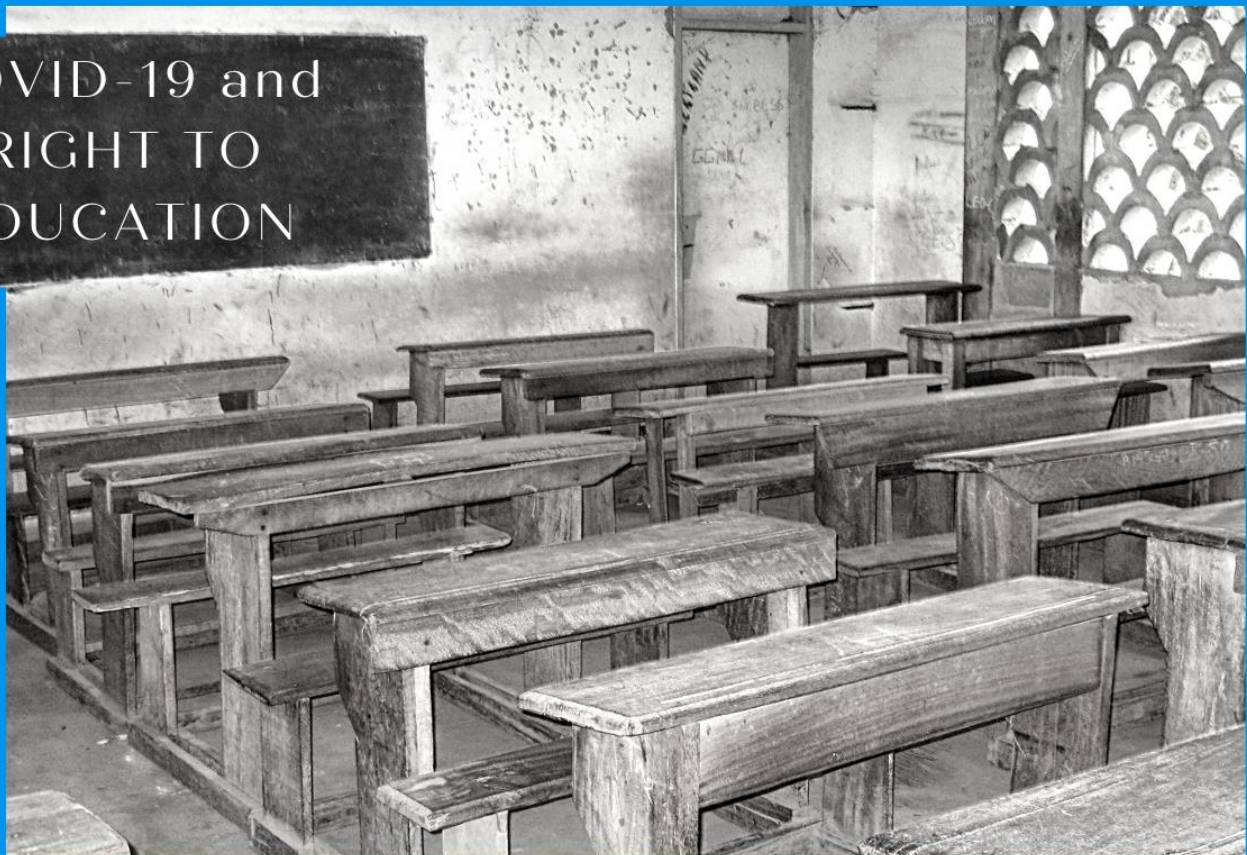


COVID-19 and RIGHT TO EDUCATION



COVID-19 AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION: CURRENT IMPACT AND FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

Online panel discussion
Held on 25 March 2021

4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE
مركز جنيف لحقوق الإنسان والحوار العالمي
CENTRE DE GENÈVE POUR LA PROMOTION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET LE DIALOGUE GLOBAL

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GENEVA CENTRE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND
GLOBAL DIALOGUE



COVID-19 AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION: CURRENT IMPACT AND FUTURE CONSEQUENCES



H.E. Lubna Qassim
Deputy Permanent
Representative at the
PM of the United Arab
Emirates to the UNOG



Dr Kombou Bolly Barry
UN Special Rapporteur
on the Right to
Education



Dr Suguru Mizunoya
Senior Adviser Monitoring
and Statistics (education)
UNICEF



Ms Emma Wagner
Senior Education Policy
& Advocacy Adviser
Save the Children



Ms Amélie J. Mariage
Founder of Apprentices
Visuales



Ms Madelle Kangha
Founder JumpStart
Academy Africa

School closures
Girls' education
Data and
methodology

Educational programs
Virtual learning
Refugee
education

25 March 2021
3:00 pm (Geneva time, CET)

PREFACE

The present publication is the result of an online panel debate organized by the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue on 25 March 2021, on a highly topical issue of major importance, entitled “COVID-19 and Right to Education: Current Impact and Future Consequences”.

The panel, in its presentations by panellists and the ensuing debates, addressed a host of crucial and contemporary issues in relation with this theme, such as school closures, educational programmes, virtual learning, refugee education, among others.

As UNESCO observes, education is both, a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. It is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty, gain societal empowerment. It goes further beyond, safeguarding women and children from exploitation, and generally promoting human rights and democracy. In this, the right to education and its protection reflects some of the underlying precepts of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Indeed, it has been acknowledged in international law and policy as a ‘multiplier right’, a vital tool for transformational change, an indispensable requisite to foster understanding, tolerance, respect and solidarity among the world’s communities.

The Geneva Centre had the privilege to benefit from the remarkable international expertise and field experience of six renowned panellists, including from a Permanent Mission, a United Nations Special Rapporteur, the UNICEF and several international NGOs, to whom it takes this opportunity to renew its deep gratitude.

The publication includes a summary of the proceedings and the full statements of the panel presentations, as well as an analytical article which builds upon the lessons learned from the panel. The article provides an overview of the existing international legal and institutional framework related to the right to education, identifies the wide-ranging impact of the pandemic thereupon, and offers policy recommendations for building forward better.

The Geneva Centre wishes to reiterate its commitment to promote the vital right to education, within the framework of its mission, through continuing efforts in terms of advocacy, dissemination of best practices, training and national capacity building.

Dr Umesh Palwankar

Executive Director

*Geneva Centre for Human Rights
Advancement and Global Dialogue*



PROCEEDINGS OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION

The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue (hereinafter the “Geneva Centre”) organized an online event entitled “**COVID-19 and Right to Education: current impact and future consequences**” on 25 March 2021. The online panel was organized on the Zoom platform.

Invited speakers coming from different types of fields and organizations discussed and elaborated on the current impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the right to education, and the future consequences it may have. Speakers identified the main risks and problems and presented solutions for the future, to safeguard and promote the right to education following the pandemic.

The focus of the event was, among others, on the following points:

- General impact of COVID-19 on the right to education worldwide.
- School closures around the world.
- The impact of COVID-19 on refugee education.
- United Arab Emirates’ efforts to safeguard education during the pandemic.
- Recommendations to states.
- Use of technology to continue providing education throughout COVID-19.
- Educational programs in Africa during the pandemic.

The speakers were experts in the field of education as well as first-hand changemakers involved in the protection and promotion of education. The panel included the following speakers:

H.E. Lubna Qassim, Minister Plenipotentiary First Degree, Deputy Permanent Representative of UAE to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva

Dr Koumbou Boly Barry – UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Dr Suguru Mizunoya – Senior Adviser Monitoring and Statistics (Education) at UNICEF

Ms Emma Wagner – Senior Education Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Save the Children

Ms Amélie J. Mariage – Co-founder of Apendices Visuales and Next Generation Fellow at the United Nation Foundation

Ms Madelle Kangha – Founder of JumpStart Academy Africa and UN Young Leader for the SDGs



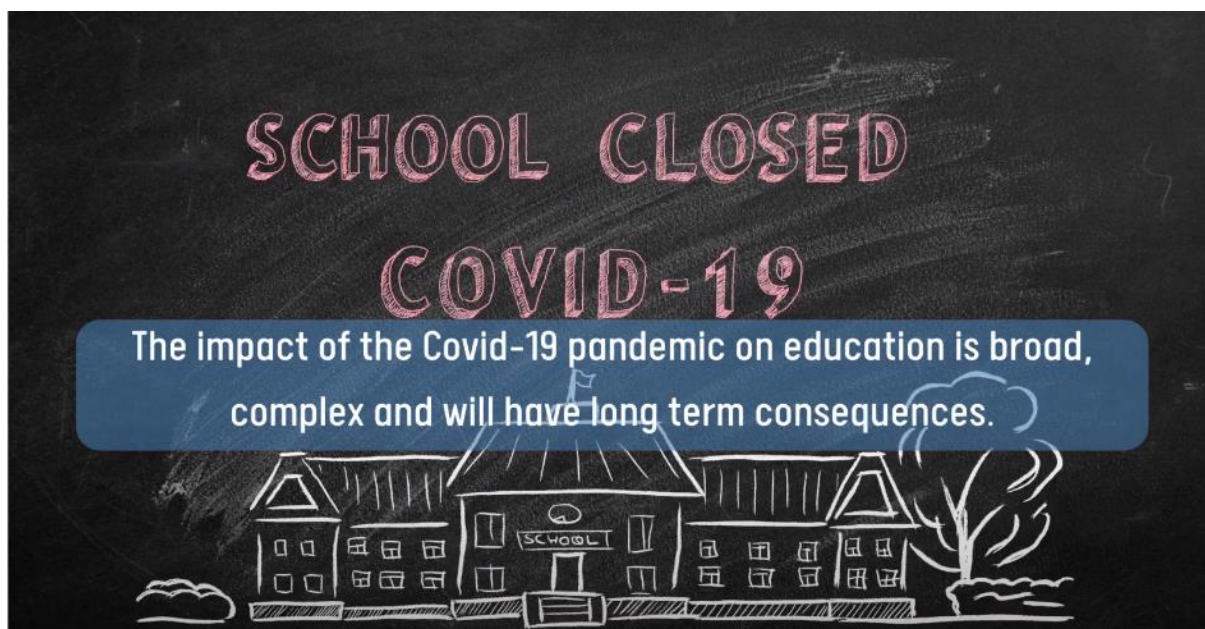
Members of the panel discussion

In his opening remarks as the moderator of the panel discussion, **Dr Umesh Palwankar** warmly welcomed the speakers and also the audience, composed of more than 70 persons from all parts of the world, interested in a subject of vital importance for the future of society.



