



Coordinate, plan, and communicate

IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs



The response to a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic should be fast, coordinated, and cross-sectoral. First, education authorities will want to set priorities and engage all relevant stakeholders, creating a short-term plan based on a rapid analysis of the situation and an assessment of immediate needs. Once this is in place, all stakeholders should agree upon a medium term plan, and anticipate the need for a strategy to manage the aftermath of the crisis.

Below, education authorities will find guidance on important steps they can take when responding to the crisis. Even if countries already have a contingency plan for the education sector, the reminders here may be helpful.

1. Activate emergency planning groups within education and coordinate across sectors

Ministries of education (MoEs) can use existing emergency structures to implement contingency plans in harmony with the national body in charge of crisis management. If contingency plans do not exist, MoEs can create their own emergency planning group, and coordinate with other sectors to respond to the crisis.

- Identify the most appropriate people from education and other sectors – setting out clear roles and responsibilities – to share information, coordinate responses, and develop joint interventions.
- Form partnerships with the ministry of health to tackle the pandemic.
- Envisage and discuss different scenarios, identifying potential opportunities and obstacles that could help or hinder implementation measures.
- Establish clear objectives, strategies, policies, and initiatives to respond to the situation.

2. Assess requirements for maintaining operational capacities at all levels

MoEs are advised to collect information from all key stakeholders to identify operational needs. Such stakeholders might include local elected authorities, non-governmental organizations, civil society actors, teachers' unions, and public health bodies.

Collect simple qualitative and quantitative data on the situation of schools, teachers, and students:

- Review existing data and information from the education management information system (EMIS) and other sources, before collecting new data.
- Establish a data collection unit for the pandemic to coordinate the process at all administrative levels.

- Collect data concerning vulnerable populations, in order to address their needs and secure their rights during the crisis. This includes in particular:
 - o children with special learning needs who might find it difficult to study autonomously;
 - o [girls compelled to undertake child- and home-care responsibilities](#) during school closures, limiting their study and rest time.

Assess operational needs (financial, human, and material):

- Take stock of particular operational needs resulting from school closures, especially regarding:
 - o [support for teachers](#) continuing to teach;
 - o support for students continuing to learn;
 - o the availability of teaching and learning materials.
- Explore mitigation and remediation strategies to counter operational problems.
- Evaluate whether the available financial resources are adequate for planning and implementing the required education services, programmes, and interventions (for instance, investigating how much it would cost to set up teacher professional development in open and distance learning).

3. Communicate clearly and continuously with teachers, parents, students, communities, and cities

During a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, communication from authorities is key to uniting people in a common effort, countering fear and desperation, and producing effective outcomes. School personnel, parents, and students all need open and ongoing communication with education authorities. Communication between school personnel, parents, and students is also critical, in order to reassure everyone, ensure that teachers and students have all the necessary information, and enable ongoing teaching and learning.

Develop clear communication channels and ensure overall coordination:

- Assess communication needs, and strengthen the MoE's coordination of communications if necessary.
- Assess the availability and effectiveness of different communication channels (radio, television, SMS, social media, etc.).
- Consider customized communication tools, targeted towards specific audiences, to better share information with the people most affected by the emergency and with other stakeholders.

Communicate clearly and coherently:

- Give audiences up-to-date information about the crisis and about decisions and initiatives developed and implemented to address it.
- Provide advice on good health and hygiene practices.
- Ensure that all audiences, including the most vulnerable, can access key information.

References:

Attawell, K. 2008. [Partnerships in practice: Good policy and practice in HIV & AIDS and education](#). Booklet 4. Paris: UNESCO.

Carron, G.; Mahshi, K.; De Grauwe, A.; Gay, D.; Choudhuri, S. 2010. [Strategic planning: Organizational arrangements](#). Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.

IASC. 2007. [Inter-Agency Contingency Planning Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance](#).

IIEP-UNESCO. 2010. [Guidebook for planning education in emergencies and reconstruction](#), 297–327. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.

INEE. 2004. [Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction](#).

UNHCR. 2011. 'Contingency Planning' (training module).

UNHCR. n.d. '[Education in emergencies](#)'.

UNICEF. 2020. [Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#). New York, NY: UNICEF.

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

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

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