanese learners had the option to follow an online curriculum, all those surveyed reported difficulties studying online. Syrians and Palestinians meanwhile reported that there was no provision for online learning through their schools. Many said that parents could not afford private tutors to finish their curriculum at home, and their education had effectively been suspended” (Save the Children, May 2020).</p> <p>“In Liberia it was reported that approximately 25% did not enter school after reopening. In Sierra Leone, the share that did not return to school after reopening was 13% (World Bank, 2015). In both countries, only a small percentage reported that not re-entering was due to fear of infection. The main reasons were economic issues such as inability to pay school fees or the need to generate incomes (World Bank, 2020)” (Chr. Michelsen institute, 2020).</p>

Compounding Vulnerabilities, Cont.

<p>Unequal access to technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The digital divide and lack of access to remote learning resources contributes to a widening of the achievement gap between the poorest students and their more advantaged peers. • Gender dynamics and inequities may be exacerbated by distance learning, whereby boys have more access to technology than girls, leading to unequal access to continued learning and educational opportunities during school closures. 	<p>“About 65% of lower-middle income countries and less than 25% of low income countries have been able to set up remote learning platforms. Moreover, only 36% of residents of lower-middle income countries have access to the internet which raises further concerns regarding the reach of remote learning. Even among those who are able to access these platforms, we know little about their efficacy or ability to cater to the needs of differently-abled learners, especially in these strained times” (World Economic Forum, June 2020).</p> <p>“Boys are 1.5 times more likely to own a phone than girls in low and middle-income countries and are 1.8 times more likely to own a smartphone that can access the internet, which means they have more access to remote learning tools” (Global Citizen, May 2020).</p> <p>“When national distance learning alternatives are being deployed, as most governments have done, there are significant challenges of access. Over 60% of these national distance learning alternatives rely exclusively on on-line platforms. Yet, as many as 465 million children and youth, or almost 47% of all primary and secondary students being targeted exclusively by national on-line learning platforms do not have access to the Internet at home” (World Education Blog, 15 May 2020).</p> <p>“During the home-schooling program, our teachers give our homework through an internet-based application. Sadly, my parents and I do not have money to purchase internet data. Therefore, I have to go to a bakery shop near my house in the morning to access free Wi-Fi from its parking lot. I always wear a mask when I go out’ - a 16-year-old girl, Quran tuition, Indonesia, PKPA” (KindernotHilfe, June 2020).</p>
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Compounding Vulnerabilities, Cont.

Increased caregiver stress during COVID-19

- Parents' distress due to difficulties in supporting their children's education at home, economic hardships, etc may also contribute to increased mental and emotional distress of the child.
- There is an increase in sexual and gender-based violence at the household level², making home environments both physically and psychologically unsafe for children and their affected caregivers.

"[I]n addition to increases in parental stress, it appears that mothers in Kosovo and other parts of the world face several other challenges (including economic issues) that affect their emotional well-being and family functioning. These findings are in line with other studies that reported increased levels of parental engagement with children and increased levels of parental stress during the COVID-19 period (Lee 2020), due to factors such as economic difficulties, overloaded daily commitments, and coping with situations that negatively affect stress levels and feelings of parental incompetence (Kersh et al. 2006; Peson and Ingram 2008)" ([Duraku, Z. et al, 2020](#)).

"Finally, beyond technical connectivity, even when parents/caregivers have the time, they may lack the requisite skills to facilitate home-based on-line learning of younger learners. Indeed, recent survey evidence among national education authorities (UNESCO, April 2020) indicates that digital skill gaps are perceived to be one of the most important barriers for effective national distance on-line learning programmes where a majority of parents/caregivers and teachers are believed not have the requisite ICT skills to facilitate remote learning in countries in both North and South"([World Education Blog](#), May 2020).

"Children are specifically vulnerable to abuse during COVID-19. Research shows that increased stress levels among parents is often a major predictor of physical abuse and neglect of children. Stressed parents may be more likely to respond to their children's anxious behaviors or demands in aggressive or abusive ways. The support systems that many at-risk parents rely on, such as extended family, child care and schools, religious groups and other community organizations, are no longer available in many areas due to the stay-at-home orders...Since children are not going to school, teachers and school counselors are unable to witness the signs of abuse and report to the proper authorities. Also, many at-risk families may not have access to the technology children needed to stay connected with friends and extended family" ([SAMHSA](#), 2020).