Dr Umesh Palwankar, Executive Director of the Geneva Centre

With a view to gaining time, the Geneva centre prepared a short video (1mn40) to introduce the subject of the panel discussion. The short video, available on the YouTube channel of the Geneva Centre, highlighted the main issues stemming from the impact of COVID-19 on the right to education: school closures, impact on girls, refugee education. The video also mentioned what could be done and some good practices to safeguard education during, and after the pandemic.



Short video played at the beginning of the event, to present the topic. Available at the following link:
<https://youtu.be/FfBH8lFNIR8>

In her presentation, **H.E Lubna Qassim**, deplored the impact of COVID-19 on the right to education worldwide, saying that more than 1.6 billion learners' right to a quality learning have been impacted by the pandemic. In her introduction, she stated that devising alternative ways to maintain access to education was the main challenge for governments, even before considering re-opening schools with or without the pandemic.



H.E. Lubna Qassim, Deputy Permanent Representative of UAE to the UN Office in Geneva

H.E. Lubna Qassim recalled the numerous impacts of school closures and quarantine measures on children. She also underscored that the media and IT packages to provide education during the confinement, proved to be insufficient in most of the low-income countries due to the lack of sufficient technical and financial resources.

She stated that in UAE, prompt and effective measures were taken to drastically upgrade its internet speed and coverage to ensure all 1.2 million pupils and students could continue their education online when COVID-19 broke out.

H.E. Lubna Qassim asked the question she considered as the most important: what can human rights do to mitigate the long-term effects of the pandemic on school children? She shared four recommendations:

- Reframe the educational process taking into account situations of emergencies in the future.
- Allocate sufficient funds to schools, to make education the priority in any public policy.
- Prepare children's transition from distance learning to normal school by providing a smooth return through psychosocial follow up and medical care to most affected children.
- Consider adopting few of the pandemic legacy such as frequent hands washing and maintain some IT experiences that could be shifted to other educational activities.

To conclude, H.E. Qassim commended the important role played by the United Nations and the OHCHR, including the Special Procedures, for their efforts in providing states with guidelines on protecting the rights of their citizens while combatting the pandemic. She also said that the work of the UN system cannot be completed without referring to the valuable work of the UN Secretary General for his various initiatives towards the international community calling for more cooperation, solidarity and compassion towards the most vulnerable countries. The call for a free and universal vaccine to be made available for all is certainly the most important goal for humankind.

Dr Koumbou Boly Barry, the UN special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, started her presentation by remembering the audience that before the pandemic, there were already 1 billion people lacking access to a proper education. She stated that inequalities were already there, before the pandemic, and that COVID-19 only exacerbated these issues.



Dr Koumbou Boly Barry – UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

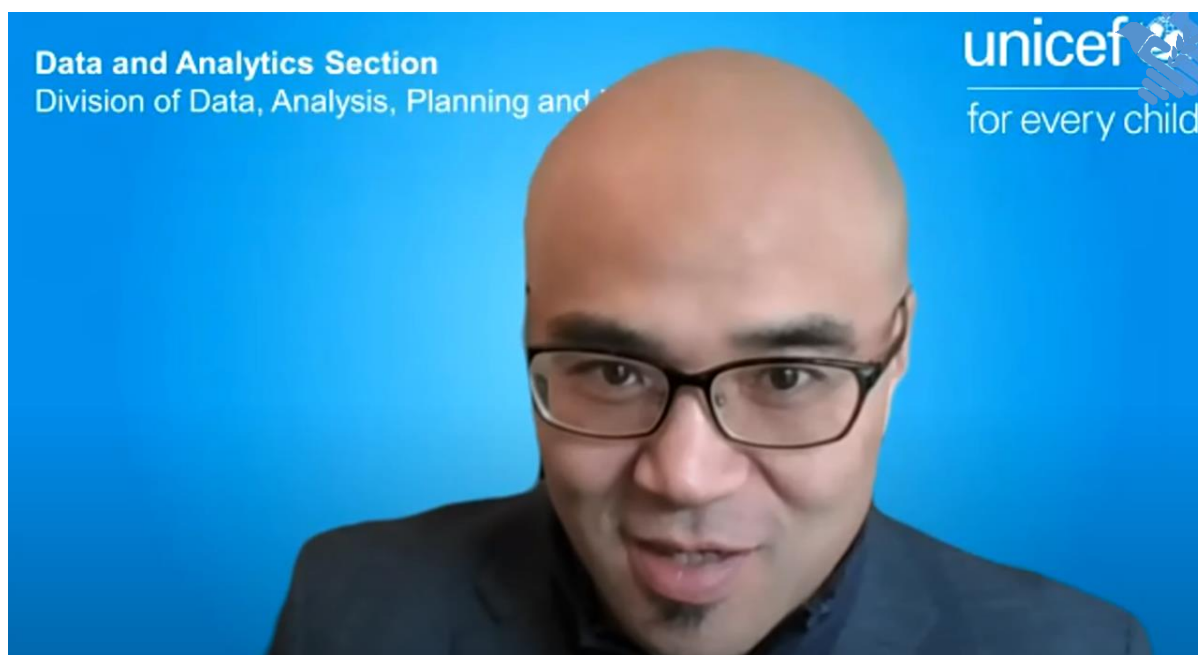
Talking about the impact of COVID-19, the Special Rapporteur highlighted the holistic aspect of the pandemic, impacting education, health, governance, economy. Her first recommendation was about the need for the whole society to be able to hold a dialogue, between policymakers, citizens, communities, teachers, learners, civil society, researchers, in order to build a new paradigm for education.

Regarding the use of technology in education, Dr Koumbou Boly Barry said it was a great solution, however, if you do not have adequate housing, how can you find a space to use technology in education, how can you use a laptop?

Another recommendation issued by the Special Rapporteur was about financing. How to finance the education system? Often it is not a problem of availability of financial resources. It is a problem of how to use the money and what is the priority given to it. She also made a recommendation about the role of the private sector in education. She said that it could be a dangerous trend if private actors do not adopt a rights-based approach in the best interest of the child when getting involved in the education system.

To conclude, Dr Koumbou Boly Barry, issued a last recommendation, about the role of teachers and their recognition, especially the role played by women. She said that it was very important to undertake capacity building programs for teachers and that mental health should not be put aside when we talk about teachers and education.

Our third speaker, **Dr Suguru Mizunoya**, Senior Adviser Monitoring and Statistics (Education) at UNICEF based his presentation on UNICEF's latest publication "*COVID-19 and School closure – one year of education disruption*", which was published at the beginning of the March 2021, to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on education around the world.



Dr Suguru Mizunoya, Senior Adviser Monitoring and Statistics (Education) at UNICEF

Dr Mizunoya started his presentation by sharing two statistics: 617 million children worldwide cannot read or perform basic mathematics. 617 million is about twice better than the entire population in European Union. 87%, or 9 in 10 students in Sub-Saharan Africa are considered as learning poor, not being able to read simple sentences. These two statistics illustrate the fact that we are facing global learning crisis.

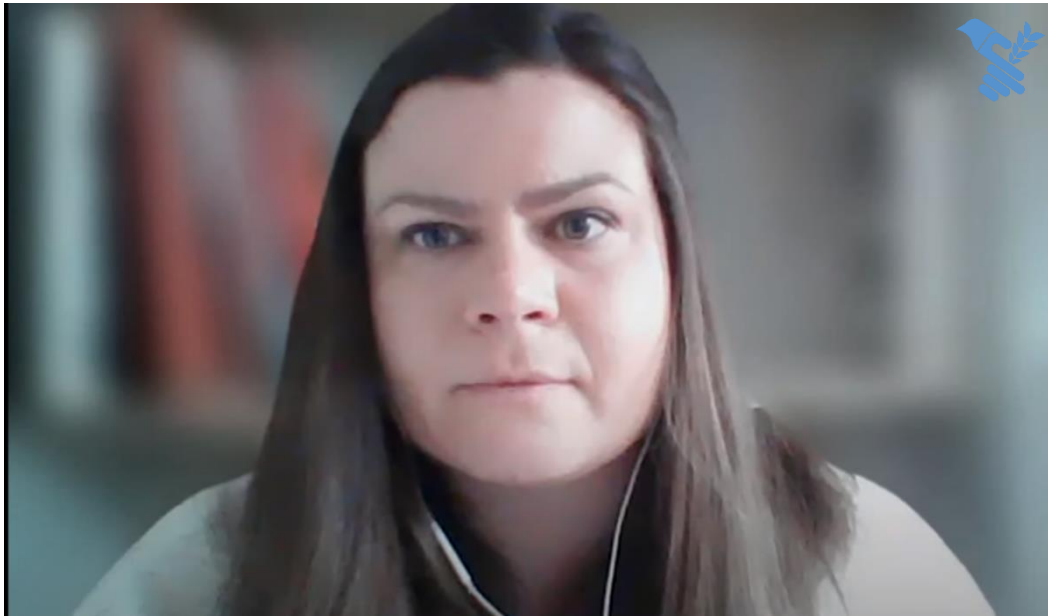
Dr Suguru Mizunoya said that UNICEF's study showed that about 1/3 of the students globally from pre-primary to upper secondary schools were not able to even access to these broadcast-based and internet-based remote learning. He stated that learning from home was fine if students had access to alternatives. Internet-based remote learning offers high quality learning opportunities. Did many of students who studied at home have access to internet? No. The World Bank estimated that COVID-19 could result in a loss of 10 US trillion dollars in lifetime earning for these generation of children.

Dr Mizunoya shared the key finding of the report: globally, schools for 95 million students are fully closed. Schools for additional 62 million students are partially closed. Then, he described the regional differences: in Latin America and Caribbean and in South Asia, the vast majority of schools are closed with some countries having schools closed for more than 200 instruction days (a full academic year), while North America only applied partial school closures.

To finish his presentation, Dr Mizunoya presented the four keys take away of the UNICEF report:

- Too many countries have opted to keep schools closed, some for nearly a year.
- Many countries failed to provide high-quality internet-based remote learning.
- Schools are essential for children's learning, health, safety and well-being. Children cannot afford another year of school closure.
- No effort should be spared to keep schools open or prioritize them in reopening plans.

Ms Emma Wagner, Senior Education Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Save the Children, focused her presentation on the impact of COVID-19 on refugee education. The pandemic has compounded existing education inequalities that prevent refugee children from fulfilling their right to quality education.



Ms Emma Wagner, Senior Education Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Save the Children

Ms Wagner started her presentation by highlighting the refugees access to education before COVID-19. She stated that almost half of all school-aged refugees – 3.7 million – were out of school even before the pandemic, with refugee girls almost three times more likely to be out of school.

