

ECW

COVID-19 RESPONSE PROFILE



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HIGHLIGHTS

AGGREGATED RESULTS INFORMATION:

- More than 29.2 million crisis-affected children and adolescents (51 per cent girls) were reached and supported with distance learning opportunities, COVID-19 awareness creation, and health and hygiene products in 2020.
- ECW approved \$45.4 million for disbursement to 32 countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and 75 per cent of FER funds were dispersed at record speed within eight weeks.
- Four MYRPs quickly re-programmed their initiatives to simultaneously target existing crises and the COVID-19 pandemic, providing flexible support for the most vulnerable.
- Well over 10.2 million of the world's hardest-to-reach children and adolescents (48 per cent girls) continued their education via distance learning.
- Slightly more than 4.5 million children, parents, and education personnel (49 per cent female) were reached with messages related to COVID-19 and focusing on education.
- Some 310,600 teachers (55 per cent female) were trained on COVID-19 related topics, such as distance learning, COVID-19 protocols, and health and hygiene promotion.

The United Nations estimates that since March 2020, 1.5 billion children have experienced a prolonged interruption in education during the pandemic caused by school closures.⁴⁷ Compounding this learning loss 31% of students lack access to remote- and distance-learning opportunities.⁴⁸

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected children, refugees, and internally displaced people (IDPs) in crisis-affected countries, while exacerbating existing challenges.⁴⁹ Refugees and IDPs living in poverty and overcrowded conditions are more susceptible to high infection rates and have reduced access to health care, intensifying the impact of the virus.⁵⁰ Girls in particular are at increased risk. The Malala Fund⁵¹ has highlighted that marginalized girls are at greater risk than boys of dropping out and not returning to school following school closures, and that women and girls are more vulnerable than men and boys to the worst effects of the current pandemic. UNESCO estimates that 11 million girls will drop out of school due to economic impacts caused by COVID-19.⁵²

Girls that remain in school often undertake three times more caring responsibilities than boys.⁵³ During the Ebola crisis in Africa, girls' increased caring responsibilities limited their learning opportunities, and a similar impact is predicted for the current crisis.⁵⁴

During crises, schools and education institutions can play a key role in building the resilience of individuals, communities, and nations. They often serve as important centres, inspiring and guiding local action,

disseminating essential information, and serving as gateways to health, protection, and other services. The closure of such critical infrastructures has had a wide-ranging impact not just on children's schooling but on their daily lives. It has disrupted people's access to other essential services, including health and nutritious food, and closed children off from safe school environments that were protective of them.⁵⁵

While nearly all children worldwide have been affected by school closings due to COVID-19, those living in the poorest countries have been disproportionately so. Since March 2020 schools in countries supported by ECW have closed for an average of 32 days more than in countries not supported by ECW. As a result, students in ECW-supported countries received on average 85 days of education – significantly fewer than the 112 days that students in non-ECW-supported countries received.⁵⁶ Students in South Sudan, for example, lost 16 per cent of their schooling over a lifetime, compared to 3 per cent for students in countries of Europe and Central Asia.⁵⁷ Thus, the poorest children and adolescents in the poorest countries have missed out on a huge proportion of their education, as shown by Figures 2 and 3 below.

- 47 Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a recently discovered infectious virus that has spread globally since March 2020. The virus spreads primarily through bodily fluids, including saliva when breathing, and is particularly infectious in enclosed and crowded spaces, such as classrooms. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020 and reported 83,363,325 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,803,116 linked deaths globally as of 31 December 2020. Governments have reacted to the pandemic by following health guidelines, which negatively affect children's education. The closing of international borders, non-essential businesses, schools, and colleges and universities as well as the suspension of exams became common to reduce the virus's spread.
- 48 United Nations Children's Fund, "Covid-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures? A global analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies using data from 100 countries." UNICEF, New York, 2020.
- 49 Plan International, 'Open letter: Leaders must protect children during COVID-19', Statement endorsed by the CEOs of ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation and World Vision International, 14 April 2020, from <<https://plan-international.org/news/2020-04-14-open-letter-leaders-must-protect-children-during-covid-19>>, accessed 6 July 2021.
- 50 World Health Organization, *Preparedness, prevention and control of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for refugees and migrants in non-camp settings*, Interim guidance, WHO, Geneva, 2020, pp. 1–6, <[www.who.int/publications/i/item/preparedness-prevention-and-control-of-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-for-refugees-and-migrants-in-non-camp-settings](http://www.who.int/publications/i/item/preparedness-prevention-and-control-of-coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-for-refugees-and-migrants-in-non-camp-settings)>, accessed 6 July 2021.
- 51 Malala Fund, 'Our Priorities: COVID-19 Initiative', <<https://covid.malala.org/>>, accessed 6 July 2021.
- 52 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 'Addressing the Gender Dimensions of COVID-Related School Closures', Issue Note 3.1, UNESCO, Geneva, 2020, <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373379>>, accessed 6 July 2021.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Building Back Resilient: How can education systems prevent, prepare for and respond to health emergencies and pandemics?* Issue Note 1.3, UNESCO, Paris, 2021, <<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375278>>, accessed 6 July 2021; and United Nations, *Education during COVID-19 and Beyond*, Policy Brief, 2020, <www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf>, accessed 6 July 2021.
- 56 Johns Hopkins University, World Bank and UNICEF, 'COVID-19 Global Education Recovery Tracker', JHU, World Bank and UNICEF, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and New York, 2021, <www.covideducationrecovery.global/data>, accessed 6 July 2021.
- 57 David Evans, et al., 'It's Been a Year since Schools Started to Close due to COVID-19', Blog post, 10 Feb. 2021, Center for Global Development, <www.cgdev.org/blog/its-been-year-schools-started-close-due-covid-19>, accessed 6 July 2021.

