



## Responding to Continuous Disruptions to Education – Reflections and Solutions

*a Side-event of the Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-2025*

**27 July 2021**

**9am – 11am (British Summer Time)**

**3 pm – 5 pm (GMT+7/Bangkok time)**

### **Concept Note**

#### **I. Rationale**

The Asia Pacific Education and Learning 2030+ Networking Group (LE2030+) will organize ‘a solutions oriented’ meeting to propose solutions to the latest phase of the COVID-19 crisis in the Asia region as a side-event at the Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-25. The focus will be clearly linked to one of the Summit’s main themes, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Education and learning have been dramatically affected by COVID-19 since March 2020. Countries in Asia were the first impacted by COVID-19, which disrupted access to education for 760 million children at the initial peak of the pandemic in 2020. It was also one of the first regions to reopen schools in mid-2020.

In 2021, recurrent waves of COVID-19 are resulting in further school closures and returns to different forms of remote learning, and countries across Asia have faced significant challenges in developing, planning and implementing remote learning effectively, not least due to the sudden onset of the pandemic, lack of preparedness for long periods of remote learning, and the challenges posed by the digital divide. Remote learning has not proven to be the panacea, or alternative to face-to-face schooling that some may have hoped for, but it has shown incredible promise as a complement, and potential alternative for those who have dropped out or otherwise have limited or no opportunities to continue face-to-face schooling. Reach in terms of access to internet and devices has however been very limited and skewed towards the more advantaged; the quality has often been lacking, students often had minimal or no contact with their teachers during school closures, and curriculum coverage has also been very limited.

While there is huge potential in bridging the digital divide in future and an increasingly universal agreement to make this happen – the complexity and cost of doing this will exclude most children over the next few years. Hence pragmatic solutions which reach all children are required now. The same solutions can also bridge the gap between the present emergency and our joint efforts to build back better and indeed re-imagine education in future.

Learning loss in the region has been massive and the future of many children and the societies in which they live has been compromised. Learning loss impacts the foundations of literacy and numeracy, as well as life skills that children need to survive and thrive in an uncertain future and will negatively affect the employability of young people and beyond individual earning, will seriously impact economies of societies.

While the focus of today’s discussion is on what governments and other partners can do when schooling is interrupted clearly the ideal solution is that children should return to school as soon as it is safely possible and schooling should be among the first services to resume after lockdowns.

## **II. Objectives**

The key expected outcome of the session will be a deeper understanding of potential, practical yet strategic responses to mitigate the effects of COVID and school disruption on learning in the short term, linked to longer term aspirations and goals.

## **III. Methodology/Approach**

This side event would first present the key findings from the COVID-19 situation analysis on Education in East, Southeast and South Asia, highlighting commonalities and variations across sub-regions, and provide recent updates. Secondly, leveraging the collaborative work of the Networking Group at the regional level, the proposed themes would include safely reopening schools, learning recovery (remediation) and effective preparation for future disruptions through adapted continuity of learning solutions (hybrid/flexible learning). This would then be contextualized by highlights of promising practices at country level presented by representatives of Ministries of Education from selected countries.

The event will be organized by UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO) and the Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), using a blend of plenary and group work sessions, virtual tools, and breakout room discussions to ensure a highly interactive session.

The sessions will be facilitated by members of the Asia-Pacific Learning and Education 2030+ Networking Group. The Chairs and facilitator will vary by session and are listed in the right-hand column in the agenda below.

## **IV. Participation**

The target audience is educationist policy makers and planners from the Asia Pacific region and beyond. We expect Ministry officials engaged in the COVID-19 response to participate. Other agencies engaged in the COVID response and the Asia-Pacific Network for Learning and Education 2030+ and sub-groups are also warmly invited to participate. This includes multilateral and bilateral agencies and civil society. Presentations will be provided by members of LE2030+ including the coordinating agencies, UNESCO and UNICEF.