Ms Wagner mentioned the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, quoting the landmark global commitment to provide more financial support for refugee education, and the 2019 Global Refugee Forum in which the topic of education “*stole the show*” in terms of pledges and commitment. However, one year on she explained that just 9% of pledges have been fulfilled.

Ms Wagner presented one of the latest reports from Save the Children: “*Progress under threat: Refugee education one year on from the Global Refugee Forum and the impact of COVID-19*”. The report shows that, where refugee children were in school, their learning has been disrupted by school closures. Very few refugee children had access to any sort of online learning. Ms Wagner presented how loss in refugee families incomes, emergency education response plans and COVID-19 restrictions increased school drop-out for refugee children, leading to increased rates of child labour, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and child pregnancy among refugee communities. Ms Wagner also presented some responses and innovations to keep refugees education safe during the pandemic, such as distance learning modalities, better integration between child protection and education sectors and provision of mental health and psychological support through new platforms.

Ms Wagner finished her presentation by giving some recommendations for the Global Refugee Forum process, refugee hosting countries, and donors:

- Urgent funding is needed. Governments should maintain or increase their education budgets.
- Refugees should be included in national education systems and in the education responses.
- Governments should provide refugees the additional support they require to access distance learning and return to school safely.

Our fifth speaker, **Amélie J. Mariage**, Co-founder of Aprendices Visuales and Next Generation Fellow at the United Nation Foundation, presented the work of the organization she founded: Aprendices Visuales, a tech for good that have helped more than 1 million children with learning difficulties to access inclusive education worldwide.



Amélie J. Mariage, Co-founder of Aprendices Visuales and Next Generation Fellow at UN Foundation

Ms Mariage explained the story behind her organization Aprendices Visuales, which started at home, to help her little cousin diagnosed with autism. Today, Aprendices Visuales is a tech non profit which created a series of online courses, eBooks and apps with pictograms that are used by more than 1 million children worldwide. She explained that one million children may seem incredible, but when you know that today 2 billion children have some learning difficulties 1 million is just a very small number.

Ms Mariage shared her views on the idea of online learning. She said that the good point in COVID-19 is that the reflection around education has never been so global, like in a large-scale social experiment. In Spain, France and everywhere else, decisions that in normal times could take years of deliberations were passed in a matter of hours. Everything and everyone just goes online.

Talking about online learning, Ms Mariage said that COVID-19 placed a spotlight on the critical need for all students to have access at home to the devices and Internet connectivity required for online learning. Closing the digital gap, by ensuring internet connexion, access to technology and devices, as universal and accessible for everyone, is a really big challenge right now.

Ms Mariage then shared two opposite views: an optimistic view, in which we see an increased recognition of how online learning can extend, break barriers and enhance students' education, and a pessimistic view, saying that the rush to online learning without adequate preparation, could lead to many minimal benefits, if not unintended consequences.

To conclude her presentation, Ms Mariage stated that effective online learning involves more than just moving lectures online. It involves changing the culture of the school, creating a real experience online as a totally new form of interactions. There is a need to stop thinking about online learning vs “face to face” and to take advantage of both physical and online learning.

Our last speaker was **Madelle Kangha**, Founder of JumpStart Academy Africa and United Nations Young Leader for the SDGs. She presented the work of her organization JumpStart Academy Africa, a social venture which is accelerating Africa's readiness for the future of work by equipping young people with workforce and soft skills. She also presented the actions undertaken to safeguard education in Africa during the pandemic.



Madelle Kangha, Founder of JumpStart Academy Africa and UN Young Leader for the SDGs

Ms Kangha started her presentation by highlighting the importance of soft skills. JumpStart Academy Africa was created in 2014, because in the current model of education across sub-Saharan Africa, almost 61 million children reach adolescence without the skills they need. JumpStart Academy Africa tries to infuse its curriculum, based on 21st century skills, making these students job ready, so that they are not only equipped to be job seekers but also job creators.

Speaking about the impact of COVID-19 on education in Africa, Ms Kangha explained that basically made a bad situation worse in terms of education. School closures have a detrimental effect on children rights, one of them being the risk of girls out of schools to be given out in early marriages.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Ms Kangha and her organization noticed disparities between rural areas and urban areas, with students in the rural areas not receiving as much attention, resources and materials as the students in urban areas. That is why, JumpStart Academy Africa created a program called "*Keep learning during COVID-19*", and the goal was to have live and on demand classes for students primarily between the ages of 14 and 19. She explained the success of this program, but also the different challenges to implement it. Ms Kangha shared some inspiring stories about students who benefited from their program, one of them now doing a PhD in the United States.

Ms Kangha concluded by saying that they hope to keep going with JumpStart Academy Africa not just in Cameroon and in Togo, but across French and English-speaking West Africa.



GENEVA CENTRE
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On 25 March 2021, The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue invites you to join its online event on

COVID-19 AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION: CURRENT IMPACT AND FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

FULL STATEMENTS OF PANELLISTS

School closures

Girls' education

Data and
methodology

Educational programs

Virtual learning

Refugee
education

25 March 2021

3:00 pm (Geneva time, CET)

H.E. Lubna Qassim

Minister Plenipotentiary First Degree, Deputy Permanent Representative of UAE to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva



H.E. Lubna Qassim was appointed as the UAE's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN and International Organisations in Geneva on 29 August 2019. Lubna was appointed by a Presidential Decree on October 2018 as Minister Plenipotentiary of First Degree. Pursuant to this appointment, she joined the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation and served as Senior Legal Counsel to the UAE's Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation after a span of 20 years of successful career in law, Trade, Economy, Finance, cross-border acquisitions and International Dispute Resolutions across Europe, US, Asia, and the Middle East.

She speaks six languages fluently and is recognized by a number of International Organisations for her leadership, diplomacy, and legal intellect. She is a recipient of a number of international and regional awards, including IFRC who chose her, in 2018, as the best General Counsel of the Middle East in 2018. She was also recognized in the same year as one of the top 50 female leaders in the Arab World.

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There is a general consensus that the closure of schools worldwide due to the Covid 19 pandemic had and continues to have a major impact on children's right to a quality learning of more than 1.6 billion boys and girls around the world according to UNESCO. In the absence of any perspective to erase the pandemic at least for the near future, the huge challenge ahead for governments and the like private educational institutions is to devise alternative ways to maintain access to education before considering whether a reopening of school can be envisaged with or without the pandemic.

This is particularly stressing as no one can predict how and when the pandemic can be overcome, and no one can predict what the future of education will like in the near, mid and long-term future. The severity of the pandemic has been so rapid and so damaging that it did not leave any time to educational institutions whether public or private for preparedness or anticipation to save or safeguard the right to education which was one of the main sectors to suffer most.

Before going into the subject of which is our main subject of our discussion, I wish first to recall few peripheral issues which are still pending and which have a direct impact on the right to education, such as the risk of children to be contaminated by the virus and be contagious in turn, their capacity to resist to the new emerging variants and whether the vaccination programme currently dedicated to adults can be feasible on children or do scientists envisage a specific vaccine for school children and youngsters. These are in my opinion prerequisite questions that may affect an adequate schooling and should be addressed in priority or simultaneously when discussing the issue of education.

As to the impact of confinement or quarantine with its multiple effects on children namely on their school curricula, the one-year long pandemic has caused and is still causing serious damages namely in the low-income countries in terms of school dropouts, idles, malnutrition school hygiene, transportation and the like services and facilities are necessary in any educational system.

Furthermore, the confinement has revealed that the alternatives ways introduced namely media and IT packages to counter the pandemic proved to be insufficient in most of the low-income countries due to inextricable situations, such as an insufficient offer by governments, poor knowledge in IT, the lack of electricity in some rural areas or Wi-Fi networks, which according to many researches made alternative solutions inaccessible for many vulnerable families.

Perhaps the most important aspect of our today's discussion is what can be done and what can human rights do to mitigate the long-term effects of the pandemic on school children at a time when the scientific community is divided between optimism for some and pessimism for others? There are many lessons to be learnt from the past year. Few I would like to humbly share:

- (i) The urgent need to rethink educational programmes and/or to reframe the educational process taking into account situations of emergencies in the future such as conflicts and natural disasters.
- (ii) Adopt a pragmatic rethinking of the financial resources by allocating sufficient funds to schools by making education as THE priority in any public policy to enable well qualified personnel to deliver quality education.
- (iii) Prepare children's transition from distance learning to normal school by providing a smooth return through psychosocial follow up and medical care to most affected children and by taking all the necessary measures to protect the mental health of children
- (iv) Consider adopting few of the pandemic legacy such as to continue with frequent hands washing which have proved to be beneficial for children who suffered less from a number of casual sickness and maintain some IT experiences that could be shifted to other educational activities. Other successful examples from the current experience can be added to improve the right to education.

In UAE, prompt and effective measures were taken to drastically upgrade its internet speed and coverage to ensure all 1.2 million pupils and students could continue their education online when COVID-19 broke out.

When the cases of corona virus slowly began the government acted quickly to instate distance learning for schools and universities. UAE was in a fortunate position and well prepared for distance learning because of smart learning initiatives which UAE had invested in since 2012. UAE has a solid base from which to build a wide scale model. It was impressive that because of the stellar infrastructure was able to shift more than 1.2 M students on a virtual platform within 2 weeks.

The country did this by developing a satellite operations centre to ensure pupils across the country had access to internet at all times. Free satellite services were set up so pupils in remote areas of the emirate could also continue their education.

Finally, what can human rights do?

This is an essential question that should remain in force during and after the pandemic, especially at a time when the bulk of responsibilities related to education is shared between governments precautionary measures, parental choice and school authorities.

From a human rights perspective, it looks quite natural that some duties go beyond these traditional stakeholders and fall within the boundary of international actors because of their significant impact on a wide range of children's rights.

One of these actors is the Office of the High Commissioner for human rights, which should be commended here for its efforts in providing states with guidelines on protecting the rights of their citizens including children while combatting the pandemic. These guidelines have the merit of drawing states' attention on the corollary negative impact of Covid on the right to education of children, namely in terms of discrimination, violence, the right to health to cite only these few examples.

It is also important that the Special procedures continue their task to ensure that governments do implement scrupulously the provisions of the UN Convention on the rights of the child, namely in sensitive areas such as the right to education, to food, to health, to be free from violence etc which are vital rights for the well-being of the child.

