

Roundtable on Refugee Education: Meeting our Promises on Refugee Education during COVID-19

Outcome Paper



Maya*, 14, a Syrian refugee living in Za'atari, Jordan says *"I miss my school so much because it is my second home, and I miss my teachers. I hope this quarantine doesn't last long and everyone goes back to their school and jobs"*
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Introduction

In recognition of the significant impact that COVID-19 has had on education for refugees, Save the Children, Education Cannot Wait, the World Bank and the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education co-hosted a high-level, virtual roundtable to discuss key experiences, learnings and promising practices that have emerged while responding to refugee education needs during the pandemic. The event, held in September 2020, was attended by donors, including multilateral organisations, philanthropists, and foundations, as well as NGOs and other partners.¹

Globally, COVID-19 has caused disruption to education on an unprecedented scale. While children in every country have struggled with continuing their education, COVID-19 has presented a significant threat to refugee education worldwide. **Refugee children and youth are particularly disadvantaged due to ongoing exclusion in many national education systems and they may not have been included in the COVID-19 response.**

Almost half of all school-aged refugee children and youth were out of school before the COVID-19 pandemic.² This already dire situation is significantly worsening without an effective and well-funded education response. Refugee children and youth are more likely than others to not return to school when schools reopen and may drop-out quickly if they do return. Many refugee families may no longer be able to afford school fees, uniforms, and books due to increased poverty caused by the pandemic. Refugee children and youth are also less likely to have access to the internet and devices needed for distance learning.³ In addition, there are serious concerns for refugee girls – the Malala Fund estimates that 50% of refugee girls who previously attended school will not return to class when schools reopen.⁴ This would leave the vast majority of refugee girls out of secondary school.

Lack of funding for refugee education and vulnerable host community children is a significant challenge. Only 8.4% (US\$28.6 million) of the US\$342 million required for the education sector in the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan has been funded.⁵ This significant underfunding is putting many millions of refugee children and youth at risk of losing out on their right to a good education.

The economic effects of COVID-19 on education are expected to be widespread and significant. Recent analysis by Save the Children and UNICEF has found that the global socioeconomic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could push 142 million more children into financially poor households by the end of 2020. The total number of children living in poor households globally could reach just over 700 million in the absence of any mitigating policies.⁶

Furthermore, the economic impacts of COVID-19 are expected to have a disproportionate effect on refugee families. Refugees are 60% more likely to work in sectors that have been highly impacted by COVID-19 and the economic downturn.⁷ This will have a significant knock-on effect for refugee children and youth, particularly the most marginalised, including girls, working children, children with disabilities and children living in remote locations. **This will make it even more likely they will drop out of school and never return, increasing their vulnerability to child labour, child marriage and other forms of exploitation.**

Considering this situation, the roundtable discussion focussed on two key themes:

- Adapting financing mechanisms for refugee education; and
- Adapting education approaches to distance learning and ensuring that other school services (e.g. school meals, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) are continued.

This paper synthesises the key learnings and promising practices shared by participants both during the roundtable and through written contributions submitted prior to the event. **In sharing these learnings and recommendations, roundtable participants hope to assist refugee and host community education actors – from donors, host governments and global organisations through to implementing partners at the international, national and local level – to better respond to children’s learning and wellbeing needs during this pandemic and in the face of future pandemics.**⁸

¹ See a list of attendees in Appendix 1.

² UNHCR, 2020. *Coming Together for Refugee Education*.

³ UNHCR, 2020. *Coming Together for Refugee Education*.

⁴ UNHCR, 2020. *Coming Together for Refugee Education*.

⁵ OCHA/FTS, 2020. COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/global-clusters> Accessed 1 Dec 2020.

⁶ See <https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/children-in-monetary-poor-households-covid-19s-invisible-victims/>

⁷ Center for Global Development, Refugees International and International Rescue Committee, 2020. *Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees’ Economic Inclusion*.

⁸ The high-level roundtable and this outcome paper focuses on the education needs of refugee children, however the majority of barriers that refugee children face in accessing quality education, as well as the learnings synthesised are also relevant to partners and donors working in contexts of internal displacement and with marginalised host community children.