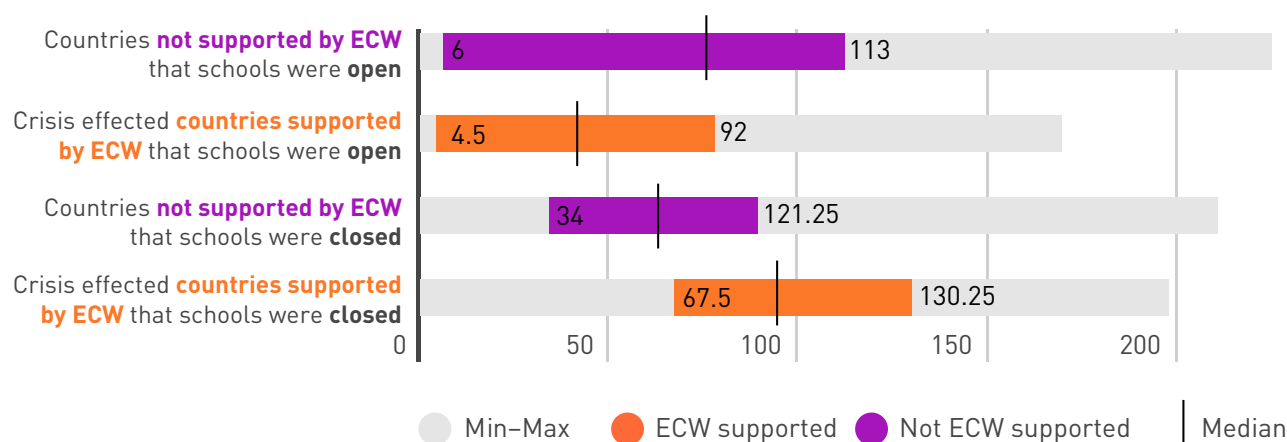
Once schools have closed, many children might never return, significantly altering their prospects for the rest of their lives. In any situation, when education provision is reduced it has a negative impact on children's learning, safety, nutrition, freedoms, and care – and the sudden shutdown of schools because of COVID-19 has been no exception.⁵⁸ In a policy brief on education in the context of COVID-19, the United Nations has stated that “Learning losses also threaten to extend beyond this generation and erase decades of progress, not least in support of girls’ and young women’s educational access and retention.”⁵⁹ Education is a human right and every child’s right; when it is discontinued it violates those rights, and its timely resumption must be a top priority for governments. Any delay will result in a “generational catastrophe.”^{60,61} The actions of ECW and its partners

and donors in 2020 are helping to prevent such a catastrophe.

Besides incurring the loss of learning, school closures have exacerbated the risks of gender-based violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and child labour;⁶² and children and adolescents engaging online for learning purposes may be placed at further risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.⁶³ The risks and impacts of such modalities may vary for girls and boys. For example, households may prioritize girls’ domestic care work over their online learning.⁶⁴ When effective, education can limit disparities within communities; yet the lack of an effective education can amplify existing disparities, particularly between girls and boys, with adolescent girls being the most affected.

FIGURE 2. Number of school days lost caused by COVID-19

Figure 2 visualises the distribution of the number of days of school lost caused by COVID-19. The coloured bars show days lost by 99 per cent of the countries in each group. The minimum and maximum data (grey) show the most and least days lost per group. The figure demonstrates ECW efforts to target the most affected countries.



58 Plan International, 'Open letter: Leaders must protect children during COVID-19'.

59 United Nations, *Education during COVID-19 and Beyond*.

60 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Building Back Resilient*.

61 United Nations, *Education during COVID-19 and Beyond*.

62 United Nations Children's Fund and International Rescue Committee, *COVID-19: GBV Risks to Adolescent Girls and Interventions to Protect and Empower Them*, Guidance Note, 2020, <www.unicef.org/documents/covid-19-gbv-risks-adolescent-girls-and-interventions-protect-and-empower-them>, accessed 13 July 2021.

63 United Nations Children's Fund et al., *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and Its Implications for Protecting Children Online*, Technical Note, 2020, <www.unicef.org/documents/covid-19-and-implications-protecting-children-online>, accessed 13 July 2021.