Equally, particular attention should be given to the role of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education and the recommendations contained in her reports, particularly in these exceptional circumstances, "to ensure that measures adopted in response to the pandemic do not jeopardize the right to education and do not increase the suffering of the most marginalized" as Ms. Koumbou Bolt Barry rightly indicated in her last report to the 46th session of the Human Rights Council.

I am delighted to see that Ms Koumbou Boly Barry is present with us in today's panel, I look forward to listening to developments if any since her last report.

Finally, the work of the UN system cannot be completed without referring to the valuable work of the UN Secretary General for his various initiatives towards the international community calling for more cooperation, solidarity and compassion towards the most vulnerable countries. The call for a free and universal vaccine to be made available for all is certainly the most important goal for humankind.

To conclude, I am of the opinion of those who say that humanity while collectively combating this awful pandemic and its dramatic consequences, should grasp this situation to transform it into an opportunity to rethink our behavior so it will not happen in the future, and if it does happen, no one, be it adult or a child, will be left behind.

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Dr Koumbou Boly Barry

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education



Dr Koumbou Boly Barry, from Burkina Faso, was appointed Special Rapporteur in 2016 at the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council. Dr. Boly Barry holds a PhD in Economic History from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Senegal. She is the former Minister of Education and Literacy of Burkina Faso and has consulted widely for various governments and international institutions on the right to education.

Dr. Boly Barry has been an advocate on gender issues in education. She also has ample knowledge and experience in training and research, as a visiting professor at University of Nottingham, United Kingdom; University of Louvain La Neuve, Belgium; and as a lecturer at Ouagadougou University, Burkina Faso; Vitoria University, Brazil; and Fribourg University, Switzerland.

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Thank you so much for inviting me in this powerful panel. To speak after Her Excellency Ms Lubna Qassim, is an honour. I will add some information and also confirm what she already said, because Her Excellency already gave us the best line in this perspective. I want to share with you three messages today.

The first one is just to remember that when we are talking about the right to education and the impact of COVID-19, we have to remember that before the pandemic, there were 1 billion of people who were illiterate. That mean 1 billion of people who were not meeting their right to education, and in this 1 billion of people we already had 258,000 who were youth, among which the majority were women, girls, rural people, refugees, people living with disabilities, nomadic people, people with specific needs. Those inequalities were already there. We just have to remember that, because it is not the impact of COVID-19 who created these inequalities. Accessibility, Adequate provision, Acceptability, Adaptability: the four “A” of the right to education are not a reality in many countries. This is very important to highlight before talking about COVID-19.

Now, talking about the impact of COVID-19, it is important to keep in mind the holistic aspect of this pandemic, because COVID-19 has an impact on social issues, in the economic sphere, but also in how we are governing ourselves. The COVID-19 has a social impact on health, education and water sanitation, but also in the economic sphere because it is a problem of decent life. It is also impacting at the political level. You can see many government taking decisions without consulting the people. We have to have keep this in mind, the global and complex impact of COVID-19 on the society as a whole.

The recommendations I want to make were already made by Her Excellency Ms Lubna Qassim, and I want to thank her for that. I want to highlight some. One recommendation I have really measured in my report¹, it is to say that we need for the whole society to be sure that we are able to talk together, and to build a new paradigm of education, having a social contract in society with people living in the same areas. This for me is very important: to talk to policymakers, to talk to citizens, to communities,

¹ Special Rapporteur on the right to Education – “Impact of the coronavirus disease crisis on the right to education – concerns, challenges and opportunities”, Human Rights Council 30 June 2020.
<https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/39>

to listen to teachers, to listen to learners, to listen to civil society, to listen also to researchers, because with artificial intelligence and the big data today, new areas of pedagogy can be explored. We have skills and knowledge. We can take this knowledge and skills and use it in a constructive perspective, but we have to talk together. It is very important that societies in each country put a mechanism of consultation and dialogue, to build a new vision for education. It is also important to highlight that education can be linked with other sectors, because all human rights are inter-dependent.

Nowadays we talk about the ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) in education, but if you do not have adequate housing, how can you find a space to use technology in education, to use a laptop? All those things have to be put on the table to be discussed and to find a way in how to involve the minister of finance, the minister of economy, the minister of rural development, the minister of infrastructure, of water, of ageing and so on. This is very important for me, as a recommendation.

Another recommendation, about financing. How to finance the education system? This is also a strong issue, and we have to raise it, because sometimes it is not a problem of availability of financial resources. It is the problem of how to use the money and what is the priority given to it. This has to be decentralized and well managed, with a good accountability system.

Capacity building of teachers and the recognition of teachers, especially women's role in the new perspective is very important. We have seen with the COVID-19 how women are forced to stay at home to be sure that at they are able to manage kids, to manage the house and everything, and also the violence they have faced during the pandemic.

We also need a strong program for a mental health, to be sure that we can build the process in the best way.

My last recommendation is the prominence of the private sector. This can be dangerous, the private sector, who is making profit, we really need to be sure that they respect human rights, especially the right to education, before we can let them be involved in the education system. We are indeed seeing the private sector and the profit organizations having more and more influence in the education system. This is one thing we have to highlight, to be sure that we can build a better world, with justice, but also with resilience to be sure we are all in the best and the good era to live in peace and building societies in peace.

Thank you so much, it is really a pleasure to participate, and it will always be a pleasure to continue to collaborate with you. Thank you. Merci beaucoup.

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Dr Suguru Mizunoya

Senior Adviser Monitoring and Statistics (Education) at UNICEF



Dr Suguru Mizunoya works at the Division of Data, Analytics, Monitoring and Planning, UNICEF New York Headquarters. Suguru's main research interests include Economics and Education, Disability-Inclusive Education and Out of School Children.

Suguru holds a PhD focused in Economics and Education from Columbia University in the City of New York and is an experienced monitoring expert with a demonstrated history of working in the international development industry.



Good afternoon everyone. My name is Suguru Mizunoya, Senior Advisor Statistics and Monitoring for education, working for UNICEF in New York Headquarters.

Today, I would like to make a presentation based on our recent publication “COVID-19 and School closure – one year of education disruption”², which was published at the beginning of the month to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on education around the world.

Before I start talking about the covid impacts, I would like to share two statistics that highlight the global education situation. The first stat is that 617 million children worldwide cannot read or perform basic mathematics. 617 million is about twice better than the entire population in EU. The second stat is that 87% or 9 in 10 students in Sub-Saharan Africa are considered as learning poor, not being able to read simple sentences. What these two statistics illustrate is the fact that we are facing global learning crisis.

Due to COVID, almost all the countries introduced school closure policy to prevent the spread of the virus. Around April 2020, about 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries were affected by school closure policies. Various governments tried to provide remote-learn rig opportunities for students so that they can continue to learn at home.

However, our study showed that about 1/3 of the students globally from pre-primary to upper secondary schools were not able to even access to these broad-cast-based and internet-based remote learning. World Bank estimated that the COVID pandemic could result in a loss of 10 US trillion dollars in lifetime earning for these generation of children.

Our study aimed to understand the impacts of school closure after one year since the pandemic using two major datasets. One is the survey of national education responses to the COVID-19 school closure. It is a joint survey among UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank that collected data from more than 150 countries. Another main database is the data on number of students from UNESCO Statistics Institute.

The joint survey data cover from March 11th, 2020, to February 2nd this year. We followed UNESCO's school closure status – when most of the schools are closed, the country schooling status is coded as “fully closed”. In our report, we also identified countries where students missed almost all the instruction time when students had 10 or less days of face-to-face instruction And 12 days or less for

² UNICEF report “COVID-19 and School Closures. One year of education disruption” March 2021.
<https://data.unicef.org/resources/one-year-of-COVID-19-and-school-closures/>

partial closure. For our analysis, the academic breaks and weekends are not counted towards instruction days.

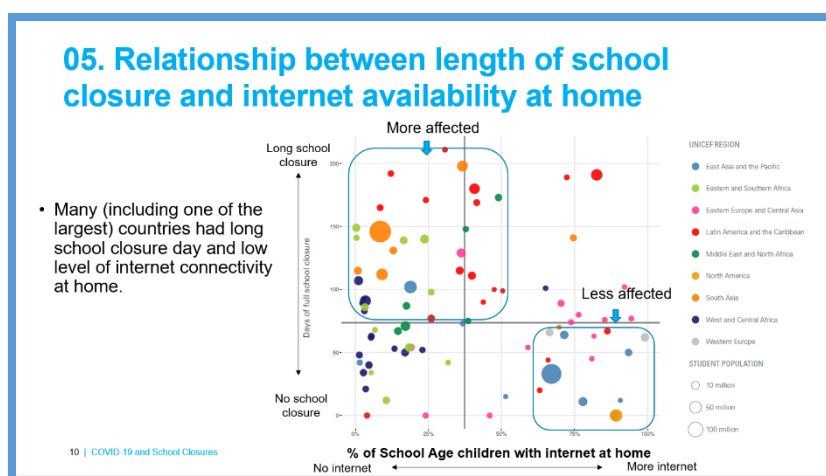
Here is our key finding: Globally, schools for 95 million students are fully closed. Schools for additional 62 million students are partially closed.

Let's look at the regional disaggregation with the current data. There are large regional differences in terms of how much school are closed and how many children are affected. When you look at the two regions on your left which are Latin America and Caribbean and South Asia region, the vast majority of schools are closed. In the middle of the chart, you see regions with mixed policies among full-school closure, partial school closure, and face-to-face instruction. North American which is consist of USA and Canada applied partial closure policies.

The country level data show serious situation in some countries. Many countries in Latin America and South Asia closed schools for almost entire academic year. As you can see some countries have closed more than 200 instruction days.

Learning from home is fine if students have access to alternatives. Let's think about that. Internet-based remote learning offers high quality learning opportunities. Did many of students who studied at home have access to internet?

The dot chart shows two information. The x-axis, or horizontal direction shows the share of children who live in a house with internet. The y-axis, or vertical direction shows the length of school closure. Dots at the top of the charts represent countries with long school closures. Let's look at countries with short school



Slide shared by Dr Suguru Mizunoya during his presentation.

closures and high internet penetration rate at home. Children in these countries are, I would say, least affected. On the other hand, in countries with long school closure and low internet penetration rate at home, students significantly lost learning opportunities. And there are many such countries and there are many students as well. You can see some large dots there representing large population.

This is my last slide. From this study, there are four keys take away that I'd like to share with you.