Key learnings

The following are the 8 key learnings shared by roundtable participants across the two themes prioritised for discussion. We encourage all education actors to prioritise these calls to action as we continue to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and seek to minimise its impact on education for refugees.

1. Donors to deliver education funding at speed with flexibility and a focus on impact

Donors acknowledged the fast pace of the pandemic and the unprecedented impact it has had on education. This has demanded a step change in how they work with implementing partners and a recognition that collaborative, multi-sectoral, multi-year, multi-stakeholder approaches that create measurable impact for beneficiaries must be prioritised. Donors recognised they must have partnerships built on trust, where they can immediately respond and stand in solidarity with education partners.

An environment is needed within which implementing partners feel comfortable to share their challenges, discuss reallocation of funding and be creative and solutions focussed, without compromising on the quality of the interventions. Donors then need to move quickly and effectively to help partners overcome the challenges they face and support their proposed solutions. This involves funding being flexible to allow local organisations to be innovative and test, adapt and scale up new approaches to distance education (such as online, offline, radio and paper-based materials) that are contextualised.

The pandemic reinforced the need for pooled funding and collective action through key global education platforms such as Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), to maximise impact. Global education networks and funds need to work closely together to ensure alignment and capitalise on investments. As stated by Yasmine Sherif, Director of Education Cannot Wait said during the roundtable, this is a time for cooperation not competition and global education funds should focus on how to work together in complementary ways to ensure their efforts are aligned and investments maximised.

For philanthropists, the COVID-19 pandemic emphasised the urgency of changing the status quo in the philanthropic ecosystem by being responsive and strategic in addressing emerging challenges. This involves making swift and evidenced decisions, or what Hassan Jameel, Vice Chairman of Community Jameel, calls “action before perfection.” This should be complemented with an openness to learning and adjusting interventions based on outcomes and impact. It is imperative that learnings from the pandemic are embedded in post-COVID interventions and long-term educational solutions.

Key examples:

- [The Education Cannot Wait Fund \(ECW\)](#) – supported partners in contexts affected by emergencies and protracted crises responded to the compounded crisis resulting from COVID-19 through its First Emergency Response window (FER) and Multi-Year Resilience Program window (MYRP). Through its FER window, ECW was able to swiftly support 35 countries through two phases, one in April and one in July 2020. The [second phase was mostly focused on refugee affected contexts](#) benefiting approximately 800,000 children of which more than 75% were refugees and internally displaced children. ECW made it possible for partners in the 10 ongoing MYRPs in contexts affected by displacement and protracted crises to reprogramme ongoing funds to best respond to COVID-19 priorities. New MYRPs developed in 2020 are all designed to ensure learning continuity in the medium and long term.
- [The Global Partnership for Education’s COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window](#) – over US\$500 million in global and country grants were launched within a few weeks, to enable Ministries of Education and partners to rapidly mobilise, formulate ways to ensure learning continuity, develop school-reopening strategies and include refugee children in national education systems in Rwanda and Pakistan.
- [OCHA’s country-based pooled funds](#) – helped education partners to adapt and implement projects in crisis-affected contexts during the pandemic. For instance, allocations from the Syria Cross-border Humanitarian Fund have helped partners adapt education programmes for distance learning delivery and utilise new technologies and social networks for remote lessons and activities.
- [The Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund](#) – supported partners in Jordan and Lebanon to repurpose funding for activities that could no longer be undertaken due to COVID-19 restrictions (e.g. transportation) to provide internet access and devices to refugee and host community children and youth so they could continue to learn online during the pandemic.
- [The World Bank’s IDA19 Window for Host Communities and Refugees \(WHR\)](#) – under IDA18 (FY2018-2020), over US\$900 million was allocated to education projects in fragile and conflict situations through the Refugee Sub-Window (RSW). IDA19 for FY2021-2023 will scale up these efforts, including incentive structures to prevent conflict and reduce fragility. The WHR supports countries that host significant refugee populations to create medium to long-term development opportunities for both refugees and their host communities. Under IDA19 the WHR will finance up to US\$2.2 billion in operations, including a dedicated sub-window of US\$1 billion for operations that respond to the impacts of COVID-19, which will be disbursed as grants.