64 United Nations Children's Fund, *Reimagining Girls' Education*, UNICEF, New York, 2021, <www.unicef.org/reports/reimagining-girls-education>, accessed 13 July 2021.

ECW'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Shortly after WHO declared the pandemic, ECW responded rapidly and decisively to the global crisis, initiating a plan just two weeks after the first COVID-19 case appeared in an ECW-supported country. Within just 21 days ECW mobilized \$23 million from FER reserves, and a further \$22.4 million was approved in July 2020. This funding was distributed to 85 grantees in 33 crisis-affected areas to ensure the safe continuity and resumption of in-person education. Some 75 per cent of COVID-19 FERs were allocated within eight weeks, making this ECW's most rapid disbursement of funds to date. While ECW moved with an 'urgency of now' philosophy, the organization would have been in an even better position to reach millions more with

such speed had the financing for emergencies been available. ECW's system, structure, and partners were all in place in-country, and they coordinated in an exemplary manner.

The COVID-19 funding differed from ECW's normal funding modalities in its approach. The goal was to ensure the continuity of education for as many girls, boys, and adolescents as possible in a timely way. The 71 COVID-19 FERs were designed to support the scale-up of existing pandemic response systems, provide funding for innovative (often distance) learning solutions, and establish alternative education pathways to maintain access to and retention in education throughout the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.

FIGURE 3. Percentage of schooling missed (in a lifetime) due to COVID-19 per country

