Prioritizing Learning During Covid-19:
Launch of Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel Report
January 26, 2022

The panel is convened by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), The World Bank and UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti
Welcome and Introduction

Abhijit Banerjee, GEEAP co-chair, Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Kwame Akyeampong, GEEAP co-chair, Professor of International Education and Development, The Open University
### Agenda

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SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Why We Should Prioritize Keeping Schools and Preschools Fully Open
SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

• Chair: Abhijit Banerjee, Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)

• Jaime Saavedra, Head of Education Global Practice, the World Bank

• Susan Dynarski, Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

• Rob Jenkins, Global Director of Education and Adolescent Development, UNICEF

• Sally Grantham-McGregor, Emeritus Professor of Child Health and Nutrition, UCL GOS Institute of Global Health
Education in Crisis

- Prior to the pandemic, education throughout the world was already in a crisis.[1]
- Children at school but not learning.
- Impact of past school closures on learning:
  - Summer breaks.[2]
  - Teacher strikes.[3]
  - Natural disasters.[4]
  - Civil conflict.[5]

References
Volcano by kareemov from NounProject.com
War by Alina Oleynik from NounProject.com
GEEAP Report, 2022
Education is one of the main sectors to be impacted by the pandemic

- At the height of the pandemic, 1.6 billion children were out of school.
School closures remain an issue

- New variants threaten to extend school closures
As a consequence, learning losses are enormous

• Learning poverty could increase to 70%[1].
• One year of school closures can translate into one year of lost learning.[2]

• Examples:
  • South Africa: reading losses of 81% of a year.[3]
  • Karnataka (India): learning losses of 1 year in literacy and numeracy.[4]
  • Sao Paulo (Brazil): remote classes learned 75% less and had 2.5 higher risk of drop-out than in-person.[5]

• Learning loss is rarely being measured systematically in low- and middle-income countries.
  • To address learning loss, it must first be measured.

References
Learning by Mat fine from NounProject.com
Measure by cindy clegane from NounProject.com
Economic Loss

• Current estimates: US$17 trillion in foregone earnings over children’s lifetime.[2]

• In developing countries, losses are estimated to be 64% of current GDP of foregone lifetime earnings (per another study). [3]

• Further closures can increase these estimates.

References

GEEAP Report, 2022
Inequities

• Families with lower income have fewer instructional opportunities.[1]
• Losses concentrated in poorer and less educated families.[2]
• Increasing inequality by gender, geography, socioeconomic background, school status and age-grade.[3]
• Food insecurity.[4]
• Mental health issues.[5]
• Gender.[6]

ECD and Covid-19

- ECD continues to be important.

- High economic cost of closing preschools:
  - Impacts on child development and outcomes
  - US$308 billion in future adult earnings.[1]

- Risk of severe illness is very low.[2]

References
GEEAP RECOMMENDATIONS
GEEAP RECOMMENDATIONS

- Chair: Sylvia Schmelkes, Provost of Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City
- Rachel Glennerster, Associate Professor, University of Chicago
- Abhijit Banerjee, Professor of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
- Kwame Akyeampong, Professor of International Education and Development, The Open University
GEEAP Recommendations
Keep Schools Fully Open
Weighing COVID Risks in Schools

Children:
• Less likely to suffer severe illness\textsuperscript{1} or die from Covid-19.\textsuperscript{2}
• Similar infection rates to adults.\textsuperscript{3}

Teachers:
• Risks decline as mitigation measures increase.\textsuperscript{3}
• Low transmission from children with appropriate mitigation.\textsuperscript{4}

References
Reduce Transmission in Schools

Vaccination, masks, and ventilation

• Use many combined mitigation strategies.¹

• Key strategies:
  • Provide masks.²,³
  • Improve ventilation, e.g., opening doors and windows.
  • Prioritize teacher vaccination.

• Handwashing is important for colds and flu, but few Covid cases are from surfaces.

