



COVID-19 & Inclusive Education: MP Briefing



Rebuilding for inclusive education

Identity, background and ability still dictate education chances

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19 more than 250 million children and youth were out of school. The groups most likely to be out of education are girls, children with disabilities, those living in conflict and emergencies, and the poorest in society.

- Only 25% of the poorest girls in low-income countries complete primary school.
- Nearly half of all children with disabilities are not in school.
- 3.7 million refugee children are out of school – more than half of all school-age refugee children. Many have no access to formal education.

Millions more children are marginalised in the classroom. Even if children from disadvantaged backgrounds are in school, their learning levels are typically significantly below their peers.



“Distance learning opportunities have expanded but they are imperfect substitutes. For hundreds of millions of children education has stopped in the last few months”.

Manos Antoninis

Global Education Monitoring Report, Director

COVID-19: Exacerbating educational exclusion

Whilst nearly 1.6 billion students in 190 countries have been affected by school closures, the impact of the pandemic on children’s learning has not been equal. About 40% of low and lower-middle income countries have not supported learners at risk of exclusion at all during the pandemic.

- 11 million girls and half of all refugee girls in secondary school may not return to school when they reopen.
- Pushed out of education by poverty, millions more children could be forced into child labour.

Distance learning is an imperfect substitute

Inequalities have been exacerbated by accessibility gaps in distance learning, which has magnified the digital divide.

- Only 47% households in developing countries and 12% in the least developed countries have internet access at home. In addition to poor access, online approaches are not suited to all learners.
- Learners with disabilities are the least likely to benefit from distance learning solutions.
- Poor access to remote learning has prevented a large number of refugee and displaced students from learning.

Put inclusion at the heart of building back better education systems

Inclusive education is the foundation of an education system of good quality that enables every child and young person to learn. However many governments are yet to base their laws, policies and practices on this principle.

Now more than ever, governments must put inclusion front and centre of their policies. As COVID-19 deepens the learning crisis, education budgets must be protected and focus must be placed on the most marginalised children.



“Evidence clearly highlights that education systems that are designed for the most marginalised children function for everyone”

Dr Nidhi Singal

Professor of Disability of Inclusive Education,
University of Cambridge

Key recommendations

1. Widen the understanding of inclusive education to include all learners.
2. Target financing to the most marginalised and invest in remedial, re-enrolment and second chance education programmes.
3. Engage in meaningful consultation with parents and communities to support the most marginalised to return to school and catch up on learning.
4. Apply universal design to fulfil every learner's potential - acknowledging that all learners are different and education systems should respond to individual learner's needs.
5. Collect and report disaggregated data on inclusion to identify and support the most marginalised learners.

Further reading

- [#AllMeansALL: Putting learner diversity at the heart of education post Covid-19 - Global Education Monitoring Report](#)
- [Leveraging Lessons from the COVID-19 Crisis for Learners with Disabilities - World Bank](#)
- [Coronavirus a dire threat to refugee education - UNHCR](#)
- [COVID-19 in humanitarian contexts: no excuses to leave persons with disabilities behind! - Humanity and Inclusion](#)
- [Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews \(PEER\) - Global Education Monitoring Report](#)



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