2. All actors to prioritise and support education innovation and collaboration

While the pandemic threatens to roll back significant progress in refugee education, the restrictions it has placed on classroom learning has triggered significant innovation in education technology, which needs to be harnessed. While recognising the digital divide can create access issues for refugee students in low resource settings, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that technological innovation in education approaches can be helpful in reaching refugee children and youth at scale. This includes access to both devices and connectivity.

The education sector must be fully supported to quickly adapt learning content and delivery to match the changing circumstances they face. Targeted financial and technical support for innovation must be prioritised to enable the real-time testing and prototyping of new education approaches and improve the resilience of education systems to weather further outbreaks and disruptions in the longer-term.

When children are out of school, their learning does not just stop but is likely to regress. When schools reopen and programming returns to 'normal', formative assessments conducted by teachers can identify learning gaps and inform remedial programming and learning opportunities so that refugee children catch up to grade level rapidly. Save the Children has developed a leading assessment of early childhood development – International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA)⁹ – covering motor development, emergent language and literacy, emergent numeracy, and social-emotional development. It is essential that tools like IDELA and other learning assessments are used on the return to school to identify learning gaps and provide appropriate catch-up assistance.

Participants further stressed the importance of collaboration between donors and implementing partners, not only to coordinate on interventions and approaches, but to co-design more innovative programmes with greater impact. Implementing partners also need to genuinely collaborate and share infrastructure, content and innovations for the benefit of all. The time has come to finally breakdown the humanitarian and development divide. COVID-19 has shown how vulnerable both sectors are, underscoring more than ever the need for collaboration to develop multi-year resilience programmes and financing for education.

Prior to the pandemic, it was estimated that only 3% of refugee youth access vocational and tertiary education.¹⁰ The education needs of refugee youth and supporting their transition from school to work require special attention. Refugee youth are increasingly employed online, especially in countries where there are legal barriers to refugee employment, such as in Lebanon and Jordan. A key benefit of the shift to distance education is that refugee youth are gaining key experience in working online and acquiring new digital skills that will help them to find job opportunities online.

Participants working in the vocational digital sector stressed the importance of encouraging refugee youth to pursue remote education and work opportunities which can go a long way in arming them with competitive and transferable skills for their futures. This type of skill development should be scaled up and invested in as it is likely to play a key role in keeping refugee youth in school while supporting their transition into work. It should also be accompanied with stronger networks and linkages with the private sector to secure remote work opportunities for refugee youth. Successful programmes, such as SE Factory in Lebanon, have seen almost 50% of refugee graduates access remote employment with global employers.

Key examples:

- [The Humanitarian Education Accelerator \(HEA\)](#) Rapid Response COVID-19 Challenge – supported promising EdTech solutions to scale, to reach more refugees and host community children and youth with high quality education during COVID-19 school closures and beyond. Partnering with a dynamic group of organisations – the EdTech Hub, Education Alliance, Global Innovation Exchange, IDEO.org and Porticus – HEA was able to maximise its reach and leverage the combined networks and expertise of all partners
- [UNESCO's Global Education Coalition](#) – a multi sector partnership brings together international organisations, private sector and civil society to identify innovative new ways of delivering education through distance learning during COVID-19.
- [The Asfari Foundation's Midan hub](#) – an open access knowledge exchange hub, where civil society partners can create and upload knowledge products, and exchange expertise, with the possibility of badging and monetising their knowledge products. Midan is a portal developed in collaboration with civil society partners.
- [The Darsak online learning platform](#) – rapidly built a free and open e-learning platform for all school learners in Jordan through close collaboration with local start-ups. Structured video classes aligned to the national curriculum for grades 1 to 12 were broadcast on the country's television sports channel, which was repurposed as a student learning channel.

⁹ <https://idela-network.org/>

¹⁰ UNHCR, 2020. *Coming Together for Refugee Education*.

- [Kiron's Collective Impact Campus](#) – NGOs and refugee-led organisations without digital platforms or Learning Management Systems can access Kiron's infrastructure, partnerships, course and support offerings and develop their own tailored and branded content.
- [MIT's Jameel World Education Lab \(J-WEL\)](#) – sharing existing and new pedagogical resources through Full STEAM Ahead, a library of 10 weekly learning units for students and educators.
- [SE Factory and DOT Lebanon](#) – supporting refugee youth to bridge the digital divide and provide them with accredited courses in programming, coding and data science that are aligned with the jobs in the digital space.