² For additional evidence and guidance related to child protection and SGBV, please refer to The Alliance's past [synthesis on SGBV during COVID-19](#) and the technical note on [COVID-19: Protecting Children from Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the Home](#).

Compounding Vulnerabilities, Cont.		
		<p>“Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in December 2019, there has been a spike of domestic and gender-based violence worldwide. Countries with higher GDPs such as Sweden or lower GDPs as Sudan, are not spared the raging havoc left in the wake of COVID-19 across states, cities, towns, and rural areas. Countries with lockdowns, partial or full, are recording spikes in domestic and gender-based violence. In response to this, the United Nations has raised alarm regarding the increase of reported cases directly attributed to forced proximity occasioned by lockdowns” (The Guardian, July 2020).</p>
<p>Reduced access to social and protective services due to school closure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are no longer available as a safe haven for vulnerable children and/or those suffering from abuse. • Children have lost access to formal in-school MHPSS and school-based social service referral programmes. • Children with disabilities, in particular, lose school-based support services and often have even fewer options available for continued distance learning. • Children’s nutrition is likely to decline for those who rely on school feeding programmes. 	<p>“Schools typically provide safe spaces for girls. When they are in school, they are less likely to be forced into marriage. During this pandemic, however, schools are not there to protect girls” (Global Citizen, 20 May 2020).</p> <p>“As schools shifted rapidly to remote education, services for children with disabilities often fell by the wayside. Another mother said that one-on-one support for her two children with disabilities ‘completely stopped’” (Human Right Watch, 15 June 2020).</p> <p>“The World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that at least 310 million children are fed at school. Of these, 100 million are in India and 48 million in Brazil, two countries which currently have statewide school closures. South Africa and Nigeria also have some of the biggest programs, feeding more than 9 million children each (Figure 1). And it’s not just in low- or middle-income countries—millions of kids in rich countries rely on school meals too...According to Banerjee and Duflo, poor people spend up to 75 percent of their income on food. School feeding programs are often a very important part of a poor family’s “budget”: nearly half of low-income households in the United States say it’s harder to make ends meet during the summer holidays, when their children don’t receive school meals” (Center for Global Development, 2020).</p>

STRATEGIES TO REINFORCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

STRATEGY	DETAIL	EVIDENCE
<p>Provide or expand cash transfer and other social protection services to support vulnerable households</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash assistance can be provided to vulnerable households for short-term protection of children and families and to support return to schooling in the medium-term. 	<p>“An evaluation of the USAID Ebola cash transfer programme for 120,000 households in Liberia and Sierra Leone found that, as the programme progressed, transfers were increasingly spent on non-food items, including schooling” (Guluma, 2018).</p> <p>“Humanitarian cash transfers are a proven, cost efficient tool, delivered directly to people in need to make their own choices. IRC research shows that cash transfers can support health costs – vital now to protecting people from the pandemic – and reduce risks of spiralling debts and negative coping” (IRC, June 2020).</p> <p>"Encourage girls to re-enroll by providing cash transfers and waiving examination fees. This helps keep poverty from being a barrier and offsets lost income from girls not working" (Malala Fund, May 2020).</p>
<p>Promote safe and effective transition back to school to reengage with supportive relationships and services</p>	<p>Effective transition back to school has potential to offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to social and protective services, including CP referrals. • A ‘safe haven’ from abusive homes for some children. • Availability of proper sanitation and hygiene facilities, and safe social distancing protocols. 	<p>“In the wake of Ebola, UNDP recommended that ‘back to school’ should be among the first priorities for the recovery of basic social services. This requires significant efforts in ‘implementing safety protocols, investments in water supply and sanitary measures for schools, refurbishing of schools, teacher training and parental awareness, and psychosocial care’” (UNDP, 2015a, p. 10).</p> <p>“France had hoped reopening would address the inequalities evident under distance learning. But the government found that students from wealthier families were more likely to be among those who returned to their classrooms, while many poorer families continued to keep their children home. The education minister suggested the gap had to do with a lack of trust” (Washington Post, July 2020).</p>