- 1st Too many countries have opted to keep schools closed, some for nearly a year.
- 2nd Many countries failed to provide high-quality internet-based remote learning.
- 3rd Schools are essential for children's learning, health, safety and well-being. Children cannot afford another year of school closure.
- 4th No effort should be spared to keep schools open or prioritize them in reopening plans.

With that, I would like to finish my presentation. Please visit: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/one-year-of-COVID-19-and-school-closures/> for the report and the school closure database. I thank you.

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Ms Emma Wagner

Senior Education Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Save the Children



Emma Wagner is the Senior Education Adviser for Policy & Advocacy at Save the Children, with responsibility for education in emergencies and refugee education. In response to the pandemic, she also leads on global policy for the Save Our Education campaign. She has published numerous advocacy reports on global education which make recommendations to a variety of stakeholders to improve access to safe, inclusive quality education for all. Throughout 2020 she was a member of the Executive Committee of Education Cannot Wait and chaired ECW's civil society group.

Ms Emma Wagner is also a member of the Advocacy Working Group of the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies, and a member of the Global Campaign for Education and the Moving Minds Alliance which advocates for early childhood development for displaced children.

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At the beginning of this pandemic there was a lot of talk about it being the 'great equaliser'. That globally everyone was facing the same sort of challenges and solutions to those challenges. But we now know that this pandemic has shone a light on and increased inequalities. We launched our campaign last year called Save Our Education which aims to get all children safely back to school and to help them catch up on lost learning. Please visit our website for lots of additional content.

A year on in this global pandemic we know that the most marginalised children including refugees have been worst hit. COVID-19 has compounded existing education inequalities that prevent refugee children from fulfilling their right to quality education.

Almost half of all school-aged refugees – 3.7 million – were out of school even before the pandemic³.

Access to education for refugees varies significantly from country to country, and within countries. Refugee girls – particularly adolescents – are almost three times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee peers⁴.

Even once in school, refugees, alongside their host community peers, are not learning, putting their development, learning and wellbeing at risk, and causing high drop-out rates. Displaced children may have experienced severe trauma and require psychosocial support in schools or referral to specialised services.

Whilst early childhood care and development in emergencies, alongside parent and caregiver education, is increasingly recognised as providing lifesaving support, analysis from the Moving Minds Alliance⁵ shows that it received just 3.3% of all development aid in 2017.

³ UNHCR report “Coming Together For Refugee Education. Education Report 2020” September 2020. <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/5f4f9a2b4/coming-together-refugee-education-education-report-2020.html>

⁴ UNHCR report “Her Turn” March 2018 <https://www.unhcr.org/herturn/>

⁵ Moving Minds Alliance “Analysis of international aid levels for early childhood services in crisis contexts” December 2020. <https://movingmindsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/analysis-of-international-aid-levels-for-early-childhood-services-in-crisis-contexts.pdf>

The majority of countries hosting large numbers of refugees have education systems that already struggle to meet the needs of the most marginalised host populations. These countries need international support to scale up education services and provide alternative educational opportunities for refugees.

A child's right to education in any circumstance is enshrined in international humanitarian law and numerous conventions.

The 2018 Global Compact on Refugees includes the landmark global commitment to provide *'more direct financial support and special efforts will be mobilised to minimise the time refugee boys and girls spend out of education, ideally a maximum of three months after arrival. Support will be provided for the development and implementation of national education sector plans that **include** refugees.'* With millions of refugees out of school this promise, if fulfilled, could have a huge impact on the lives of refugee children.

So, with the Global Compact on Refugees agreed in 2018 and the first Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 where pledges were made in support of the commitments in the Compact, progress on refugee education was in sight. Education was one of 6 areas of focus at the Forum and it really 'stole the show'. Hundreds of policies and financial pledges were made in support of the global commitment to get refugee children in school and learning.

228 pledges included references to education with over half solely on education. Of these education pledges around half focussed on early childhood through secondary. Implementing these pledges in full could catalyse much needed progress for refugee education.

One year on from the Forum and considering the impact of the pandemic, Save the Children undertook some research and published a new report: "Progress under threat: Refugee education one year on from the Global Refugee Forum and the impact of COVID-19"⁶. It looks at progress made on pledges to date and the impact of COVID19.

It shows that just 9% of pledges have been fulfilled. 71% are in progress with 20% still in the planning stage. However, one year on, status updates have not been shared for more than half of pledges. The report includes 10 country case studies, and our analysis shows that progress to deliver on the pledges has been disrupted by the pandemic and that it has decreased their learning outcomes and wellbeing.

Where refugee children were in school, their learning has been disrupted by school closures and challenges accessing distance learning, increasing their vulnerability. Very few refugee children had access to any sort of online learning.

Family incomes have been reduced so they may be less likely to be able to afford to send their children to school – leading to increased drop-out.

In many countries refugees were excluded in national COVID-19 education response plans, at least in the initial phase of the response.

Evidence demonstrates this has led to increased rates of child labour, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and child pregnancy among refugee communities.

⁶ Save the Children report "Progress under threat: Refugee education one year on from the Global Refugee Forum and the impact of COVID-19" January 2021.
https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/18632/pdf/progress_under_threat.pdf

However new initiatives are helping to meet refugee children's learning and wellbeing needs. A range of different distance learning modalities have been used in some countries to reach refugee children.

There has been better integration between child protection and education sectors to respond to impacts of school closures. Provision of mental health and psychosocial support through new platforms. And parents and caregivers have been given guidance and tools to help support their children's learning at home.



Slide shared by Ms Emma Wagner during her presentation

Emergency funding from Education Cannot Wait & the Global Partnership for Education was targeted at countries with large refugee hosting populations to help with distance learning, improving water and sanitation in schools and health messaging.

What is clear is that in no case are all schools back to normal and the impact of disruption is likely to affect refugees more severely.

Our report sets out recommendations for the Global Refugee Forum process, refugee hosting countries, and donors to ensure we do not lose sight of the promises made to refugee children.

In particular I wanted to highlight that the international financing response to the COVID-19 education emergency has been dismal. Urgent funding is needed, and governments should maintain or increase their education budgets.

Refugees should be included in national education systems and in the COVID-19 education response.

Governments should provide refugees the additional support they require to access distance learning and return to school safely, such as learning materials, EdTech devices, cash transfers, back to school campaigns, mental health and psycho-social support and language support.

If we exclude refugees from the COVID-19 response, we will all bear the costs.

A child's right to an education does not end in times of emergency or if you are a refugee. Refugees have a critical need for safe, good quality and inclusive education – which is a building block of their recovery, resilience, and long-term development.

Refugee children and their families themselves consistently ask for education to be provided to them, it is a high priority, and we must act to listen to what they say and be held to account for meeting their right to a quality education.

Thank you. ”

Ms Amélie J. Mariage

Co-founder of Aprendices Visuales and Next Generation Fellow at the United Nation Foundation



Passionate about how technology can fuel social change, Amélie J. Mariage is an impact entrepreneur and advocate for children's rights to access education.

She founded Aprendices Visuales, a tech for good that have helped more than 1 million children with learning difficulties to access inclusive education worldwide. Amélie has been selected among the most influential young people in Europe by Forbes and she recently has been selected as Next Generation Fellow by the UN Foundation, an integrated team with the ability to influence thinking at the heart of the multilateral system, and to contribute directly to work mandated by Member States to mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations).

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It is a real pleasure to be here today.

Between all these fantastic panellists, I just feel so small. I really like the global vision you are bringing about education and children rights.

In Aprendices Visuales we try to re-imagining education by using technology and visual learning methodology.

Inspiration came 8 years ago, after my little cousin was diagnosed with autism. With him, we quickly discovered that tremendous gains have been made in education, but also much more can still be done, especially in terms of breaking barriers to access inclusive education. Ever since, I have been involved in education, trying to change the system.

What started "at home" as a way to help him, as a very small and personal project... has become after a few years of work, a global response to design a new inclusive model for education.

As Dr Umesh Palwankar said, Aprendices Visuales is a tech non-profit where we created a series of online courses, eBooks and interactive applications with pictograms that can really help the children to learn easily. In terms of impact, we reached 1 million children worldwide, because all our materials are available for free, in five languages. It was important when we started the project to put it for free. And when you say one million children, this may seem incredible.



Ms Amélie Mariage showing the pictograms used by Aprendices Visuales.

But in fact, when you know the numbers and when you know that today 2 billion children have some learning difficulties (could be autism, dyslexia, hyperactivity), 1 million is just a very small number.

Working for children means working against time. And we particularly know it in Aprendices Visuales. If we don't "boost" access to education and learning as fast as possible, we probably are going to lose one other generation of children that could not access inclusive education. This is what we are trying to do in Aprendices Visuales.

On your second question about the habits of online learning that we should be keep or develop further: we are facing a global crisis. We all know that. COVID-19 is shaping the educational systems all around the world. The good point is that the reflection around education has never been so global.

What happens is like a large-scale social experiment. In Spain, France and everywhere else, decisions that in normal times could take years of deliberations were passed in a matter of hours. Everything and everyone just go online.

Covid has placed a spotlight on the critical need for all students to have access at home to the devices and Internet connectivity required for online learning. Not all the people are granted with that, it is not only about school closures. This is a really big challenge right now, to close the digital gap by ensuring internet connexion, access to technology and devices, as universal and accessible for everyone.

On the optimistic side, what we see in school, from the Spanish perspective, is an increased recognition of how online learning can extend, break barriers, and enhance students' education.

On the pessimistic side, the rush to online learning without adequate preparation, can basically lead to many minimal benefits.

What we have seen in Aprendices Visuales and what we try to explain, is that effective online learning involves more than just moving lectures online. It involves changing the culture of the school, creating a real experience online as a totally new form of interaction.

In order to progress toward the optimistic scenario, I think we need to stop thinking about online learning versus "face to face". We need to think in both coming together, and to take advantage of both physical and online learning.

It is difficult to exactly predict what education will look like after the pandemic or in 10 years. I think education will just take up different forms.

Children will be armed with different devices, and they will have more opportunities to learn. Technology will facilitate opportunities for remote self learning, and the most amazing in my point of view, if we close the digital gap, it will allow everybody, everywhere in the world to access education.

I am a believer and lover of technology. Virtual Reality can already make learning truly immersive and 3D Printing is allowing children to bring their ideas to life. Machine Learning is making learning adaptive and personalized. But we also need to balance it, and to focus more on soft skills, like empathy, ethics, critical thinking, imagination, storytelling, entrepreneurship... COVID-19 It has been very hard for the children too, with their life changing from one day to another, with their parents telling them before the pandemic "you have to go to school" and then during the pandemic "you have to stay home". More than ever, we need to work on managing emotions and empathy.