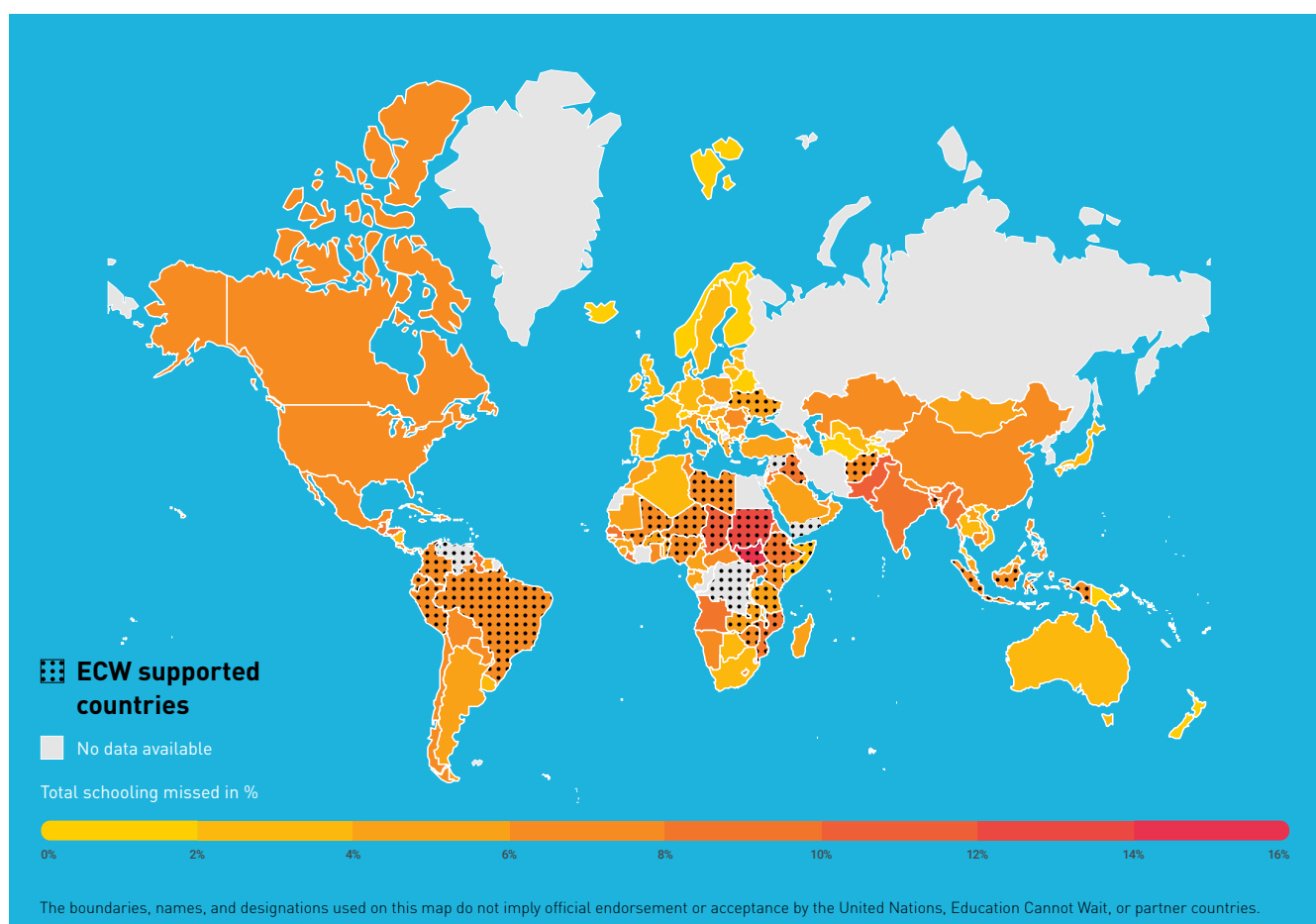
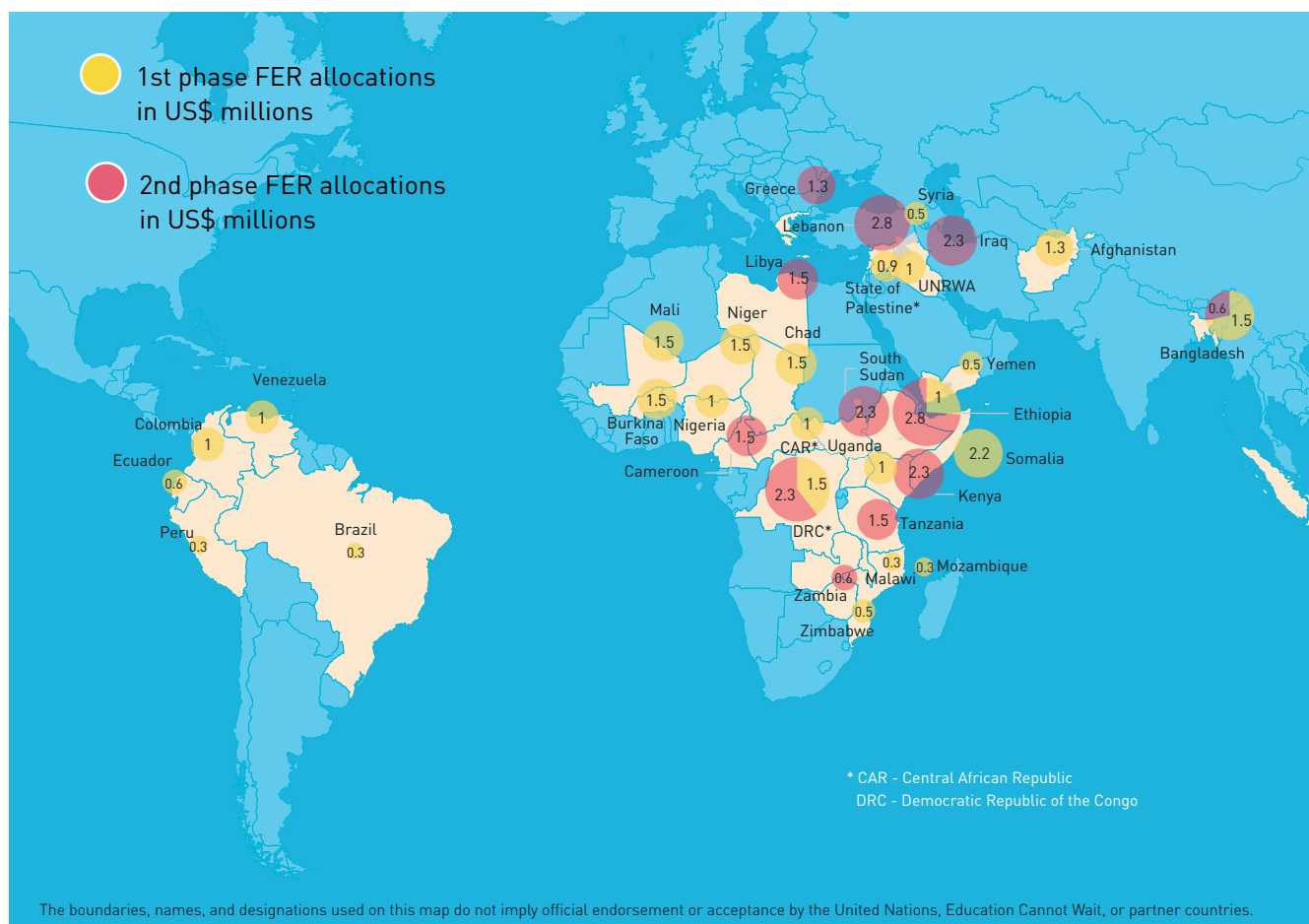


TABLE 2. Timeline showing key stages of ECW response to COVID and important details

DATE	EVENT / DETAILS
12/31/2019	Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, reports a cluster of cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei province
2/11/2020	First COVID-19 death is reported in China
2/24/2020	First COVID-19 case is reported in an ECW-supported country (Nigeria & Afghanistan)
3/11/2020	World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a global pandemic
3/25/2020	Launch of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan by the United Nations
3/16/2020	ECW mobilizes education clusters and partners to submit 23 grant proposals in the amount of \$44 million
3/30/2020	ECW's Executive Committee approves the use of \$23 million FER reserve funds; ECW requests an additional \$50 million in funding
3/4/2020	First COVID-19 death is reported in an ECW-supported country (Iraq)
4/2/2020	Round I of COVID-19 grants is funded in the amount of \$23 million. (First COVID-19 FERs distributed between 2/4/2020 and 3/4/2020)
7/23/2020	FER reserve is replenished; Round II of COVID-19 grants is funded in the amount of \$22.4 million focused on forcibly displaced children/adolescents (refugees and IDPs)
12/31/2020	More than 29.2 million children and adolescents (51% girls) reached with COVID-19 interventions in 2020