Strategies to Reinforce Protective Factors

	<p>Effective transitions must take into account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The greater real and perceived risks for certain households, particularly poor households, that may be more worried about and vulnerable to the impacts of contracting the virus. • The impact of social distancing policies on children’s attendance at schools upon reopening. 	<p>“Reopening schools in a way that maximizes safety, learning, and the well-being of children, teachers, and staff will clearly require substantial new investments in our schools and campuses. We call on Congress and the administration to provide the federal resources needed to ensure that inadequate funding does not stand in the way of safely educating and caring for children in our schools. Withholding funding from schools that do not open in person fulltime would be a misguided approach, putting already financially strapped schools in an impossible position that would threaten the health of students and teachers” (American Academy of Pediatrics, 10 July 2020).</p> <p>“In addition, in-school social distancing related policies sustained during recovery (where followed) reduced the recommended number of students per class, leading to further drop out or increased admissions to private schools, as did some increased migration to the cities, where there was limited capacity in public schools (Santos & Novelli, 2017)” (Hallgarten, J., 2020).</p>
<p>Consider children’s strengths and best interests of children in decision-making processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is vital to ensure contextualization of responses to uphold the “do no harm” principle. • It is important prioritize the best interests of the ‘whole’ child to ensure their protection and wellbeing. • Responses should build on the strengths and perspectives of children. 	<p>“National and local policymakers are facing difficult decisions in light of the COVID-19 crisis. The initial response in many countries has been full or partial school closures to prevent transmission. However, education, protection, and health issues are all critical when deciding whether, when, and how schools should close, remain closed, or re-open (fully or partially). The questions and tools above support a localized process of discussion and decision-making on when and why to reopen schools that holistically addresses the well-being of children and youth. In many circumstances, full or partial school closures may be the correct decision. In other contexts, however, the ‘best interests of the child [and youth]’ may require the safe re-opening schools” (Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and INEE, July 2020).</p>

Strategies to Reinforce Protective Factors		
<p>Consider existing household resources when planning learning solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of TV and radio as mediums for distance learning promises to reach a greater number of children than digital options alone. • Remote learning should not rely solely on the household connectivity and digital skills, and education systems should be encouraged to find ways to adapt creatively to the context. 	<p>“Governments are arguably over investing in online learning solutions when more mixed provision of distance learning would be more inclusive and have greater reach. Currently, only 20% of governments combine both on-line platforms with TV/radio in their national distance learning strategies and less than 20% are TV and/or radio-based. Expanding the use and reach of more inclusive technologies such as TV and radio would certainly help fill the gaps in access to remote learning opportunities” (World Education Blog, 15 May 2020).</p> <p>“Robert Kinyanjui, a secondary school teacher in Kenya’s Dadaab camp, said teachers there were using various methods to ensure learning continues, including conducting lessons through WhatsApp groups, radio broadcasts and even audio recordings” (UNHCR, May 2020).</p>

EMERGING PRACTICES / RESPONSES

RESPONSE	DETAIL	EVIDENCE
Direct household support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution of cash-based transfers ensure households can meet basic needs and are able to afford to send children back to school upon reopening. 	<p>“In Mongolia, the government increased their Child Money Programme monthly benefit by five times from MNT 20,000 per month to MNT 100,000 for a duration of 6 months.</p> <p>“In Argentina, the Universal Child Allowance programme provided an increase of \$3,100 Argentine pesos (US\$47) for its current beneficiaries;</p> <p>“In Colombia, the government has created the Solidarity Income Program to provide cash transfers to households that do not currently receive benefits from any other National Government programmes. As of 21 May, more than 2 million vulnerable families had received a 320,000 peso transfer (equivalent to US\$81) through two equal payments made during March and May.</p> <p>“In Peru, the Government is providing solidarity bonus to rural households, independent workers and vulnerable families, as well a new universal bond, for 6.8 million households.” (UNICEF, May 2020).</p>
Alternative learning methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to offer continued learning options to reach children with limited or no access to the internet including via radio, TV, and SMS programming. Responders should leverage existing community-based structures and programmes to provide trusted support to children and schools as they transition. 	<p>“In Kailahun, one of the poorest districts in Sierra Leone, with very high [Ebola] infection rates, an existing project ‘Getting Ready for School’ was rapidly redesigned to become a radio programme Pikin to Pikin-To-Pikin (Child to Child Talk). Delivered by a partnership between UK-based Child to Child and local NGO Pikin-To-Pikin, 36 existing ‘young facilitators’ created content in three languages. Radios were distributed to another 252 facilitators, who created listening groups. Overall, the programmes reached an audience of 137,000. Working with national agencies and local leaders ensured strong buy-in at all levels, and the content was gender-responsive. The final evaluation showed high levels of child engagement and strong agreement from adults that the programming had contributed to children’s learning” (Hallgarten, J, 2020).</p> <p>“In Liberia, an already established peacebuilding education and advocacy programme reassigned young volunteers to join the fight against Ebola, supporting both disease control and health education. When schools reopened in 2015, 241 of the 300 volunteers were allocated to 83 public schools for a year. The evaluation, while not outcomes focused, mined the perspective of the volunteers and their beneficiary communities. It found that the volunteers’ input was welcomed by communities. Their pre-Ebola training and existing understanding of these communities’ contexts were crucial to their successful deployment” (Gercama & Bedford, 2016).</p>

Emerging Practices/Responses, Cont.