I really hope, and this is our mission in Aprendices Visuales, that we will be able to provide all the children an education that make them feel confident in their abilities, regardless their gender, race, conditions, if they are refugees or not, circumstances, etc... it is all about making children excited about the world we live in, and I think this is the challenge of education right now. I thank you.

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Ms Madelle Kangha

Founder of JumpStart Academy Africa and United Nations Young Leader for the SDGs



Madelle Kangha is the Founder of the Jumpstart Group, a network of institutions which seek which seek to harness Africa's demographic dividend by fostering entrepreneurship and creating employment opportunities for young people.

Most notable among these institutions is Jumpstart Academy Africa, a social venture which is accelerating Africa's readiness for the future of work by equipping young people with workforce and soft skills. Since commencing operations in 2014, JumpStart Academy Africa has reached over 20,000 young people through their programs and campaigns; impacting them in the areas of Academic Excellence, Civic Engagement and Enterprise Creation.

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Thank you so much and thank you for having me.

The main thing that JumpStart Academy Africa does is about the importance of soft skills. We looked at the statistics and we saw that, using the current model of education across sub-Saharan Africa, almost 61 million children reach adolescence without the skills they need. So, on the one hand you have students not even completing primary school or secondary school, but then those who actually get past that stage, they do not have the skills they need. They do not have critical thinking skills and that is why JumpStart Academy Africa was born.

What we do is we immerse ourselves in existing schools, and we infuse our curriculum which is based on 21st century skills, making these students job ready, so that they are not only equipped to be job seekers but also job creators, that is very important for us at JumpStart Academy Africa. How can we teach young people entrepreneurship and empower them so that after they graduate, they can start projects and give back to their communities and create jobs for themselves and lift themselves out of poverty. That is really our core objective at JumpStart Academy Africa.

We have been doing that since 2014 and to see the lives we have changed, the impact, it has been amazing. We used to be working in Cameroon primarily, which is where I am from, and right now we work in Togo as well. So, we are really trying to expand across French and English-speaking West Africa, because the education systems across these countries are kind of similar. We really want to expand into more countries and get our curriculum out there because it is very critical that young people between the ages of 15 and 19 start learning entrepreneurial skills, start learning critical thinking skills. We do not wait until they graduate and their 24 and they are looking for jobs. We try to start teaching them critical thinking skills.

About of what we did when covid hit: so COVID-19 hit and we looked at the statistics in terms of the number of students out of school, as one of the panellists rightly said, over 1.6 billion students were out of school and that number was frightening. So COVID-19 basically made a bad situation worse in terms of education. We started noticing some discouraging trends like with school closures and girls now being out of school, some of these girls are now being given out in early marriages, so we knew that we had to do something, we had to act quickly to curb the negative effects of COVID-19 when it comes to education.

We also noticed disparities between rural areas and urban areas. Some governments tried to deploy learning solutions such as TV, but then that has some challenges as well because while secondary school is more adapted to TV and online methods, how do you teach and engage with primary school students via TV? How do you keep the attention of young children? So, there are many challenges with the deployment of virtual solutions by the government, and those virtual solutions were mostly in the urban areas. We have students in the rural areas who are not really receiving as much attention as the students in urban areas.

So, you had a lot of issues and cracks and gaps that COVID-19 and the response to it was exposing. We decided to plug ourselves in that gap and fill a need. We decided to come up with a program called “Keep learning during COVID-19”, and the goal was to have live and on demand classes for students primarily between the ages of 14 and 19, in secondary and high school and preparing to graduate for going to university. This is a crucial stage for them, especially those who were in exam classes. They were already preparing for their final exams and then, they had COVID-19 on top of it. So, we realized the huge pressure put on the shoulders of young people.



*“Keep learning during COVID-19” Program.
Created by JumpStart Academy Africa*

When we started the program, we started through Google Classrooms, and this is another challenge that we realized quickly. Not everyone has access to Internet and the bandwidth connectivity that is required for Google Classrooms could not be reached by some students. So, we quickly again had to innovate around and think “ok how can we make this work?”. We have students taking sometimes 10, 20 minutes trying to connect, the teachers are ready to teach but students either have one connectivity issue or another. So we moved to WhatsApp groups and most young people right now especially across the continent of Africa have a mobile phone so that, thankfully enough, WhatsApp groups really helped us drive this program forward, and that was a mean of teaching the students, of communicating with the students, of keeping in touch with the students, not just academically but also personally, because like I said a lot of young girls were getting pushed into early marriages, so making sure we give a holistic approach and making sure we keep in touch with these young people and stay connected with their personal and professional development.

That program has been amazing: 90% of our scholars that registered passed in the national exams, because we had national exams that still went through this period of COVID-19, so we were able to get 90% of our students to go through their exams. One of the students actually had the highest mark. For the advanced level students who are moving into University you have 25 points on 25 and he had 25 points on 25, so that was really a testament to show that we met these students in April 2020 and in the space of eight months we were able to get them ready for their final exams and get them to a point where they could actually be on the top of the pack. For us that was really amazing, and that just showed us the challenges, like I just mentioned, could be overcome. Still, there is a lot of work to be done. We are getting ready for the second phase of the program, now most schools have gone back, but still some students have not been able to go back, with financial issues, so we are trying to see how we can reach out and still be supportive to students.

The amazing thing about our work at JumpStart Academy Africa, which is very dear to me, is that most of our schools that we work with are in rural areas, which for me is very important. Our first school which we signed up was in a rural area in Cameroon and that school has produced some of our

brightest students. One of the students from that rural area, she is currently here in the US, she is doing a PhD. We met this young woman in 2014 and we are in 2021 and she is now doing a PhD. Super to see how we have changed a young woman's life. She was in rural area where young people organizations often overlook, when they are dreaming of projects, and to see where she is right now and to give them that opportunity, that for us is something very incredible, and very powerful at JumpStart academy Africa and that is something that we hope to keep doing, not just in Cameroon not just in Togo, but across French and English-speaking West Africa.

I thank you very much for inviting me.

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GENEVA CENTRE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ADVANCEMENT AND
GLOBAL DIALOGUE



On 25 March 2021, The Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue invites you to join its online event on

COVID-19 AND RIGHT TO EDUCATION: CURRENT IMPACT AND FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR SPEAKERS

School closures

Girls' education

Data and
methodology

Educational programs

Virtual learning

Refugee
education

25 March 2021

3:00 pm (Geneva time, CET)

H.E. Lubna Qassim

Minister Plenipotentiary First Degree, Deputy Permanent Representative of UAE to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva

Recommendation 1 - Rethink education taking into account situations of emergencies

There is an urgent need to rethink educational programmes and/or to reframe the educational process taking into account situations of emergencies in the future such as conflicts and natural disasters.

Recommendation 2 – Make education the priority in public policy

Adopt a pragmatic rethinking of the financial resources by allocating sufficient funds to schools by making education as THE priority in any public policy to enable well qualified personnel to deliver quality education.

Recommendation 3 – Prepare children’s transition from distance learning to normal school

Prepare children’s transition from distance learning to normal school by providing a smooth return through psychosocial follow up and medical care to most affected children and by taking all the necessary measures to protect the mental health of children.

Recommendation 4 – Consider adopting some of the pandemic legacy

Consider adopting few of the pandemic legacy such as to continue with frequent hands washing which have proved to be beneficial for children who suffered less from a number of casual sickness and maintain some IT experiences that could be shifted to other educational activities.

Dr Koumbou Boly Barry

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Recommendation 1 - Build a new paradigm of education

Involve all stakeholders within the society, including policymakers, citizens, communities, teachers, learners, civil society, researchers, in a global dialogue to build a new paradigm of education.

Recommendation 2 – Change the way education is financed

How to finance the education system? It is not a problem of availability of financial resources, but a problem of how to use the money and what is the priority given to it. This has to be decentralized and well managed, with a good accountability system.

Recommendation 3 – Recognize the central role of teachers in education

Capacity building and the recognition of teachers, especially women’s role in the new perspective is very important. A strong program for mental health of teachers is also important, to be sure that the process can be build in the best way.

Recommendation 4 – About the prominence of the private sector in education

When involved into education, the private sector must be monitored in order to be sure that it respects human rights and the best interests of the child.

Dr Suguru Mizunoya

Senior Adviser Monitoring and Statistics (Education) at UNICEF

Key takeaway 1 - Too many countries have opted to keep schools closed, some for nearly a year

Key takeaway 2 – Many countries failed to provide high-quality internet-based remote learning

Recommendation 1 – Schools are essential for children’s learning, health, safety and well-being. Children cannot afford another year of school closure.

Recommendation 2 – No effort should be spared to keep schools open or prioritize them in reopening plans.

Ms Emma Wagner

Senior Education Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Save the Children

Recommendation 1 - Urgent international funding in education is needed

The international financing response to the COVID-19 education emergency has been dismal. Urgent funding is needed, and governments should maintain or increase their education budgets.

Recommendation 2 – Inclusion of refugees in education

Refugees should be included in national education systems and in the COVID-19 education response.

Recommendation 3 – Governments should provide refugees the additional support they require

Governments should provide refugees the additional support they require to access distance learning and return to school safely, such as learning materials, EdTech devices, cash transfers, back to school campaigns, mental health and psycho-social support and language support.

Ms Amélie J. Mariage

Co-founder of Aprendices Visuales and Next Generation Fellow at the United Nation Foundation

Recommendation 1 – Close the digital gap

Not all the people are granted with internet connectivity and IT devices, it is not only about school closures. This is a really big challenge right now, to close the digital gap by ensuring internet connexion, access to technology and devices, as universal and accessible for everyone.

Recommendation 2 – Change the culture of school

Effective online learning involves more than just moving lectures online. It involves changing the culture of the school, creating a real experience online as a totally new form of interaction.

Recommendation 3 – Stop thinking about online learning in opposition to “face to face”

We need to think about both as coming together, and to take advantage of both physical and online learning.



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COVID-19 AND THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION: LESSONS LEARNED AND WAYS FORWARD

School closures

Girls' education

Data and
methodology

Educational programs

Virtual learning

Refugee
education

25 March 2021

3:00 pm (Geneva time, CET)

THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND THE NEW POLICY PATHWAYS TO “BUILD FORWARD BETTER”⁷

1. Introduction

The right to education is enshrined in international human rights law and numerous conventions. Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights establishes that everyone possesses this right, and that education must be free at least in the elementary stages of children’s lives. Furthermore, the various provisions associated with its effective protection have been progressively consolidated through important declaration and conventions such as the World Declaration on Education for All adopted by 155 States; the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by 171 States; the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified or acceded to by 191 States parties; the Plan of Action of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education adopted by a consensus resolution of the General Assembly (49/184)⁸. Additionally, within the framework of Agenda 2030, the protection of this right has been set out to be a policy priority for all, becoming transversal in the majority of the 17 SDGs.