FIGURE 4. Financial investments with the data disaggregated for Round I / Round II per country

COVID-19 FERs lasting 6 to 12 months had a much lower cost-per-child expenditure (around \$1 per child) and a higher reach compared to regular FERs lasting 6 to 12 months (\$25 per child) and MYRPs lasting 2–3 years (\$220 per child). As a result, the amount and depth of support that these children and adolescents received is much less compared to the longer and more holistic approach to access, learning, and safety that ECW's regular FER and MYRP programmes provide. Due to this difference in focus and depth, the figures of children reached as well as specific programme results on teachers trained and materials distributed cannot be combined with other

ECW statistics, and are thus kept separate throughout the report. This profile refers only to the COVID-19 education response interventions of 2020.

In response to the protracted crisis in four countries, ECW and MYRP grantees re-allocated existing 2020 MYRP funds, adding to the COVID-19 FER funding that these countries received. Afghanistan, Chad, the State of Palestine, and Uganda set up specific interventions aimed at continuing education and mitigating any losses of schooling, as well as informing children and adolescents about the importance of health and hygiene.

MAIN RESULTS

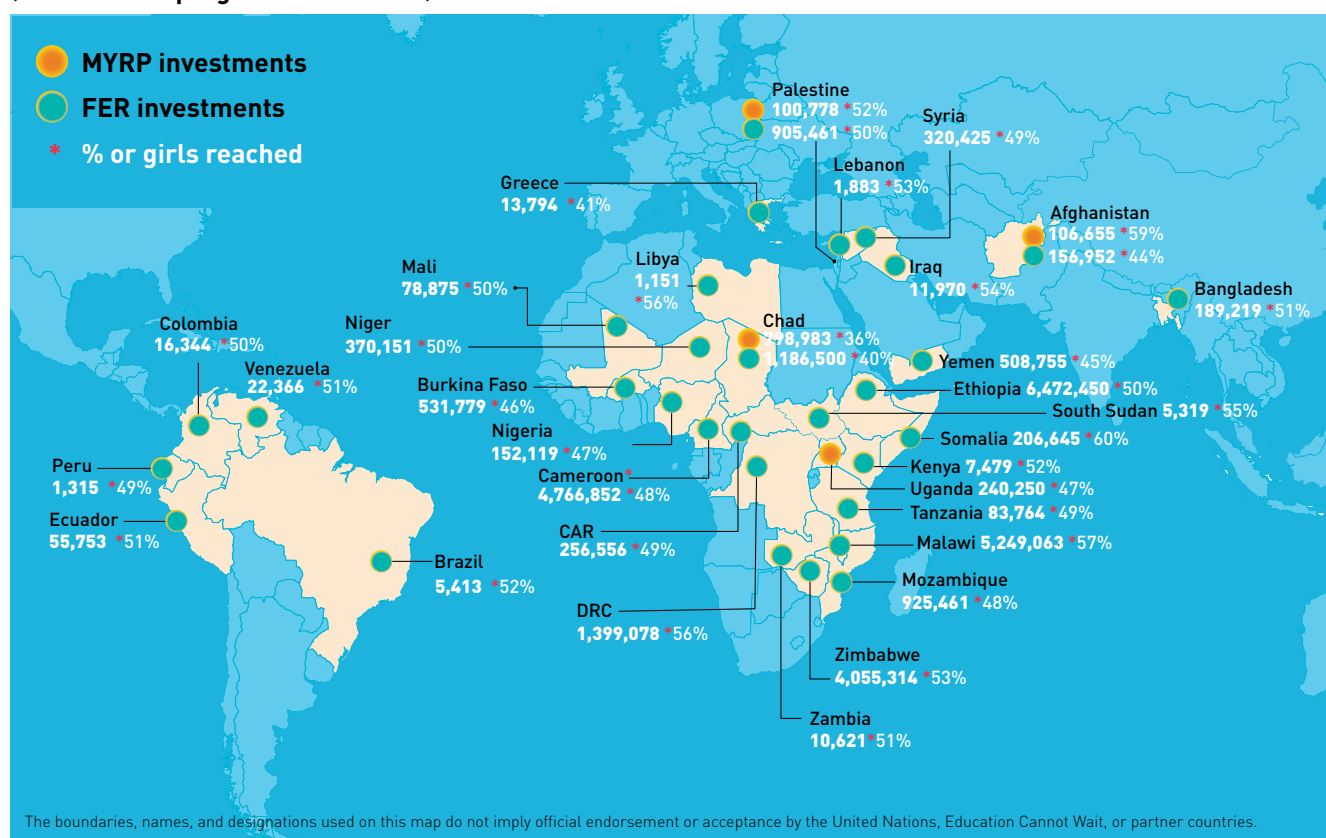
ECW's rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the greatest possible number of students to be reached with interventions before education loss irreversibly changed their futures. Twenty-four grantees reached more than 29.2 million children and adolescents (51 per cent girls), including over 1.43 million refugees (49 per cent girls), nearly 1 million IDPs (50 per cent girls), 16.2 million young people from other affected populations (51 per cent girls), and over 65,000 children with disabilities. If these children and adolescents had become deprived of their access to education, it is likely that many would never return to school, reversing decades of progress towards universal education.