3. Increase funding for refugee education and facilitate collective action

Many of the education systems in the top ten refugee hosting countries are stretched, underfunded and receive little support from the international community. Where accurate needs analyses and refugee response plans do exist, there is frequently a lack of sufficient funding to implement them. While the amount of humanitarian aid for education has increased significantly since 2012, less than half of the requests for the sector get funded. In 2019, just 43% of aid requests for the education sector were funded, compared to 63% of humanitarian aid requests overall.¹¹

The financing available for education for refugees has been overwhelmingly oriented towards short-term projects that fail to recognise the protracted nature of refugee crises. Spending is often earmarked for projects that reflect donor priorities and do not always reflect needs on the ground. At the same time, refugee education receives little or nothing from already stretched national education budgets, unless a specific refugee education plan is put in place.



Jahangir* 6 & Sifatara* 3 are Rohingya refugees, living in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. They were forced to flee their home in Myanmar due to violence and discrimination. (©Sonali Chakma/Save the Children)

The international response to educating refugees suffers not just from chronic underfunding, but also from highly fragmented planning. An additional challenge is the existence of parallel humanitarian structures for delivering services that are high-cost and unsustainable. Domestic, bilateral, multi-lateral and philanthropy financing urgently needs increasing to meet the gaps that exist and could increase due to the economic impact of COVID-19.

Key global education platforms, like the UNHCR, UNICEF, Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education, and INGOs need more funding to build capacity, strengthen their own coordination and funding mechanisms and expand their programmatic reach, to maximise the impact of pooled funding and collective action in times of crisis.

4. Global stakeholders to support inclusion of refugees in national education systems and support national delivery of education, including by partnering with refugees in the design and implementation of programmes

Inclusive policies and practices are vital so that refugee children can access and thrive in the formal education system where possible or in accredited non-formal education when not. This is the most practical and sustainable way to provide displaced children with accredited and certified learning opportunities that can be monitored for quality. Host country governments must be supported to develop and implement policies to ensure that refugee children are included in the national education system.

According to the latest World Bank estimates, the cost of enrolling all seven million refugee children and youth in primary and secondary education within their host communities would be approximately US\$4.85 billion per year, or US\$63 billion for thirteen years of education. Further analysis is needed on what the disincentives are to host governments to include refugee children and youth in national education systems and whether providing more financing to host governments, potentially through debt relief, could encourage the greater inclusion of refugee children and youth in national schools. It is also important that distance learning approaches and education innovations are developed to align with national education systems.

¹¹ INEE, (2020). 20 Years of INEE: Achievements and Challenges in Education in Emergencies

In line with the Grand Bargain commitment to provide more global humanitarian funding to local and national responders, international funding must be routed through and contribute to strengthening existing, local coordination mechanisms on the ground. Every effort must be made to avoid the creation of new or parallel financing and coordination structures for education in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and the capacity of national governments to effectively adapt in this situation has highlighted the need to invest in the long-term strengthening of national education systems and to foster greater resilience.

The pandemic also provides an opportunity to partner with refugees in the design and implementation of education approaches to effectively meet their needs, contextualise approaches and create livelihoods. Refugee children, youth, parents and educational communities will know what kind of educational support they require, so involving them in the design of programmes will be more effective and more sustainable in the long run. Although much has been written about the importance of participatory approaches to humanitarian response, the rush to provide services and deliver programmes, combined with a perceived lack of expertise at the local level, mean that participation of those affected is sadly often not prioritised or carried out in a meaningful way. It is critical to build in time and space to learn about the local setting and to conduct needs assessments that ensure any objectives and interventions are meaningful.