References

GEEAP Report, 2022 18
Adjust Instruction
Assessing learning

• Learning losses are enormous:\textsuperscript{1,2}
  • Covid exacerbated pre-pandemic crisis.\textsuperscript{3}
  • More children falling behind.
  • More disperse outcomes within a classroom.

• Assess learning to target instruction to child’s level.

• However, less than half of countries report having plans to assess learning loss

References
Adjust Instruction

Helping Students Catch Up

• **Targeted instruction** is cost-effective in mastering foundational skills.\(^1\,^2\)

• **Methods for targeting instruction:**
  • Group children by level all day\(^3\) or part of the day.\(^4\)
  • Leverage government teachers, volunteers,\(^4\) or teaching assistants.\(^5,^6\)
  • Provide out-of-school catch-up programs with small groups.

• **Curricula reform is time-consuming and difficult to do well.**\(^7\)

References

Support Teachers

**Structured pedagogical support**

- Large gap in teacher support between HICs and LICs.

- Support with structure and guidance:
  - **Structured pedagogy** programs proven to improve learning.
  - Proven ability to **scale** when paired with **accountability** systems.

- General skills training has **not been shown to be effective.**
Support Teachers

Engage additional instructors

Hiring teaching assistance and tutors:
• Strong pre-Covid-19 evidence.
• Studies in HICs, Botswana and South Africa during Covid-19
Leveraging existing technology
Avoid providing devices without support

Technology is not a panacea:
• Remote online education is unavailable to most students in LICs and MICs and not as effective as in-person learning¹
• Simply providing devices without support is ineffective

But technology may:
• Expand support to teachers
• Improve teaching effectiveness
• Help keep-in-touch with students via phone
• Help teach children “at their level”²

Despite widespread use, radio education has not yet been shown to be effective

References
Leveraging existing technology
Use available technology

Mobile phones are promising technology to leverage
- Over 80% of households have access to phones in LICs and MICs

Studies using phones:
- **Text messages** improved learning pre-pandemic in Niger\(^1\) and Chile\(^2\) and during the pandemic in Brazil\(^3\)
- **Phone calls** from teachers or mentors to parents and/or students cost-effectively improved learning in Botswana,\(^4\) Bangladesh,\(^5\) and Nepal,\(^6\) but had no impact in Sierra Leone\(^7\)

But mobile phone use for such programs by governments is still low: 17% in LICs, 57% in MICs

References

Icons from NounProject.com
Encourage parental engagement

Some **parental involvement** can increase children’s learning at low cost to the parent.

Activities need to be adjusted based on context.
Urgent, effective action is needed to help children

The recommendations in this presentation and in the GEEAP report are designed to help policymakers make swift, cost-effective decisions without having to sort through all the studies directly.
MINISTERIAL OBSERVATIONS

Chair: Jaime Saavedra, Head of Education Global Practice, the World Bank
Ministerial Observations

Jaime Saavedra, Head of Education Global Practice, the World Bank

Joan Osa Oviawe, Honorable Commissioner of Education, Edo State, Nigeria

Vinod Rao, Secretary (Primary & Secondary Education), State of Gujarat, India

Vicky Ford MP, Vicky Ford MP, Minister for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office, UK
Moderator: Tahir Andrabi, Professor of Economics at Pomona College, California, and Inaugural Dean, LUMS School of Education
Closing

Kwame Akyeampong, GEEAP co-chair, Professor of International Education and Development, The Open University
Thank you!

Disclaimer:
The Prioritizing learning during COVID-19: The Most Effective Ways to Keep Children Learning During and Post-Pandemic note was produced by the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel, with the support of its secretariat, which includes researchers at the U.K. Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, and the World Bank.

The judgments are the panel’s own, drawing on their reading of the available research and evidence; their conclusions do not necessarily reflect the policy positions of the panelists’ institutions, or of the convening and hosting institutions.

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https://bit.ly/3u3EHmP

Previous GEEAP publication:
Cost-Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning: What Does Recent Evidence Tell Us Are “Smart Buys” for Improving Learning in Low and Middle Income Countries?