

## UNESCO COVID-19 Education Strategy Regional Webinar-Arab States

### ***'Learning Loss during the COVID-19 Education Crisis and Way Forward'***

**Tuesday, 16 March 2021, 12:00 -14:00 (Beirut time)**

**Registration:** [https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_VBoYF17kT9G1HHXfdPcDGA](https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VBoYF17kT9G1HHXfdPcDGA)

**YouTube Live Streaming:** <https://www.youtube.com/unescoibeirutoffice>

### **Context**

Significant education disruption persists alongside the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. As of January 2021, more than 800 million students worldwide have been affected by complete or partial school closures, according to UNESCO's newly released data<sup>1</sup>. The average global school closures time accumulates up to 5.5 months (22 weeks), which is equivalent to almost two-thirds of a regular school year. In the Northern Africa and Western Asia region, the closure duration lasts even longer to 7 months (28 weeks).<sup>2</sup> In terms of earnings loss followed by global learning losses in the long term, the World Bank estimates that current school students could lose up to \$10 trillion over their work life, which equals one tenth of global GDP<sup>3</sup>.

Governments have been exerting great efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of education disruptions, such as implementing remote learning and remedial programmes and extending the academic calendar<sup>4</sup>, however, learning loss of students since the onset of the pandemic is tremendous and irresistible, especially for the vulnerable and at-risk learners who lack sufficient and efficient education resources support and education resources during the education crisis.

Lost learning - either refers to loss of learning opportunity, learning stagnation during a certain period, loss of gained learning, or incompleteness of expected academic progress – has been noticed and foreseen since the beginning of global school closures<sup>5</sup>. Yet, learning loss is not widely documented and assessed. Few studies have measured how much learning has been affected and how much learning students lose in remote learning comparing to on-site schooling, especially on literacy

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. (2021). UNESCO figures show two thirds of an academic year lost on average worldwide due to Covid-19 school closures. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-figures-show-two-thirds-academic-year-lost-average-worldwide-due-covid-19-school>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Aoao Pedro Azevedo, et al. (September 2020). Learning losses due to COVID19 could add up to \$10 trillion. Available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/learning-losses-due-covid19-could-add-10-trillion>

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank. (October 2020). What have we learned: Overview of findings from a survey of ministries of education on national responses to COVID-19. Available at: [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/National-Education-Responses-COVID-19-v2\\_2020.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/National-Education-Responses-COVID-19-v2_2020.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> International Baccalaureate. (November 2020). "Lost Learning": What does the research really say. Available at: <https://ibo.org/contentassets/438c6ba2c00347f0b800c536f7b1fab8/lost-learning-en.pdf>

(reading) and numeracy (mathematics) skills<sup>6</sup>. It is also noteworthy that students are affected disproportionately given the significant variations in their accessibility to remote learning, the quality of teaching, the degree of their engagement in learning, and support they received from parents and caregivers.<sup>7</sup> Learners from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds - including refugees, internally displaced people, girls, people with disabilities, minority groups - are falling further behind and having a high risk of dropping out.<sup>8</sup>

Challenges facing education system are more serious than ever with accumulating learning losses in the prolonged COVID-19 school closures. However, risks could also be transformed into opportunities to rethink and promote innovation in education to be accessible, equitable and beneficial for all learners and leave no one behind.

In light of the above, UNESCO Beirut Office, in partnership with Arab Campaign for Education for All (ACEA), Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABGS), and the Regional Center for Quality and Excellence in Education (RCQE), is organizing a webinar to call attention to learning loss in the Arab region during the COVID-19 crisis and explore potential mitigation strategies, which is in line with the SDG4 agenda and could contribute to the resilience of local education systems during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Objectives

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The overarching goal of this webinar is to **advocate the urgency and importance of recognizing and mitigating learning loss in Arab countries in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and beyond**. By identifying challenges and needs of different stakeholders and exploring potential way forward, it aims at proposing concrete policy and action recommendations for education officials and practitioners to be prepared for the remedy of learning losses in the upcoming academic year and envisioned future.

The specific objectives of the seminar will be:

- Assess learning status (including learning loss, stagnation as well as progression) of students as per education level in the Arab region during the COVID-19 pandemic with a special focus on the vulnerable and disadvantaged learners;
- Share regional and international good practices and initiatives on tracking and assessing learning outcomes and loss at school and country levels.

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<sup>6</sup> Megan Kuhfeld, et al. (May 2020). Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. Available at: <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai20-226>

<sup>7</sup> McKinsey & Company. (June 2020). COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Industries/Public%20and%20Social%20Sector/Our%20Insights/COVID-19%20and%20student%20learning%20in%20the%20United%20States%20The%20hurt%20could%20last%20a%20lifetime/COVID-19-and-student-learning-in-the-United-States-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> McKinsey & Company. (December 2020). COVID-19 and learning loss-disparities grow and students need help. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help>

- Explore potential strategies to compensate the learning loss and mitigate widened learning gap between high- and low-achieving students in the short and long terms.

## Expected Outcomes

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- Raised awareness of the sector on the severity of learning loss and the urgency to take mitigating actions.
- Catalysed inter-sectoral engagement to ensure commitment of stakeholders to narrow learning gaps by exchanging expertise and experience.
- Identified potential strategies and action plans to assess and compensate learning loss at school and government levels.

## Target audiences

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The target audience will include policy- and decision- makers at government and school levels, teachers and educators, academics, as well as any other relevant education practitioners.

## Registration

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- [Registration](#) is free and required in advance.
- Once you register, a unique join URL will be sent to your email.
- **Certificate of participation will be awarded to attendees. Please make sure to put your full name in the correct manner when register as it will show on the certificate.**

## Live transmission via YouTube

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[Live streaming](#) will be provided for those who might not be able to register in advance or to join due to limited capacity of the platform.

## Languages

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The webinar will be conducted in Arabic and English. Simultaneous interpretation services (from Arabic to English and vice versa) will be provided.