		<p>“Response measures targeting the base of the pyramid – children with regular access to internet – involve internet-based lessons and psycho-social sessions, including a referral system and monitoring by the organization’s case management team. Measures targeting the middle of the pyramid – children with access to smartphones – involves identification, registration and follow-up via regular teacher visits (with proper precautionary safety measures in place), as well as distribution of Self-Learning Kits...The top of the pyramid contains children in residential care or others who may have been overlooked by other emergency responses measures (such as children with disabilities). Hurras Network is targeting these children with more intensive identification efforts by case management workers and more tailored responses, as appropriate, based on the child’s situation and needs” (The Hurras Network, 2020). Click to read the case study below.</p>
<p>Continued promotion of inclusive education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing sensitization and promotion of education for girls and other marginalized groups, including children living with special needs and disabilities, is important even during school closures. 	<p>“During the Ebola crisis, “[i]n villages with established “girls’ clubs” and existing sensitization efforts to promote girls’ education, fewer girls experienced adverse effects and were more likely to continue their learning.” (UNESCO, 2020)</p> <p>“Yusuf is an 8 years old boy who suffered from hearing disability, and it challenged him a lot in school and in his social life. He couldn't hear or understand his family, friends, or his teacher. Before COVID-19, and because of face-to-face interaction the teacher always supported him by giving extra-hours to finish his lessons and understand the topics, however, after the disruption of school during COVID-19, the teacher was not able to provide the same support and Yusuf felt left out from his group after the education was transformed to distance learning platform.</p> <p>The Protection worker of the school referred Yusuf to HRS which in turn registered Yusuf in the CM system. Yusuf was supported through the Individual Protection Assistance program within the CM system to have a hearing aid device. The team has maintained all the precautionary measures during the whole period of registering Yusuf, to assessment, and to the point he received the device in the center. Today, Yusuf attends his lessons over the platform and plays with his friends and siblings as he always wished for” (The Hurras Network, 2020) Click to read the case study below.</p>

Emerging Practices/Responses, Cont.

Adaptive teaching methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revising curricula to reflect time lost ensures that children do not continue to fall farther behind when they return to the classroom.• Teaching methods should be adapted to emphasize rebuilding foundational skills lost during time away from the structured classroom setting.	<p>“For example, the “Teaching at the Right Level” (TaRL) approach, pioneered by Pratham in India, has shown that tailoring instruction to children’s learning levels can produce massive learning gains. The approach is now expanding and scaling in Africa through TaRL Africa. Other programs such as Tusome in Kenya have shown large results from working with governments to reorient curriculum and instructional support to teachers to prioritize foundational skills and ensure all children are learning.</p> <p>[...] One way systems could “build back better” is to use the skills gained implementing remediation to adapt instruction to children’s learning levels on an ongoing basis. For example, teachers trained to assess children’s learning when they return from school closures could continue to assess children’s learning at regular intervals throughout the year and adapt instruction to meet children where they are.” (Brookings Institute, June 2020)</p>
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GAPS

While a number of child protection risks related to the impact of COVID-19 on school closure were identified, we noticed several gaps in the data, including:

- Fewer articles/evidence on current impact of school closures on stakeholders (children, youth, teachers, etc.) in the majority world.
- Lack of data on the impact of school closure on children with special needs/ disabilities.
- Lack of age and gender (including gender non-binary) disaggregated evidence on the impact of school closure on the protection and wellbeing of children.
- Documentation of the lessons learned during the school closure decision-making process.

CONCLUSION

Schools are critical developmental and protective resources for children, families, and their communities. School closures have had immediate and significant impacts on child protection and wellbeing, particularly for girls and other vulnerable and marginalized groups of children. Evidence available from COVID-19 and previous Infectious disease outbreaks shows that the impact of these closures will likely continue through and beyond the COVID-19 recovery, with an increase in the number of dropouts and a rise of child protection concerns such as child marriages or exploitation. New challenges may also arise surrounding school re-opening, including stigmatization and anxiety around children whose households have been directly affected by COVID-19.