## **Provisional Agenda**

<b>Session title</b>	Responding to Continuous Disruptions to Education – Reflections and Solutions.		
<b>Date and time</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> July 9am – 11am (BST)		
<b>Session outline</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
<b><i>SESSION 1 - Setting the scene – global and regional (55 minutes)</i></b>			
	9:00 (5 mins)	Welcome and Introduction to the session	Introduction
	9:05- 9:20 (15 mins)	The impact of COVID and the COVID response on education in Asia– highlights of a regional situation analysis	Presentation
	9:20 – 9:25 (5 mins)	A proposed response to the recent waves of COVID on Education in Asia	Presentation
	9:25-9:50 (25 mins)	Plenary discussion and Q&A:	Francisco Benavides, UNICEF EAPRO

Session title	Responding to Continuous Disruptions to Education – Reflections and Solutions.			
Date and time	27 <sup>th</sup> July 9am – 11am (BST)			
		<p><i>What are your priorities, main concerns, and opportunities?</i></p> <p><b>1: Continuity of learning and safe school reopening:</b> access, participation and learning during the pandemic, cross-sectorial efforts</p> <p><b>2: Addressing learning loss:</b> essential learning recovery package; well-being</p> <p><b>3: Building back better</b> to improve learning and increase system resilience</p>	Plenary Discussion	Moderator: Cecilia Soriano, ASPBAE
<b>SESSION 2: Group break-out sessions (breakout rooms to run concurrently: 45 minutes)</b>				
<b>Group A: South Asian countries</b>				
	9:50 – 9:55 (5 mins)	<b>Group A:</b> Challenges and responses to COVID – country specific approaches in South Asia around distance learning and remediation	Introduction	Ivan Coursac, UNICEF ROSA
	9:55 – 10:05 (10 mins)	Country case study on systematic approaches to remediation, distance learning and system adaptation to address potential learning loss (Sri Lanka)	Presentation	Mr. A.L.M Zarudeen, Additional Provincial Director of Education (Education Development) Provincial Department of Education, Central Province, Sri Lanka
	10:05 – 10:35 (30 mins)	Discussion	Discussion	Facilitator: Jim Ackers, UNICEF ROSA
		<b>Key questions for discussion:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the essential package required to mitigate learning loss given South Asian contexts going forward?</li> <li>2. What support do countries need from Asia-Pacific Working Group Partners and what can they learn from each other?</li> </ol>		Rapporteur: Mr. Moosa Adam, Senior Policy Director, Ministry of Education, Maldives
<b>Group B: South East and East Asian countries</b>				
	9:50 – 9:55 (5 mins)	<b>Group B:</b> Challenges and responses to COVID – country specific approaches in East and South East Asia around school reopening, distance learning and remediation.	Introduction	Nyi Nyi Thaung, UNESCO BKK
	9:55 – 10:15 (20 mins)	Country case studies on systematic approaches to remediation and system adaptation to address potential learning loss Ministries of Education (Indonesia and Republic of Korea)	Presentations	Mr. Hasbi. Director of Early Childhood Education , Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (MoECRT), Indonesia  Ms. Soojin CHOI, International Education Cooperation Division, Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea
	10:15 – 10:35 (20 mins)	Discussion	Discussion	Facilitator: Nyi Nyi Thaung, UNESCO BKK

<b>Session title</b>	Responding to Continuous Disruptions to Education – Reflections and Solutions.			
<b>Date and time</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> July 9am – 11am (BST)</b>			
		<b>Key questions for discussion:</b> 1. What is the essential package required to mitigate learning loss given East and Southeast Asian contexts going forward? 2. What support do countries need from Asia-Pacific Working Group Partners and what can they learn from each other?	Rapporteur: Dr Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela, SEAMEO Secretariat	
<b>SESSION 3: Feedback to plenary: 20 minutes</b>				
	10 :35 – 10 :40 (5 mins)	Introduction to the Session	Introduction	Akihiro Fushimi, UNICEF EAPRO
	10 :40 – 10 :45 (5 mins)	Key insights and priority actions for the Education response in South Asia (selected Ministry official)	Summary of breakout room discussions	Rapporteur: Mr. Moosa Adam, Senior Policy Director, Ministry of Education, Maldives
	10 :45 – 10 :50 (5 mins)	Key insights and priority actions for the Education response in East and Southeast Asia	Summary of breakout room discussions	Rapporteur: Dr Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela, SEAMEO Secretariat
	10 :50 - 10 :55 (5 min)	Wrap-up, action points for A-P Network Follow up from the session Closing remarks		Jim Ackers, UNICEF ROSA