Throughout this seemingly solid institutional framework, the right to education has been put at the center of countries’ policy agendas by making them commit to providing the necessary resources for an inclusive and equitable education while promoting the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Nevertheless, as countries impose school closure policies and measures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the right to education is being jeopardized, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities⁹. This comes at a time when pre-existing educational conditions were already at a critical point with educational needs of one billion people still not being met, of which 258,000 are women, girls, rural people, refugees, people living with disabilities, and nomadic people¹⁰.

However, the right to education is not only being threatened by pre-crisis long-standing inequalities, but also by the exacerbation of these fueled by recent school closures policies and remote learning measures that, in many cases, have failed to safeguard the right to education of the most vulnerable people. Consequently, the crisis too has become a threat to the already weak four A’s education system in many countries, that is, to its Accessibility, Adequate provision, Acceptability and Adaptability mechanisms, making it more crucial than ever to find alternative ways to guarantee these four A’s, and to cope with school closure policies and remote learning opportunities so that everyone without exception can access their right.

Hence, as the crisis progresses and its adverse effects on the right to education become more evident, it is increasingly vital that States be able to guarantee their students a safe return to school that offers

⁷ Researched and written by Laura Gutierrez Cadena, Master’s Candidate in International Public Management at the School of International Affairs – Sciences Po-Paris.

⁸ OHCHR (2021) *d) General Comment No. 13: The right to education (article 13) (1999)*. Ohchr.org. [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/d\)GeneralCommentNo13Therighttoeducation\(article13\)\(1999\).aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/d)GeneralCommentNo13Therighttoeducation(article13)(1999).aspx).

⁹ Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry (2020) *Right to education: impact of the coronavirus disease crisis on the right to education – concerns, challenges and opportunities- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education*. <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/44/39>.

¹⁰ Save The Children (2021) *Save Our Education: Protect every child’s right to learn in the COVID-19 response and recovery*. Resource Centre. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/17871/pdf/save_our_education_0.pdf.

all the necessary economic support¹¹ and psychosocial help they need. It also becomes essential that policies implemented by countries limit as much as possible the adverse effects of school closure policies and unequal remote learning opportunities that were implemented at the start of the pandemic. Especially recognizing the long-lasting adverse effects that the crisis can have in this generation's future earnings, as well as the undesired consequences that child marriage, sexual violence and school dropouts can bring to students' future wellbeing¹². Even more worrisome data indicates that for 157 countries, "the global level of schooling and learning will fall "bringing down the effective years of basic schooling that students achieve during their lifetime from 7.9 years to between 7.0 and 7.6 years"¹³.

In light of the above, this article will first explore and analyze the different adverse effects that COVID-19 has brought upon the right to education and the harmful dynamics it has reproduced in limiting its access and quality for long-standing marginalized communities. Finally, it will offer some policy recommendations based on good practices that have shown positive and innovative results in the past and during the pandemic to reaching those most affected.

2. The Adverse Effects of COVID-19 on The Right to Education

At the same time that lockdowns and confinements were called upon worldwide to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, total or partial school closures policies and remote learning measures were also implemented. By April 2020, 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries were affected by school closure policies¹⁴. At present, more than a year later, 196 million students in 27 countries continue to be affected by totally closed schools and 62 million by partially closed schools¹⁵. Even though policies have been implemented to provide remote learning opportunities for millions of students, many of these have not been enough to guarantee equal and high-quality access to education as the benefits of schooling have excluded the special needs of most marginalized students such as girls, children from rural areas and refugees. In many cases countries have not been able to provide high-quality internet based remote learning opportunities while also failing to prioritize policies that aim to reopen schools and/or offer innovative IT tool kits and digital pathways that enable all students to access learning opportunities which are essential to their health, safety and well-being processes¹⁶.

With this in mind, the following are some of the main adverse effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had over the right to education:

¹¹ Economic support for many high school graduates, post-secondary students and parents right now as typical summer jobs or internships may not be available, which has impacted how many students and families cover tuition costs and living expenses. This could be coupled with other unexpected financial challenges as a result of COVID-19's effect on family businesses or investments volatility.

¹² Azevedo, J., Hasan, A., Goldember, D., Iqbal, S., & Geven, K. (2021). *Simulating the Potential Impacts of COVID-19 School Closures on Schooling and Learning Outcomes: A Set of Global Estimates*. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33945/Simulating-the-Potential-Impacts-of-COVID-19-School-Closures-on-Schooling-and-Learning-Outcomes-A-Set-of-Global-Estimates.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ UNESCO (2021) *One year into COVID: prioritizing education recovery to avoid a generational catastrophe*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376984>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ See the full statement by Dr. Suguru Mizunoya in the Statements section of this publication.

a) Low-quality and low accessibility to remote learning opportunities

Even when remote learning opportunities have been offered as an alternative to complete or partial school closures, deficient bandwidth connectivity and low internet penetration, especially in rural areas and low-income households have affected student's accessibility to a quality education¹⁷. A study made by UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) indicates that the internet access gap is significantly wide between high-income countries and low-income countries, and the rural-urban divide shows that only 25 percent of rural children below 25 years have some kind of internet access compared to 41 per cent of urban children worldwide¹⁸. Consequently, 759 million young people aged between 15-24 are unconnected at home and struggling to access remote learning opportunities to continue their studies.

Moreover, the most affected regions are the Latin America/Caribbean and South Asian regions, which indicate a worrisome correlation between long-duration school closures and low rates of internet connectivity. This means millions of students are missing out on both, in-person education and internet-based learning opportunities, putting them at risk of falling behind in their education¹⁹. Even though governments have tried to adapt rapidly to the emergency by offering digital/remote educational programs to all students, the reality is that some have failed to prioritize the needs of the most marginalized communities which continue to be disproportionately impacted by the crisis.

b) The disproportionate impact on girl's and women's learning opportunities

Studies continue to point out how school closure policies have inevitably led to an increase of girls and women being subject to early and forced marriages, of teenage pregnancy, of gender-based violence and of caregiving responsibilities, all this amounting to the fact that 11 million women and girls may never return to school after the pandemic ends²⁰. As a result of the severe escalation of sexual abuse and sexual violence, including transactional sex resulting from lockdown measures amidst the crisis, the increase of teenage pregnancy has become a reality which, similarly, translates in these girls and women never returning to school afterwards. Even though girl's and women's education gap had been progressively closing before the pandemic started, the crisis appears as a direct threat to this positive trend. Especially, taking into account that some countries continue to disregard the disproportionate effect of the crisis on girl's and women's education by forgetting to address their specific needs, which can only end up having long-lasting adverse effects in their livelihoods²¹.

c) The disproportionate effect on refugee children's access to education

Before the pandemic, 3.7 million school-aged refugees were out of school. Now, one year since the Global Refugee Forum and as a result of COVID-19, just 9% of the progress on the established pledges of the forum has been achieved. In the cases where refugee children were already receiving some kind of schooling, this was disrupted by school closures and threatened by distance learning which

¹⁷ United Nations Children's Fund and International Telecommunication Union, "How many children and young people have internet access at home? Estimating digital connectivity during the COVID-19 pandemic." UNICEF, New York, 2020. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/children-and-young-people-internet-access-at-home-during-covid19/>

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ See the full statement by Ms. Madelle Kangha in the Statements section of this publication.

²⁰ UNESCO (2021) *Over 11 million girls may not go back to school after the COVID-19 crisis*.

<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/girlseducation>

²¹ UNESCO (2021), *supra* note 12.

increased their vulnerability as very few of them have any sort of access to online learning. In addition, many countries continue to exclude targeted educational learning opportunities for refugee children which, in turn, has also contributed to an increase in child labor, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, child marriage, and child pregnancy amongst refugee communities²².

d) Decreased lifetime earnings for students from the current cohort

The World Bank estimated that the COVID pandemic can result in a loss of 10 trillion US dollars in lifetime earnings for these generation, meaning that the current cohort of students can, on average, face a reduction of \$355, \$872, or \$1,408 in yearly earnings due to school closures²³. Similarly, “the world could stand to lose as much as 16 percent of the investments that governments make in the basic education of this cohort of students”²⁴. Accordingly, the world could face a substantial setback in achieving the goal of halving the percentage of the learning poor, thus also being unable to meet the 2030 Agenda goal unless drastic remedial action is taken²⁵.

e) Higher school drop-out rates and low attendance as a result of households’ financial issues

Even if reasons for dropping out of school are disproportionately higher for girls and women due to the adverse effects brought by the pandemic, now that schools are re-opening, a general trend has been observed of high school drop-out rates and low attendance of most students, due to the deteriorated financial status of many households as a result of the economic crisis. Data indicates that almost 7 million students from primary up to secondary education could drop out of school due to the income shock of the pandemic alone²⁶.

In addition, the shifting of funds towards the health and other economic sectors has also inevitably contributed to high school drop-out rates. Education economic oriented policies aiming to support households have failed to aid enough so that children remain studying instead of resorting to child labor or simply have not provided enough resources so that students are able to return safely to school²⁷. Madelle Kangha, founder of JumpStart Academy Africa²⁸ highlighted this last issue at the Geneva Centre’s panel, saying that even when students are able to return to school, severe financial issues have prevented many from going back as there is a lack of support mechanisms that are able to effectively reach out to these vulnerable students. Furthermore, a Save the Children study specifically points out that there are twelve countries at extreme risk of high school drop-out rates, these being Afghanistan, Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Yemen. Hence, failing to effectively fund the global education emergency has resulted in limited resources for the protection of education, stimulus packages and an increase in the digital divide²⁹.

²² See the full statement by Ms. Emma Wagner in the Statements section of this publication.

²³ Azevedo, J., Hasan, A., Goldember, D., Iqbal, S., & Geven, K. (2021) *supra* note 4

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Save the Children (2021) *supra* note 3

²⁸ The Jumpstart Group is a network of institutions which seek which seek to harness Africa’s demographic dividend by fostering entrepreneurship and creating employment opportunities for young people.