For many school systems around the world, when considering additional holiday closures, children will have been out of school for nearly six months before returning to classroom (if not longer pending successful transition and recovery periods). Remote learning options are still largely inaccessible

for most school-aged children in the majority world, and many countries remain uncertain about the possibility of re-opening schools in the coming months.³

More disaggregated data – particularly from crisis contexts and displaced populations – is critically needed to ensure that the impacts of school closure are documented and addressed in an appropriate and timely manner. It is also imperative that evidence is used to ensure that school re-opening is done with due consideration of child protection issues and is designed to maximize protective factors to promote children’s wellbeing and protection and to mitigate the impacts experienced. More evidence is needed to inform both the impacts of the school closures and the potential impacts of school re-opening on children’s wellbeing and protection. This information can and should be used to inform preparedness for future infectious disease outbreaks or ensuing spikes of COVID-19.

³ Read the statement released Friday, July 10, 2020 by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) on considerations and decision-making for safe school openings here: <https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2020/pediatricians-educators-and-superintendents-urge-a-safe-return-to-school-this-fall/>

ANNEX I. CASE STUDIES

Below are accounts submitted directly to The Alliance from practitioners and researchers in the field related to emerging child protection issues, best practices, and ongoing challenges during COVID-19. We hope to include even more case studies highlighting field experiences in forthcoming syntheses. Case studies related to any child protection risks and associated mitigation measures during COVID-19 can be submitted to The Alliance using the [online form found here](#).

Case Study 1: Syria, [Hurras Network](#)

Issue: North-West Syria has been affected by war since 2011. Schools have been targets in the ongoing conflict. Combined with internal displacements of families and children due to the war and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, children's educational opportunities have been severely disrupted in recent months. As a result, more than 36,000 children from Hurras's current network of beneficiaries were at risk of dropping out of school and losing access to protection services provided through their educational programmes.

Response: Hurras Network has adapted its education and child protection programme to reach as many of these high-risk children as possible by providing services according to a pyramid model. The base of the pyramid represents the least vulnerable children, and the top represents the most vulnerable children.

Response measures targeting the base of the pyramid – children with regular access to internet – involve internet-based lessons and psycho-social sessions, including a referral system and monitoring by the organization's case management team. Measures targeting the middle of the pyramid – children with access to smartphones – involves identification, registration, and follow-up with children via regular teacher visits (with proper precautionary safety measures in place), as well as distribution of Self-Learning Kits. The Self-Learning Kits were developed by Hurras Network and are distributed along with helplines brochures, parenting tips, recreational items, and internet cards for children to access the online platform to receive lessons and psycho-social support. The top of the pyramid contains children in residential care or others who may have been overlooked by emergency response measures (such as children with disabilities). Hurras Network is targeting these children with more intensive identification efforts by case management workers and more tailored responses, as appropriate, based on the child's situation and needs.

Hurras Network has also participated in designing and implementing a child protection monitoring tool to study the most serious child protection concerns during the COVID-19 emergency and to support the identification of appropriate protective factors for children during the loss of access to other child protection services.

Results: Through Hurras Network's response, 24,000 children and their families have benefited from the adaptation of education and child protection programmes during the COVID-19 emergency. The adaptation of programmes during COVID-19 has created additional challenges for vulnerable children. To address these challenges, Hurras Network has also supported seven hundred children through case management services complimented by Individual Protection Assistance (see Yusuf's story above: p.10).

The monitoring tool results suggest an increase in child labour in the form of street begging during the three-month period. Most of the children who participated in monitoring activities expressed their feeling of safety and comfort in reporting incidents of neglect, violence, and exploitation at home to their extended families in the absence of access to other child protection services.

Takeaways:

- Internet infrastructure is weak, and education responses should consider a wider range of solutions to reach children who don't have access to the internet via smartphones or computers. Additional considerations, particularly for children with disabilities, like online annotations of remote lessons and audio recordings of lessons and homework with clear instructions, should be included in responses.
- Monthly visits by child safeguarding officers are critical to address concerns of violence, neglect, and exploitation at home.
- For scale-up, the extended families of children should be considered, as they were reported as the first helpers for children