In 2020, ECW's investments targeting the most vulnerable in sub-Saharan Africa reached 26.8 million children and adolescents (51 per cent girls). Further

investment resulted in 18.5 million children and adolescents (48 per cent girls) reached in the Middle East and North Africa; slightly more than 101,000 (51 per cent girls) in Latin America and the Caribbean; about 453,000 (50 per cent girls) in South Asia; and close to 14,000 (41 per cent girls) in Europe and Central Asia.

About 19.6 million children and adolescents (52 per cent girls) were supported with continued primary education programmes, providing a solid foundation benefiting not only the children but their families and entire communities. Additionally, about 2.5 million (44 per cent girls) were enrolled in pre-primary education programmes, and 5.5 million (51 per cent girls) children and adolescents were enrolled in secondary education programmes supported by ECW.

FIGURE 5. Number of children reached through COVID-19 specific interventions (FERs and re-programmed MYRPs) in 2020





NIGERIA'S RADIO LEARNING HUBS

To ensure continuity of education during school closures amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, Save the Children implemented a large-scale radio education programme. This programme targeted 150 cohorts of children totalling 14,880 children (6,525 girls). Teachers and volunteers produced ECW-funded lessons, which were aired five days a week. To further increase access, ECW funding was used to purchase 1,360 radios in Yobe State.

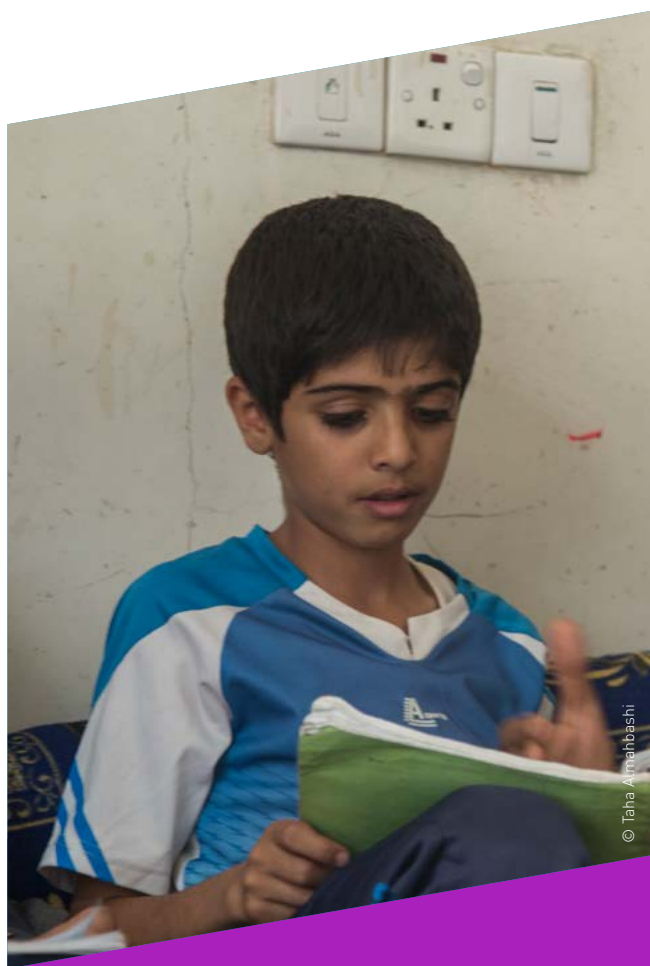
In a programme survey, 42 per cent of listeners reported an increase in basic numeracy and literacy skills, including word construction and mathematical equations, and a further 52 per cent reported learning and acquiring more advanced skills. Overall, the programme had a 99 per cent satisfaction rate among listeners.

KEY INTERVENTIONS

ECW encouraged a comprehensive approach to COVID-19 interventions to ensure that as many children as possible were able to continue their education during the pandemic. Through COVID-19 FERs, ECW promoted remote learning in various forms, and distributed masks, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other specific products for use in preventing the virus and to facilitate various health and hygiene measures. ECW also carried out large public campaigns to raise awareness of COVID-19 prevention measures.