Key examples:

- [The Global Partnership for Education's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding window](#) – 20 of the 55 projects funded will enable refugee children to access national education systems in some form.
- [The Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund](#) – through the Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Covid-19 Online Learning Emergency Fund for Refugee Education and in partnership with [Discovery Education](#), is collaborating with local organisations in Lebanon to ensure vulnerable refugee children and youth can access high-quality digital learning resources and continue their education within public schools without interruption during the pandemic.
- [The World Bank](#) – is working on 87 projects in 62 countries with COVID-19 response education components that amount to US\$4.7 billion, covering the entire education cycle (from early childhood to higher education). The Bank also provided just-in-time education policy advisory support in 65 countries and leveraged partnerships (with UNICEF, FCDO, Harvard Dept. of Education, OECD, UNESCO, and others) to develop policy knowledge and global public goods to support country responses to the pandemic.

5. All stakeholders to ensure distance education approaches are inclusive, equitable and contextualised

While this is a time of incredible disruption and change, roundtable participants emphasised that the COVID-19 pandemic also presents “the moment” to develop refugee education approaches and systems that are inclusive and resilient to emergencies. Participants stressed the need to understand the contexts that refugee students are in and the key challenges they face to continuing their learning in the COVID-19 environment. For His Excellency Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair this means having a team on the ground to work with and support for local partners.

While distance education approaches have proved useful in including refugee children and youth who are traditionally excluded from education in some contexts, online and offline platforms can also create barriers to education for other groups of children and youth, especially those who have limited access to digital technology and live in areas with unreliable internet and electricity. According to UNHCR it is estimated that the connectivity level of refugee communities is 50% that of non-refugee communities. The lack of digital devices and connectivity is a key barrier to education for refugee children and youth that requires urgent action.¹² Where connectivity challenges exist, exploration could be given to the use of ‘offline’ learning approaches using tablets and phones.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a stark reminder that developing distance education approaches primarily for low resource settings is vital and it is imperative to meet learners ‘where they are’. While high-tech solutions have proved invaluable for reaching refugee learners at scale, developing low-tech or no-tech options are also essential to enable all refugee children and youth to access quality education, whatever their circumstances.

With students spending so much time online, in front of devices and with no physical interaction with their classmates or teachers, it is also essential that remote learning is as fun, “hands on” and interactive as possible to keep children engaged, motivated and in class.

Local and national actors must also be at the forefront of designing and delivering education approaches that match their contexts. It is also critical that online and offline education platforms and resources align with national curriculum standards and in-country initiatives to enhance usability during the response and ensure compatibility with host government education systems.

¹² See <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/internet-mobile-connectivity-refugees-leaving-no-one-behind/>

Key examples:

- [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East \(UNRWA\)](#) – launched its Education in Emergencies COVID-19 appeal following closure of all 709 schools from March 2020 to end of 2019/2020 school year to better respond to the impact of the pandemic in five key areas: Self Learning, Psychosocial Support, Safety and Security – Health and Hygiene issues, Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET) and Monitoring and Evaluation.
- [Save the Children](#) – adapted existing programmes and set up new initiatives across multiple countries including developing distance learning materials, such as books and home learning kits, and working with governments and teachers to provide children with lessons and support via radio, television, phone, social media and messaging apps. In Uganda 120,000 learning packs were distributed and the social emotional learning programme HEART (Healing and Education through the Arts) was adapted into a radio series with short activities for children and caregivers to do together or alone to help relieve stress during lockdown.
- [UNICEF, Microsoft and University of Cambridge's Learning Passport](#) – a platform that provides teachers around the globe with access to high-quality learning materials and provides support to deliver them in the most effective way. The Learning Passport's curriculum can be adapted to meet local needs and circumstances and works in places with intermittent or no internet connectivity. It also tracks what has been learned, so that children have a digital record of their progress that is accessible anywhere in the world.
- [OCHA's Inter-Agency Standing Committee partners](#) – developed low-tech solutions such as the distribution of solar radios in Malawi, Mali and Malaysia and no-tech solutions such as home learning kits in South Sudan and Uganda for children and youth who do not have access to internet.
- [Kolibri](#) – an "offline first" learning platform that supports offline, online and remote learning in Jordan and Uganda, synchronises with national education systems.
- [M-Shule](#) – an adaptive mobile-based learning platform that brings inexpensive, relevant and accessible learning content to refugee and host community children in Sub-Saharan Africa through text messaging.
- [The Global Education Movement \(GEM\)](#) – secures online internship and remote employment opportunities with international companies for refugee students and helps them to improve their professional development skills. GEM is also partnering with SiriForce, a company connecting refugees with international companies for digital work opportunities.