Case Study 2: Democratic Republic of Congo, North Kivu and Ituri, BIFERD

Issue: COVID-19 has compounded many ongoing issues in the DRC. In March, the country was still dealing with new cases of Ebola. In April and May, there was a proliferation of armed conflict and, consequently, the displacement of civilians in the DJUGU Territories in ITURI and the Rutshuru Territory in North Kivu. The impacts of both the public health crises and ongoing conflict have had serious impacts on household poverty levels, further contributing to negative impacts on the protection and education of children in the short, medium, and long term. Data on violence and abuse against children at the household level has not been properly documented. As of now, an increase in violence against children has been noted. In Goma, 387 girls under the age of 18 have been identified as having unwanted pregnancies. The closure of the schools in the DRC due to COVID-19 has been particularly difficult for children and families. Children are feeling isolated and report missing social time with their peers. Parents are also faced with new challenges, including educating children at home, managing existing household duties and financial responsibilities, and protecting their children from the direct and indirect impacts of the virus without having a full understanding of the risks.

Response:

In recent years, BIFERD has been working to implement a “Child-friendly school” approach in the DRC to promote positive discipline, reduce risks in school environments, and to establish codes of good conduct in schools in order to support the protection of children and facilitate increased school attendance for children in conflict zones. BIFERD is working to adapt this approach to the current context. During the COVID-19 response, BIFERD has:

- Advocated with the education cluster to raise the challenges faced by children and their families.
- Followed up on various cases of child abuse at the community level.
- Implemented awareness-raising activities with parents to create mechanisms for supervising children’s education at home including reading notebooks with their children, offering help with homework, reviewing lessons, etc.
- Collaborated with the Community of Baptist Churches in Eastern Congo (55th CEBCE), which manages more than 535 primary schools in eastern DR Congo, to encourage teachers and parents to co-develop child protection measures in schools to strengthen preparedness plans for future emergencies.

Takeaway: It is critical for governments to have crisis action plans in place that take into account the local context, including limitations to public and social service delivery (e.g. the implementation of internet-based remote school offerings was largely ineffective due to widespread lack of access to internet). Donors, International NGOs, and UN agencies can also support these efforts by offering more agile and flexible funding mechanisms to help local organizations, prepare and respond swiftly in their communities. This funding should include additional investments to strengthen organizational and community-level resilience to ensure future preparedness for the continuation of child protection services and children’s education in the case of future epidemics or crises.

Case Study 3: Ethiopia⁴

Issue: Access to child-friendly spaces and regular attendance at school was already a daily challenge for many refugee children and was made worse due to school closures and suspension of other childcare activities.

Response: Child Protection partners are supporting children by distributing toys and play materials at home to prevent gatherings. Partners introduced tailored interventions to support children and parents to make toys and play materials from locally available materials like mud and clothes, among others. By doing this, children are encouraged to stay at home and express their feelings and emotions through play activities.

Key child-friendly MHPSS messages were developed and widely circulated among both protection and non-protection actors. The key messages were disseminated at food distribution points during GFD across all camps. Moreover, CP, MHPSS, GBV, and Nutrition partners have continued using the key messages during their own outreach activities in the community. Through the existing youth networks, partners empowered and engaged youth to provide social and educational support to other children.

Takeaways: Multi-sectoral coordination is important for both developing and implementing COVID-19 awareness-raising and response measures. Youth are also an important asset who can provide active and positive contributions in support of COVID-19 responses.

⁴ The submitting organization has been verified by The Alliance but wishes to remain anonymous.

ANNEX II. EVIDENCE

Education-related COVID-19 guidance, academic research & innovative responses (*not exhaustive*)

THEME	RESOURCES
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevilla, A., et. al (2020). "Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children’s experiences during home learning". • Nicola, M., et. al (2020). "The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review". <i>International journal of surgery (London, England)</i>, 78, 185–193. • Munro, A. P. S., & Faust, S. N. (2020). "Children are not COVID-19 super spreaders: time to go back to school". <i>Archives of Disease in Childhood</i>, archdischild-2020-319474. • Kindernothilfe (2020a). Key highlights from exploratory research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of Working Children and their Families. Written by Ornella Barros & Claire O’Kane. • Kindernothilfe. (2020b). Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Lives of Working Children and their Families. Key findings of an exploratory research. Written by Ornella Barros & Claire O’Kane. • Wang, G., Zhang, Y., Zhao, J., Zhang, J., & Jiang, F. (2020). "Mitigate the effects of home confinement on children during the COVID-19 outbreak". <i>The Lancet</i>, 395(10228), 945–947. • Berger, Z. D., Evans, N. G., Phelan, A. L., & Silverman, R. D. (2020). "Covid-19: control measures must be equitable and inclusive". <i>BMJ</i>, m1141.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Education Cluster (03/07/2020) Covid-19 Impact on the education system. • Global Education Cluster, Child Protection cluster (May 2020). Safe back to school : a practitioner guide. • Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and INEE (03 July 2020). [PROVISIONAL RELEASE] "Weighing the Risks: School Closure and Reopening Under COVID-19—When, Why, and What Impacts?" • Lewis, S. (2020). "Education for Students with Visual Impairments in the Time of Coronavirus: An Approach to Education Through Videoconferencing". <i>Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness</i>, 0145482X2092712. • Van der Berg, S & Spaull, N. (2020). "Counting the Cost: COVID-19 school closures in South Africa & its impacts on children". <i>Research on Socioeconomic Policy (RESEP)</i>. Stellenbosch University. Stellenbosch. • Armitage, R., & Nellums, L. B. (2020). "Considering inequalities in the school closure response to COVID-19". <i>The Lancet Global Health</i>, 8(5), e644. • Van Lancker, W., & Parolin, Z. (2020). "COVID-19, school closures, and child poverty: a social crisis in the making". <i>The Lancet Public Health</i>, 5(5), e243–e244.

