Basic Education in the Time of COVID-19

Why is basic education so fundamental, especially during emergencies?

Throughout the world, societies transmit not only knowledge and skills, but ethical and behavioral norms and traditions through their education systems, all of which help to reduce poverty and conflict. The importance of education increases in times of crisis, as schools are seen as the heart of the community, a symbol of a more hopeful future, and the source of education, meals, and refuge. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) states that "funding for education response should be given equal priority with water, food, shelter and health responses to ensure education provision...[during emergencies]."

What is the current situation?

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, the number of displaced persons in the world had reached historic highs, making access to education a frequent challenge. According to UNESCO, over 1.5 billion children (90% of enrolled learners), are currently out of school because of COVID-19 — a figure the United Nations expects to continue to increase. While these nationwide school closures in 188 countries (and rising) are necessary to contain the virus, they are projected to disrupt learning, nutrition, child safety, and the economy—to name only a few impacted areas. USAID is rapidly mobilizing agency-wide to develop a coherent, multi-sector strategy for COVID-19 response.

How are international education programs responding?

- Worldreader is launching Keep Children Reading, which provides children in the Global South with free digital texts through BookSmart, a new reading solution for mobile phones (available on the Google Play Store or web browser).
- Education Development Center (EDC) developed guidelines for Interactive Audio Instruction (IAI) programs and other resources, found on their COVID-19 resource page.
- Room to Read is offering free downloads of bilingual digital books and 185 English/Bahasa Indonesian books, and using cell phones to mentor secondary school girls from a distance.

Visit the Basic Education Coalition site for more examples.

Where can I find additional resources?

- USAID's COVID-19 guidance to implementing partners
- COVID-19 and Education: Initial Insights for Preparedness, Planning, and Response (USAID)
- EduLinks Education Resources in Response to Coronavirus
- INEE resources
- Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN) resources
- UNESCO's distance learning solutions

To submit resources or examples of support to education during COVID-19, email pmorencynotario@basiced.org.