6. Support refugee children and youth wellbeing

In the face of the pandemic and the need to adapt to distance education, we know that many students are experiencing more stress and uncertainty. In a recent global study by Save the Children on the impacts of COVID-19, the vast majority of children (83%) reported an increase in negative feelings due to the COVID-19 pandemic and just under half (46%) of the caregivers reported observing signs of psychological distress in children.¹³ Adolescents, and especially girls, are particularly vulnerable. It is more important than ever that their social and emotional wellbeing is supported while they are in and outside of the classroom.

This pandemic should also serve as a catalyst for a more holistic approach to education that addresses other issues that can impact students' capacity to learn, including their health, nutrition and protection needs.

As noted above, specific initiatives also need to be developed for older students to help address concerns about their future education prospects, employability and professional development, which are heightened by the pandemic.



A refugee girl living in the Moria refugee camp, Lesbos, Greece where more than 13,000 refugees live. Many families and children have been left without any shelter after recent fires.
(© Pedro Armestre/ Save the Children)

Key examples:

- [War Child Holland](#) – provided psychosocial kits for refugee and host community children and youth to engage them in education, maintain their motivation to learn, and promote their and their families' wellbeing, restoring a sense of normalcy and routine during the pandemic.
- [The LEGO Foundation's Play List](#) – provided playful activities to do at home with parents and caregivers, and as part of a collaboration with Sesame Workshop, offers new media content to deliver messages that support children and their families during the pandemic.
- [The Qattan Foundation's Child Centre in Gaza](#) – adapted its educational and cultural programmes to ensure that teachers and children could maintain contact and continue storytelling, arts and crafts and psychosocial support activities through live sessions and online workshops.

¹³ Save the Children, 2020. *The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Child Protection and Wellbeing*.

- [The Transforming Refugee Education towards Excellence \(TREE\) initiative](#) – builds capacity among teachers in areas of digital learning, learning science, mental health and psychosocial support in Jordan. The initiative places a great emphasis on compassion to help teachers overcome trauma and deliver effective teaching.

7. All stakeholders to better support teachers as the lead implementers of distance education approaches and in the safe return to classrooms

Teachers are the key for implementing distance education approaches effectively and need to be supported to quickly adapt to a “new normal”. Teaching online and keeping students engaged and learning is incredibly challenging. Teachers need dedicated training, so they can effectively deliver classes online and support their student to learn in challenging circumstances. This includes strengthening teachers’ technical capacities and providing them with information on new instruction strategies, as well as how to better support student wellbeing. They also need free access to useful resources and tools to help keep them motivated and feel supported.

As schools re-open, teachers will continue to play an important role in students’ safe return to learning. They will be central to creating safe learning spaces, adjusting curricula, and learning assessments, and supporting marginalised learners and student wellbeing. To this end, teachers need to be consulted in decision-making and planning, including the timing and processes for the safe reopening of schools and well-supported to facilitate this transition.

Key examples:

- [ProFuturo’s global digital learning platform for teachers and students](#) – provides more than 160 online training courses and digital resources for teachers, focussed on the development of their pedagogical and digital skills.
- [Kiron and TH Lübeck’s interactive online course](#) – to help educators become better online teachers.
- The International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation – developed [guidelines to support national authorities in their back-to-school efforts](#), in particular looking at how best to support teachers and education support staff in return to school planning and processes.

8. All stakeholders to champion the important role of caregivers in their children’s education

It is now more important than ever to include and support caregivers in the learning and teaching process of their children. With children learning from home, caregivers play an integral role in ensuring children effectively and safely engage in the home learning environment.

This extra responsibility on caregivers, who are already under increased pressure due to the pandemic, brings added uncertainty and stress. Every effort must be made to ensure they are supported to undertake their integral role. This includes developing distance education approaches that keep things simple, understandable, and manageable for caregivers while also giving them the tools to keep their children motivated, engaged and having fun while they learn. Caregivers’ involvement in their children’s safe return to school also needs to be supported. Caregivers’ increased engagement in their children’s education due to COVID-19 restrictions should be built on and sustained in the long-term.