THEME	RESOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee, J. (2020). “Mental health effects of school closures during COVID-19.” <i>The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health</i>, 4(6), 421. • Morgan, H. (2020). “Best Practices for Implementing Remote Learning during a Pandemic”. <i>The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas</i>. • Barnett, S et al. (24 June 2020) Redesigning an education project for child friendly radio: a multisectoral collaboration to promote children’s health, education, and human rights after a humanitarian crisis in Sierra Leone • Daniel, S. J. (2020). “Education and the COVID-19 pandemic”. <i>PROSPECTS</i>. • INEE COVID-19 resource collection. • Save the Children. (June 2020). COVID-19 Impacts on African Children: How to Protect a Generation at Risk. • Safe to Learn. (May 2020). Safe to Learn during COVID-19: Recommendations to prevent and respond to violence against children in all learning environments. • IASC, UNICEF, WHO, IFRC (March 2020). Interim guidance for covid-19 prevention and control in schools. • UNICEF (June 2020). Framework for reopening schools • UNESCO (March 2020). Education: From disruption to recovery • World Vision (June 2020) Children’s voices in the time of COVID-19 Continued child activism in the face of personal challenges • Hallgarten, J. (March 2020). “Evidence on efforts to mitigate the negative educational impact of past disease outbreaks”. Education Development Trust. • Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (May 2020). “Intimate Partner Violence and Child Abuse Considerations During COVID-19”. • Viner, R. M. et al (6 April 2020). “School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: a rapid systematic review”. <i>The Lancet</i>. • Selbervik, H. (May 2020). “Impacts of school closures on children in developing countries: Can we learn something from the past?”. Chr. Michelsen Institute. • Nyamweya, N. (26 June 2020). “Displacement, girls' education and COVID-19”. Malala Fund. • Guluma, Y. & A. Frisetti (28 May 2018). “Outcome Analysis: Cash Transfer Programming Response to the Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone and Liberia”. The Cash Learning Partnership.

Mapped News Articles

THEME	SOURCES
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Global Citizen (15 June 2020). COVID-19 Threatens to Push 33 Million Children in Africa Into Poverty, Warns Save the Children
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Human Rights Watch (15 June 2020). School Closures Particularly Hard on Children with Disabilities ● Union Leader (14 June 2020). Educators worry remote learning has worsened inequities in schools ● American Academy of Pediatrics (10 July 2020). Pediatricians, Educators and Superintendents Urge a Safe Return to School This Fall ● BBC News (22 April 2020). Tiny fraction of 'at risk' children attending schools ● BBC (4 June 2020). How Covid-19 is changing the world's children ● The Guardian (15 June 2020). Four in 10 pupils have had little contact with teachers during lockdown ● Monash University (18 May 2020). The COVID lockdown threat to children's security in developing nations ● Global Citizen (20 May 2020) 4 Critical Humanitarian Issues That African Countries Should Not Forget as They Fight COVID-19 ● Save the Children (29 May 2020). Lebanon: students miss half the school year due to double impact of economic and coronavirus crises ● The Conversation (5 March 2020). Coronavirus: Distance learning poses challenges for some families of children with disabilities ● Plan International (16 June 2020). Girls at greatest risk as COVID-19 threatens to leave a generation of African children behind. ● Sky News (16 June 2020) Coronavirus: 2.3 million children have done 'almost no schoolwork' in lockdown, study finds ● VOA (04 June 2020). Cameroon Opens Schools Amid COVID-19 Spike ● News24 (18 June 2020). Schools reopening: 'State worked hard to ensure children won't be walking into Covid-19 raging fire' ● Brookings (29 April 2020). The COVID-19 cost of school closures ● Brookings (3 June 2020). Reopening schools amid the Covid-19 pandemic: your questions, our answers ● World Education Blog (15 May 2020). Distance Learning Denied ● Boston News (19 June 2020). COVID-19 pandemic may give rise to 'universal stress' for kids coming back to school ● CNBC Africa (1 June 2020). Coronavirus – Africa: Misinformation leads to increasing COVID-19 stigma in sub-Saharan Africa ● Brookings (14 May 2020). COVID-19 in India: Education disrupted and lessons learned ● Human Rights Watch (24 April 2020). Why Covid-19 Choices Are Critical for Children ● World Economic Forum (14 May 2020). COVID-19: These countries show us what education looks like after lockdown ● The Guardian (15 June 2020). Give 1m UK children reliable broadband or risk harming their education, MPs say ● The Week (2 June 2020). Childhood after coronavirus ● AllAfrica (19 June 2020). Refugee-Led Organizations Can Deliver Education to Refugee Children During COVID-19 and Beyond