As schools closed their physical doors, remote learning provided an essential opportunity for girls and boys to continue their education in a safe and socially distant manner. Remote learning was critical to making further progress towards education for

all, and for preventing the loss of progress that had been achieved to date. Through COVID-19 FERs and re-programmed MYRPs, more than 14.8 million girls were able to access some form of education and/or COVID-19 awareness. Remote learning alone reached over 10.24 million children and adolescents (48 per cent girls) through radio, television, SMS, WhatsApp, e-learning, and paper-based initiatives. Across Nigeria, four grantees – Plan International, Save the Children, Street Child, and UNICEF – reached 43,544 children (45 per cent girls), distributed 3,943 radios to individuals and community hubs, and trained 978 teachers on remote pedagogy. Other grantees implemented e-learning programmes, such as in Yemen, where UNICEF provided nearly 336,000 children (45 per cent girls) with e-learning materials that complemented radio and TV education initiatives.



E-LEARNING IN IRAQ

In Iraq, ECW's FER partners used common and user-friendly software applications, such as WhatsApp and Viber, to provide information, lessons, and support to 5,370 children and adolescents (3,292 girls) during school closures. To ensure children and adolescents had flexible and accessible distance learning, Save the Children produced asynchronous lessons, which allowed parents and students to attend at convenient times. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and INTERSOS used these applications to ensure that teachers and students had direct lines of communication to organize learning activities. NRC provided north-east Syrian refugees supplemental Kurdish language lessons and enrolled 443 (49 percent girls) into its basic literacy and numeracy programme.

All implementing partners worked jointly to support the online learning platforms of both the Ministry of Education of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Ministry of Education of Federal Iraq. During the second suspension of schools, from November to the end of January, FER partners worked closely with communities to increase access to e-learning platforms through the provision of materials and awareness-raising.

While distance learning increased access and continuity for many children during school closures, girls and children with disabilities faced added barriers that reduced their access to distance learning. In response, ECW partners designed many distance learning interventions to be accessible and equitable for all girls and boys. For example, programme interventions in Libya were based on previous assessments and focus group discussions with stakeholders, and were developed in consideration of participants' accessibility to the learning channels, including in-person and online modalities and paper-based distribution. Similarly, when the Alshamel Centre for Disability in Benghazi faced lockdowns and a lack of PPE, the Organization Breezes Libya for Sustainable Development (Breezes) helped mitigate these challenges by supporting children with distance learning, teacher training, and the provision of PPE. Parents expressed appreciation for the learning materials provided.

The distribution of PPE in coordination with public health campaigns was critical for the re-opening of schools in a safe and protective manner. Through the COVID-19 FERs and the re-programming of several MYRPs, some 912,000 children and teachers (47 per cent girls and women) received quality PPE, such as masks, hand sanitizer, and thermometers. Through the re-programmed MYRP, children in the State of Palestine received science and technology kits for remote learning and hygiene kits to help operationalize safe school protocols established within the Ministry of Education's Back to School plan. In the Gaza Strip, more than 100,000 children (52 per cent girls) in Grades 3 and 4 received work sheets and materials to aid their self-learning in Arabic and mathematics.

Nearly 311,000 teachers (55 per cent female) were trained in COVID-19 preventive measures. The installation of handwashing basins, WASH facilities, and window screens in schools and classrooms was

HUMAN INTEREST STORY

RADIO-BASED LEARNING GETS ITS DAY IN THE SUN IN MALI

“ I could attend classes with this radio. It helped me catch up. ”
—Aichata, 15

Through an ECW-financed programme implemented by UNICEF, solar-powered radios are helping conflict-affected children continue their learning during the COVID-19 crisis.

Persistent insecurity in central and northern Mali has disrupted access to education, health and other services and displaced more than 300,000 people – over half of them children. But COVID-19 compounded the problem.

Before the pandemic, direct threats and attacks on education had forced the closure of around 1,300 schools in the central and northern regions of the country. Pandemic-related measures shuttered schools, leaving many of the most vulnerable children without access to education.

Yet, thanks to efforts by ECW and its partners, children continue to learn in safety. In the Ségou region, the distribution of solar-powered radios is providing an educational lifeline for those who otherwise would have been cut off from classes.

Aichata, 15, attended school in rural Diabaly until it closed because of insecurity. Her family moved to the town of Ségou and enrolled her at the Adama Dagnon school. The school provided her with a solar-powered radio to allow her to continue learning outside regular school hours and make up for the education that she had missed.

“I could attend classes with this radio. It helped me catch up with my studies,” says Aichata.

Around 1,500 households have benefited from the radios, which are used by children who cannot attend classes in person and as an after-hours study resource.

Aichata tunes in to educational programming every Wednesday and Thursday evening with her friends so



they can study together. “Before, I didn’t like grammar because I didn’t understand it and I found it difficult. But now I manage to get quite good marks,” she says.

The radios are distributed by UNICEF, an ECW grantee, and EduCo, an implementing partner. EduCo is responsible for identifying households that can benefit from a radio, and works closely with school management committees to distribute the radios and monitor the results.

Home visits and ‘listening groups’ supported by community volunteers – typically retired teachers – help keep students’ learning on track. ECW also supports temporary learning spaces at IDP sites.

Aichata says she now feels well-integrated into her new school. She aspires to become a school principal. Her dream is that every child in Mali will go to school.

“I know it’s ambitious,” says Aichata. “But I’m sure that one day my dream will come true.”