Anna*, 12, keeps learning from home with help from her father in Karamoja, northeast Uganda. *“My parents did not go to school but they love education which is why I go to school with my brothers and sisters”.*
(©Peter Moru / Save the Children)

Key examples:

- [Amal Alliance’s We Are In This Together](#) – a podcast series that seeks to support the caregivers’ and their children’s well-being during the COVID-19 global pandemic.
- [The Queen Rania Foundation’s Parental Education Programme and School Parental Engagement Guide](#) – consists of 40 resources, videos, documents, checklists and presentations to help schools establish effective parental engagement.

Conclusion

Roundtable participants unanimously agreed that there needs to be a paradigm shift in how we approach education for refugees and vulnerable host community children. We need to unlearn the traditional way of doing business and learn new approaches that are better fit for an unknown and uncertain future. While agility will be critical as we continue to evolve, change cannot be short-term or reactive. Our goal must be to use the pandemic to our advantage and take this opportunity to ensure that future education systems are inclusive and resilient to emergencies.

Call to action: Priorities for refugee education

Roundtable participants call on all education actors from donors and host governments through to global organisations, foundations and implementing partners to prioritise the following key actions as we continue to meet the challenges the pandemic brings and seek to minimise its impact on refugee education:

1. Donors to deliver education funding at speed, with flexibility and a focus on impact.
2. All actors to prioritise and support education innovation and collaboration.
3. Increase funding for refugee education and facilitate collective action.
4. Global stakeholders to support inclusion of refugees in national education systems and support national delivery of education, including by partnering with refugees in the design and implementation of programmes.
5. All stakeholders to ensure distance education approaches are inclusive, equitable and contextualised.
6. Support refugee children and youth wellbeing.
7. All stakeholders to better support teachers as the lead implementers of distance education approaches and in the safe return to classrooms.
8. All stakeholders to champion the important role of caregivers in their children's education.

Appendix 1: Roundtable participants

1. His Excellency Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair, Philanthropist and Chairman of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education
2. Alice Albright, Global Partnership for Education, CEO
3. Andrew Jack, Financial Times, Global Education Director
4. Bassem Sa'ad, Queen Rania Foundation, CEO
5. DIALA KHAMRA, Save the Children Jordan, CEO
6. Don Macphree, War Child Holland, Regional Director
7. Dr. Heike Harmgart, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Director, Regional Head
8. Dr. Sonia Ben Jaafar, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education, CEO
9. Filippo Grandi, UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
10. Hassan Jameel, Community Jameel, Vice Chairman
11. Ibrahim Safadi, Luminus Technical University College, Founder/CEO
12. Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management
13. Keiko Miwa, World Bank, Regional Director for Human Development, Middle East and North Africa
14. Kevin Watkins, Save the Children UK, CEO
15. Magdalena Brier, ProFuturo Foundation, CEO
16. Marianne Bitar Karam, Digital Opportunity Trust, Country and Regional Director
17. Melek El Nemer, Unite Lebanon Youth Project, Founder
18. Myrna Attala, Alfanar Venture Philanthropies, CEO
19. Noura Selim, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, CEO
20. Omar Qattan, A.M Qattan Foundation, Founding Member and Chair
21. Paul Ellingstad, Pearson, Senior Advisor, Sustainability & Social Innovation
22. Ramesh Rajasingham, OCHA, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
23. Robert Jenkins, UNICEF, Associate Director of Education
24. Saba Mubaslat, Asfari Foundation, CEO
25. Sarah Bouchie, Lego Foundation, VP of Global Programmes
26. Tariq Al Gurg, Dubai Cares, CEO
27. Tom Fletcher, UK diplomat, Former UK Ambassador to Lebanon
28. Vijay Kumar, Abdul Latif Jameel World Education Lab, Executive Director
29. Yasmine Sherif, Education Cannot Wait, Director
30. Zeina Saab, SE Factory, Founder

This paper was written by Claire Mason with support from Emma Wagner, Salma Wehbe, Danah Dajani and Samar Farah.