THEME	SOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CGTN Africa (14 June 2020). COVID-19: Education goes online ● Voice of America (02 June 2020). Girls Rush to Marriage, Childbirth for Fear of COVID-19 ● Inquirer (02 July 2020). Plight of children with disabilities ‘exacerbated’ by COVID-19 lockdown ● Healio - Psychiatry (08 April 2020). COVID-19’s mental health effects by age group: Children, college students, working-age adults and older adults ● Xinhua News Agency (24 June 2020). Feature: Gambian children suffer stressful impact of stay-at-home orders ● CNN-News18 (12 June 2020). Pulled Out of School, Pushed Into Marriage: What the Pandemic is Doing to India’s Teenaged Girls ● The Policy Times (08 June 2020). Global Lockdown; How School Closure Left Children at Risk as a Victim of COVID- 19 ● Global Citizen (19 May 2020). COVID-19 Puts Girls at Risk of Unplanned Pregnancies, Violence, and Missing Out on School: Report ● Brookings (15 June 2020). How much learning may be lost in the long-run from COVID-19 and how can mitigation strategies help? ● Brookings (06 May 2020). How school closures during COVID-19 further marginalize vulnerable children in Kenya ● New Scientist (29 April 2020). Coronavirus: What does evidence say about schools reopening? ● Washington Post (29 May 2020). The case for reopening schools this fall ● The Conversation (28 May 2020). Coronavirus: is it safe for children to return to school? ● Maintains Programme (11 May 2020). COVID-19 Series: School’s out for COVID...But how could we lessen the impact? ● World Health Organization (10 May 2020). Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19 ● UNESCO (9 April 2020). Plan for school reopening ● Le quotidien du médecin (13 May 2020). Covid-19 : 20 présidents de sociétés savantes de pédiatrie réclament le retour des enfants à l'école ● American Enterprise Institute (4 May 2020). A blueprint for back to school ● The Economist (April 27, 2020) ‘No more pencils, no more books: Closing schools for covid-19 does lifelong harm and widens inequality’ ● The Guardian (20 May 2020). When should British schools reopen? Here's what the science tells us ● Centre for Global Development (29 May 2020). Planning for School Reopening and Recovery After COVID-19 ● The John Maytham Show (16 June 2020). Podcast: COVID-19 school closures in South Africa and its impact on children. ● International Growth Centre (9 June 2020). COVID-19 Torn safety nets: How COVID-19 has exposed huge inequalities in global education ● The Guardian (3 June 2020). Sexual and gender-based violence: Hidden social pandemic under radar of COVID-19 lockdown ● UNHCR (11 May 2020). Refugee children hard hit by coronavirus school closures ● BBC News (17 June 2020). Coronavirus: What's happening to free school meals this summer? ● Center for Global Development (24 March 2020). With Schools Closed, Hundreds of Millions of Children Are Not Receiving School Meals

THEME	SOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="398 276 1973 339">• World Food Programme (March 2020). World Food Programme gears up to support children left without meals due to COVID-19 school closures<li data-bbox="398 347 1973 411">• International Rescue Committee (17 June 2020). The cost of living: COVID-19 humanitarian cash transfers to prevent hunger and hardship