

Education in a post-
COVID world:

Towards a RAPID transformation



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Around the world, a lack of support for foundational learning is depriving millions of children of their right to learn. But while this is a global challenge, it is not an impossible one.

UNICEF and partners have developed an evidence-based solutions framework that clearly sets out what we know works to get children learning. This framework, known as **RAPID**, covers five key actions: **R**each every child and keep them in school; **A**ssess learning levels regularly; **P**rioritize teaching the fundamentals; **I**ncrease the efficiency of instruction, including through catch-up learning; and **D**evelop psychosocial health and wellbeing.

Using the latest results from the Global Education Recovery Tracker (GERT) (collected between May and July 2022), this brief sets out the global progress made under each RAPID action and highlights lessons learned from around the world. Finally, the brief points out areas for improvement so governments can take targeted action to reach every child.

By scaling up evidence-based solutions, supported by political will and increased investment, a different future is possible. Together, we can ensure **every child learns**.

Full analysis of the GERT and detailed case studies can be found in UNICEF's [full report](#).

Reach every child and keep them in school

Ensuring children can access school is key to supporting foundational learning for every child. As such, education systems must have effective measures in place to ensure all children, especially the most vulnerable, are able to access, stay in, and learn at school.

What works?

- **Community mobilization campaigns**
In [Iraq](#), 400 social mobilizers were trained to conduct the 2022 annual back-to-learning campaign in six governorates and the Kurdistan Region. The campaign targeted 20,000 children who had dropped out of school or not yet returned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end of 2022, over 44,000 children were identified and over 10,000 had returned to formal education.
- **Identification of children who are out of school or at risk of dropout**
In the [Dominican Republic](#), UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education with the publication of an early warning app, which allows the identification of children and adolescents at risk of dropping out through tracking attendance.
- **Interventions addressing barriers to education**
In the [Philippines](#), to address the needs of children with disabilities, UNICEF and Humanity and Inclusion have introduced the system for Prevention, Early Identification, Referral and Intervention of Delays, Disorders and Disabilities in Early Childhood in Surigao del Norte. To date, 3,780 parents of young children at risk of developmental delays were trained and supported, along with over 500 child development workers.

What progress have governments made?

Of 165 countries covered in the GERT, 40 per cent reported implementing at least one of the following measures to bring students back to school: automatic re-enrollment, cash transfers or other financial support, and community mobilization campaigns. While this progress is welcome, more work is needed: one quarter of countries did not have the data to show how many students returned to school, following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assess learning levels regularly

Understanding children's current learning levels allows educators, school leaders, and policymakers to make informed decisions about teaching, assessment, and other areas of learning recovery. Strengthening classroom-level assessment can also support children to be more active participants in their learning journey, in turn improving learning outcomes.

What works?

- **System-level learning assessments**
In [India](#), results from the National Achievement Survey for students in grades three, five, eight and 10 and the Foundational Learning Study for students in grade three will be used to gauge learning losses and inform learning recovery.
- **Classroom-level learning assessments**
In [Sri Lanka](#), results from a task-based, diagnostic learning achievement test informed curriculum adaptation and a blended approach of classroom-based, teacher-led and home-based, parent-led remedial activities that integrated formative assessments.
- **Strengthening teacher capacity for assessment**
In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, UNICEF developed diagnostic instruments for schools to self-apply and use to track learning progress. To date, nearly 950 teachers have been trained, benefiting over 20,000 students have benefited.

What progress have governments made?

Data from the GERT suggest that governments have made significant efforts to assess learning levels during and/or after school closures, with 74 per cent of 118 countries reporting that data had been collected since March 2020 to measure learning outcomes. However, GERT results also indicate that only one third of countries had a systematic plan in place to measure learning when children go back to school, even though ongoing assessment of learning levels is essential to ensure every child is taught at the right level.



Prioritize teaching the fundamentals

Far too often, children fail to learn the basic skills that are the fundamentals for all future learning, falling behind in their studies and, for some, falling out of education altogether. In response, governments must adjust curricula and teaching plans to prioritize fundamental concepts, including reading, maths and socioemotional skills.

What works?

- **Integrating socioemotional skills**
In [China](#), the [Social and Emotional Learning](#) (SEL) Project aims to move beyond SEL as a stand-alone subject, reinforcing it across subjects and integrating SEL into daily activities.
- **Supporting foundational learning through alternative pathways**
In [Sudan](#), UNICEF is supporting e-learning centers that provide a [two-year](#) program for [out-of-school children](#) in remote communities to learn foundational reading, writing and numeracy skills.

Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning

In 2022, UNICEF and partners launched the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#) (CtA), developed as a formal way for countries around the world and the global education community to demonstrate a commitment at the highest political levels to securing foundational learning for all children. By endorsing the Commitment to Action, countries and organizations commit to taking urgent and decisive action to reduce by half the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten, by 2030.

What progress have governments made?

Global momentum is gathering behind foundational learning. As of March 2023, 19 governments and over 30 organizations have endorsed the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning, demonstrating their high-level support for accelerated action on basic reading, maths and transferable skills. As the movement grows, more children will benefit from stronger foundations for learning.

Increase the efficiency of instruction, including through catch-up learning

The global crisis in foundational learning means students around the world are falling behind their grade-appropriate learning levels. In response, education systems must promote strategies that increase the amount of learning within classrooms, with a focus on providing teachers with adequate support to ensure these interventions are applied effectively.

What works?

- **Targeted and tailored instruction**
In [Brazil](#), through the *Acompanhamento Personalizado de Aprendizagem* program, students are grouped based on their learning levels for four two-week intensive periods during which they receive targeted instruction.
- **Accelerated, catch-up, and remedial programs**
In [Mozambique](#), UNICEF is supporting an accelerated learning program for over 40,000 children, about a third of whom improved their literacy skills and about half improved their basic numeracy skills.
- **Self-guided learning, including with the support of digital learning solutions**
Solutions such as the [Learning Passport](#) – an online, mobile, and offline tech platform enabling high-quality, flexible learning – have been utilized in numerous countries including [Mexico](#) and [Lebanon](#) to reach children and improve learning.
- **Teacher training and support**
In [Sierra Leone](#), an early grade teacher training program was launched in July 2021 to improve literacy and numeracy among children in Grades 1–3, helping more than 600,000 students acquire these foundational skills.



What progress have governments made?

The GERT results suggest that countries have recognized the essential role that teachers play in quality learning, with over half reporting that they had implemented measures to support teachers for pedagogy and learning. However, these efforts require scaling up: only 26 per cent reported implementing such measures at nationwide scale.

Develop psychosocial health and wellbeing

For many children, schools are far more than simply a place for learning. School can be a central hub for services, supporting children's mental and physical health and wellbeing. These services are in turn vital to ensure that children are ready to learn, supporting their academic success. As such, it is essential that schools can provide students with tailored and comprehensive support to meet their needs.

What works?

- **Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)**
In [Nigeria](#), 30,000 community volunteers and teachers were trained on the provision of MHPSS, including tools to deal with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and broader issues linked to insecurity and attacks on education.
- **Providing nutritional services**
In Cameroon, UNICEF is providing nutrition supplements to children and nutrition education for parents, benefitting 10,000 children.
- **Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities**
In [Papua New Guinea](#), handwashing points were established in 44 National Capital Schools to provide clean water and hand washing facilities, benefitting over 37,000 students.

What progress have governments made?

Significant efforts have been made to develop children's health and wellbeing. The GERT results indicate that two thirds of countries had implemented small-scale or significant additional WASH measures, and over half had delivered similar interventions for MHPSS. However, just one-third of countries reported implementing school nutrition programming.

No RAPID without resources

The RAPID actions outlined above cannot be implemented without sufficient resources. Sustainable and equitable education financing is essential to recover and transform education, and yet significant gaps remain. [Only four in 10 countries meet the benchmark of allocating at least 15 per cent of total public expenditure to education](#). This lack of financing is made worse by inequity: on average across countries, [the poorest learners benefit from only 16 per cent of public funding for education](#). As governments consider the RAPID actions most relevant for their context, additional consideration must be given to securing the resources needed to ensure their effective and sustainable implementation.

A chance to change

From the Transforming Education Summit, to the High-Level Political Forum, to the G20 and G7, and beyond, governments are aligning in unprecedented support for foundational learning. These efforts are underpinned by concrete action at the national level, with leaders and decisionmakers around the world putting foundational learning firmly on their policy and political agenda.

To capitalize on this momentum and join the global movement, governments should endorse the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#), demonstrating their commitment to:

- Implement the actions outlined in the RAPID framework;
- Commit to reduce by half the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10, by 2030; and
- Close the education resource gap to invest in foundational learning.

With the evidence-based, scalable solutions outlined in the RAPID framework, political will, and increased investment, we can ensure every child learns. **Now is the chance for change.**

For further information on UNICEF's advocacy on foundational learning, visit [our website](#). Full analysis of the GERT and detailed case studies can be found in [UNICEF's full report](#).