²⁹ OECD (2020) *The impact of COVID-19 on student equity and inclusion: supporting vulnerable students during school closures and school re-openings*. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=434_434914-59wd7ekj29&title=The-impact-of-COVID-19-on-student-equity-and-inclusion&_ga=2.211007891.787776338.1623012153-513041138.1617032838

f) Students' mental health deterioration

The last and most worrisome adverse effect of the pandemic on students which inevitably affects their right to effectively access both in-person and virtual learning opportunities, has been the increasing amount of youths and teens struggling with virtual learning, social isolation and unstable lives. In the US, a report released by the Center for Disease Control showed that mental health visits comprised a greater percentage of pediatric emergency room visits since the start of the pandemic in mid-March all the way to October 2020. These rose 24 percent among children ages 5 to 11, and 31 percent among adolescents ages 12 to 17, over the same period in 2019³⁰.

Psychologist Kristine Brady highlighted that students now face a variety of stresses that can seem overwhelming, as a result from frustration with virtual learning, anxiety about grades and the loss of normal social life³¹. Consequently, struggles associated to internet-based education are affecting students all across the academic spectrum, from perfectionists worrying of not being able to get good grades to students with learning disabilities. Similarly, virtual learning platforms have also become sources of high levels of stress as many students struggle to master content while at the same time learning all the apps and systems used to deliver it. These negative impacts are significantly higher for marginalized children, such as those living in countries affected by conflict and other crises, migrants, refugees and the forcibly displaced, minorities, children living with disabilities, and children in institutions³².

3. Policy Recommendations and Best Practices for “Building Forward Better”

The COVID-19 pandemic has served to identify the numerous shortcomings that still affect national education systems worldwide, even those that seem to have more resources than others. It has shown that the most vulnerable communities, low-income children from low-income countries, women, girls, refugees, and people with disabilities, are the ones whose right to education is being most affected. Therefore, State education response plans should aim to prioritize their needs by focusing their policy efforts on losing all the existing educational gaps resulting from long-standing inequalities.

The pandemic has also certainly served as a “wake-up” call for many governments to encourage policymakers into exploring blended learning methods, developing innovative IT packages, and new forms of assisted digital education and training, while also addressing the numerous challenges that preceded the crisis with innovative tools targeted at schools, colleges and universities.

The following are some policy recommendations based on best practices that States could consider within their COVID-19 education response plans to improve in their 4 A's while also being more inclusive of the needs of those most affected by the pandemic:

³⁰ Brennan, Deborah (2021) *Students' mental health deteriorating during pandemic*. The San Diego Union Tribune. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/education/story/2021-02-01/students-mental-health-deteriorating-during-pandemic-lockdowns>

³¹ Ibid

³² UNESCO, UNICEF, The World Bank, WFP, UNHCR (2020) *Framework for reopening schools*. <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Framework-for-reopening-schools-2020.pdf>

- a) *Closing the digital gap: Reaching out to the most vulnerable populations through an increase and enhancement of innovative IT toolkits, and maintaining and enhancing the already successful IT experiences resulting from the pandemic*

First, taking example from the UAE, States must commit to upgrading their internet speed and coverage to ensure that all students can continue their education online if there is any kind of emergency that prevents them from in-person schooling. As in the UAE, countries that have the resources should install satellite operations centres to ensure that pupils across their territories are able to access the internet at all times, as well as free satellite services so that students in remote areas can also continue their education³³. As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres emphasized, States should be prioritizing budgets for the protection of education, enhancing the focus on education in stimulus packages, maintaining or increasing aid to education, replenishing the Global Partnership for Education Fund and using “the recovery to narrow education divides, expand digital connectivity and reimagine education”³⁴.

Even if closing the digital gap might mean more resources being targeted towards the education sector, countries’ national budgets should prioritize this national spending. States must understand this is a long-lasting investment with long-term benefits as it has the potential to consolidate an educational infrastructure that is adaptable/flexible and more importantly, fully prepared to any future emergency that forces students to leave in-person schooling. This not only means that investing in this type of technology can facilitate opportunities for remote self-learning, but also bear the potential of closing the digital gap which would allow everybody, everywhere in the world to access education, a certainly desired outcome for every country that wishes to achieve Agenda 2030’s education related targets.

For example, JumpStart Academy Africa through their program “Keep Learning with COVID-19” has shown that WhatsApp groups is an effective digital tool to help students from vulnerable communities in Africa between the ages of 14 and 19 prepare their final exams to be able to graduate and go to university. By focusing on digital devices that most students know how to use and manage, the program has moved forward positively. This method has not only allowed for successful teaching dynamics, but also to establish close personal bonds with the students to be able to help them through harsh personal experiences. From this, it is important that other organizations and countries learn that IT methods can offer a holistic educational approach that allows to stay connected to students’ personal and professional development.

- b) *Re-thinking educational programs in a natural disaster/emergency response context*

As expressed above, countries must invest in and re-think educational programmes that will help them navigate through any disaster/emergency response context. The COVID-19 pandemic has already proved to many that their education systems are not as adaptable and flexible as they thought, thus urgently calling for them to reframe the educational process taking into account situations of emergencies in the future, such as conflicts and natural disasters. Additionally, in this re-framing, States must understand that offering high quality remote learning opportunities means much more

³³ See the full statement by H.E Ms. Lubna Qassim, Chargé d’Affaires, Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the UN in Geneva in the Statements section of this publication.

³⁴ UNESDOC (2021) *One year into COVID: Prioritizing education recovery to avoid a generational catastrophe*.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376984>

than just moving lectures online. It involves changing the culture of the school and creating a real experience online that offers new and varied forms of interactions that adapt to the age needs, disabilities and socio-economic conditions of the students receiving it.

c) Building a new paradigm of education by promoting dialogue between all stakeholders and by ensuring a cross-sectoral approach

It is very important that countries start building consultation and dialogue mechanisms so that all stakeholders can participate in the new visions for education resulting from the very diverse and blended educative experiences amidst the crisis. Listening to the voices of every stakeholder becomes more important than ever as each of them can offer unique learning experiences, methods and perspectives that can enrich this new paradigm. This is why it is important to talk to policymakers, citizens, communities, teachers, learners, civil society, and researchers, especially the latter, as “with artificial intelligence and the big data today, new areas of pedagogy can be explored”³⁵. Moreover, recognizing that all human rights are interdependent, a cross-sectoral approach is indispensable. As soon as Information and Communication Technologies start intersecting with the education system and remote learning opportunities, adequate housing, for instance, becomes a pre-requisite in order to use any type of technology. This is why all concerned ministries, such as the ministries of finance, economy, rural development, infrastructure, amongst others, should all work together in order to offer holistic educational solutions that address the needs of all students³⁶.

d) Re-opening schools should be a priority for States

In order to mitigate long-lasting severe effects in students’ future livelihoods, the answer now is not to keep schools closed but to open them safely in order to effectively mitigate and reverse learning losses and get girls back in school. For instance, for many girls, especially the youngest, the learning lost during the pandemic can be limited and even reversed by improving distance education during school closures and by implementing learning recovery programs such as “Teach to the Right Level” and “High Dosage Tutoring”, which the evidence has shown to be effective³⁷. However, for older girls, the risk of dropping out is higher for they may leave school before their learning losses can be recovered, unless innovative programs are put in place in a timely manner³⁸.

e) Providing psychosocial support to all students becomes essential to guarantee their smooth return to schools, colleges and universities

Preparing students’ transition from distance learning to in-person schooling by providing effective psychosocial follow-up and medical care, especially to those most affected by the pandemic, becomes essential to guarantee student’s attendance and successful participation within the education system amidst the COVID-19 crisis. New mental health platforms should be made available so that students are able to access mental health services both remotely and in-person, so that these can help them cope throughout their studies and solve any difficulty they are currently dealing with.

³⁵ See the full statement by Dr. Koumbou Boly Barry, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, in the Statements section of this publication.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ WISE Qatar (2021) COVID-19: Bringing Girls Back to School. <https://www.wise-qatar.org/covid-19-bringing-girls-back-to-school/>

³⁸ Ibid

f) More inclusive models for a more accessible education: Helping the most affected and vulnerable students to catch up with lost learning

Education recovery policies should be specifically targeting the most marginalised students, including those most affected by the pandemic. For instance, Emma Wagner, Senior Education Policy & Advocacy Adviser at Save the Children, highlights that refugee students have a critical need for safe, good quality and inclusive education – which is a building block of their recovery, resilience and long-term development³⁹. Therefore, refugee children should be included in governments' COVID-19 education responses offering the appropriate learning materials, EdTech devices, cash transfers, back to school campaigns, mental health/ psycho-social support and language support.

On the other hand, Amélie J. Mariage, Co-founder of Aprendices Visuales⁴⁰, has also highlighted the importance of developing inclusive online courses for children with learning difficulties through targeted online courses, eBooks and apps with pictograms. Part of its success is due to its deeper focus on soft skills such as empathy, passion, ethics, critical thinking, persistence, imagination, curiosity, storytelling, and entrepreneurship. Hence, education systems worldwide should try and emulate this best practice as it has proven to be successful in being inclusive of people with learning difficulties and helping students to better manage emotions like empathy, especially amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

g) Listening to teachers' expertise to improve education policymaking and student's future

While the COVID-19 pandemic has added inextricable challenges to teachers, the need to consider their expertise and judgment in the future of education becomes crucial as they are the closest witnesses of the challenges the pandemic has brought for their students, for themselves, and for their jobs. Hence, their expertise and judgment become critically important to solving these challenges as the pandemic continues and, in its aftermath, taking into account also, that they are the only ones who can provide the most accurate educational roadmaps to address the students' specific needs. Most certainly, they are the only ones in continuous contact with their students and can notice how and in what ways “disparities in learning factors and opportunity gaps associated with uneven access to food, shelter, health insurance, and financial relief can substantially widen and deepen learning gaps between worse-off and better-off students”⁴¹. Thus, policymakers within countries must work side by side with teachers in order to design more precise education recovery programmes that are able to address these very harmful disparities and protect the right to education of the most vulnerable.

³⁹ See the full statement by Ms. Emma Wagner in the Statements section of this publication.

⁴⁰ See the full statement by Ms. Amélie J. Mariage in the Statements section of this publication.

⁴¹ Garcia, E., Weiss, E. & Welshans, I. (2020) *What teaching is like during the pandemic—and a reminder that listening to teachers is critical to solving the challenges the coronavirus has brought to public education*. Economic Policy Institute. <https://www.epi.org/blog/what-teaching-is-like-during-the-pandemic-and-a-reminder-that-listening-to-teachers-is-critical-to-solving-the-challenges-the-coronavirus-has-brought-to-public-education/>

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