Contributed by Fatou Diagne, UNICEF Mali

key to enabling children to return to formal schooling, especially those who had been unable to access remote learning activities. In Chad, MYRP funds for strengthening WASH in schools were partially re-programmed to encourage students and teachers to adopt preventive measures against COVID-19 and other diseases. UNICEF as grantee purchased and distributed 5,349 hand-washing kits, containing soap and other hygiene items; 1,083 boxes of disinfectant for 1,083 schools; and 2,000 bottles of hydro-alcoholic gels for the Ministry of National Education and Civic Promotion – all benefiting nearly 400,000 children (43 per cent girls). As part of an awareness campaign, a comic strip titled Lafya was created to inform children and their families about COVID-19 preventive measures.

As part of ECW's comprehensive approach in response to the pandemic, it was important that parents and the wider community were provided with accurate and up-to-date information. Some 53 per cent of ECW countries with COVID-19 FERs and re-programmed MYRPs created awareness campaigns to inform the public about prevention measures and remote learning opportunities, reaching some 4.5 million people (including an estimated 49 per cent girls and women) through radio, TV, and posters.

As part of a mass awareness campaign in Bangladesh, leaflets and posters containing safety and hygiene instructions were developed and produced in Bangla, Burmese, and English, and distributed in refugee camps and host communities. Twelve audio programmes were created on preventing COVID-19, play and engagement, family nutrition, psychosocial well-being, and nurturing care for children. Rapid surveys found that approximately 117,000 parents and community members (54 per cent female) throughout 21 Rohingya camps were exposed to these messages.

FIGURE 6: Leaflets and posters containing safety and hygiene instructions in Bangladesh



HUMAN INTEREST STORY

IMMACULATE RETURNS TO SCHOOL

“Education is very important to me. If I do not get it, then my future will not be very bright.”
—Immaculate, a class 8 pupil

When COVID-19 shut down schools in Kenya in March 2020, many girls and children with disabilities struggled to access distance learning because of household responsibilities and limited mobility. But in October 2020 one girl with a disability and others like her were able to return to school for classes and candidate exams thanks to the support of ECW and its implementing partners.

The girl, Immaculate, could not access remote learning activities because her family did not have a television. “I felt bad because my classmates were studying with the help of TV programmes,” she recalls. “Studying at home was also difficult due to the lack of books.”

COVID-19 FER funding from ECW supported several interventions in response to the needs of children with disabilities in Kenya. This included awareness-raising about the importance of health and hygiene among parents, teachers, caregivers, and learners; the coordinated distribution of PPE; and the creation of water, sanitation, and health (WASH) stations at schools. As part of the mobile library projects supported by ECW, books were distributed door to door in the Kawangware, Kitengela, and Umoja areas of Nairobi. In 2020 this initiative benefited 729 children, of whom 367 were girls and 183 were children with disabilities.

Due to the comprehensive COVID-19 response, Immaculate was thrilled to be able to return to a safe school and to continue her education. “When we were



© Save The Children

told that we could come back to school, I was very happy because I knew I would be able to recover the study time I had lost. I was still very scared about COVID, but when I got to school I saw the handwashing stations and felt much safer... now I feel protected.”

Immaculate and her classmates received revision books, pencils, and other learning materials when they went back to school. “Education is very important to me,” she declares proudly. “If I do not get it, then my future will not be very bright.”

Save the Children’s original reporting of this story appears at: <https://youtu.be/K0GfEP-duC8>

CONCLUSION

ECW's COVID-19 response contributed to ensuring that some of the world's most vulnerable girls, boys, and adolescents were able to continue their education after school closures via alternative forms of (distance) learning. Yet even amid the pandemic, it is important to recognize that there are ongoing conflicts, natural disasters, and other forms of violence that continue to disrupt education every day, posing threats to children's learning and violating their right to education. ECW will continue to support those children, adolescents, and communities who have been double affected – by existing crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of ECW COVID-19 investments are continuing in 2021 to prevent the reversal of decades of progress towards realizing every child's right to education, improving access to schooling, promoting inclusion in the education sphere, and securing funding for these goals.

As fiscal pressures increase and development assistance comes under strain, the financing of education could also face major challenges, exacerbating massive pre-COVID-19 education funding gaps. For low-income and lower-middle-income countries in an emergency or protracted crisis, that gap had already reached a staggering \$148 billion annually, and it

could now see a 30 per cent increase.⁶⁵ It will be essential to increase funding in the coming years, as the most vulnerable children will feel the repercussions of COVID-19 well after the most privileged have recovered from the pandemic and its memory has faded.

In 1942, in the midst of World War II, Winston Churchill declared: “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” Even as vaccines are deployed, this is not the end of the COVID-19 pandemic for the world's most vulnerable children, but simply the end of the beginning. ECW shall continue to work to alleviate COVID-19's impact on education for the most vulnerable boys, girls, and adolescents, ensuring that no child is left behind.

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”

—Winston Churchill

⁶⁵ United Nations, *Education during COVID-19 and Beyond*.