



Prepare for school reopening

IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs



Regardless of a country's capacity to provide appropriate, continued access to learning during crises and school closures, all education systems should prepare for schools to reopen when the time comes. This process poses many challenges for education authorities, and [careful planning is essential](#).

The sections below provide advice and information for education planners and decision-makers who are anticipating the reopening of schools following closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Even if countries have crisis-recovery strategies in place, the following may be useful reminders.

1. Plan for the reopening of schools

Three key elements should be considered as part of the preparations: finance, infrastructure, and human resources.

Finance:

- Assess the impact of the crisis on the current education [budget and on the financing](#) available for the coming months and years, and consider the potential trade-offs.
- Readjust national budgets for education in light of the findings.
- Make sure teachers and non-teaching personnel are paid and all schools have an operational budget adapted to the situation.
- Implement measures to help with the financial burden on families.

Infrastructure:

- Discuss with health authorities the safety of school buildings and their surroundings before reopening.
- Establish conditions that must be met before schools are reopened. This will lessen the probability of a new outbreak and boost the confidence of parents, students, and teachers in terms of school safety.
- Ensure communities' [trust in the health and safety measures](#) taken by schools to guarantee the well-being of returning students and to ensure that the risk of contagion is minimized.
- Renovate, improve, or install (as necessary) hygiene facilities like washrooms, toilets, and bathrooms; guarantee that handwashing stations will be available; and provide running water as well as, for example, soap and disposable hand towels.

Human resources:

- Plan for teacher mobilization, prioritizing regions that were worst hit by the crisis.
- Explore, as an exceptional measure, the emergency deployment of teachers to areas affected by high teacher mortality rates during the crisis.
- Train teachers to monitor children and identify those experiencing particular difficulties when they are back in school.

- Provide [support to teachers](#) so that they can in turn support distressed children.
- Begin structured education activities as soon as it is safe to do so in order to mitigate the psychosocial impact of the crisis on children and youth.
- Guarantee free school meals as an incentive for children to return to school.

2. Communicate, consult, and coordinate

It is important to [communicate regularly](#) with teachers, parents, students, and communities on, for example, the dates and conditions of reopening.

- Use multiple [channels of communication](#) (e.g. radio, television, internet, community meetings) to inform teachers, parents, and students about the different measures taken to reopen schools.
- Communicate widely and transparently with all education stakeholders, as parents may be reluctant to send their children to school after the crisis.
- Appeal to local authorities, community leaders, and parents to disseminate accurate information on the reopening of the school system.
- [Correct misinformation](#) and put to rest any public doubt or fear.

3. Review and assess the learning needs of students

When schools reopen after a period of closure, education authorities may want to consider adopting a [flexible learning approach](#). Here are some suggestions on how to do this.

- Adjust the school and exam calendar to take into account the teaching time.
- Consider shortening the academic year(s) and following an accelerated syllabus that focuses on core subjects.
- Start planning for accelerated learning strategies (e.g. condensed curricula focusing on core subjects), [developing policies and programmes](#), making funding available for them, and guaranteeing that human and technical resources are available.
- Prepare special after-school study classes (either mandatory or for selected groups) so that students can catch up on core subjects.

References:

IIEP-UNESCO. 2010. [Guidebook for planning education in emergencies and reconstruction](#), 623–653, 872–894, 937–962. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.

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UNICEF; WHO; IFRC. 2020. '[Guidance for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools](#)'. New York, NY: UNICEF.

World Bank. 2015. '[Back to School after the Ebola Outbreak](#)'.

World Bank. 2016. '[The impact of Ebola on education in Sierra Leone](#)'.

Access to all IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs:

<http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/five-steps-support-education-all-time-covid-19>