

Education Systems' Response to COVID19

Brief: March 31, 2020

- As of March 31st, schools have closed in 170 countries, with many countries announcing extension of closures through the end of April. There are indications however, that China and South Korea have slowly begun to reopen schools under strict protocols (see March 27 brief).¹ It remains to be seen if Singapore, Turkmenistan and others that have chosen to keep schools open are faring better in slowing down the virus.


World Bank Education Overview of school closures

	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC and North America	MENA	SAR	Total
Closed	39	10	44	36 (+1)	20	8	157
Partly closed	3	7 (+1)	2	1	0	0	13
SUM	42	17	46	37	20	8	170

* An additional 28 countries are not reporting, or open, or open with restrictions. They are noted [here](#). Changes since last brief: China moved to "partial closures"; Tonga was added to the EAP list of countries; and Barbados closed schools.

Extended closures and challenges continue

- Many of the countries that had already closed schools announced extension of school closures this week or imposed further lockdowns to curb the spread. **Russia and Poland** announced lockdowns on March 30 and 31st respectively, with both countries enforcing jail time and financial penalties for non-compliance.
 - Sweden** added more restrictions this week but has not changed its policy on schools (primary and middle schools for children up to age 16 remain open). The Government is now imposing stricter travel bans, advising those who can to work from home, and people to social distance while in public. There is no indication yet that schools for younger students would close. However, kids are asked to stay home if they have a sniffle or more. The system is struggling a bit since teachers are out and kids are staying home. But some teachers are doing dual online and offline teaching, to allow kids who stay home to not lose out on schooling.
- An external landing page has been added to the Education Global Practice website with links to the school closure [dashboard](#), a [guidance note](#), and the EdTech Solutions Repository. Additionally, translation of key documents is underway and colleagues are encouraged to share with counterparts in relevant languages. [Link here](#).


- Extended school closures have begun to showcase sever non-academic challenges** for students and families. In the United States, 30 million kids found themselves this week without their breakfast, lunch (and sometimes take-home meals on the weekend). Communities across the country are scrambling to distribute meals to disadvantaged students at such large scale, oftentimes under state lockdown or travel restrictions.
 - Distance learning at university level is proving to be a challenge for some students.** Stories online describe weary situations of students in different time zones having to wake up in the middle of the night to attend classes. Additionally, some those living in select countries are not able to access study materials due to

¹ Source: Education GP dashboard is accumulating the information crowdsourced by the Bank Task Team Leaders on the ground and by the best available information online. It might not be accurate but reflects the best knowledge of the situation globally by the Bank.

stringent internet access. Student Unions, like those in the United Kingdom, have asked for end-of-year exams to be cancelled or postponed to avoid adverse effects on students dealing with the pandemic.

- **GPE** has established a \$250 million *COVID-19 Accelerated Financing Window* to support countries in addressing an education response. Grants issued under the AFW are supplemental but treated in the same manner as standard ESPIGs: i.e., Grant Agent supervision costs would be deducted from the gross allocation. *(Please contact Doug Sumerfield for more info)*

Distance Learning Efforts

- **Jordan** launched “Darsak” (your studies) this week. It is an educational portal for grades 1-12 core subjects, developed by Mawdoo3 (private sector), the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship with content from local service providers (Edraak, Jo Academy and Abwab) Content changes weekly and students can access the portal without internet charges between 6 am and 4 pm. ([Link](#))
- **The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)** launched this week a compilation of resources on education in emergencies, including guidance on closures and distance learning. Resources can be found at this [link](#).

Bank Engagement and Options for Support

- Both Pakistan and Afghanistan COVID19 Emergency Response Project include elements of urgent support to the education sector. In addition, more **client countries have approached the Bank seeking guidance on addressing key gaps in delivering education during school closures or beyond**. Examples include Morocco who intends to bring their IT infrastructure up to scale and building critical content to address multi-modal distance learning, and Kazakhstan who is looking to procure laptops for student currently without access. In addition to these ad-hoc requests, WB country teams are currently **preparing analyses of potential World Bank engagement in education in response to COVID19** through the existing potential portfolio.
- **The World Bank OPCS team has added an additional procurement option for COVID19 emergency operations:** use of Bank Facilitated Procurement (BFP), at borrowers’ request. BFP will help clients get access to critically needed supplies, if and as needed. The Bank will assist in accessing existing suppliers and negotiating prices (based on aggregated demand across borrowers). While borrowers will sign and enter into contracts themselves, including assuring relevant logistics with suppliers. The Bank will not charge a fee for this.

Brief Highlight

Serbia's Plan of Action for Inclusive Distance Learning

On March 17th, after announcing the closure of schools, the Government of Serbia launched a Plan of Action for providing inclusive distance. The Plan featured several elements worth highlighting:

- Emphasis on **role of parents** in ensuring success of students and distance learning
- Provision of **classes and materials through multiple modes** (6 days per week television broadcasts for primary and secondary students on dedicated channels, with materials available on ministry website one day prior - www.rasporednastave.gov.rs; Use of online platforms including; use of Viber, Zoom, Microsoft Teams), as well as the national online learning platform My School (*Moja škola*) to supplement learning
- **Accountability and autonomy at school level**, allowing school administrators and teachers to select most effective mode of teaching based on socio-economic profile of school’s community.
- **Ensuring the learning is measured and counts** – requiring that work be assessed and grades and an end of year summative assessment.
- **Daily communication between teachers and administrators** on progress, plus regular communication with parents on students.
- **Use of teachers to transmit public health messages** to communities related to *COVID19*.

Source: Ministry of Education Science and Technology Development – Serbia (for more information, please contact Tigran Shmis)

